An elderly displaced man sitting outside his home in Noelbaki camp, Kupang regency. The camp, established in 1999, was officially closed in 2005 but still hosts some 1,800 IDPs. IDMC/Frederik Kok, May 2015

BRIEFING PAPER

Forgotten displacement: why it's time to address the needs of West Timor's protracted IDPs

22 JULY 2015

Nearly all the 31,450 people currently displaced by conflict and violence in Indonesia were forced to flee their homes more than 15 years ago. The majority live in West Timor in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) and are at risk of being forgotten by the national authorities and the international community. Southeast Asia's biggest economy, over the years Indonesia has made considerable efforts to resettle the province's internally displaced persons (IDPs). Between 1999 and 2013 the government assisted by the UN and international non-governmental organisations helped some 92,000 IDPs in camps to settle elsewhere in NTT, the majority in West Timor. Today however, an estimated 22,000 people continue to live in at least four main camps without access to land, adequate housing and tenure security. Thousands of former displaced also face an uncertain future in some 80 resettlement sites across the province mainly as a result of lack of livelihood opportunities and poor access to basic services.

Complex patterns of displacement, return and settlement elsewhere

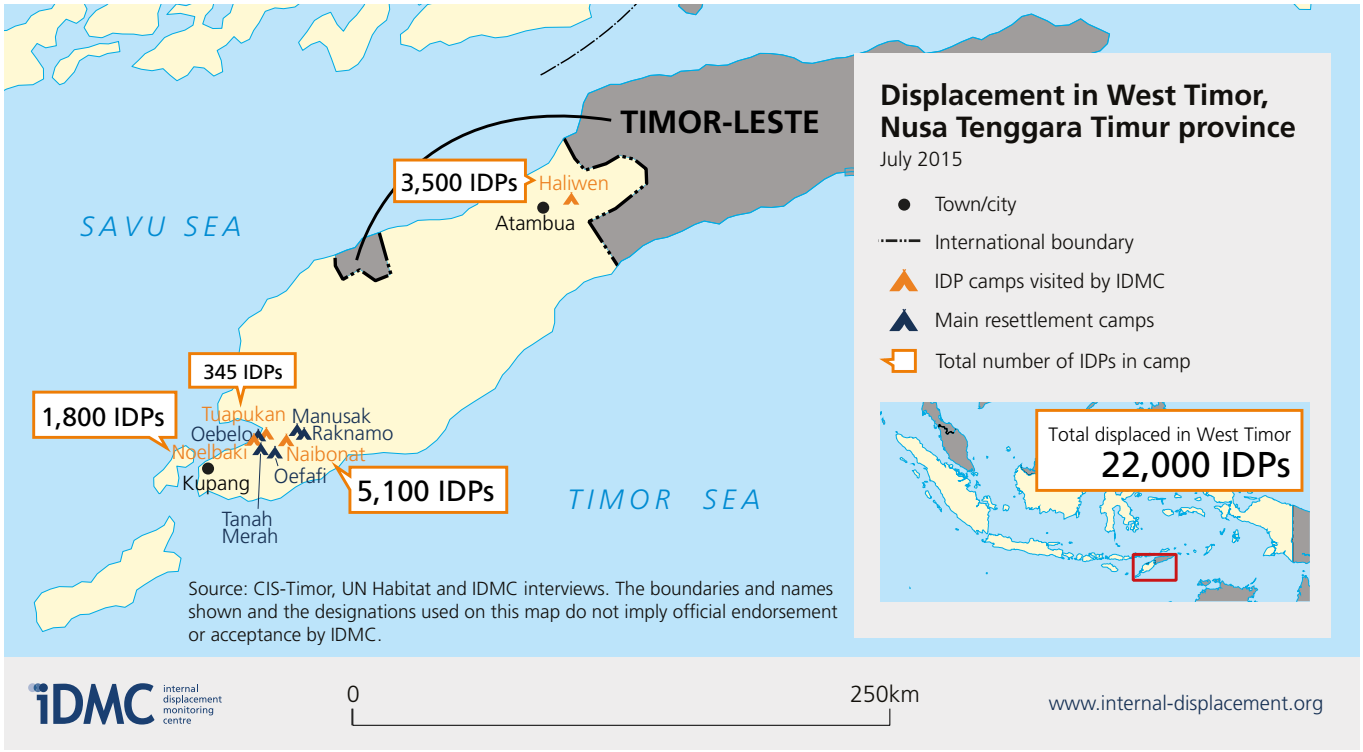
Following the 1999 UN-sponsored referendum for independence in East Timor, about 240,000 people fled violence unleashed by anti-independence militias and crossed into neighbouring West Timor (UN, 1 March 2000). In return for supporting Indonesia, many IDPs were promised safety in West Timor, homes and help to start new lives.

West Timor's protracted IDPs are part of the estimated 120,000 people who did not to return following Timor-Leste's independence in 2002 but chose to rebuild their lives in Indonesia. Nearly all IDPs at the time sought refuge in camps in the regencies of Kupang and Belu where they were provided with assistance (UNHCR, February 2004, p.1). Initially considered as IDPs – as they had merely crossed provincial boundaries – those who remained became refugees following Timor-Leste's independence. In 2003, they lost their refugee status as the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) no longer considered them to be at risk of persecution upon return (UNHCR, 30 December 2002). The government then designated the displaced as warga baru ("new residents") of Indonesia.[1]

Hoping to close the camps by the end of 2003, the Indonesian government offered their remaining residents three forms of assistance: repatriation to Timor-Leste, assistance to settle elsewhere in NTT through resettlement programmes, or resettlement as part of the nationwide transmigrasi programme to move people from over-populated to less populated islands (UNDP, 2005, p.45). While several thousand "new residents" opted to settle in South-east Sulawesi, most, or 104,000, remained in NTT. The majority, some 92,000, lived in four regencies of West Timor: Belu (70,000), Kupang (11,000) and North Central Timor and South Central Timor (11,000) (Ministry of Housing, on file with IDMC, 26 October 2011).

1 IDMC considers as IDPs those former East Timorese refugees who remain living in camps and resettlement sites in West Timor and elsewhere in Indonesia and who have failed to achieve durable solutions, either through local integration or settlement elsewhere, in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs.

NRC NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL
iDMC internal displacement monitoring centre



Humanitarian assistance provided by the government and UN agencies ended in 2005 when the camps were officially closed. However national and international efforts to help IDPs in camps resettle continued until the end of 2013. Between 2006 and 2010, the Ministry of Public Housing built 11,000 houses in West Timor, 60 per cent of them for IDPs, the remainder for poor local residents (Kompas, 15 June 2010).

In 2011, President Susila Bambang Yudhoyono instructed the Ministry of Public Housing to resettle all remaining camp residents by the end of his mandate in 2014. This was in line with national development policies for 2010-2014 which identified post-conflict areas as priority development zones (GoI, 2010). Between 2011 and 2013, the Ministry of Public Housing set aside two trillion Indonesian rupiah ($150 million) for housing construction benefiting both IDPs and local residents (Sianipar, on file with IDMC, 2014, p.7; UCA News, 26 April 2012; IDMC interview, June 2015).

Uneven access to land and tenure security in resettlement sites

Indonesia's resettlement process involved the state acquisition of land and subsequent construction of housing. Consultation with IDPs and communities was limited and resettlement sites have not always adequately met IDPs' needs for housing and livelihoods (IDMC interviews, May 2015; Sianipar, on file with IDMC, 2014; UN-Habitat, October 2011). For those willing to leave camps, a major obstacle to sustainable resettlement has been the lack of money to purchase land and the absence of government support (IDMC interviews, May 2015; UCA news, 26 November 2014). Key challenges reported over the years in often remote resettlement sites include the poor quality of housing, lack of infrastructure and limited access to basic services and livelihood opportunities (UN-Habitat, January 2014, p.7; JRS, March 2011; The Age, 2009; La'o Hamutuk, November 2003).

Identifying available land for resettlement has also been a challenge. The government tended to focus on the construction of houses, using either military or private contractors and sometimes failing to conclude the land acquisition process with land owners. Some houses were also constructed on *adat* (customary) or contested land. With little or no security of tenure, IDPs in some sites have been at risk of being evicted by landowners (Jakarta Post, 4 September 2014; UN Habitat, January 2014, p.7). For example, in Kupang, local NGO staff and IDPs told IDMC that land in sites such as Oebelo and Manusak had been only partially paid for by the government and that some people were at risk of eviction (IDMC interviews, May 2015). IDPs in the Toelnaku site who were resettled in Kupang regency had faced a similar problem, prompting them to return to the camps (IDMC interviews, May 2015).

In some cases, lack of tenure security has been compounded by insufficient efforts to foster integration between IDPs and local communities. In Belu the fact that IDPs share historical and cultural ties with the locals facilitated the acquisition of land while in Kupang the lack of ethnic and cultural links left IDPs facing more challenges integrating and acquiring land (ANU, August 2014 p.12; UN Habitat, January 2014, p.8; IDMC interviews, May 2015). In cases where land identified for IDPs was government-owned, it was usually easier for the displaced to be granted ownership or another form of tenure security, and this increased the chances IDPs would stay in their new homes. Similarly, when land has been purchased by the displaced themselves through negotiations with local communities this has often resulted in more sustainable resettlement (Sianipar, on file with IDMC, 2014, p.20; IDMC interviews, May 2015).

A number of international interventions in support of the government have tried to address concerns, and sometimes outright hostility, expressed by local communities. Pilot projects were implemented in 2003 by UNHCR and the UN Development Programme (UNDP). Such projects included providing incentives such as new or improved infrastructure. This often

encouraged locals to sell land to the displaced, and facilitated their sustainable re-settlement (Sianipar, on file with IDMC, 2014, p.28; UNDP, 2005, p.48).

Barriers to solutions in camps

As of mid-2015, IDMC estimates that at least 22,000 IDPs had not been resettled and were living in four main camps concentrated in Kupang and Belu regencies (Jakarta Post, 17 January 2014). According to the latest available government figures from January 2014, Noelbaki, Tuapukan and Naibonat camps host around one quarter of all IDPs (UN-Habitat, January 2014, p.75). In Belu, Haliwen camp is home to an estimated 3,500 IDPs. A number of smaller camps are scattered in Belu and in North Central Timor regencies (CIS-Timor, on file with IDMC, May 2015).

Located along major roads and close to the cities of Kupang and Atambua, camps generally offer good access to schools, health care and livelihood opportunities. However, living conditions are largely inadequate, with most IDPs living in dilapidated basic shelters with poor sanitation (IDMC interviews, May 2015).

Of greatest concern to IDPs is their lack of tenure security and limited access to agricultural land. The government has been unwilling to grant secure tenure to the displaced in camps as this would contradict its official resettlement policy. In some cases, land ownership is unclear or disputed leaving the displaced unsure how long they will be allowed to stay (IDMC interviews, May 2015; JRS, March 2011). Naibonat camp is on army-controlled land. In 2013, the military notified residents that they would need to leave to make way for a training ground. An informal arrangement has allowed residents to stay but they still live in fear of eventually being evicted (IDMC interviews, May 2015; UCA news, 26 November 2014).

Some IDPs have become labourers, small scale vendors and motorcycle drivers while others make a living from weaving, polishing stones and collecting roots from the forest (IDMC interviews, May 2015; ANU, August 2014 p.14). However, many IDPs have a farming background and depend on land for survival and alternative trades do not always provide livelihood security. Some have concluded sharecropping agreements with local communities but these provide little security.

Priority given to 'quick fix' non-participatory solutions

Programmes to promote solutions for IDPs have been hampered by the lack of accurate data on the displaced. Following the decision by president Yudhoyono to complete the resettlement of all displaced by 2014, in 2013 the provincial authorities, in collaboration with CIS-Timor and UN-Habitat, undertook a data collection exercise focused on former refugees' numbers and housing needs. Due to limited funding, however, the survey was only carried out in Kupang regency (IDMC interviews, May 2015).

The national IDP policy adopted by the government in 2001 and which was discontinued in 2004 provided for local integration in addition to return and settlement elsewhere. In West Timor, however, this option was not made available to IDPs, where the government focused on resettlement, often in haste with insufficient planning, consultation and community-building efforts (IDMC interviews, May 2015; Sianipar, on file with IDMC, 2014, p.47; JRS, March 2011). Government officials are generally unaware of international guidance on durable solutions and tend to view displacement as a short-term phenomenon to be addressed through a 'quick fix' approach (IDMC interviews, May 2015).

Since 2010, the government has officially considered all those displaced in Indonesia during the 1998-2002 period and who have failed to sustainably return or settle elsewhere as 'vulnerable poor' considering their needs as no different from other non-displaced poor groups. The priority given in the national development plan for 2010-2014 to post-conflict zones such as West Timor ensured specific attention was still paid to vulnerable groups living there, although without distinction between displaced and non-displaced populations (GoI, 2010, p.50).

In early 2014, Bappenas, the national development planning agency, held consultations with West Timor local authorities and UN-Habitat and committed to use their experience in working with protracted IDPs as input into the 2015-2019 National Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMN). In particular, Bappenas pledged to ensure that the land and housing rights of vulnerable groups, including IDPs, would be addressed by the RPJMN (Jakarta Post, 16 January 2014). However, when the RPJMN was issued in early 2015 it no longer prioritised post-conflict areas, reflecting official views that needs had been addressed. This was despite the recommendation made by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) to the Indonesian government in June 2014 to include targeted policies within the RPJMN to address the needs of IDPs (OHCHR, 19 June 2014).

UN agencies such as UNHCR and UNDP assisted the government in its resettlement efforts until 2005. Subsequent international assistance was mainly channelled through the EU's Aid for Uprooted People (AUP) programme which prioritised water and sanitation, livelihoods and education in both camps and resettlement sites (EU, 2006; EU, 2007; UN-Habitat, October 2011; Jakarta Post, 16 May 2012). The last AUP-funded programme, implemented by UN-Habitat between 2012 and 2013, was conceived as a phase out project aimed at building the capacity of local government and elected officials to deliver assistance to protracted IDPs, in particular women and children, and ensure their sustainable integration in West Timor (UN-Habitat, January 2014). By 2014, shifting EU priorities and scaling back of aid to middle-income countries such as Indonesia, meant funding for the AUP programme was not extended (Devex, 20 January 2014; IDMC interviews, May 2015).

Conclusion

Now assistance has ended, at least 22,000 IDPs find themselves at risk of being forgotten and sinking further into poverty and marginalisation. There are a number of steps that the government could take to help those still displaced in West Timor overcome obstacles to durable solutions.

- The provincial authorities need to resume the data collection exercise conducted in Kupang in 2013 and extend it to other regencies, particularly Belu.
- Bappenas should ensure that the specific needs of IDPs are reflected in national and local development plans.
- Key to the successful resettlement of IDPs still in camps is to ensure sites are built on land where IDPs have secure tenure.
- Efforts should be made to include all stakeholders, and in particular IDPs, in land acquisition processes as well as in the design and construction of new homes which allow access to livelihood opportunities.
- The Indonesian government should recognise local integration as a durable solution and consider regularising land tenure in the four main remaining camps and improving water and sanitation services, thus providing IDPs with more incentives to improve their homes.
- The international development community should provide technical assistance to undertake wider data collection and ensure policies and programmes are consistent with international standards, in particular the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs.

There is little doubt that Indonesia has both the means and capacity to address the outstanding needs of IDPs in West Timor. What is now needed is sufficient political will to realise promises made nearly 16 years ago to those who chose to be part of Indonesia. Central to the achievement of durable solutions is participation of IDPs in the planning of programmes.

CONTACT

Caroline Howard
Head of Middle East, Europe, Caucasus and Asia department
Tel: +41 22 795 07 40
Email: caroline.howard@nrc.ch

Frederik Kok
Senior regional analyst
Tel: +41 22 799 07 12
Email: frederik.kok@nrc.ch

Marita Swain
Associate regional analyst
Tel: +41 22 795 07 02
Email: marita.swain@nrc.ch