

## **GPC HRE TT Webinar: How to Tackle Racism and Related Intolerance in the Context of Internal Displacement**

*Thursday, 7 October 2021*

- A recording of the webinar can be viewed [here](#)

### **Opening: Bruno Donat, Global Coordinator, Mine Action Area of Responsibility**

- There are several steps that can be taken to fight racism and ensure non-discrimination for internally displaced persons.
- [As stated by the UN Secretary- General](#), “racism is a deeply rooted global evil”, which “perpetuates inequality, oppression and marginalization”.. We see racism in many cases, especially in certain regions. In the context of internal displacement, intersecting forms of discrimination can force people to flee their homes. In some places, racial discrimination is the main cause of internal displacement and can prevent their safe return home. Often times, IDPs are stereotyped in the media which affects their basic human rights.
- We often encounter racial discrimination not only in the context of affected populations, but also in our own workplace culture. The Secretary General has stated that the United Nations is not immune to racism. In the last year, there has been progress in bringing conversations about racial equity to the table and even to public. However, these efforts have not been unchallenged, and there is still much progress to be made in taking concrete steps forward to make the humanitarian sectors more equitable.
- Importance of recording, collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data on racial discrimination.
- With or without discrimination, IDPs already suffer a lot. The do no harm approach should be taken in protection work. For instance, in Colombia humanitarian actors implement activities that benefit both IDPs and host communities, to avoid jeopardizing the relationship between them and reducing any social tension.
- As fellow human beings, we should not be using ambiguous or naïve language. We should advocate for what we believe in. Often times, strong advocacy starts with discussions such as this webinar.

### **Claude Cahn, OHCHR chair of the UN Network on Prevention of Racism and Protection of Minorities**

- The Network was founded in 2012 by the SG and was given a mandate for UN agencies to work together to fight racial discrimination and protection of minorities. Following 2014, however, it became relatively dormant. In the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd and the outpouring of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, UN agencies realized that there was a call from the public to do much more on the issue, both internally and externally.
- Last year, the Network prepared [guidance for UN teams in the field](#). The document is comprised of questions relating to different themes aimed to help UN teams develop better programming to address racial discrimination. The background framework is ICERD, the UN Minorities Declaration (1992), and the Durban declaration (2001).
- Example from the field on strengthening documentation on racial discrimination
  - Issues related to internal displacement involve people who are known to the majority communities, but face stigma and negative sentiment. A complaint was brought to CERD committee involving Moldova, which used testing. Testing means sending two testers into the establishment (ex: housing availability, job applications, etc.) where discrimination is alleged. Usually,

there would be one tester from the majority group and one from the minority group. In this case, a Romani man was denied a job interview at a fast food restaurant, whereas a man from the Moldovan majority was given an interview.

### **Marie Joseph Ayissi, CERD Committee**

- CERD committee was created by the ICERD. Its mandate is to ensure the monitoring of state compliance with provisions of the Convention through a number of procedures, notably the reporting procedure. Every two years, State parties report on the measures they are taking to implement the Convention.
- The Committee also examines individual complaints against State parties. For example, IDPs whose rights have been violated can submit individual claims before the committee with the help of non-governmental organizations.
- The Committee also issues general recommendations, which are guiding tools adopted by the committee to assist states in understanding the content, scope, etc. of the Convention's provisions.
- CERD considers groups such as IDPs, refugees, people of African descent, persons with disabilities, as persons who are vulnerable and need protection beyond what the Convention provides for. The Committee has developed general recommendations as guidance for additional protection to these groups.
- The 1993 General recommendation outlined a few principles:
  1. State parties must ensure IDPs can return to their home under safe and voluntary conditions
  2. Displaced persons have the right to participate equally in public affairs and be granted equal access to public services
- The Committee has applied these principles in a number of concluding observations, such as the one made to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this context, the Committee raised the issue of returnees facing difficulties in reintegration and accessing the labour market. Also did so with regard to IDPs in Colombia, Ukraine and Iraq.

### **Valerie Svobodova (on behalf of Madeline Garlick, Head of Protection Policy and Legal Advice Section, Division of International Protection, UNHCR)**

- Racial discrimination is not only a protection issue once displacement has occurred, but also act as a driver of displacement, and can equally hamper durable solutions and prevent IDPs from returning to their homes.
- UNHCR has developed a [Guide on how to address and prevent racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance](#).
- As humanitarian actors, we have a long way to go in tackling racism in protection responses. It starts with stronger monitoring and assessment of signs of racism and xenophobia. There should be a system of referral between actors on the ground.
- In all countries, there is racial discrimination and xenophobia. Humanitarian actors should not be afraid to call out racism and take necessary steps to address it.
- Human rights education can serve to empower IDPs to make strong connections with host communities and promote social cohesion.
- Human rights mechanisms can be a very useful tool for advocacy and addressing specific cases. However, they are still not being used to their full potential.

### **Discussion**

*Any examples of tackling racism in operations using human rights education?*

*How to use human rights mechanisms and education to address discrimination against IDPs and how to help IDPs be more vocal in raising these issues?*

*If an IDP comes forward with an incident, how to identify if the alleged practice constitutes racism and address it in a way that does not affect relations with the authorities?*

- **Claude Cahn:** Must be mindful of the particular situation of affected persons and repercussions of bringing a justice claim. If it is impossible to provide any protection concretely and the situation is very sensitive, it is not necessarily useful to talk to them about rights. Human rights mechanisms can be used to support victims, but they can also be used directly by protection officers in order to raise factual information on situations on the ground and help the system develop a better understanding of the protection situation. For example, UNHCR regularly briefs the CERD committee on protection issues.
- **Marie Joseph Ayissi:** If there is no possibility to raise issues with the authorities in the country/locality of operation, two things can be done when IDPs make claims of racism. First, identifying a pattern within several claims can make advocacy much stronger and increase chances of obtaining a remedy. Second, these situations can be brought to the attention of special procedures and other human rights mechanisms.
- **Rossana Scita:** Should take into account racism occurring in the workplace, which can affect the work of humanitarian actors. Racial discrimination and unconscious bias can also affect our work in supporting affected populations. As professionals working in the humanitarian sector, we need to acknowledge the unconscious bias that we may have. Workshops and dialogues can be useful in raising awareness on racism in the workplace.

Resources shared during the webinar:

- UNHCR, [Guide on how to address and prevent racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance](#).
- As humanitarian actors, we have a
- [UN Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities webpage](#)
- UN Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, [Checklist to strengthen UN work at country level to combat racial discrimination and advance minority rights](#)
- [CERD Committee webpage](#)
- [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#)
- CERD Committee, [General recommendation XXII on article 5 of the Convention](#)
- Roundtable on Equality and Non-Discrimination in Nationality Matters to End Statelessness (21 October, 15:00-17:00 CET): [Flyer](#), [Registration form](#)
- [UN Fight Racism campaign](#)
  - For those with access to iSeek: [Fight racism | United Nations](#)