



Seminar highlights

Profiling Internally Displaced Persons in urban settings

Geneva, 27 May 2008



To complement the *Guidance on Profiling Internally Displaced Persons*, in 2006 IDMC commissioned a study from the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University to develop research tools to estimate the number and distribution of IDPs living in urban settings, and to gather information about their assistance and protection needs. Case studies were conducted in Khartoum (Sudan), Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) and Santa Marta (Colombia) between 2006 and 2008. The case studies compared the experience of IDPs and others living in the same city, in order to draw parallels between their basic needs and protection concerns.

IDMC and the Feinstein International Center presented the study and its findings, the lessons learnt and the main recommendations at a workshop on 27 May 2008 in Geneva. In the morning, the main objectives and the challenges of the study were presented to donors and decision-makers, and in the afternoon, methodological issues including logistical and practical challenges were presented to profiling experts and others interested in responding to urban displacement situations.

Seminar presentations

- The opening address by Christophe Beau, Acting Head of IDMC, highlighted the current policy and operational difficulties in profiling internally displaced people in urban settings and introduced the rationale for the IDMC/Tufts University urban displacement study. As part of its responsibility to promote the collection of reliable and relevant data on IDPs, to improve the response to their protection and assistance needs, IDMC undertook two separate but interconnected initiatives. Together with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), IDMC developed a practical tool on profiling IDPs (the *Guidance on Profiling Internally Displaced Persons*) and initiated together with the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University a research project on profiling IDPs in urban areas.
- The presentation by Anne Davies, author of the *Guidance*, focused on the general definition and purpose of IDP profiling and set the context by clarifying why, when and who should conduct profiling exercises. She emphasised that profiling exercises enable only “best estimates” and it is therefore important to adopt a collaborative approach and reach an agreement with all interested parties on the objectives of the exercise before its start.
- Karen Jacobsen of the Feinstein International Center presented the profiling tools developed for the study, and explained what the tools make possible and their limitations. She reviewed the methodological approach and described the logistical and practical challenges that arose in the studies.
- A panel including Khassoum Diallo, Senior Statistician with UNHCR and Vincent Omuga, Humanitarian Affairs Officer at OCHA's Displacement and Protection Support Section commented on the methodology and two of the case studies (Khartoum and Abidjan). The reviewers provided constructive suggestions for improvements, particularly with regard to sampling and number projection techniques. The panel-

lists highlighted how the reports identified critical problem areas faced by IDPs in those two cities and how the studies could inform programme strategies.

Challenges and grey areas

Both the presentations and the following discussions underlined the usefulness of profiling exercises. However, it is not always easy to determine who is an IDP and who is not and when somebody ceases to be an IDP. A number of grey areas and challenges when trying to identify IDPs were discussed.

With regard to the scope and the data collection techniques of profiling exercises, the participants highlighted that:

- Based on the IDP definition in the UN's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, criteria for who is an IDP need to be agreed by the country team to ensure that the resulting figures enjoy as large a consensus as possible.
- It can be difficult to separate the coerced elements of somebody's decision to leave their homes from other reasons including economic ones.
- Profiling exercises provide a "snapshot" of a situation. In countries where repeated and secondary displacement occurs, updating information is important and will require additional resources. Profiling tools should be designed for easy re-use.
- There is concern about overlaps between profiling exercises and needs assessments. It is important to highlight that the two are not the same but complementary, and that they can be conducted simultaneously or the former can be used as a basis for the latter.

Some protection concerns were also mentioned:

- Many urban areas can be unsafe, and profiling exercises should ensure the safety and security of those conducting the exercise and of the surveyed population.
- Involving local actors (such as national universities, NGOs and associations, the government) can present both advantages and disadvantages. It can improve the rigour of the methodology and allow the survey to be deeply embedded in the context, but sometimes people may be more reluctant to talk to local organisations.

Finally, the issue of resources was discussed:

- It is important to consider carefully the resources needed to conduct a profiling exercise as it could be demanding in terms of time and financial and human resources.

Participants agreed that these challenges call for careful consideration. *The Guidance on Profiling Internally Displaced Persons* provides a reliable framework for answering these questions. In the case of urban IDPs, the idea was to develop a methodology that could address some of these grey areas.

The tool for profiling IDPs in urban areas

The tool developed by the study shares many features of other profiling exercises but is intended specifically for urban populations. In urban areas, migrant groups tend to settle among existing residents of slums and shanty towns, without visible barriers separating those displaced by conflict and/or generalised violence from other migrants. The seminar participants evaluated the methodology developed by IDMC/Tufts University for profiling IDPs in such contexts.

Regarding the scope of the methodology and the sampling techniques used:

- The tool includes both a methodological approach and a conceptual framework, and allows IDP population to be estimated, patterns of distribution identified, the situations of IDPs and non-IDPs compared.
- It is intended for profiling IDP and non-IDP populations in protracted, non-emergency situations but it can be adapted for use in different settings or for different populations (such as urban refugees, migrants, urban poor, war or disaster-affected groups).
- The tool allows users to identify the characteristics, situations and coping mechanisms of a number of urban groups (how they are living, in what kind of housing, their source of income, what their protection challenges may be). It provides an indication of whether IDPs, for example, live in a different way or are more vulnerable than non-IDPs. The findings can therefore inform policy makers, for example, whether or not to intervene, on behalf of which groups to intervene, or what interventions are necessary.
- The tool consists of a household survey based on a two-stage random sample of the entire population of a designated urban area, which does not require respondents to identify themselves as IDPs.

In terms of resources:

- The exercise would require three to four months from preparation and data collection to data analysis, and cost around \$100,000 per urban area. The methodology could be adapted according to the objective of the exercise and the context.

The discussions that followed the presentation of the tool and the panel review provided the ground for interesting suggestions and considerations. With regard to the scope of a profiling exercise in urban areas:

- Non-IDP households often host IDPs and a clear categorisation of the groupings can be drawn: IDP families, IDP families hosting local community members, non-IDP families, non-IDP families hosting IDPs. The methodology could be adapted to estimate the number of IDPs in host families.

Regarding data collection and extrapolation techniques:

- There are challenges when working with census data. This is often outdated, and areas such as shanty towns where IDPs are more likely to be found are commonly not included. There are ways, however, to adapt the methodology and update the census data to have a clearer idea of the total urban population and extrapolate a more accurate result.
- Stratification can save a considerable amount of time, especially during data collection. The hypothetical presence of IDPs in certain areas can be tested to see whether expectations match with reality. Results can also be stratified afterwards. Prior knowledge of patterns of displacement is advantageous.
- The methodology allows for a “snapshot” picture. It is a good starting basis for further analysis, which should be carried out by the humanitarian community with in-depth knowledge of the context.
- A particular strength of the methodology is that it includes focus groups with the data collectors, which allows for detailed and regular feedback on the execution of the survey.

It is important to present the preliminary results to key informants as this allows the data collected to be validated.

Conclusions

In the last session, participants were asked to think ahead to the possible next steps. The idea was to see how to obtain a rigorous tool and adapt it to the field. Is the tool useful? How do we refine the methodology? Does it need collaboration between an outside agency and the country team to go ahead?

- It is a useful planning tool, it is crucial for having reliable figures.
- The methodology needs to be part of the collaborative approach. The preparatory phase is a particular example of this, where all actors need to come and work together.
- If the aim is to have an impact at the policy level, the methodology needs to be looked at and adopted at the inter-agency and country levels. IDP associations also need to be heavily involved.
- Given the generally limited census data available, the methodology needs to be refined in order to produce a more reliable estimate of the number of IDPs in any given city. The focus needs to be put on the sharpening of the profiling tool with the inclusion of a qualitative component.
- The collaborative approach is the clear way forward. The policy and programming implications of the findings of the profiling exercise needs to be clearly laid out, and agreed on as part of the collaborative exercise.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), established by the Norwegian Refugee Council, was requested by the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee to set up an IDP database in 1998. The Geneva-based Centre has since evolved into the leading international body monitoring internal displacement caused by conflict or violence in some 50 countries worldwide.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre focuses on the following activities:

- monitoring internal displacement and maintaining an online database on IDP-related information ;
- providing training on the protection of IDPs ;
- advocating for the rights of the displaced and making their voices heard ;
- increasing visibility and awareness of internal displacement.

For more information on IDMC's profiling work, please visit www.internal-displacement.org/profiling or contact IDMC at profiling@nrc.ch

The Feinstein International Center

The Feinstein International Center's (FIC) mission is to develop and promote operational and policy responses to protect and strengthen the lives and livelihoods of people living in crisis-affected and marginalized communities who are impacted by violence, malnutrition, loss of assets or forced migration. The FIC does this through rigorous field-based, organizational and policy research. Its research uncovers opportunities to effect institutional change at all levels and feeds into our teaching, which is in itself a major opportunity to affect future institutional change.

For information on the studies please contact the author at Karen.Jacobsen@tufts.edu