

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Globalization and Marginalized Groups: Finding Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Heavy Nala Estriani

*Department of International Relations, Faculty
of Law and Social Political Sciences
Universitas Mataram*
heavynestriani@unram.ac.id

Hasbi Asyidiqi

*Department of International Relations, Faculty
of Law and Social Political Sciences
Universitas Mataram*
hasbiasyidiqi@unram.ac.id

Nurul Qomaria

*Department of International Relations, Faculty
of Social Political Sciences
Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang*
nurullqomariaa28@gmail.com

Abstract

Globalization does not automatically align with equitable growth and development. Its progress has often been exclusionary, as reflected in the growing number of marginalized groups overlooked by global development dynamics. Among these groups, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) remain particularly neglected, receiving limited support and attention from the international community. This causes IDPs to experience more social vulnerability, exclusion, and deprivation in various sectors. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has one of the largest IDP populations worldwide. Conflict and violence, and frequent natural disasters, have become the main reasons for displacement. This paper aims to discuss the most feasible durable solution to be implemented in handling prolonged displacement in the DRC. Using qualitative methods, this paper used the

concept of Internally Displaced Persons and also the concept of Durable Solutions in addressing these matters.

Keywords: *Globalization, Marginalized Group, Internally Displaced Persons, Durable Solutions*

I. Introduction

The development of globalization also contributes to increasing the growth of the human development index. However, these developments are not inclusive. One in three people worldwide is recorded to be in low growth. They are a marginalized group that generally experiences economic, social, and political deprivation. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are one of these marginalized groups. There are 75.9 million IDPs worldwide as of the end of 2023. 68.3 million are IDPs due to conflict and violence, while natural disasters cause another 7.7. Interestingly, out of a total of 6.9 new IDPs in 2023, one million of them are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (IDMC, 2023).

The issue of IDPs as a marginalized group is increasingly interesting because although the number of IDPs is twice as large as the number of refugees and has a global scale, the issue of IDPs has received less attention from the international community. This situation increasingly hinders their ability to participate in and keep pace with the ongoing developments of globalization—particularly because globalization itself has yet to become inclusive or favorable toward marginalized groups, especially internally displaced persons (IDPs).

This paper then questions how globalisation affects the dynamics of the development of marginalised groups,



especially IDPs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This paper also examines the most feasible durable solutions to handling prolonged displacement in the DRCs. This paper argued that the development of globalisation has not been able to involve marginalised groups, such as IDPs in the DRC, in the dynamics of economic, political, and social development in their countries. Therefore, in order to reduce the extended displacement, long-term measures including repatriation, resettlement, and local integration are essential.

II. Methods

This paper employed qualitative methods to explore the lived experiences and challenges faced by individuals categorized as internally displaced persons (IDPs) as part of marginalized groups. While not all marginalized groups are IDPs, IDPs often experience marginalization due to their displacement status. IDPs are therefore viewed as a particularly vulnerable subgroup among larger underprivileged populations, particularly in light of globalization, which reinforces and intensifies structural inequality. By applying the concept of internal displacement, marginalization and the durable solutions, the study aims to understand how durable solutions can be a feasible solution in handling protracted displacement and how the international community can accommodate these matters.

III. Theoretical Framework

a. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Guiding Principles on Internally Displaced defined as:

“Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obligated to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border” (OCHA, 1998, p. 1).

United Nations Human Rights Commission Includes internally displaced persons as one of the lists of marginalized groups that suffer from deprivation of basic rights in many ways. (OHCHR, 2014). In this case, IDPs are different from the definition of refugees. This difference lies in the existence of IDPs who are still residing within the country where they live. Despite being included in marginalized groups, the position of IDPs is in some ways more difficult than that of refugees. IDPs do not receive as much attention as refugees. Very little information and documentation has been obtained regarding IDPs. Although UNHCR includes IDPs in its agenda, UNHCR's focus is more on refugees, and there is no UN agency specifically addressing the issue of IDPs (Seshadri, 2008). Marginalized groups are generally forgotten from the development agenda in the domestic and global scope. According to UNDP, although



the pattern of human development has increased from 1990 to 2015, one in three people worldwide is at a low level of human development. This further increases the level of vulnerability, widens the gap, and makes it difficult for marginalized groups to catch up as the world progresses (UNDP, 2017).

Francis M Daeng, who served as the first Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced, explained that IDPs have become a global crisis, with half of the total IDPs in the world being in Africa (Deng, 2001, p. 142). Attention to IDPs began to emerge in the 1990s, precisely when some observers of IDPs proposed establishing a set of rules that apply to handling IDPs. This was realized by completing the Guiding Principles on Internally Displaced in 1998. Although it is not legal and binding, the rule can be used as a reference in dealing with IDPs worldwide. Similarly, with the help of the UN, the Norwegian Refugee Council established an Internal Displacement Monitoring Center that comprehensively processes data related to IDPs (Seshadri, 2008, p. 38).

b. Durable Solutions

UNHCR has introduced the concept of a durable solution in response to the prolonged displacement of refugees and internally displaced people. The idea, introduced in the guiding principles of internal displacement 2004 (UNHCR, 2004), specifically states that internally displaced persons (IDPs) have the right to return voluntarily, in safety and dignity, to their place of origin, or to choose to settle elsewhere within the country. Second, the state bears the primary responsibility to assist IDPs in the processes of

return, reintegration, or local resettlement, and to ensure safe and adequate living conditions. Lastly, the state must facilitate the participation of IDPs in decision-making processes that affect their future, including in choosing durable solutions.

In various displacement situations, durable solutions are indeed regarded as long-term responses. There is no specific hierarchy in implementing durable solutions; rather, governments, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations can adopt the most feasible solution at a given time (IDMC, 2014). Suppose resettlement and integration are deemed the most feasible options. In that case, the relevant stakeholders—particularly the UN and other international organizations—must ensure that the resettlement and integration processes are carried out effectively to assist displaced persons in relocating and starting over in the place of their choosing.

IV. Findings and Discussions

a. Internally Displaced Persons and Social Exclusion

The development of globalization has also facilitated the development of intra-state conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which has subsequently had an impact on the increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The DRC is currently listed as the country with the most significant number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in 2024, with more than 900,000 additional IDPs. Overall, the total number of IDPs in the DRC reached 6,800,000



people by the end of 2024 (UNHCR, 2024). This number covers more than 55 percent of the total population of the DRC. IDPs are generally spread across several regions in the Eastern DRC, where escalating communal conflicts are rampant, such as North Kivu, South Kivu, Katanga, Orientale, and Maniema (White, 2014, p. 5).

IDPs in the DRC generally leave their homes due to instability caused by communal conflicts. However, a humanitarian crisis will happen without any serious policy to deal with it (Rushing and Montandon, 2017). As in the DRC, prolonged conflicts have impacted the scarcity of staple foods caused by crop failures. This is due to the absence of human resources in conflict-affected agricultural sectors. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, as many as 7,7 people in the DRC experience food insecurity (FAO, 2017). Other humanitarian crises caused by the increase in IDPs include health problems such as cholera outbreaks, lack of education, and unsafe infrastructure of refugee shelters inhabited by IDPs.

As a country with one of the most significant humanitarian crises in the world, the United Nations stated that the condition of the humanitarian crisis in the DRC has entered level three, the highest level in humanitarian crisis issues. (United Nation, 2017). Reaching level three on the scale of the humanitarian crisis means that the problem of IDPs in the DRC can be equated with the humanitarian crises in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. IDPs in the DRC are described as having a vicious cycle of displacement because they generally experience displacement more than two or three times. IDPs in the DRC are categorised as

marginalised groups with problems such as homelessness, lack of food supply, disease outbreaks, sanitation problems, maternal and infant mortality rates, and so on. The number of IDPs in the DRC contributes to making the DRC one of the least developed countries by ranking 171 out of 193 countries and territories in the 2023 Human Development Index (UNDP, 2023).

The communal conflict that occurred in the DRC had an impact on the increase in the number of IDPs in the country. With the number covering 55 percent of the total population, this problem should not only be a domestic problem but also an international one. However, the issue of IDPs in DRC has not received much attention from the global community. As a marginalized group, it is clear that the concept of marginalization, in this case, is not related to the quantity or number of IDPs in the DRC. Marginal, in this case, is when the IDPs experience deprivation in various aspects and experience social exclusion. In this case, the vulnerability faced by IDPs is a factor that affects IDPs as a marginalized group.

In line with Haan, that vulnerability is the cause of an individual experiencing social exclusion. In the case of the DRC, the condition of insecurity as part of the vulnerability is a factor that increases the number of IDPs in the country. As a marginalized group, IDPs in the DRC are different from IDPs in other countries. They not only live in refugee camps but also live in a community in another area with a safer situation. However, this is sometimes unsafe because disputes with host families over a lack of food, water, and sanitation are more likely to occur, making them vulnerable



to new conflicts. This has an impact on IDPs, who also have to move from one place to another when the conditions at the location are no longer safe, and the availability of foodstuffs has run low (HRW, 2010, p. 35). Although internally displaced persons have the same rights as the rest of society, the reality is that they face much discrimination. The stigma of 'displaced' in social status indicates that they differ from the common society. Moreover, the political and economic conditions of the DRC are far from stable, making IDPs in the country further discriminated against in the global order. The condition of the IDPs is exacerbated by the role of the DRC government in not focusing its attention on the group. This is because the government is in a fragile condition with an unstable political situation. Poor economic conditions also complicate this (Veiga, 2011). The low economic growth cannot be separated from the loss of the role of 55 percent of the population, who have lost their right to contribute to increasing the country's economic growth.

In this regard, the social deprivation IDPs face in the DRC is related to De Haan's explanation (De Haan, 2000, p. 26) The deprivation of these basic rights cannot be separated from social exclusion, a multidimensional concept. Not only do IDPs lose their homes, jobs, property, and so on, but they also experience deprivation of various things at one time. This causes them to experience deprivation and exclusion in the economic, political, and social dimensions.

b. Seeking for Durable Solution?

Although the concept of durable solutions applies to various forms of forced migration—such as refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs)—global policies tend to focus more heavily on the durable solution for refugees. In contrast, IDPs often receive significantly less attention (Cakaj, 2017). Addressing the development and protection of IDPs has proven to be a particularly challenging issue. In many cases, resolving the situation of IDPs is even more complex than addressing refugee crises. This is largely because IDPs remain within the borders of their own country and are therefore legally under the responsibility of their national government. Consequently, international intervention in IDP situations is often constrained by concerns over national sovereignty, making external involvement more sensitive and limited in scope.

However, this issue should not serve as an obstacle for the international community to begin prioritizing policies related to IDPs, particularly when the situation reaches the level of a category three humanitarian crisis. For a solution at the top level, the UN, in this case, needs to pressure the DRC government to control the root of the existing problems, especially prolonged communal conflicts. In terms of IDP management, the role of the international community remains crucial. This involvement must go beyond short-term assistance and extend to long-term solutions. A long-term solution, such as identifying and supporting prospects for durable solutions, is urgently needed to ensure the protection and reintegration of IDPs in the DRC.



Related to the durable solutions, voluntary repatriation must not be the best option for the IDPs. As is known, once IDPs leave their place of residence, it will take them a long time to return to their place of origin. The resurgence of violence in their place of origin, along with the presence of active combatants in the area, are key reasons why many people are reluctant to return to their hometowns. Thus, IDPs generally stay in refugee camps annually or move from one camp to another. So, they choose whether to stay in the refugee camps, join the local community, or strengthen their community to develop their potential and ability to continue living like other normal people.

Second, international aid, especially from agencies like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), is closely linked to the resettlement of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). For instance, in 2023, IOM helped thousands of displaced households living in places like Mukuku, Kalenge, Cinquantenaire, Kalonda, and Kalunga gain access to long-term solutions. Many of these households had no safe and sustainable alternatives and were in imminent danger of being evicted. In response, IOM supported their voluntary relocation to safer and more stable areas by offering financial help as well as transportation.

In responding to the problem of IDPs, the UN facilitates assistance through several agencies such as UNHCR, UNOCHA, and so on. The UN also identifies the rules that must be carried out by the countries involved in

handling IDP cases based on guiding principles related to IDPs (Alobo and Obaji, 2016, p. 26). However, Lanjow in Haynes (Haynes, 20, p. 36) Criticized the handling of IDPs through external assistance, which has been more focused on short-term handling through the provision of cash assistance and limited food and medicine supplies, and does not last in the long term. Short-term humanitarian assistance is certainly needed, but if we look closely at the duration of the settlement of IDPs in refugee camps, handling by relying heavily on humanitarian assistance alone is not enough. In this regard, the United Nations, through its agencies, must emphasize long-term solutions such as local integration to push the self-sufficient of people in displacement (O'Brien, 2017). Self-sufficiency is important because it is certainly difficult for IDPs to survive in the local community without having the ability and capability to sustain their lives. Remaining in refugee camps for years without access to employment or skill development is not a sustainable solution, as it further marginalizes IDPs from the dynamics of global development and economic growth.

Another significant international effort in addressing the issue of IDPs is the establishment of the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 as a response to the increasing number of global humanitarian issues, specifically related to refugees and IDPs. The summit, which produced the paperwork called "Agenda for Humanity," heavily emphasized five core responsibilities that must be upheld in solving the prolonged displacement. The core commitment 2 specifically emphasizes major global commitment under the slogan "Leaving No One Behind," reinforcing the need



for inclusive humanitarian responses and long-term solutions by 2030.

“Commit to promote and support safe, dignified and durable solutions for internally displaced persons and refugees. Commit to doing so coherently and measurably through international, regional and national programs and by taking the necessary policy, legal and financial steps required for the specific contexts and in order to work towards a target of 50 percent reduction in internal displacement by 2030” (Agenda for Humanity, 2016, p. 7).

The document offers long-term, durable solutions to reduce the number of marginalised groups of IDPs, by finding political solutions to solve the root of the problem, developing legislation and government policies to integrate marginalized groups in the national development agenda, and including them in education programs, labor absorption, and national development plans. A notable point here is to disenchant the international communities that the sole problem of the IDPs is only by providing them with short-term assistance. In fact, if strong self-sufficiency and widespread independence are emphasized, IDPs can become valuable contributors to the economy. As mentioned in the fifth point of the document agenda:

“Ensure that humanitarian and development actors, local authorities, and private sector enterprises work collectively, across institutional divides and mandates and, in multi-year frameworks, to end aid dependency and promote the self-reliance of internally displaced populations” (Agenda for Humanity, 2016, p. 7).

The commitments contained in the Agenda for Humanity seem to show the seriousness of the international community in reducing the number of IDPs in the world. But the problem goes beyond just whether or not there is a basic framework in place to deal with the IDP issue. It also involves making sure that these documents are not only legitimate in theory but are also successfully applied in real-world situations. To make sure that the catchphrase “leaving no one behind” is not just a pipe dream, it is still very difficult to translate established rhetoric into tangible action.

V. Conclusion

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are one of the parts of marginalized groups that receive less attention. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is the country with the largest number of IDPs in the world. IDPs in the country have also been included in the third level of international humanitarian crisis. However, the handling of IDPs has not received great attention, especially from the international community. The social exclusivity received by IDPs in the DRC has made the group increasingly face deprivation in various sectors. Thus, durable solutions such as repatriation, resettlement and local integration are crucial to cut the prolonged displacement.

However, the main challenge is not only the presence of policy frameworks, but also, it relies on the implementation. Without real commitment and collaboration among actors and stakeholders, the policy documents will only be discourses without practical meaning. Therefore, realizing durable solutions is not only about moving IDPs from



one place to another, but about restoring their dignity, rights, and life opportunities so that they can contribute more to social and economic development.

Works Cited

- Agenda for Humanity, 2016. Agenda for Humanity.
- Alobo, E., Obaji, S., 2016. Internal Displacement in Nigeria and the Case for Human Rights Protection of Displaced Persons. *J. Law Policy Glob.* 51, 26–33.
- Cakaj, L., 2017. A New Year resolution: making 2017 a year for IDPs [WWW Document]. *Intern. Displac. Monit. Cent.* URL <http://www.internal-displacement.org/library/expert-opinion/2017/a-new-year-resolution-making-2017-a-year-for-idps> (accessed 12.14.17).
- De Haan, A., 2000. Social Exclusion: Enriching the Understanding of Deprivation (PDF Download Available) [WWW Document]. ResearchGate. URL https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237389092_Social_Exclusion_Enriching_the_Understanding_of_Deprivation (accessed 10.31.17).
- Deng, F.M., 2001. The Global Challenge of Internal Displacement. *Wash. Univ. J. Law Policy* 5, 141–155.
- Džuverović, N., Vidojević, J., 2018. Peacebuilding or 'Peacedelaying': Social Exclusion of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Post-war Serbia. *Ethnopolitics* 17, 55–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2017.1340476>
- FAO, 2017. News Article: Food insecurity soars in conflict-ridden Democratic Republic of Congo [WWW Document]. Food Agric. Organ. FAO. URL <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1028934/icode/> (accessed 12.14.17).
- Haan, A., 2000. Social Exclusion: Enriching the Understanding of Deprivation 2, 22–40.
- Haynes, S., 20. DISPLACED PEOPLE AND THE CHALLENGE TO DEVELOPMENT [WWW Document]. ResearchGate. URL https://www.researchgate.net/publication/252699137_DISPLACED_PEOPLE_AND_THE_CHALLENGE_TO_DEVELOPMENT (accessed 10.31.17).
- HRW, 2010. Always on the Run [WWW Document]. Hum. Rights Watch. URL <https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/09/14/always-run/vicious-cycle-displacement-eastern-congo> (accessed 10.31.17).
- IDMC, 2017. IDMC » Democratic Republic of the Congo [WWW Document]. *Intern. Displac. Monit. Cent.* URL <http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/drc> (accessed 10.31.17).
- Koser, K., 2001. IDPs, refugees, and violent extremism: From victims to vectors of change. Brookings. URL <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2015/02/20/idps-refugees-and-violent-extremism-from-victims-to-vectors-of-change/> (accessed 12.14.17).
- O'Brien, S., 2017. Displaced but not forgotten: momentum is building to ensure internally displaced are not 'left behind' [WWW Document]. *Intern. Displac. Monit. Cent.* URL <http://www.internal-displacement.org/library/expert-opinion/2017/displaced-but-not-forgotten> (accessed 12.14.17).
- OCHA, 1998. Guiding Principle on Internally Displaced.
- OHCHR, 2014. Marginalized groups: UN human rights expert calls for an end to relegation [WWW Document]. U. N. Hum. Rights Off. High Comm. URL <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents>



- /Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14690&LangID=E (accessed 10.30.17).
- Rushing, E., Montandon, R., 2017. Raising the alarm in DRC [WWW Document]. Intern. Displac. Monit. Cent. URL <http://www.internal-displacement.org/library/expert-opinion/2017/raising-the-alarm-in-drc> (accessed 12.14.17).
- Sen, A., 2000. Social Exclusion: Concept, Application, and Scrunity, Social development papers. Manila, Philippines.
- Seshadri, K.R., 2008. When Home Is a Camp: Global Sovereignty, Biopolitics, and Internally Displaced Persons. Soc. Text 26, 29–58. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-2007-018>
- UNDP, 2023. Human Development Index, Human Development Reports. United Nations.
- UNDP, 2017. World's most marginalized still left behind by global development priorities: UNDP report [WWW Document]. U. N. Dev. Programme. URL <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2017/03/21/world-s-most-marginalized-still-left-behind.html> (accessed 10.30.17).
- UNHCR, 2024. Democratic Republic of the Congo Annual Results Report 2024 [WWW Document]. UNHCR. URL <https://www.unhcr.org/media/democratic-republic-congo-annual-results-report-2024> (accessed 6.23.25).
- UNHCR, 2004. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement [WWW Document]. UNHCR. URL <https://www.unhcr.org/media/guiding-principles-internal-displacement> (accessed 6.29.25).
- United Nation, 2017. Widespread militia activity, political unrest drive millions from their homes in DR Congo, UN warns [WWW Document]. UN News Serv. Sect. URL [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=57949#](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=57949#.WgFevrVx3IW) (accessed 11.7.17).
- Veiga, A.A., Francisco José, 2011. How Does Political Instability Affect Economic Growth? [WWW Document]. IMF. URL <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2016/12/31/How-Does-Political-Instability-Affect-Economic-Growth-24570> (accessed 6.23.25).
- White, S., 2014. Now What? The International Response to Internal Displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Brookings. URL <https://www.brookings.edu/research/now-what-the-international-response-to-internal-displacement-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/> (accessed 10.31.17).

