

Promoting sustainable return and integration of IDPs in Indonesia

by Patrick Sweeting, George Conway and Nabila Hameed

As the Indonesian government develops appropriate policies to address IDP needs and prevent future displacement, UNDP's work in the region has highlighted a number of challenges to be faced and lessons to be learned.

By the end of 2001, an estimated 1.3 million people were displaced in 14 of Indonesia's 28 provinces, mainly as a result of a wave of conflicts that erupted or intensified following the 1997 financial crisis and the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998. The eruption of these conflicts was linked to the more general conditions of political instability and change in the post-Suharto years and the initiation of a vast process of political reform and decentralisation.

Conflicts in Indonesia have been distinctly regional, with their own particular dynamics. Social conflict crystallised along religious lines in the Maluku provinces and Central Sulawesi. Ethnic conflict between indigenous Dayaks, Madurese migrants and Malays erupted in West and Central Kalimantan. The long-standing struggle with the militant separatist movement in Aceh also intensified. The overall caseload of displaced persons additionally includes East Timorese whose numbers, at their peak, reached 290,000 people. Once East Timor seceded from Indonesia, these people became internationally recognised as refugees, although Indonesia regards them as Indonesian citizens eligible for resettlement in Indonesia.¹

Since 2001, the level of violent conflict across the country has reduced significantly. Positive developments in most areas have created conditions conducive for addressing the IDP situation. However, recent episodes of violence in Maluku and Central Sulawesi demonstrate that significant risks remain and that there is potential for new displacement.

Patterns of displacement

The patterns of displacement in Indonesia have been as diverse as the conflicts themselves. Some displacement has been short-term, such as in Aceh where the separatist struggle has resulted in a pattern of people leaving their villages temporarily when violence escalated. By contrast, much of the displacement from the Kalimantan conflicts has become longer-term. The tensions between the indigenous population of inland Dayak, the Malay riverine people and Madurese settlers that inflamed the conflict remain largely intact and widespread return has not been a realistic option.²

In the provinces of Maluku and North Maluku, people were displaced to religiously segregated areas within the provinces or to neighbouring provinces, notably to North Sulawesi from North Maluku, and to Southeast Sulawesi from Maluku. The reconciliation process has been quicker in North Maluku than in Maluku, and returns to mixed communities have increased. However, most IDPs from Maluku in Southeast Sulawesi, and many from North Maluku in North Sulawesi, remain in these areas and have begun to integrate into local communities.

There are long histories of group migration across the islands, either through formal government 'transmigration' programmes or through spontaneous migration. While the transmigration programme was designed to relieve population pressures on Java and neighbouring islands (such as Madura), migra-

tion has also been caused by poor economic conditions, development-induced displacement and natural disasters. In many areas these migration patterns created new social and economic imbalances, led to disputes over land and access to natural resources, and fuelled competition for scarce employment opportunities between migrants and residents.

The more complex IDP situations tend to involve migrant groups who were displaced back to their areas of ethnic origin (such as the ethnic Madurese displaced from Kalimantan to Madura). Such IDPs face the dilemma of being unable either to return or to fully integrate into their places of ethnic origin - the latter because of having lived away for generations, having few family connections and being seen as competitors for employment and scarce resources.

Government response

While many IDP crises occur in the context of a failed state, Indonesia's state institutions have remained intact and most humanitarian support has been provided by the government, not the international community. Initial efforts focused on humanitarian assistance in the form of food, non-food items and shelter, in addition to provision of temporary health and education services. As most violence subsided in 2001 a three-pronged strategy - built around return, local integration and resettlement - was devised.

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The policymakers' favoured option - return to places of origin - has required a desire by IDPs to return and a willingness of the local community to accept them back. In many areas, particularly Kalimantan, this is not the case. The option for IDPs

to integrate into the community to which they had been displaced is called 'empowerment' and has involved cash grants to start new lives and livelihoods. The third option - resettlement to new locations - has met a variable response. Many IDPs resettled (or maybe temporarily resettled) close to areas from which they had been displaced but few have been willing to resettle further away. It is still too early to say what may constitute temporary resettlement (or temporary empowerment) and what will become permanent resettlement. People do not give up hope of return quite so easily.

The National Coordinating Body for Disaster and IDP Management (BAKORNAS) is charged with coordinating management of the IDP situation at the national level, with equivalent coordinating bodies at the provincial and district levels (SATKORLAK and SATLAK). Different tiers of government and line ministries are responsible for implementing various parts of the strategy. However, as BAKORNAS has no control over sectoral budgets, coordination has been problematic.

The policy was implemented over the course of the next two years, resulting in a reduction of the number of IDPs by mid 2003 to approximately 500,000, almost one-third the amount at the peak of the IDP crisis. Beginning in 2004, the Government of Indonesia ended special assistance for the three options, instead preferring to address the needs of these former IDPs within general poverty alleviation strategies. It is yet to be seen if this approach will be successful.³

Challenges in implementing the IDP policy

Despite the government's overall accomplishments in addressing the IDP situation, the implementation of the policy was complicated by a number of factors:

- insufficient coordination between departments and between levels of government
- lack of information on the options available regarding opportunities for return or resettlement; IDPs also often knew little about conditions in their home

areas and, as a result, many opted to accept the government's 'empowerment' package, as it seemed to be the safest option.

- insufficient participation of target groups - resettlement sites were poorly planned, often too far for IDPs to access employment opportunities and markets
- poor coordination of responsibilities between sectoral agencies: some settlement sites lack essential services such as health and education and most new settlers have not received certification for the land and houses they are occupying or ID cards; this creates uncertainty about their futures and hinders access to public services.
- insufficient or inaccurate data collection, leading to unequal access to assistance and problems in monitoring resource allocation
- uneven distribution of assistance which has created resentment, accusations of corruption and demands from IDP groups for greater transparency
- tensions between IDP and host communities, especially in poor areas: in response, the state has, in some cases, provided support (eg housing) to locals as well.

The government shift in early 2004 from IDP-focused assistance to longer-term development may be appropriate for some con-

texts in Indonesia but has itself created another set of challenges. In particular, it is unclear what support will be available, and who will be responsible, for the remaining specific needs and vulnerabilities of IDPs. The problem of coordination and use of resources will not necessarily be solved, and may even be exacerbated, by this change of strategy.

UNDP engagement

In areas where return has been possible, such as North Maluku and Maluku provinces, UNDP has focused largely on addressing barriers to return by supporting government housing programmes, infrastructure rehabilitation, re-initiation of public services disrupted by conflict and support for resumption of livelihoods. The focus has been on public goods and services that benefit whole communities, and on facilitating participatory processes in which returning IDPs and home communities work together to achieve shared results.

Support for rehabilitation of damaged facilities has been coupled with training for service providers and facilitation of peace-building approaches to build trust and social cohesion. In Ambon City in Maluku Province, for instance, UNDP has worked with the municipality and Muhammadiyah, one of Indonesia's major Islamic

Returning IDPs in East Timor



organisations, to rehabilitate school facilities, launch 'reconciliation classes' with religiously mixed groups of students, support in-service training for teachers and school administrators and introduce peacemaking and tolerance into curricula.

In Maluku UNDP has been supporting an initiative by the International Catholic Migration Commission to strengthen civil society peace building by encouraging visits and joint meetings between returning IDP groups and home communities. These opportunities for dialogue can lead to action plans (to address barriers to return) that are presented to local government for support. This initiative has demonstrated the importance of working with traditional conflict resolution mechanisms at the community level in supporting IDP return and reintegration.

Where IDPs have voluntarily opted not to return to their places of origin, UNDP is also supporting resettlement or local 'empowerment' options. While settlement does not necessarily require the level of peace-building support involved in IDP return, programmes still need to address whole communities and not only IDPs. In NTT province, for example, where the government is resettling former East Timorese refugees who have opted to stay



New houses for IDPs in Ambon, Maluku Province

in Indonesia, UNDP is assisting the local government to mitigate the longer-term impact of IDPs on local development prospects and potential for future conflict, through facilitating consultation processes between former refugees and communities, and providing economic support benefiting both groups.

Lessons learned

Experience from working with governmental and other partners has highlighted a number of lessons:

- The government needs to be helped to learn from its own experience in order to improve capacity and develop more appropriate policies: this includes improved data collection, information management and coordination between departments and between levels of government, as well as information provision to ensure that IDPs are aware of their options.
- Planning processes need to include greater participation of communities and displaced persons, and the level of support needs to be balanced between IDPs and communities to avoid discrepancies and social tension.
- Capacity-building assistance should not only be directed to such emergency planning mechanisms as BAKORNAS, SATKORLAK and SATLAK but also to regular development planning structures to address longer-term monitoring and the need for development programming in affected areas.

- The government needs to be supported to develop better migration policies – including formal 'transmigration' programmes – in order to reduce scope for future conflict and reduce inequalities between migrant and indigenous groups.
- There is a need to proactively promote trust-building between returnees and their home communities, ensure that women are involved and use traditional systems of reconciliation.

A series of recent multi-stakeholder workshops supported by UNDP in a number of Indonesia's conflict-affected provinces has identified unresolved IDP contexts as a primary obstacle to future peace. These situations need to be resolved in as expedient and as sustainable a manner as possible to prevent a resumption of conflict.

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¹ At the end of 2002, UNHCR applied the cessation clause for East Timorese refugees in Indonesia, so that these persons are no longer considered refugees.

² See 'Going home of going away from home? The dilemma of Madurese IDPs' by Sheryl Sarigih Turnip, in *Researching Internal Displacement: State of the Art*, 2003, online at: www.fmreview.org/StateoftheArt.pdf

³ See FMR 17, Christopher Duncan 'Confusing deadlines: IDPs in Indonesia': www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR17/fmr17.15.pdf

