

## გაჭიანურებული კონფლიქტური სიტუაციები და მათი გავლენა ხანდაზმულ ადამიანებზე

დევისი ჯანეტ  
ოქსფორდის უნივერსიტეტი

იძულებით გადაადგილებული პირების მდგომარეობა კარგად არის განსაზღვრული, მაგრამ კვლავაც მიმდინარეობს კამათი, ჩაითვალოს თუ არა ეს პირები ჰუმანიტარული მისიის მატარებელ პირთა სპეციალურ კატეგორიაში. ჰუმანიტარული მისიის კატეგორიაში იძულებით გადაადგილებულ პირთა ფორმალური შეყვანის მიზანს არ წარმოადგენს მათთვის პრივილეგიის მინიჭება, არამედ მათი საჭიროებების დაკმაყოფილება. მე ვფიქრობ, რომ არსებობს საფუძველი შეიქმნას იძულებით გადაადგილებულ ხანდაზმულ ადამიანთა სპეციალური კატეგორიაც. ასაკოვან ადამიანთა შორის წარმოებული კვლევა გვიჩვენებს, რომ მათ სურთ არსებობდეს უფრო დაბალანსებული შეხედულება როგორც მათ მოთხოვნებთან, ასევე მათ შესაძლებლობებთან დაკავშირებით. UNHCR2000-თან (გაერთიანებული ერების უმაღლესი კომისია იძულებით გადაადგილებულ პირთათვის) ერთად ჩატარდა კვლევა დავეხმაროთ ხანდაზმულ ადამიანებს, ასაკოვანი ხალხი კატასტროფებსა და ჰუმანიტარულ კრიზისში: საუკეთესო გამოცდილებების გზამკვლევი, რომელიც გვაჩვენებს, რომ მოხუცები არ ითვლებიან დაუცველ ნაწილად სააგენტოებისა და არასამთავრობო ორგანიზაციების მხრიდან. ეს ხაზგასმით მიანიშნებს, რომ გაჭიანურებული სიტუაციების მოსაგვარებლად მნიშვნელოვანია ჰუმანიტარული ფაქტორების გარდა სხვაგვარი ჩართულობის განხორციელებაც.

## Protracted Conflict Situations and Their Impact on Elders

Davies Janette  
Oxford University

I am convinced that research can and does have impact on society and individuals. Research impacts both practices and norms, (Adelman 2008). Maybe we can remind ourselves at this conference that we are not therefore just addressing research for research's sake but endeavour to not lose sight of the human thread through all this namely the people themselves.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) plight is well documented but there is still debate as to whether they should be recognised as a special category of persons for humanitarian purposes (UNHCR 2006, p. 155). The late 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> C have seen UNHCR take on even greater responsibility for the protection of IDPs who unlike refugees have not crossed an international border (Loescher et al. 2008, p. 111). These scholars and others are discussing protracted refugee situations (PRS), longstanding and intractable – state of limbo – and sometimes recurring. What is striking is that the people concerned are spending much time in exile usually the result of several im-passes as evidenced in Georgia.

The purpose of formally identifying internally displaced persons as a category for humanitarian action is not to confer privileged status on them, but to ensure that their unique needs are addressed. Experience has shown that special attention to particular disadvantaged groups – whether refugees, IDPs, minorities or women – has enhanced their protection. Singling out the internally displaced makes it easier to call upon governments to assume responsibility for them and to press for international action on their behalf (UNHCR, 2006, p. 156). I think there is a case for making IDP elders a special group also.

IDPs have special needs. Displacement breaks up families and severs community ties. It leads to unemployment and limits access to land, education, food and shelter. The displaced are particularly vulnerable to violence (UNHCR, 2006, p.115). Research amongst older people, (Elders), shows they want a more balanced view presented of both their needs and capacities. They question the common image of them as disabled, unproductive and dependent. However, understanding of and sensitivity to the chronic problems of older people contributes to an awareness of how their difficulties become acute in emergencies as the limited support on which they have relied is damaged or destroyed. This undermines their capability to cope from their inner resources. The resilience and agency of older refugees is not always highlighted.

Isolation is significant in the creation of vulnerability. Elders' problems become complex with the destruction of families and communities, which probably includes the loss of support mechanisms that they had previously been dependent upon.

Research carried out by HelpAge International with UNHCR 2000, *Older people in disasters and humanitarian crises: Guidelines for best practice* shows that older people are not often considered among the most vulnerable by relief agencies and NGOs. Agencies priorities, assumptions and delivery systems can limit or impede older people's access to humanitarian assistance. Immediate survival in an emergency often depends on rapid access to relief. Long-term rehabilitation depends on the renewal of coping and support mechanisms.

Some older people report experience of problems in accessing relief aid at times and find themselves excluded from economic and social recovery. 'Even when agencies carry out participatory assessments of need at community level to determine relief priorities, older people's vulnerability and their potential contribution to relief delivery and rehabilitation tend to be ignored' (HelpAge, 2000). Older people have consistently asked to be seen, heard and understood, to have equal access to essential support services, to have their potential and contributions recognised, valued and supported.

Many elders feel that with help in generating an income they could manage most of the practical problems focused on by relief agencies. Experience shows that this requires changes in the way essential services are delivered and the way older people are viewed. Not that special service should be established for older people but integration of older people into mainstream services and ensuring equity of service provision throughout the displaced community.

Chronic problems of health and mobility are not seen as a priority in most emergencies, yet it is these problems that make it difficult for older people to support themselves. Limited mobility can create difficult problems for older displaced persons. Some older people are disabled by the loss of mobility aids, prostheses and spectacles during the emergency period when fleeing. Age specific issues, such as chronic health problems, mobility and psychosocial needs are specific factors that make it difficult for older people to support themselves through a crisis.

Separation from, or loss of, family members leads to isolation, bereavement, and loss of support. It is extremely difficult for them to cope with the trauma of losing homes as also scattering of community and even family ties. Consequently, many elders are leading lives of isolation.

Older people sometimes have to care for younger children or other dependants in the absence of middle-generation adults. The break down of social structures impacts on loss of family and community support and loss of respect for older people as cultural and social values break down. In extreme cases this results in abandonment. The distress and disorientation caused by sudden changes in social status are compounded by trauma and stress resulting from loss of family, home and livelihood. Recognition of the importance of integrating the memory and history of pain, loss and trauma in the process of reconciliation and renewal, and the particular role played by older people in this process.

Older people hold indispensable roles as carers, while their knowledge of traditional survival systems, appropriate technologies, and alternative medicines can be crucial to the implementation of community coping strategies in and after crises. Elder's sense of history can help safeguard communities' cultural and social identity, even in situations such as refugee centres and camps, where negative 'camp culture' can prevail.

Older women contribute in many ways as income generators, caring for children, the sick, or orphaned dependants, teaching younger people, by example of co-operative action in farming, food production and shelter construction. Older people can be aid givers as well as receivers of aid. Therefore their assistance to others means that support of Elders via healthcare or income generation activities, skills training or credit, ultimately supports their families and communities.

Little attention in the research has yet been undertaken as to how older people can be helped to fulfil valuable roles in rebuilding communities. Acknowledgment of their unique contribution should not lead to adding to their responsibilities without increase in support.

Older women are often more numerous in refugee populations, but age and gender are often stumbling blocks and may exclude them from decision-making and re-

sources. They are more likely than older men to be caring for children, with long-term responsibility for bringing children up.

Complex political emergencies are linked to issues of isolation and separation, transport and mobility, destruction of social structures, and erosion of respect and status, as well as loss of identity papers and other personal documents.

Gender and age discrimination combine with mobility limitations and physical strength to hide older people in emergencies. Older people feel they are 'not being seen' and that agencies fail to consult older people on their needs and priorities.

While appreciative of initial relief, older people are dissatisfied at short-term relief that does not address their long-term problems. They feel deeply that such aid risks dependency and does not aid sustainable community-based self-help initiatives that could avoid older people becoming more vulnerable. Despite this, older people identify families, mutual support groups and relief agencies as their most important sources of support during and after an emergency.

If invisibility, exclusion and powerlessness are common themes emerging from the experience of older people, then consultation, inclusion, and empowerment through partnership are the primary indicators for good practice.

Humanitarian literature provides understanding how displaced persons make sense of their losses. Psychological losses are must also be accounted for. Displaced persons experience grief because they have lost a sense of their future, their community, and most importantly, their home. All aspects of loss must be addressed in order for people to regain human security.

Loescher and Milner (2008) argue that in PRS the UN Peace Building Commission could provide a forum for these to be addressed. The establishment of the PBC draws together the full range of actors required to formulate and implement truly comprehensive solutions for protracted refugee situations, and therefore a unique opportunity to articulate a system-wide response. This highlights the importance of engaging more than humanitarian actors in the quest to find solutions for protracted situations. Protracted refugee situations will only be resolved through the sustained engagement of a broad range of actors from all sectors of the international community.

An illustration of the protracted situation of displaced persons in Georgia was given to me in personal discussion with a young woman who described her family situation when they became internally displaced. Parents and grandparents and their only child fled Abkhazia in 1993 and sought a haven in Batumi. They were accommodated in a hotel. The protracted nature of this situation is evident when she relates that the family lived in that accommodation for twelve years. During that time there was no hope of returning home. The grandmother felt the loss of their home and community deeply and died without realizing the hope and desire of return. All that remains of that home are the family photographs. They now live in the capital leading everyday lives. However, their photographs as illustration of their memories are ever-present reminder that they are displaced persons in a protracted situation.

References

Adelman, Howard. *Does Research on Refugees Help Refugees?* Inaugural Lecture Annual Howard Adelman lecture at York University in Toronto, 10 April 2008

HelpAge International 2000. *Older People in Disasters and Humanitarian Crises: Guidelines for best Practice*, UNHCR.

Loescher Gil, Alexander Betts and James Milner. (2008). *The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: the Politics and practice of refugee protection into the 21 Century*. Routledge.

Loescher Gil, James Milner, Edward Newman and Gary Troeller. *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications*. United Nations University Press.

UNHCR. (2006). *The State of the World's Refugees: Human Displacement in the New Millennium*. UNHCR Oxford University Press.

UN Security Council (2007). *Report of the Secretary General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, S/2007/643, 28 October, p. 2