

SUPPORT TO THE GOVERNMENTS

Through these projects IOM gained expertise and built capacities aimed at supporting all governments (or central authorities in transition societies) in their effort to ensure the participation to the election process to their displaced populations.

In addition, IOM works with a number of inter-governmental and non-governmental agencies in the fields of migration services, human rights, humanitarian assistance and democracy and governance .

An international colloquium in Geneva in June 2006 provided a platform for governments, NGOs, and international organizations to discuss a range of migration topics related to the political rights of displaced persons and to extend and strengthen the network of involved organizations.

IOM also works closely with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division, the Representative of the Secretary General on the Human Rights of IDPs, and the Brookings/Berne Project on Internal Displacement to further promote and mainstream the issue.



THE PEP AND PRESS PROGRAMMING INCLUDED SEVERAL COMPONENTS:

Under **PEP** and **PRESS**, IOM produced a number of studies, tools and resources, including:

- A three-day training program for national legislators, election management bodies, and other interested stakeholders entitled: "Enfranchising Displaced Electorates: A Course on Policy and Best Practice;"
- Studies and analyses of best practices and the human rights norms associated with enfranchising displaced electorates;
- Country-specific "Action Plans" assessing the situation of displaced electorates and making recommendations to international and national stakeholders aimed at ensuring displaced population's participation in elections.
- Civil Society Strengthening for self-advocacy and representation aimed at strengthen civil society organizations in target communities to provide advocacy and monitoring activities during elections.
- International conferences and publications aimed *inter alia* at generating standards to ensure that electoral participation meet all criteria for genuine elections.
- A web-based information resource on political processes and forced migration that houses project outputs, country information, and an archive of resources and materials from around the globe.

Website link: [http:// www.iom.int/pressproject](http://www.iom.int/pressproject)

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IOM - SUPPORT TO ENFRANCHISEMENT OF IDPS

SUPPORT TO THE ENFRANCHISEMENT OF DISPLACED POPULATION

Elections and access to political rights, through the establishment of transparent and inclusive electoral processes are often a key component of long-term peace building and vital to the creation of sustainable democratic structures.

In those cases where populations are displaced beyond territorial limits and without opportunities to register and vote, there is a need to warrant a mechanism for their enfranchisement. In fact if these groups are left outside of the electoral processes, the legitimacy of these processes is compromised.

IOM's expertise in forced-migrant voting stems from over ten years of direct experience in organizing external voting programs for refugees and IDPs.

Since 1996, the organization has provided transparent voter registration and balloting services to over two million refugees and displaced persons in elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1996, 1997, 1998), East Timor (1999), Kosovo (2000, 2001), Afghanistan (2004), and Iraq (2005).

IOM now maintains an extensive roster of absentee voting operations staff, proprietary information technology platforms, and the ability to organize voting services on a global scale on very short notice. Since 2002, IOM has implemented two technical cooperation projects with an overall emphasis on strengthening the voting rights of displaced persons, including refugees, asylum seekers, or internally displaced persons (IDPs). In a first phase, through funding from USAID, the "**Participatory Elections Project (PEP)**" ran from 2002 until 2004. IOM identified obligations, standards, and best practices in order to serve to the governmental effort toward the enfranchisement of displaced populations in post-conflict elections.

In a second phase, the "**Political Rights and Enfranchisement System Strengthening Project (PRESS)**" ran from 2004 until 2007. PRESS further developed international, regional, and national capacity to enfranchise migrants and assist Election Management Bodies, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations in the election process.

These projects have supplemented and built upon other IOM country-specific Out-of-Country Voting projects, where IOM served as an implementing partner for external voter registration and balloting programs on behalf of election organizers in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, East Timor, and Bosnia and Herzegovina .



COLOMBIA: Internally Displaced Family from Huila. © IOM 2005



SRI LANKA: Victims of the Tsunami. © IOM 2005



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

COUNTRY SPECIFIC ACTION PLANS

ANGOLA

Angola was selected because of the convergence of positive developments in the peace process leading to elections, the scale of displacement, and the larger goal of promoting electoral inclusion as a tool for reconciliation.

Though provisions were made to guarantee the rights for all Angolans to participate in the political process, major logistical & political obstacles confronted the participation of refugees/internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the forthcoming elections. The Plan suggests four phases of intervention :

- **Consensus Phase:** to identify the constitutional & electoral law amendments required for assuring refugee/IDP enfranchisement; and to create a widely shared political view that these communities should have such political rights.
- **Foundation Phase:** delimited to anchor the political consensus in articles, statutes, agreements, memoranda of understanding, political party pacts, & platforms; & to establish the constellation of groups required for implementation.
- **Planning Phase:** the National Electoral Commission (CNE), Justice Ministry, Foreign Ministry, & other Angolan government agencies will join the international community to devise a joint/integrated operational plan to accomplish registration/census, identity document distribution, & voting for the refugee/IDP communities.
- **Operational Phase:** conduct of registration/census, campaigning, balloting & certification of results.

CAUCASUS

This Action Plan assessment combined visits to **Azerbaijan and Georgia**. IDPs in Georgia and Azerbaijan have been displaced for different reasons and reside in differing circumstances.

Although each case must be approached independently, there are common regional security issues at stake and IDPs remain a visible reminder of the protracted and unresolved territorial disputes in the Caucasus. In neither case had the countries involved possessed any recent history or experience with IDPs.

The governmental, societal, and political response to this emergency required the creation of a new system of laws, resources, and institutions to provide care and services.

In both cases, political parties were reluctant to campaign as advocates for improved living conditions for IDPs.

- In Georgia, IDPs do not appear to be political captives of any party or government coalition.
- In Azerbaijan, the overall political strength of New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) throughout the country will probably be reflected in the voting by IDPs.

LIBERIA

This Action Plan identifies issues surrounding the participation of refugees and IDPs in the 2005 Liberian elections.

The Plan is organized in four parts.

- **Part 1** provides basic background information on the Liberian Peace process, the imperatives for refugee and IDP inclusion in elections, and a discussion of Liberia's last elections, in which refugees were almost entirely excluded from the elections process.
- **Part 2** provides an overview of the nature and scale of displacement in Liberia, including an overview of various refugee populations in the neighboring states.
- **Part 3** discusses the key obstacles to refugee and IDP participation.
- **Part 4** suggests a number of interventions and donor sponsored programs to ensure that Liberia's displaced are provided equitable access to the election process.

The proposals are based on field visits and consultations with refugees, IDPs, NGOs, UN Agencies, and the Liberian government, conducted during a two-week assessment visit to Liberia and Guinea during March, 2004.

- **Angola Elections:** Promoting Reconciliation through Participation by Conflict-Forced Migrants (November 2002)
- Electoral Displacement in the **Caucasus** (July 2003) - Georgia and Azerbaijan
- **Liberia:** Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in the October 2005 Elections (May 2004)
- **Uganda:** Internally Displaced Persons in the 2006 National Elections (May 2005)
- **Sri Lanka:** Voting Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees, and Economic Migrants (April 2006)
- **Nepal:** Supporting the Democratic Transition through the Participation of Internally Displaced Persons and migrants in Constituent Assembly Elections (June 2006)
- Conflict, Displacement, and Elections: Action Plan for Municipal Election in **Colombia** (November 2006)

(Available at: www.iom.int/pressproject)

DISCUSSION PAPERS

- **PRESS Colloquium Proceedings.**
- **Enfranchising Conflict Forced Migrants: Issues, Standards and Best Practices** (September 2003)
- **Electoral Rights of Conflict-Forced Migrants: Review of Relevant Legal Norms and Instruments** (June 2003)
- **Case Studies on Participation of Conflict Forced Migrants in Elections** (May 2003)



COLOMBIA

The assessment mission took place in September 2006 in view of the 2007 municipal electoral process.

The municipal election cycle presented to provide IDPs with a stronger voice in governance to advocate on their own behalf.

However, to maximize effectiveness and create a critical mass of resources, a coordinated approach was recommended that integrated democracy and displacement assistance programs.

From an institutional perspective, this integration should have included international and national stakeholders from governmental and non-governmental sectors in a constellation of organizations unique to this election cycle.

UGANDA

The Action Plan reports on an assessment visit to Uganda and desk research in spring 2005 in view of the February 2006 presidential and parliamentary elections.

The purpose of the Action Plan was twofold:

- 1) **to increase awareness** and attention to the tragedy in Northern Uganda and the importance of IDP participation in the elections; and
- 2) **to make specific recommendations** to the Government of Uganda (GOU), the Ugandan Electoral Commission (UEC), donors, inter-governmental organizations, and domestic and international NGOs and civil society groups to ensure that IDP participation is conducted in a way that meets criteria for free and fair elections.

As a positive result of the Action Plan, the UEC renewed efforts in respect to voter education for IDPs and conducted specific programming to reach IDP voters after the Action Plan was produced.

SRI LANKA

The Action Plan is based on an assessment mission in August 2005 and the review of the 2005 presidential elections observer reports.

Aside from proposals to link issues of citizenship and voting rights to the peace process, the Action Plan was primarily designed **to provide an enfranchisement roadmap** for the Government of Sri Lanka, the Election Commission, civil society organizations, and donors after a comprehensive resolution to the conflict is reached.

Sri Lanka held parliamentary elections in 2004 and presidential elections in 2005. Both of these programs included impressive mechanisms designed to provide IDPs with the opportunity to vote.

Thus, with the exception of some important technical flaws and localized problems of inadequate implementation, the legal framework governing IDP voting could have served as an example of best practices for other countries with substantial numbers of IDPs.

Unfortunately, few IDPs have been able to realize their rights as a consequence of the political and security issues they confront, particularly in the contested areas of the country. Furthermore, the assessment found, that refugees and economic migrants have not been able to vote in Sri Lanka's elections.

NEPAL

An assessment of the Nepal Action Plan was conducted in May 2006, only one month after the King's direct rule ended and the restoration of parliament took place on 28 April 2006.

The Action Plan examines issues associated with displacement and migration (internal and external) in the context of the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections. The Action Plan states, in order for the elections to occur in an inclusive, free and fair manner, parties and stakeholders would need to address the following core issues :

- (1) **Transition and ceasefire;**
- (2) **Citizenship;**
- (3) **Documentation;**
- (4) **Electoral Formula; and**
- (5) **Redistricting of Administrative Boundaries and Zones.**

Furthermore, the report examines issues and options associated with absentee balloting, both inside Nepal and externally. Several initiatives to protect the voting rights of displaced Nepalese have followed from the release of the Plan, e.g. in late 2006, the Nepali International Electoral Forum conducted a national survey on IDP voting rights.