
Press Release

Land reform must not shut out Côte d'Ivoire's IDPs - report

GENEVA 30 November 2009 - A reform programme designed to formalise customary land rights in Côte d'Ivoire may compromise durable solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) if their specific needs are not taken into account, according to a new report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

“Since the conflict erupted in 2002, some internally displaced people have been able to return to their home areas, but tensions around land between communities still run high, particularly in the highly fertile western areas,” said NRC Country Director in Côte d'Ivoire, Veit Vogel. “Land issues continue to cause most tensions, and access to land remains a priority for returnees.”

In the absence of a system of restitution or compensation for properties which IDPs were forced to abandon, the 1998 land law which is designed to convert customary rights into formal title deeds or lease contracts is the only legal framework to settle disputes in rural areas. It is therefore essential for IDPs to be able to access its mechanisms.

According to NRC Secretary General Elisabeth Rasmusson, “Although the aim is to reduce tensions resulting from the uncertainty of customary transactions, the implementation of the law may lead to further tensions over land if certain provisions and procedures are not adapted to the specific situation of IDPs.” For instance, absence from the land may compromise the legitimacy of their claims and, having sought shelter elsewhere in the country, they may not benefit from the notification systems foreseen by the law. The report provides practical recommendations to resolve these substantive and procedural problems and ensure that IDPs are included in the reform process.

The report also underlines that the numerous land disputes arising in protected forests or “*forêts classées*” (which are not covered by the 1998 rural land law) need to be addressed in a more systematic manner and encourages authorities efforts in that sense.

[Summary and recommendations](#)

[Full version of the report](#)

[IDMC Côte d'Ivoire country page](#)

Notes for Editors:

The report was presented to a number of Ministries, including the Ministries of Agriculture and National Reconciliation, local government officials, and Côte d'Ivoire's international partners at a meeting opened by the Minister of Solidarity and War Victims in Abidjan, on 10 November.

The Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), established by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring internal displacement worldwide. For information contact Kate Half, Head of IDMC, on +41 (0)22 799 0703 or at kate.half@nrc.ch.

For further general or country-specific information, go to www.internal-displacement.org.