

FINAL REPORT
Training-Workshop on the UN Guiding Principles
on Internal Displacement
November 22 to 24, 1999
Quezon City, Philippines

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WORKSHOP BACKGROUND

A training-workshop on the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement was held in Quezon City, Philippines, from November 22 to 24, 1999. It was organized by the Ecumenical Commission for Displaced Families and Communities (ECDFC), in cooperation with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

Participants numbered about 38, primarily, from non-government organizations and agencies servicing the needs of internally-displaced families; secondly, representatives of government agencies and the military, thirdly, some members of internally-displaced communities, and fourthly, a representative of a Muslim group currently engaged in armed struggle and political negotiations with the Philippine government.

Because of limited time, workshop modules focused on specific themes culled from the Guiding Principles. Participants were divided into five workshop groups. Each group discussed the themes and gave separate reports to the main gathering. On the final day, participants approved specific recommendations.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES & EXPECTATIONS

The organizers proposed the following **objectives** for the workshop.

- (1) Promote and disseminate the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement;

(2) Promote dialogue between members of the internally displaced communities, national NGOs, international organizations and NGOs and government authorities concerning the protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced in the Philippines, and;

(3) Unite the participants on the present situation and causes of internal displacement in the Philippines and recommend plans to addressing the issue.

For their part, participants shared the following specific **expectations** which they hoped to see during the workshop:

1. Share and discuss specific situations: (a) the repeated-displacement phenomenon, where frequently-displaced families strain the limited resources of NGOs; (b) other causes of displacement such as clan conflict, and lately, economic projects which hurt urban poor, as well as agricultural communities.
2. Highlight rights violated by internal displacement, including economic, cultural and social rights. Discuss possibility of establishing the justiciability of economic-social rights. Discuss possible means of compensating victims.
3. Share personal experiences of internal displacement and in dealing with it.
4. Use the occasion to improve coordination between NGOs and government for greater effectiveness of the relief operations.
5. Get to know of international agencies involved in internal displacement. Determine if the Philippine government could be obliged to report to which of these agencies regarding its compliance with the Guiding Principles. Know of examples from other countries. Know the prospect of strengthening the guiding principles towards this concern.
6. Ask the UNHCR for greater presence in troubled areas in Mindanao because thousands of displaced people in these areas are not being reached by government relief agencies or NGOs.

WORKSHOP REPORTS

MODULE 1. PHILIPPINE PROFILE OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

A. Who are the internally displaced in the Philippines?

In general they are persons or groups of persons (families or communities) forced, intimidated, threatened or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence (or work) as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights (institutionalized violence), or natural, or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.

Specifically, they are :

- (1) those uprooted from their homes because of military operations, or those fleeing from fighting between government forces and armed rebel groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front or the New People's Army; or families of former rebels being harassed by former comrades.
- (2) those who lose their homes and means of livelihood to big economic projects of government or big corporations, and are not properly relocated;

- (3) those indigenous peoples driven away from their ancestral domain by powerful persons who stake a claim over their ancestral domain;
- (4) victims of *rido* or tribal or clan war;
- (5) those unable to return to their communities and live normal lives, or are without means to cope with displacement, including street families now living in pushcarts, or under bridges, sewerage, canals and along the rivers, creeks or streams (and if removed from the streets, suffer double displacement); and
- (6) victims of natural disasters who continue to be homeless due to government neglect or inefficiency.

Internally displaced persons include those wanting to return to their original places of residence but are unable to do so because they lack social, economic and political security to resume normal life.

B. Where are the internally displaced located?

They flee to safer places such as churches, plaza, relatives in adjacent villages or municipalities or province, schools, government buildings, evacuation centers. Others go deeper into the forest where they feel safer.

Displaced persons usually start from the rural to urban areas, or from devastated areas to safer areas, from areas of ancestral domain to evacuation centers. There is temporary displacement, repeated displacement, and long-term displacement.

C. What are the causes of internal displacement in the Philippines?

A complex combination of situations create the phenomenon of internal displacement in the Philippines. Some situations are human-made: military operations, armed conflict, demolition programs, and development projects, among others. Others are caused mostly by natural disasters such as a volcanic eruption, earthquake and typhoons, where resettlement is slow or non-existent.

D. Other circumstances

A family that returns to the community during certain hours in the day is still considered displaced. A family that has no more intention to go back to the community and/or habitual residence where it was displaced is still displaced as long as full relocation is not established. Moving one's household within the same village is strictly not displacement.

Squatters whose houses are demolished, even if they have no legal right to the place they are removed from, are considered internally-displaced persons.

Displacement is considered to have ceased when the victims have returned or successfully resettled elsewhere, living a lifestyle similar or better as before displacement, and when cultural and emotional rehabilitation is considered done.

Government is frequently the source of displacement, as in the following examples:

A government-instigated project in the province of Sultan Kudarat (Mindanao) resulted in the disappearance of a whole village. The government through its Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) entered into a contract with the private firm Consunji for an “Integrated Forest Management Agreement.”

The village of Sumilao in Mindanao was razed without residents being first relocated. Demolition was forced, with the demolition crew using a writ issued by the local office of the justice department.

Displacement is frequently a matter of perception. The problem starts as soon as the threat is first felt, not when the displacement becomes actual. Displacement has to contain the element of unwillingness to be moved by the persons concerned.

Other grey areas in the Philippine experience include:

- Victims of development aggression, the term used locally to refer to cases of displacement of people and communities by the creation of industrial estates; government infrastructure, such as ecozones, roads, public markets, railways, and so on.
- Victims of natural disasters directly attributable to government neglect, such as flash floods due to illegal logging or harmful development projects, are also considered among the internally displaced.
- In cases when relocated families have to pay for their new place, what happens when they fail to continue payments and eviction is threatened all over again? How is the line drawn between migration and internal displacement?
- Since street families have no roots to a specific place, where are they to be “returned?”

If groups and individuals belonging to these grey areas are considered internally displaced, the number of IDPs in the Philippines would be much bigger.

MODULE 2. LEGAL ORIGINS AND INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

Participants were given an overview of the legal foundations of the Guiding Principles and the key concepts involved. Among other documents cited were the UN charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN conventions on civil-political rights and economic-social-cultural rights, Protocol II, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and Convention Against Torture.

They were then asked to identify existing protection guarantees in specific instruments, paying attention to special needs, namely (1) housing and shelter; (2) education; (3) health; (4) non-discrimination; (5) security; (6) food security; (7) psycho-social rehabilitation; (8) economic livelihood, and; (9) assistance.

Participants then identified specific provisions in these documents, as well as those found in the Philippine Constitution, and the Philippine law on the Rights of the Child.

MODULE 3. PROTECTION FROM DISPLACEMENT, AND PROTECTION DURING DISPLACEMENT

Key concepts discussed in the module were nondiscrimination, movement-related rights, rights during displacement, right to leave one's country and return, and right to physical security. The workshop groups related the following problems:

1. Nondiscrimination

Discrimination is frequently suffered by civilians living around or within rebel-controlled areas, and civilians identified with political opposition groups.

Civilians who flee towards rebel-controlled areas in the aftermath of a fighting are not given assistance by government social workers lest the refugees siphon off food aid to rebel troops. Within the government framework, people who sympathize with rebel troops become enemies themselves. Why should government fund the relief and rehabilitation of its "enemies," in this case the internally-displaced communities?

Labeling a community "MILF-area" or "NPA-area" often results in that area not being given due attention in terms of relief aid. In fact, the entry of food products is sometimes controlled to prevent supplies from reaching the rebels. This is a phenomenon called here a "food blockade."

Supporters of opposition parties or groups who suffer displacement are not afforded assistance during natural disasters or calamities. Other sources of discrimination are ethnic origin, and political belief.

On the other hand, persons or communities seen by the military to be government-friendly often receive special treatment.

2. Movement-related rights

Villagers are told to vacate their communities without prior warning or enough provision. People are left to fend for themselves. According to the military, to give warning of its operations is to jeopardize it because the element of surprise is destroyed, and "the enemy" is allowed to prepare.

In the IDPs camps, villagers are constantly subjected to military surveillance and checkpoints are set up. Curfew hours are imposed. Proper accommodations, safety, hygiene, and health facilities are lacking. Suspected sympathizers or members of the parties in conflict are always in danger of being abused. People put themselves at risk when they go into areas outside government control. Refugees are used as human shields by the armed contenders.

Police detachments or military/paramilitary stations are installed in evacuation centers, purportedly to secure the evacuees.

Schooling of children are stopped, sources of livelihood are destroyed, food and facilities are not available, people especially children become sick or experience emotional trauma, women suffer from greater violence and abuse, discrimination grows worse, and in the end, poverty.

In the communities, the houses are frequently burned, and property destroyed or stolen.

NGO relief workers are denied entry into affected areas, or the military would insist in escorting them, which puts these workers at even greater risk.

Children are also recruited for military training.

Policies and laws that protect the rights of the displaced are not clear, or are non-existent.

Even prior to displacement, however, poor villagers are already disadvantaged because officials are generally not after serving the poor people, while the military and police are sorely lacking in human rights orientation.

Women experience harassment from military or other armed groups. Families are forced into selling property at low prices. And children resort to selling labor to help out.

Government agencies must have evacuation plans for high-risk communities. Planning must involve such agencies as the Commission on Human Rights, the Department of Social Work and Development, the Department of Health, Congress committees, the military, and the police.

Government functionaries directly handling displaced persons should be trained in the Guiding Principles (and by UN people). Government should be asked to make a commitment to the Guiding Principles. Awareness about internal displacement and the Guiding Principles should be raised among government agencies.

Victims of internal displacement should be indemnified to force government to recognize its responsibility over human rights violations that may be committed by its agents. A test case, e.g., a class suit, should be filed in Philippine courts for IDPs.

Participants repeatedly mentioned proposals to invite UN's Mr. Francis Deng to study displacement in the Philippines, and to conduct training of UN Guiding Principles.

MODULE 4. RETURN, RESETTLEMENT & INTEGRATION

Five themes were identified in the module, which were then discussed in the workshop groups. Reports of the discussions include:

1. Voluntary return or resettlement

The use of a broader framework for resettlement was suggested. Basic issues should be justly resolved through, for example, a political settlement. Peace zones (Banayal, Tulunan, Nabundasan, North Cotabato) could be established to encourage IDPs to return voluntarily. This framework should also include a conscious government policy to consult residents about projects that harm their community, particularly ethnic communities occupying their ancestral domain.

Indigenous communities should also be allowed to choose whether or not they would return to their communities, and they should be given full information to make their decision. Cultural practices, for instance, the role of the council of elders, should be respected.

Authorities can further encourage voluntary return by giving out written assurances of safety, observing proper procedures of return, respecting the culture of the returning families, establishing clear indicators for an ideal safe community, and providing psychological rehabilitation.

In order to make resettlement a real option, resettlement areas should be prepared, and livelihood projects and basic services ensured. A resettlement plan should be created through the concerted efforts of NGOs, GOs and affected people. A monitoring body should be set up, and penalties imposed on individualized or institutionalized violence (for non-implementation, etc.).

Displaced communities have to be made aware of the consequences of return or resettlement, including the resources and support mechanisms available. Once they have made a decision, planning the process of return/resettlement should be done with the help of support groups. If basic resources are not immediately available, coordinated efforts should be made to insure the initial provision of these resources with the active involvement of the groups concerned. Freedom of choice can further be ensured by distributing information about the rights of the internally displaced.

Perpetrators must not be spared. They must be investigated through the creation of a investigating commission. Truth-telling sessions could be organized.

2. Role of the internally-displaced in the return process

Participants stressed the vital role that displaced communities must play in the return process - from decision-making, to planning, to implementation and management of activities. Support groups may only assist by helping them hold consultations with each other, coordinating their efforts, or offering technical assistance, such as capability building programs. Local or traditional methods of resolving conflicts should be promoted, such as peace dialogues, or *bodong* or peace pacts.

3. Nondiscrimination

It was pointed out that where the principle of non-discrimination is concerned, the groups most affected are indigenous peoples, Muslims, and suspected “rebels.” In fact, discrimination already exists prior to displacement, and is simply made worse by the displacement process. Discrimination

could be avoided by intensifying human rights education, and dissemination of the Guiding Principles.

Other discriminated persons are women, children, older persons and disabled persons. They should be involved in decision-making processes. Men and women should be assured of equal opportunity to assume leadership roles.

Discrimination may occur in the aspect of education of children and in the involvement of internally displaced persons in the community's political activities. This could be remedied by preparing the "receiving" community for the coming IDPs.

4. Recovery of property and compensation

Among the proposals from participants were indemnification of property lost or stolen during evacuation or during military operations. Damage should be compensated. A test case could be filed in court, or a bill filed in Congress. Lands grabbed when the occupants are away should be restored. One problem is that statistics are sometimes not updated, so this should also be looked into.

Displaced communities could be helped by the provision of legal assistance and by making them know of existing instruments towards the recovery of property.

5. Access of humanitarian organizations

Humanitarian groups often work against great odds. Affected areas are usually very difficult to reach because of the rough terrain. The military sets conditions, such as enforcing military escorts, limiting the time allowed for relief distribution, and sometimes even actually harassing relief workers. Thus, the security of these workers, sometimes including foreigners, is also threatened. Local politicians also sometimes make such humanitarian work difficult, because they feel hostility towards non-government groups.

In order to dispel suspicions, it was proposed that non-government groups coordinate more with authorities (local or national), and use existing channels. Media releases could also improve coordination. More thorough documentation and case files could also be made available.

The issue of internal displacement would be benefited by the creation of a network of national and international solidarity groups looking into such concerns. Churches should also be involved. Service providers from government must especially be oriented towards genuine service.

Since government is mandated to assist displaced communities, NGOs should push them if the task is not being performed. Sometimes, however, political differences among NGOs become another problem.

6. Other points

As part of its overall framework, government should implement genuine land reform in these areas, recognize ancestral domain, and stop destroying rural and local livelihoods by the conversion of their lands into commercial, industrial or residential purposes.

The Commission on Human Rights was further asked to intensify its training and education work, and improve its investigation work.

MODULE 5. RECIPIENTS AS RESOURCES

The following themes were presented in the module: (1) preserving the family and community links; (2) supporting strategies of self-help; (3) empowerment; (4) involving IDPs in decision-making, and; (5) promoting self-reliance.

The facilitator said that communities must never be passive recipients of assistance. They should be key actors in developing programs for themselves. This is because communities usually have their own strategies for protection and assistance, particularly of those vulnerable groups within their community. These strategies have to be identified, supported, and considered during planning.

The first practical protection of a community is seen through a complex social network that includes the family, the clan or the tribe. These relations are disturbed or destroyed during displacement, so they must be rebuilt as soon as possible.

Family units must remain together as much as possible at any phase of displacement, and if separated, must be reunited as soon as possible. Families have the right to know the whereabouts of their relatives, so government authorities should establish mechanisms to trace separated families. When family members have been killed, relatives should be allowed to visit the grave sites.

Displaced individuals have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, opinion and expression, which serve as their protection, too. Children whether in camps or outside the camps, should receive education according to the culture, language and religion to which they belong. Families have the right to participate in the community.

As citizens, they have the right to participate in elections and vote. This is the only way they could express their opinion, and the authorities to consider their opinion, which is the fundamental aspect of reconciliation.

On the theme of self-help and empowerment, displaced communities have the right to approach government or national authorities.

When a community has to be moved, it has to be involved in decision-making and in organizing relocation. Women should be involved in planning and management of the relocation. They must be in full participation in planning and distribution of basic supplies.

Even in IDPs camps, IDPs should be given a chance to seek employment and participate in economic activities and not become assistance-dependent. Education and training facilities should also be provided.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Following the three days of deliberations and discussions the following set of recommendations were formulated at the final plenary meeting of the workshop participants. The workshop:

International

1. Supports the peace process between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and all armed opposition groups in the country to seek resolution of the conflicts, and requests the Philippine government to explore other avenues including the possibility of international mediation.
2. Calls on the Philippine Government to respect its obligations under international law. Non-government organizations and organizations present at the workshop resolved to use existing human rights reporting mechanisms to monitor government compliance with human rights norms as they relate to internally-displaced persons.
3. Recommends that the Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Francis Deng, be invited to visit the Philippines to conduct talks with the government on internal displacement and to jointly seek ways to implement the Guiding Principles.
4. Encourages Philippine NGOs concerned with internal displacement to seek partnerships with like-minded international NGOs to further raise awareness and respond to the protection and assistance needs of internally displaced in the Philippines.
5. To request the UN or any of its organs to explore the possibilities of monitoring the armed conflict in the Philippines, provide assistance to internally-displaced peoples in the Philippines and designate an appropriate UN agency to act as focal point for these persons.

National

6. Calls on the Philippines government, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the National Democratic Front (NDF) to vigorously pursue a peace process and to find all available peaceful means to arrive at a political settlement. The workshop calls on all parties to the conflict to cease using armed solutions to resolve current differences and instead use peaceful dialogue to seek ways to address the demands of the concerned population.
7. Urges all armed opposition groups active in the Philippines to respect the rights of the child and refrain from forcible recruitment of minors as combatants.
8. Calls on the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP), the MILF, the NPA and all other armed groups to respect the rights of the internally displaced to receive assistance. Mindful of the need for increased security for NGO personnel operating in areas of conflict, the workshop further urges these conflicting forces to allow NGOs greater access to victims of internal displacement.

9. Recognizing the importance of accurate and comprehensive documentation, encourages NGOs, under the leadership of ECDFC, to develop improved monitoring mechanisms for cases of displacement in the Philippines including through the development of common indicators and improved methodology.

Property Issues

10. Calls on the Government of Philippines to fully implement genuine land reform and respect ancestral domain and adopt a national land use policy to prevent further displacement of farmers and indigenous peoples from their lands.
11. Recommends that appropriate cases be brought before the Philippine Commission on Human Rights in order to safeguard and protect the housing rights of displaced families and those included in the urban poor.
12. Urges national authorities to provide housing and more assistance to families forcibly evicted from their homes and where applicable improve their access to judicial remedies.

Judicial

13. Calls on the Government of the Philippines to vigorously pursue the prosecution of gross violators of human rights and where appropriate provide indemnification to victims of internal displacement.

Legislative

14. Urges the Philippine government to endorse the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.
15. Calls on the Philippine government to abide by the 1987 Philippine Constitution which protects the rights of Philippine citizens and is a valuable instrument to advance and promote the rights of the internally displaced and to prevent further arbitrary displacement.
16. Asks the Philippine government to pursue the establishment and creation of a mechanism within government to improve coordination among NGOs, government authorities and internally-displaced persons to further improve response to their protection and assistance needs.
17. Calls on the Commission on Human Rights to strengthen its investigation and monitoring work on IDPs, to activate the GO-NGO Sectoral Working Group on IDPs for the implementation of the administrative, program and legislative measures indicated in the Philippine Human Rights plan, and to include the issue of IDPs as well as the UN Guiding Principles on IDPs in its public information and education program.

18. Urges that appropriate legislation be passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate providing for compensation/restitution for lost and destroyed property of victims of internal displacement.
19. Requests the Philippine National Disaster Coordinating Council to develop disaster-management and preparedness programs for high-risk areas especially conflict-prone areas.

Information campaign

20. Encourages a joint effort by NGOs and the Government of the Philippines to develop an information campaign to raise awareness on the issues of internal displacement in the Philippines and to seek means to disseminate the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

Training

21. Urges government authorities, particularly the AFP, PNP and other law enforcement agencies to include in their curriculum/education program the training on the Guiding Principles and other international human rights instruments.
22. Encourages the internally displaced, NGOs and government authorities to cooperatively search for durable solutions and where appropriate prepare a common and integrated strategy and plan for return or resettlement.

Local

23. Encourages further dialogue between Muslim, Christian communities and the indigenous peoples to establish common understanding and mutual trust.
24. Urges that local officials undergo training on the Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement.
25. Encourages the creation of programs to raise awareness and seek greater empowerment of the internally displaced.
26. Requests that leaders of the internally displaced communities be given training in disaster-management and preparation in order to mitigate the effects of displacement and provide further vocational training to increase self-sufficiency of victims of internal displacement following return. The workshop further urges the greater involvement of women in leadership structures of internally displaced communities and that they be included in any training activities.
27. Encourages greater promotion and use of local indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms wherever possible and appropriate.
28. Urges that government authorities and NGOs respect the right of IDPs to participate in all decision-making processes that concern their current or future needs.

29. Requests that genuine and adequate consultations be held with affected populations before the implementation of development projects. The workshop further requests that all development projects include complete resettlement plans and proper compensation before any activity is undertaken.
30. Requests that concerned agencies and organizations respect the rights of host communities.
31. Requests that local government authorities provide psycho-social services for the internally-displaced whether they are temporarily settled, are returning or are resettling elsewhere.
32. Create a Study Commission composed of representatives of the Human Rights Committees of both Houses of Congresses, the CHR, DSWD, DOJ, DND, PNP, concerned non-governmental organizations and the academe to draft a comprehensive bill protecting the rights of IDPs.

ANNEXES

Annex A. Workshop Program

Annex B. Training Modules

Annex C. Opening Remarks

SR. EVELYN CORONEL, RGS
 Chair, ECDFC Board of Directors

At the UN Commission on Human Rights' 54th session of 1998, the representative of the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Francis Deng, presented a document entitled United Nations' Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, a significant step towards the defense and protection of the rights of internally displaced persons worldwide. The document will serve as the basic materials of this training for the next two days.

Last year, the ECDFC reprinted these documents with the support of United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, UN Information Center and the Philippine Human Rights Information Center. This was followed by a forum on December 9 held last year, the eve of the Human Rights' Day to disseminate the tasks and more importantly understand its implications to the work among internally displaced families in the communities.

In the Philippines, the phenomenon of internal displacement and the consequent anguish and misery, the violations, neglect and deprivation of the victims of human rights (civil and political, economic, social and cultural) provide very compelling reasons why it should be addressed

urgently. This is also why ECDFC was established in 1984, precisely to respond to cases which are the result of human-made disasters, such as armed conflict, internal strife or even development policies. According to data gathered by ECDFC between January 1987 and December 1998, a total of 577 incidents has displaced 251,698,000 families and 8,268 individuals. The trend shown in the 12-year span is not exactly encouraging. The lowest number of incidents took place in 1995 affecting a total of 40,000 families. The highest recorded was 112 in 1989 which displaced much less, around 18,000 plus. However, a decrease in number does not necessarily ease the suffering of the people involved.

The latest data shows that on October 28 and November 14, there were two incidents that again displaced thousands of families. The human toll exacted by internal displacement here and elsewhere knows no bounds. Our staff have been witnesses in countless times to the painful and at times tragic situations and conditions of relocation sites as they conduct relief operations. Behind publicized statistical figures are breathing and living people whose lives have been uprooted, disrupted and whose ordinary dreams have been shattered.

Although we have all come for a common cause, it is quite possible that we will differ in our perception of the issue of internal displacement. But let this be an occasion to enrich our dialogue and discussion during this training. Let us together find ways and means to make the guiding principles truly alive and operative, an endeavor that needs the cooperation and goodwill of us all.

In a few weeks it would be Christmas. He who is the center of this beautiful life, He who is the source of all goodwill for all times, said to the people of his time and to us now -- "I have come that you may have life, life in his fullness and this fullness of life is meant for all." I would like to hope that particularly on this last Christmas of the 20th century, we will carry with us the resolve to make a positive difference in the lives of those caught in the web of displacement as we enter in the new millennium. Honored guests and friends, a warm welcome to you all.

HON. LORETTA ANN P. ROSALES
Member, Committee on Civil, Political and Human Rights
House of Representatives

This training on management and administration of internally displaced people is very important. I remember I was on my way to Sultan Kudarat recently, and I was escorted by tanks and policemen. It is an indication that things are not going any better evidently although government claims it wants to make peace with MILF, and MILF claims it wants to make peace with government.

Perhaps the economic, social conditions do not allow for immediate peace to take place. So the situation in Mindanao is uncertain and more than anything else, this kind of training is needed, this kind of coming together, the kind of commitment from kindred spirits. Thanks to international solidarity where people from Norway and UN came to us.

I have an important suggestion to make. Internal displacement in the Philippines has always referred to people internally displaced because of conflict between government and resistance

Forces. But there are also those displaced by demolition efforts. We have a very nice law called UDHA, an enabling act from the Philippine Constitution that says....."when you're going to transfer the urban poor dwellers to the different place, do it humanely, think and consider their human rights and make sure they've got a nice place in the resettled area before you transfer them...."

Unfortunately officials who are authorized to do this, forget all about this enabling law and more often than not demolition involves conflict, violence, displacement of people. The urban poor dwellers are mentioned here and in every town and city nowadays. Imagine the congestion that comes out of our major urban centers, so that one of the most acute problems is housing in the highly urban areas.

Another source of internal displacement would be the workers. I recently addressed a congress of workers where I was told about the problems of displacements precisely because of contractual arrangements, and the bankruptcy of a lot of our local firms because of the economic situation. Evidently we are far from recovered. The displacement of workers going on right now from the factory areas to displacement of the urban poor in the shanties or the urban center – these are as important as the displacement taking place in the countryside because of the internal conflict against the government.

What the Committee on Human Rights does is to accept whatever problems there are and we try to investigate as much as possible in collaboration with the Commission on Human Rights. Thanks for the people who are advocates of human rights. Work for internally displaced peoples does not stop with relief operations. What happens is that we have what we call rebel returnees, those who finally get out from the mainstream of armed resistance and they try to pick out a living. Members of the House of Representatives are working out cooperatives with clusters and clusters of rebel returnees. This is another step of the ongoing effort to help displaced persons for nation-building and promotion of their own democratic well-being.

Whatever concrete results there are from here, we could get a report so that in our own modest and humble way, in the Committee of Civil, Political Human Rights, we would be able to collaborate with you and give whatever support for the ongoing effort you are doing.

Mr. JOAR STRAND
Second Secretary, Royal Norwegian Embassy

It is an honor for me on behalf of the Royal Norwegian Embassy to be invited to the opening ceremony of this training seminar on "UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement"

I have been asked to give some thoughts on global trends in human rights work as well as a brief presentation on some of the aspects of the Norwegian Government Human Rights policy.

The idea that each individual human being has certain fundamental rights was not born in the second millenium. The dream of freedom from violence, bondage and slavery is as old as mankind itself. But it is during the second millennium that the idea has been transformed from a dream into

a contract between the ruler and the ruled, between the organs of the state and the individual human being. And in the last half of this century, the notion of universal human rights has grown from ideas into real commitment.

In the Charter of the United Nations, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is not just an objective in its own right. It is a key to progress. We often underestimate the indispensable contribution, fulfillment of this objective can make towards achieving the other goals of the United Nations. Respect for human rights contributes to building peace and advancing human development for the benefit of all. Because promoting human rights is a "win-win" situation.

At this point in human history, we have a real opportunity to use the universality of human rights as a spur to concerted action. Today's spirit of partnership, dialogue and open doors has replaced decades of bipolarity, walls and doorkeepers. We have a universal platform of values, a common ground, a new window of opportunity. This means that we can now talk of the globalization of accountability - our key to progress for human development.

We can - and we should - cooperate in the family of nations on the common understanding that the human rights debate is no longer only about civil and political rights. And human development is no longer only about economic growth. We must give the economic, social and cultural rights their rightful place in the human rights machinery and in practice. Human rights challenges of today, civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights, are mutually reinforcing. We need to act on this understanding. This, again, is a matter of global accountability.

The United Nations has defined development as the process of expanding people's choices. Expanding people's choices means respecting people's rights. All of them, every single one of them. This is what human development is all about.

We need to recognize our responsibility to assist each other in fulfilling our obligation to implement human rights. By committing ourselves to all human rights in our development efforts, we have a better chance of succeeding. This will be the commitment Norway brings to the table in addressing such important issues as the right to development. As a donor, Norway can give sources, but cannot give rights. As a partner in development, Norway can offer the means, but cannot provide the will. We can share our knowledge and experience, but the wisdom to act -- the ethics of politics -- comes from within.

Human rights are universal. Today's global, interdependent societies set every human rights violation on the agenda. This is a welcome development. The international community has a legitimate say in every human rights situation. When addressing human rights issues we must never lose sight of our main objective: to protect the inherent rights and fundamental freedoms of women, men and children.

Norway is engaged in a multi-faceted human rights dialogue with several countries. Such dialogues have a political dimension, they focus squarely on human rights. They provide opportunities for those who are accountable, to exchange views and experiences. They are never just talk and theory. They are followed up by practical engagement in the field. China, Cuba and Turkey are examples of countries where Norway are currently engaged in meaningful, bilateral dialogues.

Norway values these dialogues. Because they are active, open and frank. Because they are never one-way communication, but involve discussion, listening, exchange of ideas and constructive criticism. Because they always address real and serious issues, including individual cases. Because they open up cooperation between NGO's, academic institutions, media and other civil society partners. And dialogues do never mean that we condone our partners' human rights record.

Engaging in a bilateral human rights dialogue is one of several ways of addressing human rights concerns. Thus, dialogue should not preclude pursuing other avenues. There is no inherent contradiction between monitoring and cooperation, between criticism and discussion. One example is our membership of the United Nations Human Rights Commission and our intention to make active use of each opportunity to speak our mind. This means addressing the human rights situation in a number of states. Our objective remains the same: the fulfillment, safeguarding and defense of human rights for our fellow human beings.

Children are the human rights defenders of tomorrow. They are the key to progress. Yet we see countless horrific photos, reports and statistics of children exploited in factories, brothels and armies. Norway is stepping up support for various initiatives to combat child labor and the demobilization of child soldiers in conflict areas. Education has the highest priority in our development assistance.

Ethnic bias and racism pose grave challenges to every nation. We have legal standards that must be implemented to halt racist action. The challenge of racism, however, also concerns people's mindsets, their attitudes. The World Conference on Racism to be held in 2001 is an opportunity to address all aspects of this challenge.

Religion is often describes as a source of racial prejudice, the germ of conflict. Although this judgment is often misplaced, it points to the fact that religion or belief can also be a powerful force for the resolution of conflict. A conference was held in Oslo, Norway, last summer at which many religious communities gathered in order to draw attention to the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. The participants of this seminar decided to build a coalition to promote respect for religion and belief.

Let me conclude by once again underlining that globality means greater interdependency at all levels between states, nations, cultures and individual human beings. Interdependency requires mutual listening and learning. It generates more chances for speaking out. Human rights are expressions of human worth, and they know no geographical borders. We have a universal platform of values that should lead to the globalization of accountability. We have a moral obligation to care, and this is our key to progress.

Thank you for your attention and all the best to the seminar organizers and participants.

ATTY. RENE SARMIENTO

Vice-chair, ECDFC

There are two aspects of human rights, the prophetic human rights that persists, demands and urges, and the bureaucratic and administrative human rights that counsels, suggests and discusses. We are of that prophetic approach. We persist. We demand. We urge.

Recently a Philippine mission bid that government personnel should not attend our training-seminar because this could be a meeting of anti-government forces. An examination of this conference would show that not only are we not anti-government. We even have government participants.

Mr. MARC VINCENT

Training consultant, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

The workshop provides the institutional and legal framework of internal displacement. Governments have the primary duty to respond to the internally displaced, although they might be unwilling or unable to respond in certain cases. Legally, internally displaced persons already have rights as human beings, and as civilians in situations of armed conflict.

There is no single international body that monitors the internally displaced, but an inter-agency standing committee has been organized together with working groups which meet regularly to discuss at the international level and determine international response. The standing committee includes several NGOs and the ICRC. At the local level, governments should primarily respond.

Although IDPs have a significant set of rights, and therefore significant protection, gaps and gray areas exist. Further internal displacement is not static, but a situation with phases, such as pre-displacement, displacement and after displacement..

Since its introduction in 1998, the Guiding Principles have gained international credibility and reputation. The UNHCR has since recognized that protection of IDPs should be strengthened by identifying, reaffirming, and consolidating the specific rights for the protection of IDPs. The UNHCR has welcomed the use of the Guiding Principles in discussions with government and NGOs. The UNHCR has encouraged the dissemination of the principles, and NGOs have applied them throughout the world, he said.

The Guiding Principles are the first articulation of the rights of the internally-displaced and identify the obligation of states and other authorities, proving them guidance as well as to NGOs and groups of people working with IDPs.

There are about 20 to 25 million internally displaced persons around the world, half of whom are in Africa. Asia, including the Indian subcontinent, has about 3 million people displaced as a result of internal conflict. If natural disasters and development-induced displacements were added, there would have ten times more, or about 25-30 million of internally displaced in Asia alone.

The Guiding Principles serve not an operational role, but the role of a catalyst raising awareness of internal displacement. The sheer magnitude of the problem has prevented a single agency from being able to take responsibility over the problem. The inter-agency standing committee now consists of the UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, WHO, FAO, ICRC - the major UN organizations, and the two representing as the NGOs namely, Inter-Action and International Council for Voluntary Agencies.

The Guiding Principles puts together in a single instrument all existing legal framework for IDPs and addresses the gaps. They articulate the rights of the internally displaced, and cover all phases of displacement. They should guide state and non-state agents. Although the document is not binding, it is based on binding instruments.

The training would introduce the Guiding Principles and help put them in Philippine context. Participants should try to apply their experience in validating the principles, and then make appropriate recommendations.

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