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Bangladesh: minorities increasingly at risk of displacement



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Acknowledgements

During the period of research for the report, between December 2005 and February 2006, interviews were conducted with United Nations officials in Bangladesh, members of the diplomatic and donors' community, academics, members of national and international organisations, and representatives of the internally displaced. Numerous other sources were also consulted.

Photos by IDMC, unless otherwise indicated

Map of Bangladesh



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Executive summary

Civil war and persecution of religious minorities have displaced hundreds of thousands of people in Bangladesh.

The largest occurrence of conflict-induced displacement is found in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in south-east Bangladesh, traditionally inhabited by 13 different groups of indigenous people collectively referred to as “Jumma”. The root cause of displacement in the region derives from the politics of nation-building and ensuing conflicts between the minority and the majority population. Since Bangladesh’s independence in 1971, armed conflict between the tribal population and the government as well as a government-sponsored transmigration programme of Bengalis from the plains have forced large numbers to flee their homes. Some 65,000 fled to India’s Tripura state and an even larger number were internally displaced. A peace accord signed in 1997 enabled the refugees to be repatriated, but thousands of IDPs and returning refugees remain displaced due to unresolved issues related to land and property restitution. The peace accord includes mechanisms to address internal displacement, but a task force to rehabilitate the displaced and a land commission to settle land disputes have never functioned effectively. The core issues of contention revolve around land ownership and disagreement about whether Bengali settlers should be counted as IDPs. No recent estimates of the number of IDPs are available. Existing figures from 2000 vary between 60,000 (Amnesty International) and 500,000 (Government Task Force).

The slow implementation of the accord, stalled since the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) took office in 2001, has put the peace process in danger and the plight of the IDPs has been mostly ignored. Thousands of IDPs who live illegally and unassisted in “reserve forests” – ecologically protected areas – are particularly vulnerable. Violent incidents still occur frequently in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, occasionally causing further displacement of civilians. Clashes between tribal groups who either contest or defend the peace accord, anti-terrorist military operations and sporadic attacks by Bengali settlers against the Jumma population, allegedly with the support of the military, continue to create a general climate of insecurity.

Persecution and communal violence against religious minorities – mostly Hindus – have seriously intensified after the 2001 elections when the BNP formed a four-party coalition government including two Islamic parties. Incidents against religious minorities have since escalated dramatically, often involving eviction and land grabbing. The post-election violence compelled up to 200,000 Hindus to flee the country. The Ahmadiyya community, an Islamic sect numbering 100,000 in Bangladesh, has also been subject to intimidation campaigns and attacks in recent years. No information is available on the number of Hindus or Ahmadis that may have been displaced or whether the affected population has received any assistance. In general, the police have done little to prevent or stop the violence, and the authorities have failed to bring the perpetrators to justice. The deteriorating political and security conditions during 2005 contributed to an

unprecedented climate of fear and vulnerability among the minority population, which increases the risk of future displacement.

There is no national strategy to address the needs of the internally displaced in Bangladesh. In November 2005, the government released its poverty reduction strategy plan "Unlocking the potential". While full implementation of the peace accord features as one of its objectives, there is no specific focus on the internally displaced. In December 2005, the government approved the largest ever multi-sectoral project to promote development and confidence-building in the Chittagong Hill Tracts with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), costing \$50 million over the next five years. One component of this programme will specifically target the internally displaced population. Some ongoing development projects targeting vulnerable populations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts also benefit IDPs.

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement are an essential tool for improving the IDP response and should be incorporated into national strategies and legislations. They should also serve as guidelines for the international community and local NGOs. The UNDP programme could offer a platform for training and to promote the Guiding Principles. First and foremost, independent surveys are required to identify the number of IDPs and assess their needs. Furthermore, the government, UN agencies, NGOs and the donor community should work together to develop a holistic strategy to achieve durable solutions for IDPs in Bangladesh.

Key recommendations

To the government of Bangladesh

- Develop a National IDP Policy, including clear rehabilitation strategies that are in line with the UN Guiding Principles
- seek technical support and training for an improved response to conflict-induced displacement at both local and state level
- establish a government IDP focal point to coordinate and take action on IDP issues
- develop a dialogue with the international community in Bangladesh to build up a coherent response related to IDP protection and assistance
- launch an independent survey with the participation of the affected communities and in collaboration with international organisations with a view to establishing the number and identifying the particular protection and assistance needs of IDPs
- allow national and international organisations full and unconditional access to IDPs in their places of refuge and in areas of return
- address the unimplemented part of the peace accord which concerns the future of the internally displaced population, especially the complex issue of property restitution to returning IDPs
- systematically consult and include IDPs in decisions that affect their current and future situations
- take measures to enhance protection of religious and ethnic minorities and address the risk of eviction
- help put an effective end to impunity by ensuring that perpetrators of violence against the minority population are identified and brought to justice

To the United Nations in Bangladesh

- Develop a strategy to address the internal displacement situation in Bangladesh that is in line with the UN Guiding Principles, if deemed necessary with support from OCHA's Internal Displacement Division
- establish an IDP coordination mechanism to ensure a coherent response to IDP issues

- strengthen the capacity of the UN Country Team to collect IDP-specific information and to advocate for IDPs' rights at various levels
- support and facilitate capacity-building initiatives, such as training in the UN Guiding Principles for relevant actors in Bangladesh
- where possible, ensure appropriate longer-term and durable support to IDPs in terms of income-generation activities and community development projects

To donors

- Support initiatives by the government and the international community that would increase awareness, protection and assistance for IDPs
- raise the issue of internal displacement with the government and encourage and advocate for solutions
- support projects that cater for the longer-term needs of IDPs and affected local communities, such as rehabilitation of facilities in education, health and water/sanitation

Background of internal displacement in Bangladesh

Conflict-induced internal displacement in Bangladesh is primarily the consequence of post-colonial nation state-building. The partitioning of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 and the war between East and West Pakistan, which ended with the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971, alienated and uprooted millions among the non-Muslim population. The emergence of a homogenous Bengali nationalism was reflected in the 1972 Constitution, which defined a citizen of Bangladesh as “Bengali” (SAFHR, April 2000)¹. Later, in 1988, Islam was proclaimed the state religion by constitutional amendment, strengthening Islamic culture as a central symbol of nationalism. Centralisation of power by a government whose vote bank is primarily the Bengali Muslim population has increasingly led to discrimination and the exclusion of religious and tribal minority groups in the country. Conflict-induced displacement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and persecution of religious minorities should be placed in this historical perspective (Amena Mohsin, 2003, p.16).

Forced migration in Bangladesh must also be seen in the context of its demographic profile, being one of the most densely populated countries in the world with strong population growth. The population is overwhelmingly Muslim with minorities of Hindus (10.5 per cent), Buddhists (0.6 per cent), Christians (0.3 per cent) and other religions (0.3 per cent)². The Buddhists are largely concentrated in the Chittagong area while the other religious communities are spread across the country. There are 27 indigenous groups, accounting for 1.13 per cent of the population, concentrated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and northern Bangladesh. However, several analysts have argued that the population of ethnic minorities may be higher than the official figures.

Conflict is also fuelled by the scarcity of land in Bangladesh due to chronic flooding, river erosion and environmental degradation. Competition for land combined with poor governance has disproportionately affected the poor and marginalised, including the minorities.

Internal displacement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

The largest occurrence of conflict-induced displacement is found in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in South-East Bangladesh. The region occupies a physical area of some 5,000 square miles (13,000 square kilometres) or ten per cent of the total land area of Bangladesh and is divided into three districts: Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban. This mountainous frontier region lies at a strategic location between India and Burma, where South Asia meets South-East Asia. It is also rich in natural resources; 60 per cent of Bangladesh forests are located in the region. Despite its natural resources, the Chittagong Hill Tracts

¹ In a 1979 amendment to the Constitution, “Bengali” was replaced by “Bangladeshi”.

² According to the 1991 population census.

region is poorer than the rest of the country. In 2000, per capita income was 40 per cent lower than the national average (ADB, 26 October 2000).

The region is inhabited by 13 different groups of indigenous people, collectively referred to as “Jumma” due to their traditional practice of shifting cultivation. The three largest ethnic groups are the Chakma, Marma and Tripura. They also differ in religion and customs from the majority population of Bangladesh.

The region has seen a phenomenal increase of the Bengali population. Government-sponsored resettlement of more than 400,000 landless Bengalis from the plains between 1979 and 1984 dramatically altered the demographic balance as well as amplified resource constraints. According to a 1991 population census, the total Chittagong Hill Tracts population then amounted to approximately one million, the tribal population making up a little more than 51 per cent and the remaining 49 per cent being overwhelmingly Bengalis. The latest population census conducted in 2001 showed a total population of 1.3 million, but a breakdown by ethnicity is still not available. While the tribal population might have been understated in 1991³, the massive influx of Bengali settlers since then has probably made the tribal population a minority in the region. Migration of Bengalis from the plains continues unabated (CARE 2004, pp. 8, 10; 2005, p.6).

Building of the Kaptai Dam

In 1860, the British colonial rulers annexed the Chittagong Hill Tracts to the then province of Bengal. They granted a certain degree of autonomy to the region and limited access to outsiders. The Pakistani administration abolished this special status and started encouraging migration of non-tribals and exploiting its natural resources. The Kaptai dam was built during the Pakistan period and its reservoir submerged over 400 square miles (1,000 square kilometres) of land and flooded at least 54,000 acres (22,000 hectares) mostly farmed by Chakmas, or 40 per cent of the region’s arable land. Some 100,000 people lost their homes and prime agricultural lands. Compensation was largely inadequate. Some 5,600 families were resettled in the state-owned Kassalong Reserve Forest on an area of 23,000 acres, but with limited possibilities for farming (Shapan Adnan, pp. 44-46). By 1964, over 40,000 Chakma had migrated to Arunachal Pradesh in India, where the majority remain today as stateless persons (AI, 2000). The construction of the Kaptai dam led to the first crisis of internal displacement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and, combined with loss of control over natural resources and threats of assimilation with the majority culture of Bangladesh, provided fuel to the armed conflict that ensued. The devastating effect of the building of the Kaptai dam is still deeply felt as an alienating factor among the tribal population.

³ For example, a Mro community leader indicated that 22,167 Mro were recorded in the 1991 census while their own count revealed a figure of 59,000.

Outbreak of civil war causes large scale displacement

Tensions intensified after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, when tribal demands for constitutional safeguards and recognition as a separate community were rejected (Amena Mohsin, 2003, p. 22). The tribal population reacted by creating the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti or Chittagong Hill Tracts People's Solidarity Association (PCJSS) in 1972. Its armed wing, the Shanti Bahini, was formed in January 1973. In August 1975, Prime Minister Mujibur (Sheikh Mujib) Rahman was assassinated in a bloody coup led by General Ziaur Rahman. Under his military regime, Bangladeshi nationalism incorporated Islamic ideals which excluded the cultural identities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Amena Mohsin, 2003, p. 24). In 1976, Shanti Bahini started an armed insurgency with the support of India, which in turn led to a sharp increase of government forces in the Hill Tracts. Thus began a 25-year-long armed conflict.

As the conflict escalated, the government began relocating Bengalis in the Chittagong Hill Tracts as a counter-insurgency strategy. Between 1979 and 1983, over 400,000 poor and landless Bengalis from the plains were settled in the region and provided with land, cash, rations and other incentives (AITPN, April 1998, p. 20-21). At the height of the conflict, almost one third of the Bangladesh army was deployed in the region and Bengali settlers were also mobilised against the tribal population. Official figures indicate that more than 8,500 people were killed during two decades of insurgency, including some 2,500 civilians (AI, February 2000).

Although access to the Chittagong Hill Tracts was denied during the conflict, the international community was regularly informed of human rights abuses by international NGOs, such as the Anti-Slavery Society, Survival International, the International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, the Minority Rights Group and Amnesty International. In 1990 the international Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission carried out an independent investigation in refugee camps in Tripura, India, and also managed to get into the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The ensuing report documented widespread human rights abuses and displacement of the indigenous population (Aarens and Chakma, 2000).

Forced evictions, atrocities in the conflict between the Shanti Bahini and government forces, confiscation of land to establish military camps, the population transfer programme and clashes between tribals and new settlers compelled tens of thousands of tribals to leave their homes. After 1980, ten major massacres by Bengali settlers and the security forces led to a refugee exodus of about 65,000 tribals to the neighbouring Indian state of Tripura (AI 2000, UN GA, August 2000, para. 69). An even larger number were internally displaced.

Patterns of displacement

The 1991 report of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission “Life is not ours” identified two types of conflict-induced internal displacement: People either fled to the nearest forest or went into hiding for a few days, sometimes even for several years, or they were forcibly relocated to cluster villages. Many tribals from the Rangamati and Bandarban districts attempted to find safety in the Mizoram State of India but were pushed back by Indian border forces in 1986. Instead, they settled in reserve forests along the Indian border. Today, many are still living illegally in the Kassalong and Rheinkhyong Reserve Forests where they currently face threats of eviction.



School for tribal IDP children – Photo JRWA

Forcible relocation to cluster villages became a part of the military’s counter-insurgency strategy from 1979 onwards. Conditions in these villages were reported to be worse than in the relief camps in Tripura (CHT Commission, 1991). Shortage of land and limited assistance from the government led to widespread starvation. Furthermore, loss of land and restricted movement made traditional agricultural activities impossible. Many therefore started working

as day labourers in plantations or as share-croppers in afforestation projects. Today, the cluster villages have been dismantled but many displaced remain in these sites with nowhere else to go.

Repatriation of refugees from India: from refugees to IDPs

As early as February 1994, a rehabilitation package was agreed between the Bangladesh government and the Jumma Refugee Welfare Association (JRWA) for the repatriation and rehabilitation of refugees sheltering in camps in India’s Tripura State. According to figures supplied by the Returnee Jumma Refugees’ Welfare Association (RJRWA), some 5,100 people from 1,000 families were subsequently repatriated. Most became internally displaced as they could not return to their original villages, but had to take shelter with relatives. This early repatriation exercise subsequently stalled because the rehabilitation package was not implemented.

A new agreement was signed in March 1997 which was followed by the return of the remaining refugees within three months of the signing of the peace accord. By the end of February 1998, all of the tribal refugees had returned to the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Almost all were originally from the Khagrachari district with the majority from Dighinala (4,200 families) and Panchari (3,400 families). The rest (just over 50 families) hailed from the Rangamati district, mostly the Baghaichari sub-district.

While most returnees were provided with some economic rehabilitation and food rations, many did not recover their lands which were now occupied by Bengali settlers. The RJRWA claims 80 per cent of the refugees, did not get back their land, orchards or homesteads while official statistics say this was the case for only 25 per centes (Daily Star, 23 October 2003). Furthermore, according to the RJRWA, 40 villages, all in Khagrachari District⁴, are still illegally occupied by settlers. An issue of contention is also the fact that settlers have built markets on land claimed by repatriated tribal families (RJRWA and PCJSS information).

The 1997 peace accord and provisions for IDPs

After 25 years of conflict, a peace accord came into effect on 2 December 1997, signed by the then ruling Awami League and the main indigenous political party, PCJSS. The peace accord grants a higher degree of autonomy to the indigenous people through the creation of a regional council. The accord also provides several mechanisms directly aimed at addressing and resolving the problem of internal displacement. The most important provisions are the establishment of a task force to coordinate rehabilitation for the internally displaced, the launching of a land survey in consultation with the regional council and the settling of land disputes by a land commission with a minimum tenure of three years to "resolve the disputes in consonance with the law, custom and practice in force in the Chittagong Hill Tracts" (AI, 2000).

However, the task force to facilitate the rehabilitation of the displaced has failed to function effectively. Two of the main problems blocking its work have been disagreement as to whether the Bengali settlers (non-tribals) should be considered IDPs, and secondly, the proposed rehabilitation package for the internally displaced population.

Disagreement about the criteria for the definition of an IDP caused the main schism between tribal and non-tribal members of the task force. Originally, the peace accord stipulated that the term 'internally displaced' referred to the tribal population of the three hill districts (Clauses D.1 and D.2), thus excluding the Bengali population. In June 1998, the task force agreed on a working definition of "internally displaced people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts" as "all tribal peoples from the three districts who had been

⁴ Among the 40 villages still occupied in Khagrachari District, 15 were in Dighinala, 20 in Matiranga, three in Khagrachari Sadar and two in Panchari sub-districts.

compelled to leave their village, land or house during the conflict from 15 August 1975 (date of Sheikh Mujib's assassination) to 10 August 1992 (date of PCJSS unilateral ceasefire) and forced to take shelter in other areas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts" (JWRA, December 2005). Local authorities were then instructed to identify and compile a list of the internally displaced in their area in accordance with the agreed definition. On this basis, tribal leaders today restrict the definition of an IDP to the specification of the peace accord.

Conflict arose when the task force reportedly received sudden instructions from the Prime Minister's Office⁵ to include the non-tribal population in the IDP population, thus including Bengali settlers who had been forced to move when tribal refugees returned from exile in India. This point was then included without consulting the tribal representatives. Fierce debate ensued on whether or not settlers should be considered internally displaced and, in November 1999, the two tribal representatives from the RJRWA and the PCJSS walked out and refused to attend any subsequent task force meetings. The official list of IDPs, published in 2000, was immediately rejected by the tribal task force members who called for the removal of non-tribal settlers from the task force IDP list and their transfer outside the Chittagong Hill Tracts. They also requested the inclusion of thousands of tribal IDPs whom they said had not been counted.

Tribal leaders also refused to accept the proposed task force rehabilitation package because it did not make guarantees for property restitution, a main requirement by PCJSS when the negotiations started. After the task force chairperson resigned in August 2001, the task force did not function for more than two years. In October 2003, the BNP-led government finally appointed a new chairperson, but his official status is unclear, no financial support has been allocated for the work of the committee and its ten employees have not been paid since October 2001 (New Age, 27 March 2005).

The Land Commission was to function as a special tribunal for property restitution for the tribal people. By May 2003, some 35,000 cases had been filed involving land disputes between indigenous people and state-sponsored settlers (Daily Star, 5 May 2003). However, it had not even started its work as of March 2006. After years of delay, the commission met for the first time on 8 June 2005. One of the outcomes of the meeting was a suggestion by the chairperson to set up a tribunal rather than a commission to resolve land disputes (Daily Star, 9 June 2005).

Apart from the land question, other parts of the peace agreement remain to be implemented, such as the closure of temporary army bases. Reportedly, only 31 of the estimated 520 temporary military camps at the time of the signing of the peace agreement have been withdrawn (ACHR, 26 August 2004). Furthermore, several temples and schools which were destroyed during the conflict have not been rebuilt on their original locations as stipulated in the peace agreement (RJRWA and PCJSS information).

In general, implementation of the peace accord has been completely on hold since the BNP-led coalition came to power following its 2001 election victory. The agreement was

⁵ Special Affairs Division: Order No. [Spe. A. B. (Document)-78/98/185 dated 19-07-98]

condemned from the outset by the BNP, which was then in opposition, as a “sell out” of Bangladeshi sovereignty. It has also been rejected by a section of the tribals who want all Bengali settlers removed from the Chittagong Hill Tracts. In 1998, the tribal United People’s Democratic Front (UPDF) was formed to this effect and has occasionally been involved in armed clashes with PCJSS supporters. The accord has also been denounced by the Bengali settlers who have launched a movement called Sama Adhikar Andolon (CHT Equal Rights Movement) against the peace agreement which they see as discriminatory and favouring the tribal population (Daily Star, 1 December 2004).

Number of internally displaced in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

Estimates over the number of internally displaced in the Chittagong Hill Tracts vary between 60,000 (AI, 2000) and 500,000 (Government task force, 2000). Another estimate says the conflict displaced 100,000 people, and of these between 30,000 and 50,000 took shelter in reserve forests (Adnan, p.52). The compilation of a list of IDPs became one of the most controversial issues in the post-conflict years, and is still a major issue of contention today.

Districts	Tribal families	Non-tribal Families	Total
Rangamati	35,595	15,516	51,111
Khagrachari	46,570	22,371	68941
Bandarban	8,043	269	8,312
Grand Total	90,208	38,156	128,364

(Source: Government task force on internal displacement, 2000)

The 2000 task force report stated that 128,364 displaced families (90,208 tribal and 38,156 non-tribal), or 500,000-550,000 people, were displaced due to the conflict. This means that up to half of the total population of the Chittagong Hill Tracts were internally displaced that year due to the conflict. However, there is a general consensus between tribal representatives, NGO workers and Bangladeshi academics that the task force list is inaccurate.

The list was compiled by members of local union councils⁶ without any involvement of the internally displaced themselves. Furthermore, no proper survey was carried out and remote areas were often not taken into account. The RJRWA claims that up to 10,000 tribal IDP families were not counted, nor were the refugees who had become internally displaced after repatriation. On the other hand, there are also claims that the local lists were inflated

⁶ The union council is the lowest local government administrative unit. Each district is divided into sub-districts (or upazila) and each sub-district is divided into unions. Each union has a council with a chairman, a secretary and union members representing villages. Many unions have a mixed population of tribals and Bengalis (mostly settlers), so union members are composed of both Bengalis representing Bengali settlers and tribal representatives.

on both sides. A former tribal union chairman from the Rangamati district, for example, said Bengali union members included an exaggerated number of displaced settlers in the lists in order to secure a larger share of the rehabilitation package. However, it should be noted that the tribal protests in general are not targeting the original Bengali population of the Chittagong Hill Tracts who also became victims of displacement during the conflict. One tribal union chairman from the Bandarban district for example, stated that he included in his IDP list Bengali permanent residents who were displaced in 1989 when the army confiscated their land.

The debate about the IDP definition is still ongoing. No recent information exists about the current number of displaced, nor are there any reports of reintegration or rehabilitation of the internally displaced population, although many might have integrated in their place of refuge since the time of the survey. Some have started a new life in urban centres. It should also be noted that villagers around the Kaptai reservoir who lost their land due to construction of the Kaptai dam maintain that they also are internally displaced who are entitled to rehabilitation.

Living conditions of IDPs in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

Information on the conditions in which internally displaced currently live in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is not available. Most humanitarian and NGO reports generally assess or analyse the overall needs of their targeted beneficiaries, tribal and non-tribal, without making specific references to those who have been displaced. However, it is widely acknowledged that a large number of tribal internally displaced live illegally in reserve forests which are administered by the Bangladesh Forest Department and fall outside the scope of the



An internally displaced woman from the Chittagong Hill Tracts

peace accord⁷. IDPs in reserve forests face an extremely difficult situation as agricultural practices, use of forest products and even collection of firewood is officially prohibited.

Access to livelihood is the most critical issue affecting the IDPs. According to a World Food Programme (WFP) study, unresolved resettlement issues are one of the four main causes of food insecurity in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Furthermore, reserve forests and other areas believed to house the most vulnerable IDPs have a very high level of relative food insecurity⁸. The same areas also appear to have the highest primary and adult education needs, with no access to health services and adequate sanitation and safe drinking water. High prevalence of malaria is also a serious health concern (WFP, March 2005, pp. 10, 25, 26, 30).

To date, food aid has been supplied only to the families who returned from exile in India, while the remaining internally displaced population has been unassisted. In 2003, a government decision to stop all food assistance to the tribal returnees while continuing to provide it to 28,000 Bengali settler families led to strong protests from tribal organisations. Rice distribution eventually resumed, but only at half of the original quantity. Full rations were not reinstated before 2004, but have since then been distributed on a regular basis (Daily Star, 14 June 2004).

Around 10,000 IDPs, plus some returnees from India, are known to live in the Kassalong Reserve Forest, situated in the Rangamati District near the border with the Indian State of Mizoram (JIDRWA, February 2006). Their main sources of income are swidden (slash-and-burn) cultivation, small vegetable gardens and illegal logging of teak timber and bamboo. According to the Jumma Internally Displaced Rehabilitation and Welfare Association (JIDRWA), the IDPs have never received any rehabilitation nor have they benefited from any development programme carried out in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. For medical treatment, their only option is to approach the Médecins sans Frontières NGO clinic in the area as well as basic public health facilities based in the main local centre, Baghaihat, a remote hill village which is far from where they live. In 2005, 20 children died due to lack of health care and clean drinking water.

⁷ Reserve forests, which cover a little less than a quarter of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, were created for the purpose of conservation in the 19th century and were then sparsely populated. Today, large parts of these areas contain settlements of hill people. Control over the reserve forest is formally under the Bangladesh Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF), but in practice administration of the reserve forests is carried out by the Bangladesh Forest Department headed by the Chief Conservator of Forests (CARE 2004, p. 18). The 1997 peace accord specifies that the three Hill District Councils exercise control over land, including forests in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The reserve forests, however, fall outside the scope of the peace accord, and therefore outside the authority of the Hill District Councils.

⁸ See Map in Annex, p. 27

Only 40 IDP children attend the government school in Baghaihat (JIDRWA, February 2006). The IDPs have established some self-supported schools for their children, but receive no subsidies from the government as schools in the reserve forests are illegal. Inhabitants of these forests are therefore denied their basic right to education (CARE 2004, p. 43). IDPs in the Bandarban district face similar conditions and hardship. Many displaced from various indigenous communities were gathered by the army into cluster villages during the conflict⁹ and have continued to live on these sites in mixed groups as they have lost their original lands. Other IDPs such as the Khyang¹⁰, who were all displaced during the conflict, have scattered in the Rheinkhyong Reserve Forest.



Rudimentary school for tribal IDP children in the Hill Tracts

Obstacles to return and reintegration

The land issue remains the key obstacle for the return and reintegration of the internally displaced as well as for the implementation of the peace accord. Land-related conflicts between tribal people and settlers are also the greatest threat to peace and stability in the region.

According to customary law, the tribal population practised communal ownership of land used for slash-and-burn cultivation and for cattle grazing, which is not registered in public records. The situation is different for the Bengali settler population, who received landownership documents after having been relocated to the Chittagong Hill Tracts by the government. One of the main issues to be resolved by the Land Commission or another body is therefore to balance customary rights and usages prevailing in the Chittagong Hill Tracts against ownership by Bengali settlers which is backed by documents (CARE 2004, p.47). In accordance with the peace accord, some Bengali settlers did lose their ownership

⁹ In Bandarban district, most of the cluster villages were set up by the Army in Rowangchari, Ruma and Tanchi Sub-districts during the conflict.

¹⁰ The Khyang are one of the 13 Jumma groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The 1991 census counted 1,980 Khyang, but they estimate their number at 3,000 (SEHD, Earth Touch, March 2005, p. 17). Almost the entire population of this small ethnic group were evicted from Rajasthali in Rangamati district and part of Bandarban district.

rights to land belonging to returning tribal refugees. They were subsequently required to relocate several times, and in some cases made landless altogether. But many Bengali settlers, backed by the military and the ruling political party, refused to give up the land to the returning tribal people. More than 40 villages formerly inhabited by the tribal population are still occupied by government-sponsored settlers.

In view of the scarcity of land available, especially after the reclassification of 220,000 acres of forest as reserve forests, it is difficult to understand how the government will be able to return land to the hill people while accommodating the Bengali settlers within the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Amena Mohsin, 2003, p.51). At the same time, it is unlikely that either of the two mainstream political parties, whether the BNP or Awami League, would ever consider removing the settlers even though the PCJSS claims their rehabilitation outside the Chittagong Hill Tracts was an “unwritten” part of the peace accord.

Developments in 2005

Violent incidents have occurred in the Chittagong Hill Tracts since the signing of the 1997 peace accord, occasionally causing further displacement of civilians. There are reportedly ongoing cases of land deprivation as Bengali settlers continue to move into the region, especially in Khagrachari District where the settlers constitute a vote bank for the ruling BNP (CARE, 2004, p.46; ACHR, 26 August 2004). Several violent clashes which occurred after the peace accord are directly related to land grabbing.

No major episodes of violence leading to displacement were reported in 2005. However, tensions between Jumma and Bengali settlers, political and criminal attacks, abductions, “anti-terrorist” military operations, and clashes between PCJSS and UPDF militants have continued unabated and continue to create a general climate of insecurity.

In Khagrachari district in January 2005, Bengali settlers started clearing and building houses on land belonging to tribal people. This time, the army stepped in and ordered the dismantling of the houses (PCJSS, January 2005). In August 2005, another serious incident was reported. PCJSS says more than 100 settlers attacked eight tribal villages, damaging trees, paddy and orchards, and threatened to expel the tribal population. The main motivation behind the attack was allegedly to seize 600 acres of land (PCJSS, August 2005).¹¹ There have also been reports of destruction of houses of tribal cultivators by Bangladesh border security forces accusing them of being terrorists (PCJSS, June 2005). Threats of eviction are widespread and could result in future displacement for local villagers as well as for those already uprooted.

In the course of 2005, the tribal communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts faced new restrictions and harassment by government officials aimed at limiting their freedom of

¹¹ The reported incident took place in the Latiban union of Panchari sub-district, Khagrachari district on 17 August 2005

expression, something which indirectly affects the internally displaced. Tribal representatives experienced official intimidation due to statements they made in UN fora such as the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York in May 2005 where they demanded the full implementation of the peace accord. Members of the Jumma communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts also faced harassment when at least two meetings were stopped by the authorities (PCJSS, March and April 2005). Leaders of the Permanent Bengali Welfare Council, which represents the Bengali permanent residents in the Chittagong Hill Tracts who had land titles before 1979 and who support the peace accord, were prevented from organising a meeting on 3 June 2005. Some of the leaders have reportedly been mistreated by the authorities (AI, 13 October 2005; New Age, 16 June 2005; Daily Star, 18 June 2005). On the other hand, the Sama Adhikar Andolon (Equal Rights Movement) representing the Bengali settlers has been particularly vocal and did not appear to face any hindrance during 2005 (Daily Star, 4 May 2005).

Humanitarian access to the Chittagong Hill Tracts continues to be difficult. Information gathering and monitoring about internal displacement are complicated by the fact that communications with the outside world are extremely poor. In August 2005, for example, the government closed down all the commercial mobile phone networks in the three hill districts on security grounds (PCJSS, August 2005). Internet connections are slow and often disrupted. The movement of foreign visitors is restricted to the urban centres of the three district headquarters and permission to enter rural areas is only granted exceptionally and with armed escorts, keeping internally displaced areas off limits to foreigners.

Thousands under threat of eviction

The tribal population of the Chittagong Hill Tracts remains under serious threat of displacement as a result of evictions from existing reserve forests, acquisition of land by government agencies for the creation of additional reserve forests, expansion of military facilities and lease of land by the government for commercial plantations. .

After 1992, the government reclassified 220,000 acres of forest as reserve forests, thus unavailable for use by inhabitants in the CHT. The tribal population suspects that the government is planning to resettle Bengalis in these areas (CHTC, 2000). IDPs who have been living illegally in reserve forests since the conflict are especially vulnerable and have faced the threat of evictions for several years. In 2001, the army filed charges against more than 830 families for illegal occupation of land in the Kassalong reserve forest in the Rangamati district. The IDPs responded by creating the Jumma Internally Displaced Rehabilitation and Welfare Association which demanded the restitution of their lands and proper rehabilitation before leaving the forest. The charges were dropped, but in June 2005, the army again threatened to burn down the houses of IDPs in several areas if they did not return to their original locations. Similar threats have been repeated on several occasions (JIDRWA, 16 November 2005). While no forced eviction has yet taken place,

the IDPs fear that the authorities will compel them to leave by curtailing their access to their livelihood.

While tribal IDPs are threatened with eviction, the government allegedly plans to move several thousand Bengali families – 65,000 according to available sources – to the Kassalong reserve forest (Daily Star, 4 June 2005). In addition to the eviction of tribal IDPs, such a major influx of Bengali families risks displacing Pankhua Christians who live in the Machalong area of the Kassalong reserve forest (PCJSS, April 2005).

The creation of additional reserve forests has increased the pressure on the tribal population further. The Bangladesh Forest Department has earmarked a total of 218,000 acres for new reserve forests in the three hill districts. Under this scheme, some 2,000 people, mostly from the small Khyang community, were evicted from their land in the late 1990s without any compensation (Feeny, 2001; SEHD, 1999). Most of these Khyang IDPs went to live illegally in the Rheinkhyong reserve forest of the Bandarban district. They have not yet received eviction orders but face an increasingly difficult situation as forest guards have stopped them from collecting firewood and, since late 2005, they are no longer allowed to practice shifting cultivation. Many families have reportedly moved deeper into the forest away from the control of forest rangers.

Acquisition plans proposed by the military to enlarge their facilities has led to and could result in future displacement of villagers. Bandarban district is the most affected, with a total of more than 65,000 acres of land assigned for the construction of military training centres and the extension of existing facilities. More than 230 families were already displaced in 1989 due to the creation of a new artillery training centre (ACHR, 25 June 2005 and Daily Star, 14 March 2005).

Another problem for the tribal people is the government's leasing of land for commercial projects such as rubber plantations, endorsed by the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CARE, 2004, p. 48). The government also plans to create a 5,000-acre Eco Park¹² in the Chimbuk Range of the Bandarban district which could displace at least another 5,000 Mro people (Daily Star, 14 March 2005). A local civil society group advocating for the protection of forests and land rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, confirmed that the Bandarban District would be badly affected by internal displacement if the government plans were implemented.

Land acquisition plans also threaten the minority population in other parts of Bangladesh. While there is little information about displacement due to such policies, a few episodes have been reported by local NGOs and the media. In northern Bangladesh, the Garo tribe in the Modhupur Forest of the Tangail district were reportedly displaced when they protested against the creation of an eco-park project announced by the government. The eco-park, allegedly supported by the Asian Development Bank, will cover an area of 3,000 acres to be encircled by a 20-kilometre-long concrete wall. The project will affect 21 Garo and Koch villages and threatens to displace 1,500 families (Rahman, February 2006;

¹² The government has created several ecological parks to develop eco-tourism in Bangladesh.

SEHD, Earth Touch Magazine, 2004). During demonstrations in 2004, police opened fire on the protesters and BNP supporters allegedly later attacked their villages. During both incidents, indigenous villagers fled their homes but it is not known whether they have since returned (Daily Star, 9 January 2004). Tribal villagers in northern Bangladesh have also reportedly been victims of evictions because they live in reserve forests. In 2002, forest guards and local Bengali villagers looted and destroyed a Khasi village in the Maulvi Bazar district for the purpose of evicting 20 Khasi households from forest reserve land (The Daily Nayadiganta, 23 and 24 July 2005).

Another issue which has increased the risk of displacement of the tribal population is the introduction of social forestry.¹³ Critics have objected that these new laws only promote commercial and industrial plantations, do not acknowledge the participation of the indigenous people and vest the decision-making powers solely upon the Forest Department, thereby reinforcing state control over forests and a policing approach to forest management. Social forestry practices in Bangladesh have proven to be detrimental to the environment and have led to land alienation when afforestation programmes have been implemented on lands traditionally owned by the local villagers (SEHD, 2001).

Religious minorities at risk of displacement

The national elections of October 2001 brought a massive victory for the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) which established a four-party coalition government including two Islamic parties. Religious minorities only hold seven seats in the 300-seat Parliament.

In the aftermath of the elections, attacks against the minority population who traditionally support the defeated Awami League party, escalated dramatically. Assaults are generally carried out by Islamist militants with alleged links to the ruling party. No survey is available on the number that may have been internally displaced due to violence targeting minorities, nor is there any information about assistance to the affected population. However, as religious intolerance has grown throughout Bangladesh, this has resulted in massive migration out of Bangladesh. Also, an increasing number of people targeted by violence in rural areas have left their homes to stay with relatives in safer places or to go to urban centres. The deteriorating political and security conditions in Bangladesh in 2005 as well as the culture of impunity have significantly increased the vulnerability of religious minorities. Threats, attacks and hate campaigns have created an unprecedented climate of fear which increases the risk of displacement.

¹³ Social forestry is defined as the sustainable management of forests and trees by local communities for their own benefit. But social forestry policies in Bangladesh remain substantially state-oriented, mostly promoting commercial plantations of exotic tree species.

However, there is no monitoring of displacement related to attacks on religious minorities. Collecting information about internal displacement is also complicated by the fact that media and human rights organisations are increasingly victims of attacks by extremist groups. Although local media report human rights violations, journalists are vulnerable to repression, intimidation, brutal attacks, torture and even murder (IFJ, 2003-4). There have also been incidents where human rights workers have been jailed and reportedly mistreated in detention.

The Hindus

Since the partitioning of India in 1947, the Hindu share of Bangladesh's population has steadily diminished. Although the government has officially promoted religious freedom, the Hindu population has lived in a climate of repression since the partitioning, especially through the deprivation of land, forests and other property. Hindus lost a large part of their lands during the communal riots in 1947, and continued to do so as a result of land reforms while the territory formed part of Pakistan (1947-1971). According to a local NGO, 30 per cent of Hindu households have been affected by a Vested Property Act which functioned as a tool to dispossess and displace Hindus and other minorities. The Act was only abolished under the former Awami League government. Millions of Hindus have emigrated or fled to India, some have been dispossessed while in India. According to a 1991 census, the Hindu population decreased from 25 per cent of the population in 1947 to an estimated 10.5 per cent in 1991. It is estimated that 5.3 million Hindus, or 535 people per day, left Bangladesh between 1964 and 1991 (HRF, 12 December 2001; Rehman, May 2003; SATP 2003; OneWorld, 14 June 2004). Approximately 1 million or 40 per cent of the total Hindu households in Bangladesh have been affected by the Vested Property Act, and the Hindu population has been dispossessed of land equivalent to 5.3 per cent of the total land area of Bangladesh (Abul Barkat, 2000, p. 441).

The BNP victory in 2001 started a massive wave of violence against the Hindu population. Their homes were looted and burned, temples desecrated and women raped (HRW, World Report 2003). Post-election violence compelled up to 200,000 Hindus to flee to safer areas or to migrate to India (USCR 2003). The intensity of the violence diminished after the first weeks following the elections, but spates of violence against Hindus have continued unabated since then. Violent assaults have been particularly frequent along the Indian border, mostly targeting Hindus but also other minorities (Griswold, 23 January 2005). Attacks against Hindus, their properties as well as their places of worship, have led to the requirement for guards to be present at temples and at religious ceremonies.

Although this has not been verified independently, two local NGOs, the Bangladesh Hindu Buddha Christian Oikya Parishad (BHBCOP) and the Human Rights Committee for Bangladeshi Minorities (HRCBM) have documented systematic intimidation and human rights violations against Hindus, suggesting that many continue to be displaced. Most of the reported incidents are directly related to land grabbing.

According to Human Rights Watch, there were persistent reports of abductions and forced conversions of minorities, and destruction and desecration of religious sites throughout 2005 as well as many reports of forced evictions of Hindus from their properties. In some cases of reported rape of Hindu girls, the police refused to pursue investigations (HRW World Report, 2005). The government has generally failed to investigate the crimes and prosecute the perpetrators (USDOS, Religious Freedom Report 2005; Daily Star, 16 September 2005).

The Ahmadis

Under the BNP-led government, the Ahmadis, an Islamic sect numbering 100,000 in Bangladesh, have been subject to new waves of threats, attacks and hate speeches from Islamist groups. Ahmadis profess to be Muslim but, because of their belief in the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, many Muslims have ostracised them for subverting a fundamental tenet of Islam, namely the “finality of the prophethood of Mohammed”. Intimidation campaigns have been organised by the Khatme Nabuwat, an umbrella of extremist groups with alleged links to the BNP’s two Islamist coalition partners, in order to pressure the government to declare them non-Muslims and ultimately to change Bangladesh to an Islamic republic.

On 8 January 2004, the government declared a ban on Ahmadiyya publications, although this was overruled in December 2004 by the Bangladesh High Court. Throughout 2005, the Khatme Nabuwat have continued to threaten the Ahmadiyya community and campaigned for Ahmadis to be declared non-Muslims. Human Rights Watch released a comprehensive report in June 2005 documenting abuses against Ahmadis ranging from mass rallies inciting violence, attacks on mosques, lootings of houses and incidents in which Ahmadis were evicted, ostracised, beaten, injured or even killed (AI, 16 February 2006; HRW, June 2005). The international community has on several occasions raised concerns about the situation of this group. As with the Hindu population, no survey exists to verify whether members of the Ahmadiyya community have experienced displacement.

Other minorities

In the sectarian atmosphere currently prevailing in Bangladesh, other minorities have also been targeted. One local NGO, Hotline Human Rights Bangladesh, compiled a list of assaults against the Christian community from 2001 to 2004. Their report documents rape and harassment of Christian women, the killing of a Christian priest and attacks on a church, and looting of Christian villages. The reported incidents generally involved local miscreants connected to BNP activists and most are related to land grabbing (HHRB, September 2004).

National assistance: political will is missing

The government of Bangladesh has done little to assess and respond to the rights and needs of people who have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict. A national strategy and political will are lacking to address the needs of the internally displaced in Bangladesh. This is also reflected in the Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan (PRSP) of Bangladesh, released in November 2005, which only mentions internal displacement once, in relation to trafficking (“Unlocking the Potential”, October 2005, p. 151). In relation to the Chittagong Hill Tracts, one of the stated objectives of the PRSP is full implementation of the peace accord and operationalisation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Refugee Task Force and Land Commission, but again there is no mention of IDPs.

In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the government continues to discourage involvement in the political situation by donors and international organisations due to the “sensitivity” of the issue. On 23 November 2005, a high profile two-day workshop on land issues organised among others by the Chittagong Hill Tracts NGO Forum and supported by DANIDA, was stopped by the Rangamati Deputy Commissioner following a memo from the Prime Minister’s Office¹⁴. Internal displacement was among the items on the agenda (Daily Star, 24 November 2005).

Since 1997, larger Bangladeshi NGOs have started programmes in the fields of health, education, water and sanitation, as well as microcredit activities. National NGOs are also intervening in diverse areas such as agriculture, horticulture, forestry, fisheries, poultry farming, microcredit, education, women in development, income generation, the environment, and training and development in general (Aarens and Chakma, 2002). Civil society organisations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts insist that external development initiatives should only be implemented with the informed consent and participation of the communities involved. Furthermore, they also demand development policies to be respectful of their cultural identities and be environmentally sustainable. In 1998 they reaffirmed those principles in the Rangamati Declaration released at a conference involving all development actors, including government and donors’ representatives.

The Hill Tracts NGO Forum was established in 1999 to strengthen the activities of local NGOs and improve coordination with development planners. Only a few of the 61 members have targeted internally displaced people with rehabilitation assistance. However, IDPs are likely to be among the beneficiaries of some ongoing development projects.

A serious obstacle for the Hill Tracts NGO Forum as well as for a significant number of local NGOs is the difficulty of obtaining official registration at the government NGO Bureau, without which they cannot receive any foreign grants. As a result some local NGOs complain that they are excluded from the internationally-supported development initiatives.

¹⁴ Memo ref. 2016/Joint Oper (A)/1304 dated 21-11-2005

Only ad-hoc international assistance

The international community has largely played a passive role when it comes to addressing the situation of internal displacement in the country. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the improved security situation has allowed for the start-up of relief and development activities. However, aid programmes have been suspended on some occasions, notably in 2001 after the abduction of aid workers and a generally deteriorating security climate after the elections. While some donors made implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord a precondition for starting programmes, many have started funding development projects. Bilateral and multilateral donors have given external assistance largely focused on development and disaster response (ADB 2001-2003, p.28). However, there are several signs of increasing impatience among the donor community. Widespread allegations of corruption and inefficiency together with the deteriorating security situation and the blocked political situation led to a sharp decrease of foreign aid to Bangladesh during 2005 compared to the previous year. In early 2005, donors also met in Washington D.C. without the participation of the Bangladeshi government to discuss the country's failure to meet conditions imposed by the main aid actors (COE-DMHA, 14 March 2006).

There is no official UN strategy to address conflict-induced displacement in the country. On 15 December 2005, the government approved the largest ever development project in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This ambitious multi-sectoral programme will invest \$50 million over the next five years (from 2005 to September 2009) to promote development and confidence-building and will be implemented through local NGO partners and the Chittagong Hill Tracts institutions. The programme aims at overall development for both the indigenous population and the settlers, which will also benefit IDPs. One of its 32 components will specifically target "returned refugees, internally displaced people and ex-combatants" and comprises two activities: (a) an assessment of the situation of these groups to determine their location, current socio-economic status and priority needs, and (b) activities to improve social services and economic opportunities through a special fund.

UN activities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region also include development projects by the children's agency UNICEF and a food security programme by the World Food Programme (WFP). UNICEF initiated its programmes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in the early 1980s and assisted activities related to pre-school education, health and nutrition awareness as well as small water and sanitation projects. In 1998, WFP expanded its activities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to respond to the influx of returning refugees from India. Its current food aid selection criteria include IDPs, women and the ultra-poor. Although not formally mandated, UNHCR monitored the return of refugees from camps in Tripura to the Hill Tracts after the signing of the peace agreement. In general, local NGOs have pointed out that education is a development sector, which appear to be disregarded as no budget has been earmarked for education in the UNDP programme and UNICEF education projects are restricted to pre-school activities.

Several international NGOs are also present in the Hill Tracts. Médecins Sans Frontières has been combating malaria and delivering basic health in the region since 2000 with a team of expatriates and Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) makes volunteers available to provide technical assistance to local NGOs.

In the aftermath of the violence in the in Mahalchari Sub-district of Rangamati in Chittagong Hill Tracts in August 2003, the government provided humanitarian assistance and also invited international agencies to assist the tribal displaced. Various government departments, local and international agencies provided relief assistance to the displaced population. The government approved a UN needs assessment mission and UNDP launched an appeal for one million Euros, largely funded by the European Commission's humanitarian aid department ECHO, covering food, health, water and sanitation, housing, agriculture, education, non-food items and rebuilding livelihoods for the displaced (EC, 6 October 2003). According to donors and international agencies all the affected people have now been adequately rehabilitated. WFP also assisted with food relief families displaced after an incident between PCJSS and UDPF supporters in September 2004.

No information has been found regarding assistance to the Hindu, Ahmadi or Christian religious minorities, as well as indigenous communities in Northern Bangladesh, either by national authorities, or by the international community. The EU Parliament passed a strong resolution¹⁵ on 14 April 2005, expressing concerns at violence against religious minorities.

Needs for addressing conflict-induced displacement in Bangladesh

In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, available information indicates that those who returned from India only to be displaced again are especially vulnerable and in need of assistance. But little is known about the remaining internally displaced population: to what extent they have reintegrated and restarted a livelihood, or whether they have special needs for material or legal assistance. There is no estimate of to what extent minorities were or are internally displaced due to religious persecution in Bangladesh.

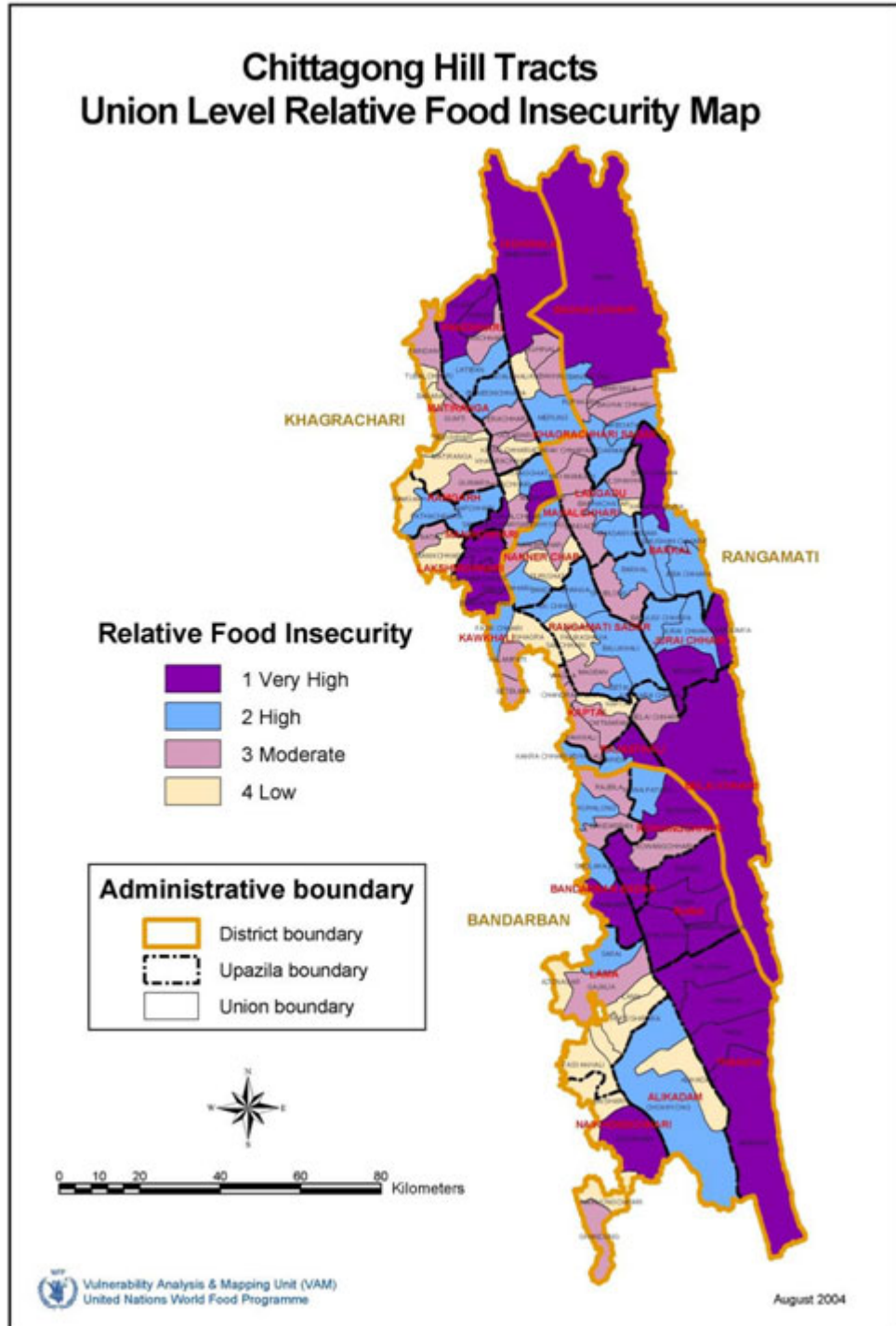
An assessment of numbers of IDPs, the degree of vulnerability and the risk of future displacement/eviction faced by these groups would be essential towards creating an adequate response to the human rights abuses faced by the minority population. The component in the UNDP joint programme with the Bangladesh government specifically targeting IDPs in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is an important first step. Also, there is a need to raise awareness of the phenomenon of conflict-induced displacement in Bangladesh among aid actors. Forced displacement is, for example, not mentioned in any of the main donor strategy documents and in general information about people displaced by conflict in Bangladesh is virtually non-existent.

¹⁵ European Parliament Resolution P6_TA(2005)0136 passed on 14 April 2005.

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement are an essential tool for resolving contention over the definition of IDPs and should be incorporated into national strategies and legislations. They should also serve as a guideline to international humanitarian agencies, local institutions and local NGO partners. To this effect, broad-based training is recommended to include civil society, aid agencies and government officials. The capacity-building components of the UNDP-funded project could offer a platform for awareness-raising. In-depth and independent surveys are also needed to identify the number of displaced people, their living conditions and the specific challenges they face. It is essential that the government, UN agencies, NGOs and the donor community cooperate to monitor and address the needs of the internally displaced in Bangladesh.

Note: For more detailed information on the internal displacement situation in Bangladesh, please visit the [Bangladesh country page](#) on the IDMC's online IDP database.

Annex: WFP Map on Food insecurity in the Chittagong Hill Tracts



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About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the IDMC contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people. In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the IDMC website and the database at www.internal-displacement.org.

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