

The Protection of Internally Displaced Women in Mekelle, National Regional State of Tigray, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the challenges of Internally Displaced Women (IDW) in Mekelle, the Regional State of Tigray, Ethiopia. Qualitative research methodology was employed to achieve the proposed objective. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions and key informants interviews were adopted to collect the primary data. This article posited the core values of the human security approach as analytical and theoretical framework. Consequently, the findings reveal that IDW in Mekelle are threatened by shortage of food, inadequate health services and socio-economic crises. Moreover, they are not getting appropriate women friendly treatments such as delivery services, pre and postnatal follow-ups. Above all, IDW who are living in the overcrowded warehouses with their men counterparts are vulnerable to rape, fear and stress to change their clothes and wash their bodies as well as sleep peacefully. Whilst, IDW in Mekelle are sidelined from discussions, decisions affecting them and the undergoing interventions are found to be ineffective to support them. Generally speaking, the root cause of the currently increasing massive displacement in Ethiopia rests on the recent political crises which correspondingly require political solutions. The Federal Government of Ethiopia has failed to fulfill its obligation to protect IDP (Internally Displaced People) at national level by coordinating with the Regional Government of Tigray in solving problems of IDP in the region. Hitherto, absence of competent expertise to handle issues of IDP, problem of exploiting public support and administering the limited resources at hand should be addressed promptly in Tigray Regional State.

Key words: Challenges, Ethiopia, Human security, Internally Displaced Women, Mekelle,

Introduction

1. Background of the Study

In the contemporary world, human beings face many challenges that affect their living conditions. One of the challenges in which millions of people are suffering from is conflict driven influxes of internal displacement. Natural and man-made problems such as disasters, political instabilities, economic exclusion as well as lack of good governance can also force people to leave their home. Internal Displacement of Peoples (IDPs) is interconnected to governance deficits, such as weak governance, fragile institutions, corruption, unequal distribution of wealth, political chaos that lead to economic marginalization (Shields, 2017). The United Nations Guiding Principles on Internally

Displaced People (UNGPIDP, 1998) provides widely accepted definition of IDPs. Accordingly, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) means:

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.

IDPs are the most vulnerable people to multiple threats of security, face human rights violations and obtain pathetic national and international protections. Though it is impossible to ascertain the exact number of IDPs, globally it is estimated that 70.8 million people had been internally displaced in 2018, and 33.2 million of these IDPs (47%) are women (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee [UNHCR], 2018). Due to recurrent conflicts, ethnic violence and human right violations, the highest proportion (36%) of the worldwide displaced people are found in sub Saharan Africa in which Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Central African Republic and Somalia are the most affected countries(Global Report on Internal Displacement [GRID], 2019).

In Ethiopia, a devastative intensification of new displacement of people occurred with haphazard upsurges of political instabilities concomitant to the political change in 2018. According to the reports by the USAID (2019) and GRID (2019), since the coming of the current regime, the country has the largest number of IDPs, with 2.9 million of new displaced peoples in 2018. Notwithstanding, ethnic tensions and conflicts are the major causes for 70% of internally displaced persons in Ethiopia. Recurrent patterns of natural hazards such as drought and flood are also additional factors (Behigu&Kweon, 2018; Arbouw, 2018; GRID, 2019).

Millions of Ethiopians suffered from loss of livelihood, their assets, family disintegration, physical and psychological problems, socio-economic and personal insecurity, deprivation and gender-based violence (Olanrewaju, et al., 2018; Internal Displacement Monitoring Commissioner [IDMC], 2019). Surprisingly, Ethiopian government tried to hide and divert the real causes of IDP, attribute all crisis to natural hazards and lacks political will to prevent it, protect the rights of IDPs and regulate durable solutions (Arbow, 2018; Behigu & Kweon, 2018; Mehari, 2017).

In addition to the challenges faced by all IDPs, women are more vulnerable to multiple kinds of adversities when they live in camps and face unique sets of challenges and deserve gender-responsive treatments. Violations of human rights including torture, rape, and loss of property and

risks of gender-based violence are common incidences that occur during internal displacements (GRID, 2019). Women, more than men are prone to lack of adequate health care, maternity and reproductive health problems, personal sanitarian equipment, pregnancy, childbirth, child feeding, family responsibility, gender based violence, discrimination, rape, sexually transmitted disease. Like men, they also face economic or financial problems, family disintegration, lack of enough food, lack of shelter, lack of appropriate clothing, poor education, unclean environment and lack of freedom are among the common challenges (IDMC, 2019; Behigu & Kweon, 2018; Olanrewaju, et al., 2018).

2. Statement of the Problem

Internally displaced women are overburdened by certain conditions related to pregnancy, and child bearing. They are also more vulnerable to gender based violence, sexual harassment, rape, discrimination and degrading treatments at the time of the forceful displacement period and on the camps. Having this in mind, 45% of the total number of IDPs, who reside in Tigray Regional State (112,000 IDPs) are women (Displacement Tracking Matrix [DTM] Tigray, 2019). Though the national government is the major responsible body to protect IDPs, non-governmental organizations such as civil societies, academic institutions, scholars and researchers are expected to give due concern, deal on issue of IDPs and contribute their stake for the protection of IDPs. Nonetheless, the IDPs in Ethiopia including the IDPs in Tigray Region have been overlooked.

Moreover, little is known about the protection and challenges of IDPs in general and Internally Displaced Women (IDW) in particular. To mention some of the previous studies, Mehari (2017) studied the Causes, Dynamics, and Consequences of Internal Displacement in Ethiopia. Behigu and Kweon (2018) looked at the general issues of internal displacement in Ethiopia, and Arbouw (2018) examined the role of African Union in addressing the lack of legal protection afforded to IDPs in Ethiopia.

Though displacement has bad consequence on women than it has on men, none of these studies gave special attention to situations of displaced women. Gender issues of IDPs are not considered. The situation of IDW in Ethiopia, the magnitude of the challenges they face and the undergoing responses are disregarded on previous studies. This study attempted to assess gender related challenges of IDW as well provide an insight into gender sensitive intervention mechanisms particularly in Tigray Regional State.

3. Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to assess the protection of Internally Displaced Women in Mekelle. Besides, the study has the following specific objectives:

- To examine the major challenges of the women IDW in Mekelle, and
- To assess the undergoing interventions pertaining to women IDW in Mekelle.

4. Methodology

The study employed qualitative research approach. Qualitative approach enables researchers to grasp detailed and unquantifiable data from participants that is suitable to assess attitudes, opinion and behavior of people (Mohajan, 2018). This study explores the situations of IDW and explain their narratives, and its objective is to assess and understand the lives of its participants. As a result, this study is a phenomenological type of the qualitative approaches.

4.1. Type and source of data

This study used both primary and secondary sources of data, the primary data was collected from IDW, IDP officials, and other administration bodies. Accordingly, key informants' interview, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews are employed. Moreover, books, journal articles, and reports are used as sources of secondary data.

In this study, 40 participants are involved, of which 34 of them are IDW, and 6 key informants (3 men & 3 women). The key informants are selected based on their position, knowledge, and familiarity to the area. On the other hand, three focus group discussions were conducted on three camps in which FGD1, FGD2 and FGD3 has 6, 7 and 8 participants respectively. In-depth interviews were conducted with 13 internally displaced women in three camps (sites) in *Kedamay Weyane*, *Quiha* and *Semen Kifleketemas* (sub- cities).

4.2. Data analysis

The views of all participants are translated, interpreted and then categorized in to themes. To do so, the major dimensions of the human security approach: food, health, social and personal security are used as framework of analysis. Basically, the protection of vulnerable group, women IDPs are at the center of the analysis.

4.3. Ethical considerations

All participants are informed about the objectives of the study and participated according to their full consent. The names of participants are not used. We avoided any sign that can indicate participant's identity. Their idea is used for only academic purpose. Moreover, previous studies and literature used in this study are cited and referenced properly.

5. Theoretical Framework: A Human Security Approach

Human security as a new theoretical framework and central point of academic debate was popularized after the end of Cold War. The 1994 United Nations Development Program report on human development was the turning point and pioneer to popularize the concept and shift the traditional model of state security into human centered security (Baluev et al., 2014; Singh, 2014; Trachsler, 2011).

Though several efforts were made to develop commonly acceptable definition on human security, the contention between the realist traditions, who promote state-based security versus the advocates of people centered security is arguable. The state centric traditionalists contend, protection of state borders and its sovereignty from external attacks to safeguard citizen's security. On the contrary, advocators of human centered security argue that a paradigm shift is needed from the traditionalist view, and more attention must be given to people's security. For protagonists of human security, the State which is authorized to ensure people's security fail in its obligation, and sometimes act in a threatening manner to people's security (Howe, 2019; Muguruza, 2017; Baluev et al. 2014 and Singh 2014). Correspondingly, the current Ethiopian government failed to reduce the threats of violent conflicts within the state, and protect the security of massive internal displacement (GRIDP, 2019).

According to Baluev et al., (2017), elites without full legitimacy maneuver the politics of governments more than external threats. Thus, if we try to compare the external threats to state sovereignty and human security threats within a country, existing literature reveal, the post-Cold War period is characterized by intra-state violent conflicts than the war between countries (Avis, 2019; Cilliers, 2018; Szayna, etal. 2017).

Despite their consensus on the core values of human security, such as survival, livelihood and dignity, the advocators of human security come with varied arguments pertaining to its interpretation, mainly with regard to the broadness, depth, and prioritization (Baluev, etal. 2017; Singh, 2014; Fukuda & Messineo, 2012). However, absence of a single definition cannot

undermine the value of this concept as it is a common problem within the social sciences. Instead, its wide-ranging nature allows integrating all issues related to the security of human beings, human rights and development. This approach is recognized as flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances. Moreover, freedom from fear (survival, livelihood and disease), freedom from want (employment and income) and freedom from indignity (socio-political and respect) become its major features (Singh, 2014; Gomes, 2016). Human security approach strives to overcome the negative outcomes and focus on understanding the downside risks and insecurities of individuals and society at grass root level. Hence, it is helpful for early identification of threats and prevent it proactively; rescue people if difficulties take place, and empower the vulnerable to cope widespread insecurities (Ibid). Most importantly, its interpretation is free to be accustomed with several threats of human security according to their contextual relevance.

As it is discussed in the background part of this paper, due to ethnic based conflict and disasters, internal displacement had been a common denominator of the present Ethiopia. The displaced people are vulnerable to or threatened by hunger, physical and psychological abuses, disease, human rights violence and gender-based violence, poor housing, unemployment, disappearing and separation of families, disruption, deprivation, social instability and personal insecurity. Hence, human security is employed as a theoretical framework of this article because its center of gravity is safeguarding the survival, livelihood and dignity of vulnerable people such as the IDPs in Ethiopia.

Therefore, employing a human security approach is appropriate to explore, describe, and analyze the multidimensional challenges, threats, insecurities and vulnerabilities of IDW. In doing this, the core dimensions of human security, food insecurity, health insecurity, social insecurity and economic insecurity are employed to analyze the status of IDW in Mekelle. Besides, the protection and empowerment of IDW is the most fundamental principle to examine the undergoing interventions. The human security approach promotes empowering the vulnerable people and it is recognized as the most effective bottom-up approach to counter potential threats of human security (Schneider, 2018; Gomes, 2016; UN, 2009).

6. Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Ethiopia

Protection is defined as the full activities aimed to respect the rights of IDPs. Besides, protection is a complementary concept that incorporates setting an objective to save and empower vulnerable

people, assuming legal responsibility and taking action for its implementation (Kälin et al., 2010). To this end, the UN had developed guiding principles for the protection of internally displaced people at international, regional and national levels (UN, 1998). These Guiding Principles are drawn from the major international human rights conventions including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1949), International Convention against the Discrimination of Women (ICADW), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR 1996) and (Kälin et al, 2010). These covenants are relevant to enhance the rights of internally displaced persons in general and women in particular. Accordingly, States have international obligation to protect, respect, and fulfill the rights of IDPs (UN GPIDPs, 1998). Besides, principle 3 of the Guiding Principles states, the primary responsibility to protect and assist IDPs lies on the national governments.

In Ethiopia, though IDPs is not explicated in specific legal document, there are several provisions relevant to issues of IDPs. It is worth noting that, the fundamental human rights prescribed in the constitution and other relevant laws, as well as other regulations are applicable to protect IDPs. Besides, Ethiopia is has signed some of the major international human rights treaties in which the guiding principles have been drawn from. Even though it has not been ratified, the government of Ethiopia has signed the African Union's IDP convention (Kampala Convention), to protect IDPs in line with the UN guiding principles (GRID, 2019). More importantly, article 9(4) of the FDRE Constitution states that, international conventions ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the constitution (FDRE, 1995). Besides, article 13 (2) of the same constitution states the fundamental rights and freedoms specified in chapter three of the constitution which affects IDP shall be interpreted in line with the (UDHR, 1949). The provision of affirmative action in article 35 can be applied to deliver gender specific supports for displaced women who are among the most vulnerable groups. Article 89 (3) of the Ethiopian Constitution states that the government shall take measures to avert any natural and man-made disasters, and in the event of disaster, to provide timely assistance to the victims.

To discharge this disposition, the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) was established to prevent disaster, declare its occurrence, provide emergency responses and rehabilitate victims (FDRE Regulation No. 363/2015, 2015). According to article 2 of this regulation, disaster is defined as 'a serious disruption of the functioning of a community causing wide range of human, material, economic, or environmental loss and impact which is beyond the

capacity of the affected community to cope using its own resources.’ Therefore, this definition embraces the overall situations of the conflict ridden internal displacement and could be handled by this commission. Nonetheless, though Ethiopian government has a number of legal and institutional frameworks that can be used to protect IDPs and contrive durable solutions, it has been ineffectiveness and unsuccessful (Behigu & Kweon, 2018; Arbouw, 2018; Mehari, 2017).

6.1. Jurisdictional issue: who is responsible to take care of IDPs in Ethiopia?

According to article 16 of the UN general principles, the national authorities of states are the primary duty bearers to protect IDPs. States should establish enabling structures at national, sub-national and local levels to prevent or minimize internal displacement, ensure the provisions of assistances for IDPs, and implement durable solutions. Hence, Ethiopia as a state is responsible to handle the problems of IDPs. It has yet to enact a specific legal instrument pertaining to IDPs. However, its commitments to its international human rights treaties and domestic national laws including FDRE constitution and regulation 363/2015 (NDRMC) show the responsibility of the state to protect, assist and fulfill the needs of IDPs.

The National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) is an autonomous federal government office having its own legal responsibility accountable to the office of prime minister, and its head office is in Addis Ababa. It is clearly stated that the budget of the commission is allocated and mobilized by the Federal Government (See articles 3, 5 & 12 of the FDRE Regulation No. 363, 2015). The commission is established to prevent disaster before its occurrences and intervene during and after the disaster periods at all levels. Besides, the commission is empowered to monitor support with respect to activities carried out by the lead sector institutes, coordinate and support the establishment of similar centers in lead sector institutes as well as at Regional, Zonal and *Woreda* levels. It is also mandated to coordinate, follow up and evaluate disaster risk reduction, disaster response and rehabilitation programs. It also plays a pivotal role in utilizing secured resources such as funds, food, other procured or donated emergency resources and equipment for emergency response (See article 4).

Within the newly established executive organ of the government, the Ministry of Peace (MoP) is established with the mandate of making appropriate preparation for natural and manmade disasters that may possibly cause internal displacement. It shall also follow-up the national disaster risk management within the country (FDRE Proclamation No. 1097, 2018). According to article 76 of

the FDRE constitution, this MoP is also accountable to the prime minister (FDRE Constitution, 1995). The ministry has the mandate to embark on pre-emptive protection mechanisms, prevent conflicts and internal displacement, facilitate provisions of proper protection of citizens including IDPs living in any part of the country, foster the co-existence of IDPs and host communities through inter-regional and inter-communal dialogues in collaboration with the concerned regional authorities to safeguard individual's human and democratic rights (See article 13, FDRE Proclamation No. 1097/2018).

In short, the authority and mandate to administer issues of IDPs resides upon the Federal Government. As a result, regional governments are not well empowered to handle the conditions of IDPs. Structurally, the regional governments have not any established body or organ to deal with IDPs and this indicates that regions cannot request budget from the Federal Government as part of their routine activities. Since the Federal Government is the sole distributor of the state's budget to the regions and since the mandate to deal with IDP is autonomously in its hand, the regions become financially incapable and systematically unprepared to give appropriate temporary assistance or offer durable solutions. The absence of specific legal instrument, clear policy and implementation strategies debilitate IDP protection in Ethiopia, obstruct provision of assistance to displaced people. In other words, lack of specific legal framework pertaining to IDPs in particular indicates there is unclear financial budget, accountable body, effective structure for durable solution and this shows less commitment of the government (Ferris et al., 2012).

7. Discussion and Results: Challenges of Internally Displaced Women in Mekelle

7.1 Lack of access to food

Nowadays, internally displaced people are facing multidimensional challenges throughout the world, and lack of food is among the common but the worst challenge of IDPs, especially for Internally Displaced Women (IDW) and children. Even though food is one of the basic needs for human existence, IDW in Mekelle are suffering from food insecurity and starvation. All informants participated in this study stated that the only thing that IDPs have to eat is the 15 kilos wheat/sorghum and 0.50 liter of oil which is provided by government monthly. In this regard, a mother had explained her experience as:

We have children and we cannot feed them properly. Then they go out of the camp, we can't ask where they are going because we know they are hungry. I have a 17 years old girl supporting me and her brothers. She buys bread and tea for them and sometimes clothes and shoes. I can't

ask her where she gets the money because I need her help. I am sick. I don't have a husband to help me.

The key informants who are in position to handle the issue of the IDPs in Tigray Regional State confirms that except the commonly known quota of 15 kilos wheat there is no additional budget from regional or federal governments. Although some volunteer parts of the society, governmental and nongovernmental institutions provide supports to IDPs, it is insufficient. Furthermore, the key informant officers admit that there is nothing special for women by our office, but external bodies, voluntaries or NGOs are sometimes helping them.

Normally, the primary responsibility to protect and assist IDPs lies on the National Government that should provide additional food to children, the pregnant, breastfeeding and the ill persons (Olanrewaju et al, 2018; UN Guiding principle, 1998). The problem of food has a spillover effect on the overall situations of the IDP in general and IDW in particular in the study area. Women, especially, those mothers who fail to provide food for their children are suffering and some are selling sex. Children are vulnerable to drop schools, participate in harmful child labor, become beggars and leave their home to eat leftovers and engage in criminal activities like theft. In addition, lack of food causes diseases related to malnutrition.

7.2. Lack of access to healthcare services

Health is the basic element for human being. The provision of health services to IDPs is one of the fundamental functions of government. Nevertheless, internally displaced women in Mekelle are complaining about the lack of healthcare services. One of the major difficulties faced by IDW in Mekelle is that women are infected along their infants and children. For example, the camp in *Kedmay Weyane* sub city is unsafe and perilous to the health of the IDP in general and more dangerous to IDW and children.

The compound is unclean. The septic tank of their toilet was burst and outflows. It had been a hub of flies and other insects. Its smell pollutes their warehouses for it is built right next to their house. This is more infectious to the little babies, children and the elderly women; as a result, many of them are threatened by different diseases. In effect, the unsafe and reckless disposal of waste highly affected the health of IDPs by attracting insects and mosquitoes that spread unpleasant smells. There is a bush that can breed or hide snakes and mice, dusty materials, and the sewerage passes close to the warehouses. These people have no money to mend or repair the drainage and avoid the

garbage related problems around the camp. To make matters worse, these vulnerable people cannot get the minimum health facilities. FGD participants explained this as follows:

Health services are allowed to us for free; however, we get only free examination. We hardly get medicines from governmental pharmacies. Most of the time, the doctors ordered us to buy medicines from private pharmacies at our own expense. The prices are not affordable to us at this hard time.

In principle, the provision of free health services are allowed for IDPs, however, the participant key informants admitted that the IDPs in Mekelle Camps suffer by the frequent orders for extra examination in private hospital and to buy medicine from private pharmacy. Nevertheless, IDWs has the right to get special attention to their health needs, including access to female health care providers and services such as reproductive health care, as well as appropriate counseling for victims of sexual and other abuses (UNHCR, 2017 and UN, 2018).

7.3. Economic challenges

According to the existing literature, both men's and women's economic participation decreases in times of war and forced displacement. Thus women's role is changed to income generating activities, economic responsibilities often become the primary earners by selling tea, door-to door tradings, and home based works like poultry and decoration materials (Barbolt & Wake, 2017). The majority of the IDW in Mekelle camps have faced an entrenched economic challenge and are searching any means of income for survival. The participants of FGDs explained that they faced with economic insecurity caused hunger and lack of money to start any business.

Participants of FGD also stated that IDW complained about the delay and unfair requirements to get credit. The first requirement to be fulfilled is, to save 20% of the money they want to borrow; however, they cannot save the required amount of money. If someone could save that sum the next challenge is to get a person for surety. No special consideration to IDWs. Moreover, it has very complicated and prolonged bureaucracy. As a result, some women expertise who have capability to generate income and support their family have been idle. For instance, an in-depth interview with participant 2 demonstrates as this:

I had a textile shop and I used to work as a known dressmaker in Amhara region, but I left all most all my property during my displacement period. Fortunately, my friend sent me two machines but I cannot work with them. I had tried to work here but there is no electric power. I applied to the *Woreda* administrators for the provision of working place, because I have not money to rent a house. I went to the credit union but they said to me our budget is done. The house renters request for an advance payment of six and above months. Besides, I have family

responsibility; I have to take care of my children. Nevertheless, if I start my work, I am sure I can solve my problems and afford the necessary costs for my family.

Legally, IDWs have the right to participate in economic activities. In addition, the UN guidelines explain, IDW have the right to participate in economic means and to get job opportunity (UNIDPs, 1998). Nonetheless, the camps are not enabling for work and even those who try to generate income for their livelihood are hindered by the shortage of electric power.

Young women who drop out of school are idle, depressed and isolated in the camps. As a result, some of them are selling sex at night clubs. This causes another effect in their health, and face unexpected pregnancies. For example, a young woman who held unexpected pregnancy has thrown her infant around the camp.

Moreover, the researchers had observed that, some IDPs particularly in *Semen Kifleketema* are investing more money to build a house (about 150,000 Birr) in temporarily allowed places. This has been a source of conflict between husband and wife. This is because, the women doubt its consequences; if the legal individual owners of the land or the government order IDW to take their materials and leave the place (second displacement), and the loss would be very high. At government level, the concerned officials clearly stated that as it is a temporary staying place just for a short period of time, no permanent investment shall be made.

7.4. Socio cultural problem

The social networks, cultural values and community relations built for decades are disrupted accidentally during displacement and the displaced people loss their social - cultural ties, social networks, and solidarity. Moreover, IDPs can face challenges to adapt new environment and unfamiliar social contexts. According to the participants of FGD, their social network such as *Edir* and *Mahber* (social organization) had important cooperative role during their mourning and happiness, however, things are changed here. Supporting this idea participant 9 said:

Now we are just living as animals not as human beings. We do not have social relation. No one calls us to their marriage, baptism, and many other social and cultural ceremonies. We have no money even to baptize our children; even the church requests us money. Personally, I face social discrimination; even my relatives and people who know me are not willing to call me to their house.

According to the participants of FGD3, disintegration of community by itself can increase the vulnerability of woman and weaken coping mechanisms. For example, conjugal conflicts were simply solved by elders in our previous life, but in camps many women are suffering because of

divorce and forced to assume to their ill prepared role as house head. For example, one of the IDW who came with her husband and two children, but now divorced explained her situation as:

When I start to generate income working as a waiter and help myself and my family, the behavior of my husband changed immediately. Instead of helping me in treating our children and household activities, he became aggressive not only to me but also to my children. He feels that he became dependent; he repeatedly talked about gossips and said to me that I was acting like a husband. Finally, we just divorced simply. Here there are no families or elders to mediate us. I have to go to my work in order to bring food for my children.

Displacement changes the role of husband and wife in their family and the normative family unit losses its existence. This change may not be welcomed and disappoint man who considered himself as a bread winner (Lokot, 2018). In Mekelle camps, woman's role as a household breadwinner of her family often resulted in divorce. However, the value and custom of the community towards women is stereotyped and the environment is not conducive to support women even if they perform good things. This emanated from the presupposed social role that considers women as subordinate to their men counterpart. For some, caring their children in the absence of their husband increases their responsibility and burden during the time of limited resources; therefore, the life of internally displaced mothers is more difficult in the camps. Participants of FGD2 explained that:

It is known that education is a basic right for all and should be accessible even to those who are displaced. Nevertheless, our children face several barriers. Our children interrupt school due to absent of food and facilities like uniform and exercise books, as well as the distance of public schools from the camps. Even the children who to bear the challenges and go to school are finally forced to drop it.

In addition to their multiple responsibilities, children's school dropout from their education is another source of psychological stress for IDW. According to article 36 of the Ethiopian constitution the government has responsibility to provide education services for them (FDRE Constitution, 1995). However, majority of the children in the camps of IDPs in Mekelle had stopped their school due to several factors related to their living conditions. Besides, according to FGDs1 there is a problem related to reproductive issue, particularly, pregnant women and childbirth in camp is overlooked issue and mothers hardly get appropriate medical, social and economic support. The authors of this paper met a mother who gave birth before two weeks at the time of data collection who stated her condition as:

I got pregnant without my plan and knowledge. After that, I accepted all things as it is and I tried to regulate my life as much as possible. It is very difficult to live here having a little baby and without any support. I have persistent pain in my backbone. You see this place is too cold. My baby started fever three days after his birth. Both of us cannot get any special treatment. What

we receive is just the normal 15 kilos. In our culture, childbirth deserves religious, cultural, and social treatments. Unfortunately, I am not lucky to get such treatments.

According to FGD3 and in-depth interviews with IDWs, women, particularly those who gave birth in the camp suffer too much. There was, for instance, a mother who threw her infant. This indicates the magnitude and agony of the challenges. Family break up is also an additional challenge which makes mothers to be separated from their support system. In this connection, participant 11 stated:

I have two children living with my relatives and I always miss them. I need to bring them to the camp but it is not comfortable because most of the women and their children living in the camp are affected by various communicable diseases. One day my daughter came to the camp and asked me why I live here lonely. I am always unhappy to miss my children. Family disintegration is the worst problem for me; I am always not sure about their living conditions. I doubt about the treatment of my children, but I cannot do anything for them.

According to principle 16 of the UN general principles, the right to family of IDPs is protected. These rights are also recognized under the ICESCR which imposes states to recognize the rights of everyone to adequate standard of living for families. Similarly, the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) grants the right to family and impose an obligation up on states to undertake necessary measures for its implementation. More importantly, article 34 and 36 of the Ethiopian Constitution (FDRE, 1995) and the revised Ethiopian family code (FDRE Proclamation number 213, 2000) guaranteed the protection of family and children by the state and society. Nevertheless, family brake up is common phenomena due to several factors. Some of the IDW left their husband in their previous residence and come with their children, “while others come with their husband and separated from their children and others left their daughters or sons from other men.

As it is articulated in article 9 (2) (k) of the Kampala Convention (2012) IDPs should be consulted and allowed to participate in decisions related to their protection and assistance. On top of that, the UN guiding principle four indorses the importance of IDW participation in all activities affecting them. IDW shall be entitled to protection and assistance required by their condition and get treatments that take into account their special needs (UN GPIDPs, 1998). Nevertheless, IDW in Mekelle are excluded and underrepresented on the activities and decisions that affect them. A woman participated in FGD2 shared her idea on the consequence of women’s exclusion from the committee as follows:

When I arrived at this camp, I was pregnant and I gave birth here. Maternal support is not even raised as an issue of discussion. Sadly, my new baby was denied from the monthly offered cereal (15 kilos), which is allowed to every displaced person in the camp. I complained so many times, but they told me that, my baby was not displaced. What makes it worse is that no one is ready

to stand by my side and help me. The so-called committee, a collection of men, cannot understand our problem. The committee knew what is happening to me, but they ignored me intentionally to keep their good relation with officials who maximize their personal advantage while they distribute the cereal.

Conversely, principle 20 of the UN guiding principle on IDPs and other international and national organs state that all children of IDP have equal right with the children born outside the IDP camps (Cazabat, 2019; IDMC, 2019; Mooney & Paul, 2010; UN GPIDPs, 1998). Either in the absence of knowledge or deliberate denial, illegal exclusion of children even to acquire the minimum standard support in the study area is found to be one of the challenges for women. Another social problem raised by participants is that some of the children especially the teenagers had been challenged to adapt the social life, language, culture and life style which is different from their previous ways of life. Thus, they are challenging their family.

7.5. Personal Insecurity and Gender Based Violence

Displacement by itself has different effect that threatens women's security than men (GRID, 2019). Women are vulnerable to gender violence such as rape, prostitution, sexual abuse and sexual harassment. According to WFO (2018), IDW who are living in a camp are the most vulnerable group confronted with personal and gender-based insecurity. The literature reveals that gender based violence increases during conflict induced displacement (UN, 2019).

The majority of the FGD participants stated the main challenges by IDW living in camp: while living with men in single warehouse, it is difficult to change their clothes freely; there is no place to wash her body and they feel insecure in the night. Living in the camp by itself is a source to personal insecurity. Most of the camps are unsafe, less comfortable and dangerous for the protection of personal security of the IDP in general and for IDW and their children in particular. Another threatening issue is the nearness of the warehouses to the bush that breeds snakes, mice, and other insects. The other in-depth interview participant also said that IDW are vulnerable to prostitution, rape, discrimination, sexual harassment and other related problems. To State a worst example: "A nine year- old child was raped recently in the camp."

The international, regional and national legal instruments put a special treatment of vulnerable people like children and women in a favorable approach. For instance, UN Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement underline the fact that states are responsible to establish strong and effective mechanisms for the implementation of laws and policies in relation to protection of IDPs especially

women (Brookings Institution, 2014). Moreover, national authorities have primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their country and put durable solutions (Kampala convention, 2012). However, in this case, the federal government and the regional governments fail to cooperate and assume their responsibilities for durable solution of IDPs.

8. Conclusion

Since the end of 2017, the number of internally displaced people is increasing significantly in Ethiopia. Even though there are several factors of displacement, the intensification of ethnic tensions and conflicts take the lion's share in escalating human displacement in Ethiopia. As a result, about three million people are suffering from forced displacement of which 112 thousand IDPs reside in Tigray Regional State. About half of the internally displaced people in Ethiopia are women; women comprise about 45% of the IDPs in Tigray. Forced displacement in Tigray causes worse consequences to all IDPs, and unbearable to women, children and other vulnerable groups. The ordeals demand viable protection pattern and gender sensitive response system. The IDW in Tigray Regional State are suffering from absence of access to food, health service; physical and psychological harassments; inadequate and poor sanitation facilities, shelter, education; family and social disintegration as well as psychological, stress. In Ethiopia, the federal government and the newly established Ministry of Peace and National Disaster and Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) which are accountable to the prime minister are ascribed as responsible institutions. Nevertheless, the federal government and its institutions have failed to prevent ever growing conflict ridden displacements, protect the displaced persons and devise durable reintegration mechanisms. The regional government and its local units have been made peripheral. Consequently, this study argues, the administration of IDPs in Ethiopia is a top-down approach, where the regional government and its local units are not empowered to protect and reintegrate IDPs. Regarding the existing minimal assistances that are offered at IDPs camps in Mekelle Women are excluded from participation in activities and discussions that affect them. On top of this, BOLSA and /or IDPs project office in the region has failed to device innovate alternative mechanism and undertake decisive solutions in spite of the active and motivational public support in Tigray.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researchers have suggested the following recommendations: In the first place, the federal government of Ethiopia is required to settle conflicts that intensify forced displacement. By decentralizing authority new and comprehensive mechanisms of prevention, protection and reintegration mechanisms should be devised to promote the human security of IDPs. To do this, full participation of regional governments, their local units and representatives of IDPs is necessary. Responsibilities should be clear and all accountable bodies should allocate budget to guarantee the rights of IDWs. Second, the regional government, its local units and host community should not be bystanders on issues occurring at the heart of their localities. Fully mandated and financed local government unit is indispensable that can bridge the interaction between the federal government and regional units. Third, the Regional State of Tigray, and IDPs Coordinating Office are expected to undertake swift decisions rather than waiting the Federal Government to take solutions for IDPs for years while the victims are the camps hopping durable reintegration solutions. Besides, it is expected to exert its utmost effort to mitigate women's adversity through the provision of improved health service, sanitarian facilities, and food staffs. Forth, internally displaced women must have full access to relevant and reliable information on the general situations and mechanisms of available assistance. Along with other community members, they should be actively involved as equal partners in all planning and decision making, which affects them. Specific measures must systematically be taken to ensure the full and equal participation of women and other groups to avoid the constant risk of marginalization.

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