IDP Protection Expert Group

Enhancing protection in situations of internal displacement through coordinated, collaborative, and targeted support

February 2025

NEWSLETTER

Updates: September-December 2024

Cross-Regional Forum on Implementing Laws and Policies on Internal Displacement in Africa

The IPEG and UNHCR with support from the Sanremo IHL Institute organized a Cross Regional Forum on Implementing Laws and Policies on Internal Displacement in Africa from 18-20 September in Dakar, Senegal. Opened by the Special Rapporteur, UNHCR and Norway, and facilitated by IPEG members Walter Kaelin, Chaloka Beyani and Maya Sahli Fadel, this initiative built on the successful Cross-Regional Forum convened in Sanremo, Italy, in 2023. The 2024 forum brought together **government officials from 13 African countries**, donor countries and representatives of the African Union for peer discussions on how to overcome challenges to preventing and responding to internal displacement, including through ratification, domestication and implementation of the Kampala Convention.



Participants and facilitators of the Cross-Regional Forum



Participants during the Session on Data on Internal Displacement

The forum underscored the critical need for direct engagement with governments to foster national and local ownership in addressing internal displacement. The way forward requires a collaborative approach that prioritizes the voices of IDPs, incorporates local experiences, and strengthens the commitment to ending arbitrary displacement. For more information, please refer to the **summary report** (English and French) and **listen to the reflections of participants.** Post-forum, a virtual Member states briefing was held to allow facilitators and participants to share their reflections and key takeaways.

""For us, this work was catalytic to reinvigorate the work of the Government and put the issue of domesticating the law on protection and assistance for IDPs on the agenda."

- Participant of the Cross-Regional Forum 2024

IPEG Protection Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo

The IPEG undertook a Protection Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from 24 – 30 November, on invitation from the DSRSG/RC/HC. The mission delegation was led by the Special Rapporteur and IPEG members Maya Sahli-Fadel and Jennifer Welsh. The objective of the mission was to engage with key actors (Government, UNCT/HCT, etc.) to identify opportunities for enhancing IDP protection in the context of the MONUSCO withdrawal, support IDP participation in peace and stabilization processes, and advance progress toward government-led solutions, including through the domestication of the Kampala Convention.



The Special Rapporteur and the DSRSG/RC/HC meeting with DRC's Minister of Foreign Affairs



IPEG delegation meets with DRC government officials from key ministries in Kinshasa

The first part of the mission involved meetings with key government and UN officials in Kinshasa. This included a technical-level roundtable with various ministries, chaired by Mr. Alain Iyeti, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Humanitarian Action. During the visit, the Government of the DRC formally invited the Special Rapporteur to return for an official country visit in 2025. This would mark the first official visit to the DRC by the mandate holder since 2008.

In the second part of the mission, the delegation traveled to eastern DRC, visiting Goma and Beni in North Kivu, as well as Bunia in Ituri. The delegation met with provincial authorities and members of the UNCT/HCT. They had conversations and focus group discussions with IDPs and with civil society organizations focusing on the needs of displaced women and youth.

Since the mission, the **protection crisis in eastern DRC only intensified** due to clashes between armed groups and the fall of Goma to elements of the March 23 Movement (M23/AFC).

Please see below for the post-mission follow-up plans.

Progress around the Kampala Convention

The IPEG mission, along with the participation of government officials at the Cross-Regional Forum, restored momentum among key ministries at the technical level in the DRC to advance the domestication of the Kampala Convention. In light of this progress, the Protection Cluster, in collaboration with the General Secretariat of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, organized several initiatives to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Kampala Convention:

- On December 12, prior to the renewed major crisis in the East, an awareness event was held with local authorities, IDP representatives, and members of host communities in the commune of Maluku.
- On December 19, a "press cafe" was organized by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Humanitarian Action, where representatives from civil society organizations and key local media outlets were in attendance.



Attendees at the café de presse, 12 December

Workshop on Strengthening the Participation of IDPs

There Is a long-standing concern that the specific needs and concerns of IDPs are overlooked in humanitarian and development programming and that IDPs are still too often excluded from decision-making regarding responses to their internal displacement. In light of this, the Special Rapporteur, IPEG and McGill University, with support from UNHCR, convened a workshop on strengthening the participation of IDPs in Montreal, Canada, on December 5-6. The workshop aimed to **deepen the understanding of IDP participation and its effectiveness, strengthen opportunities for transformative IDP participation in decision-making and governance processes**, and **facilitate the UN Special Rapporteur's ongoing engagement with internally displaced communities**.

A total of 40 participants included IDP leaders, IPEG members, experts from UN agencies and NGOs, key academics and students (**see the list of participants here**). Ten IDP Leaders from Colombia, Ethiopia, Honduras, Iraq, Nigeria, and Ukraine shared their experiences and recommendations regarding participation in the response and solutions for their displacement.



Participants of the workshop on Strengthening the Participation of IDPs in Montreal, December 2024

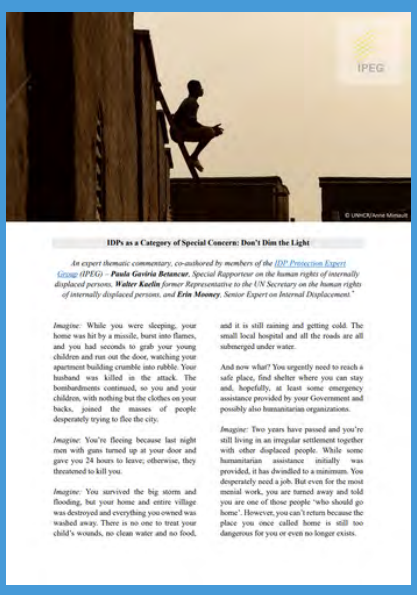
The Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement, Robert Piper, also attended the event and shared lessons on IDP participation.

Workshop participants highlighted numerous obstacles and opportunities for improving the participation of IDPs, and contributed recommendations which will be listed in the soon to be published workshop report. The workshop report is coming together with a set of videos of IDP leaders, IPEG members and other participants on how to achieve transformative IDP participation. In the meantime have a look at the **workshop background paper** written by IPEG member, Jennifer Welsh and Megan Bradley from McGill University.

Read article on the workshop here

IPEG Expert Thematic Commentary

The Special Rapporteur, Paula Gaviria Betancur, and IPEG Members, Walter Kaelin and Erin Mooney, published an **Expert Thematic Commentary - IDPs as a Special Category of Concern: Don't Dim the Light**. This piece highlights the specific needs of IDPs as a result of being forced to flee and answers the question of why internal displacement warrants – and urgently needs – continued focus and specific attention.



IDPs as a Category of Special Concern: Don't Dim the Light

*An expert thematic commentary, co-authored by members of the IDP Protection Expert Group (IPEG) – **Paula Gaviria Betancur**, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, **Walter Kaelin** former Representative to the UN Secretary on the human rights of internally displaced persons, and **Erin Mooney**, Senior Expert on Internal Displacement.*

Imagine: While you were sleeping, your home was hit by a missile, burnt into flames, and you had seconds to grab your young children and run out the door, watching your apartment building crumble into rubble. Your husband was killed in the attack. The bombardments continued, so you and your children, with nothing but the clothes on your backs, joined the masses of people desperately trying to flee the city.

Imagine: You're fleeing because last night men with guns turned up at your door and gave you 24 hours to leave; otherwise, they threatened to kill you.

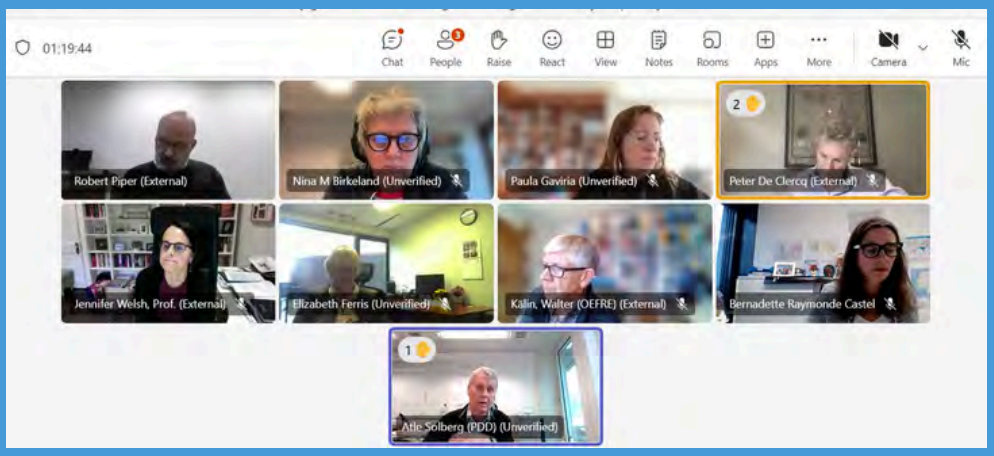
Imagine: You survived the big storm and flooding, but your home and entire village was destroyed and everything you owned was washed away. There is no one to treat your child's wounds, no clean water and no food, and it is still raining and getting cold. The small local hospital and all the roads are all submerged under water.

And now what? You urgently need to reach a safe place, find shelter where you can stay and, hopefully, at least some emergency assistance provided by your Government and possibly also humanitarian organizations.

Imagine: Two years have passed and you're still living in an irregular settlement together with other displaced people. While some humanitarian assistance initially was provided, it has dwindled to a minimum. You desperately need a job. But even for the most menial work, you are turned away and told you are one of those people 'who should go home'. However, you can't return because the place you once called home is still too dangerous for you or even no longer exists.

IPEG Meeting with SA Robert Piper for Inputs on Guidance on Solutions to Internal Displacement

The Office of the Special Adviser presented a final draft of the "Guidance on Solutions to Internal Displacement" that was shared with the IASC and the UNSDG for input and consultation. In the process, Robert Piper sought advice of the IPEG members on the Guidance. They met virtually on November 22 where IPEG members provided their in-depth inputs and comments. The final version was submitted to the IASC and UNSDG at the end 2024 for endorsement in early 2025.



Virtual meeting with SA and IPEG members on Guidance on Solutions to Internal Displacement

What's Next

Peer Exchanges

BRIDGING GAPS BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

3rd Cross-Regional Forum on Implementing Laws and Policies on Internal Displacement

Sanremo, Autumn 2025 (TBC)

The IPEG with support from UNHCR are planning to convene the third Cross-Regional Forum on Implementing Law and Policy on Internal Displacement, with this year's focus on municipal responses. Through facilitated peer exchange, this forum will discuss how central-level policy to advance protection and solutions for IDPs connects with local (particularly municipal)-level implementation and vice versa, identifying existing models - which may differ significantly based on levels of political, administrative and fiscal decentralisation in each country. This initiative builds on two successful Cross-Regional Fora convened in Sanremo in June 2023 and Dakar in September 2024 on laws and policies on internal displacement.

DRC Post-Mission Follow Up

HUMANITARIAN DIPLOMACY IN ACTION

1. With the intensifying crisis in Eastern DRC, **support strategic advocacy on protecting the rights of IDPs**, respect for IHL, and donor support to address the rapid deterioration in the humanitarian situation - in the Kivus, but also in places like Ituri. See **joint statement** by UN Special Rapporteurs on 6 February 2025.
2. Provide **support country-to-country peer learning and exchange** aimed at addressing internal displacement in the context of protracted armed conflict - such as between Colombia and DRC.
3. Collaborate with **NORCAP** to explore how targeted deployments can effectively reinforce and support **community-based protection mechanisms**, as well as unarmed civilian protection efforts.
4. Continue advocating for **the domestication of the Kampala Convention** while offering technical expertise on both the draft IDP law and the critical aspect of preparing for its effective implementation.
5. Prepare for an **official country visit** by the Special Rapporteur in 2025, following the issuance of an official invitation.

IPEG Public Thematic Commentaries

GLOBAL ADVOCACY ON IDP PROTECTION

In addition to participating in global events, IPEG members will bring forward their expertise to publish periodic commentaries on critical thematic IDP protection issues over the coming months. Commentaries will be co-authored jointly by two or more IPEG members to be published in media outlets, as well as the IPEG website. The current topics planned for publication are:

- **Responding to internal displacement amid shrinking resources**
- **Planned relocations**
- **IDP participation**

The IDP Protection Expert Group – IPEG – is co-led by the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and UNHCR, with support from the Global Protection Cluster.
See more here

With support from NORCAP

The IPEG Members include:

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- **Chaloka Beyani**
- **Walter Kaelin**
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