

Guidance Note 8

Profiling Internally Displaced Persons

1. What is profiling?

Profiling internally displaced persons is a collaborative process whereby data on individuals or groups who have been internally displaced is collected, with the purpose of informing advocacy on their behalf, improving protection and assistance interventions and, ultimately, finding a durable solution to displacement.

For more comprehensive guidance on profiling see ‘**Guidance on Profiling of Internally Displaced Persons**’ (forthcoming 2008).

The level of detail gathered through profiling will vary depending on the context. At a minimum, core data includes the number of IDPs disaggregated by age and sex,¹ and their location(s). But IDP profiling is not just about numbers. Additional information may include, but is not limited to: cause(s) of displacement; patterns of displacement; protection concerns; key humanitarian needs; and possible solutions for the group or individual.

Profiling may overlap with but is different from **needs assessment**, which is intended to gather and analyze a wide variety of data in order to get a **comprehensive overview of humanitarian needs and protection concerns** (see *Part III.1*). 📖 Profiling is primarily intended to identify the number and location of IDPs among other population groups, although information about urgent needs can be gathered as well. Profiling and needs assessments are different but complementary exercises that can be carried out in tandem, if appropriate and desired.

Internally displaced persons are entitled to the same rights as other citizens or habitual residents of their country. Profiling should not result in the creation of a real or perceived “IDP status”. Such misperceptions may place IDPs at risk, contribute to discrimination and stigma, and exacerbate community tensions. It may also give the impression that IDPs are being singled-out for preferential treatment or create incentives for others to present themselves as displaced in order to access assistance or services.

Profiling or registration?

Registration is one of several profiling methodologies. It involves the gathering and recording of detailed personal data with the aim of identifying the person at a later time, for instance to facilitate the delivery of assistance and protection.

Registration is not necessarily required, and sometimes not even desirable, in IDP contexts: rather the benefits of registration depend on factors such as the actual need for detailed data, the role of the government, and the period during which the information will remain valid. Where registration is needed, efforts must be made to seek informed consent for the collection, registration and use of data.

Appropriate data protection mechanisms must be put in place to safeguard confidentiality and protect those registered from potential protection risks, including violence, discrimination or stigma.

2. Main Methodologies

IDP profiling is based on sound data collection. As IDP situations can vary widely, they will not all require, or even allow for, the same scope or type of data collection. Data-collection methods must be conceptually sound as well as practical and well-documented. They should facilitate the tracking of displaced persons and obtain realistic, commonly agreed estimates of their numbers and profiles.

¹ These might only be best estimates in many cases, especially in sudden emergencies or where IDPs are located in areas difficult to access. Estimates might be from primary or secondary sources and will need to be verified later with more systematic methodologies.

The chart below gives an overview of the most practical and widely used methodologies, including both quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (non-numerical) methods. Quantitative methods are based on statistical designs, are comparable to one another, and are often complemented with qualitative methods. Note that most methods require some kind of *triangulation*, that is, comparison of data on the same situation, yet gathered through different methodologies.

| Methodology | Description |
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| 1. Desk review | <p>A desk review involves the assessment and analysis of existing data from all available sources, both locally and internationally. It provides important background information and helps to assess what further data is needed.</p> <p>It can include review of various types of data, such as statistics, reports, evaluations, news reports, governmental registers (e.g. tracking births, deaths, marriages, residence, voting, census), information provided by civil society organizations and so forth. The IDMC database on internal displacement, covering over 50 countries, can be a useful source as well (see www.internal-displacement.org).</p> |
| <p>Quantitative Methods – These methods collect (mainly) numerical data on the whole population or part of it, although results can often be extrapolated to the whole population.</p> | |
| 2. Rapid population estimates | <p>Such methods are suitable for estimating the numbers and basic characteristics of a population in a short period of time, such as during ongoing movement. Although ground access is generally needed for accurate estimates, some estimates can be made without such access. Rapid population estimates are most useful when applied to a well defined geographic area. Key methods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area survey using aerial/satellite imaging – Used to gain a broad picture of an ongoing movement, to estimate numbers, or see what people are fleeing from and where they are moving to. Useful when the need for information is urgent and access is limited. • Flow monitoring – People are counted when passing a given point (crossroads, bridges, mountain passes, etc.). Can be comprehensive, i.e. taking place continuously, or based on spot checks (counting at the same location at certain times of the day or week). Useful for estimating numbers during mass movement (e.g. during an exodus or return). • Dwelling count – Counts the number of huts/houses/tents in a given area to obtain an estimate of the number of the people in that area. Can be combined with a survey to obtain additional information on the residents. • Head count – Counts the number of people settled in a given area. This method is labour intensive in comparison to a dwelling count. • Dwelling/Head count using sampling methods – With the help of sampling methods,² counts a subset of dwellings or of the population and extrapolates the results to estimate the overall population figure. |
| 3. Surveys | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys involve the collection of data on a sample or part of the general population and generalizing the results. They can be used at both the household and the individual level. They are useful when the population and ground conditions are stable, allowing for the collection of additional information. • Surveys can be used to identify IDPs within a larger population group or to identify individuals and groups with specific needs within the IDP population. In this case, a cross-section of the whole population would be interviewed to compare differences in socio-economic status or exposure to risks between IDPs and the local population. ►► |



² **Sampling** is the process of selecting a representative portion (“sample”) out of the total (“sample universe”). It can drastically reduce the cost of the exercise in terms of time and human and other resources, while preserving the accuracy of the data to the maximum extent possible. In addition, profiling can be done using primary sources (data that agencies collect themselves) or secondary sources (data that comes from the reports of others) or, for best results, a combination of both.

| Methodology | Description |
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| 4. Registration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The primary goal of registration is to establish the identity of persons through detailed data-collection at the individual or household level. The level of detail and use of data will differ among humanitarian organizations, depending on the purpose of registration. For example, registration for the purpose of delivering assistance generally requires less detail than registration relating to specific protection interventions. Registration often takes place in a phased approach, first at the family/household level and then at the individual level. In most cases, registration data will have to be regularly updated (continuous registration). <p>Note! <i>Informed consent must be sought for collection, registration and use of data. The purpose of registration must be explained to all concerned prior to taking place. Also note that registration interviews are not “status determination” interviews: IDPs have the same rights and entitlements as other citizens and residents in their country and do not need to “apply” or “be granted” a special status to receive protection and/or assistance.</i></p> |
| 5. Population census | Usually conducted by national governments every ten years. A census covers the entire population of a country and, in addition to individual data, gathers a set of relevant socio-economic data. Humanitarian actors can support a census and, for instance, request that data relating to IDPs is also collected to improve protection and assistance interventions. |
| <p>Qualitative Methods – Involve the collection of (mainly) non-numerical data and are not based on statistical concepts. They complement quantitative methods and are particularly useful for <i>triangulating</i> and interpreting results.</p> | |
| 6. Interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group discussions – These are structured discussions, using the same set of questions, with different groups within the population. It involves separate discussions with women and men, of different ages, and diverse backgrounds (ethnicity, language, religion, with disability, etc). They are helpful to gain a better understanding of people, their concerns and capacities, and help ensure that the information collected represents the views of all the different groups within the society (see Part III.1). 📖 Key informant interviews – Key informant interviews are usually conducted with a small number of pre-selected individuals, who may hold relevant information. Interviews should include both men and women of different ages and diverse backgrounds, as with focus group discussions. |

Caution! The safety of displaced individuals, families and communities must be a primary consideration at all times. The rights to privacy and confidentiality must be respected and informed consent is to be sought for the collection, registration and use of information. This requires that the purpose of profiling and intended use of information is clearly defined and explained prior to it taking place. Adequate mechanisms for data protection and confidentiality must also be put in place.

3. Key protection considerations on profiling

Regardless of the methodology chosen certain common protection standards must be taken into account and applied.

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| <p>1. Support the role of national authorities</p> | <p>The primary responsibility for providing protection and assistance to displaced persons and other affected communities lies with the national authorities (see Part I.1).  Creating parallel structures and information systems may not be sustainable, thus, where possible national structures should be supported. This is all the more important where humanitarian actors have limited access to displaced populations.</p> <p>Different considerations may however apply in cases where the authorities are unable or unwilling to provide protection and assistance, or where the information collected might put the displaced community at risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess national data gathering systems and, where possible, work with and support such systems rather than creating a parallel system. |
| <p>2. Ensure IDP/host community participation³</p> | <p>Both the displaced and the host community (men and women of different ages and diverse backgrounds) should be consulted in order to ensure that their views or concerns are accurately reflected. Failing to do so may undermine the accuracy of the profiling and have adverse effects for displaced individuals and communities (see Part III.1). </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When possible, ensure the participation of men and women of different ages and diverse background in all phases of the profiling exercise (planning, implementation, and analysis). • Experience has shown that IDP self-profiling can yield very useful data. It may also provide opportunities to identify community-based protection mechanisms in need of support and gaps to be filled. • Consider in advance how the profiling will be perceived by the IDP community, the local community, local authorities and other actors and take action to minimize the risk of tension, discrimination or stigma arising against the IDP community. |
| <p>3. Reach common objectives with partners</p> | <p>Different partners may enter the profiling exercise having different requirements, objectives and divergent plans for follow-up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all partners agree on the purpose of the profiling and that it will result in improved protection and/or assistance of the relevant population. • Be inclusive; try to incorporate the expertise of other sectors/clusters in profiling exercises and share the results with relevant humanitarian partners. |
| <p>4. Respect privacy and seek informed consent</p> | <p>Some IDPs may prefer to remain anonymous and not be identified as being displaced, either for reasons of privacy or because of fear of discrimination, stigma or various forms of violence, including forced evictions or arrest and detention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always seek informed consent from individuals on the collection, registration and use of data. This requires that the purpose of profiling and intended use of information is clearly defined and explained prior to it taking place. • Assess what impact the profiling exercise may have on IDPs and their communities prior to it taking place. Where IDPs either oppose the exercise or their safety and security may be put at risk, profiling may need to be limited to secondary data-analysis. |

³ Usually, profiling targets IDPs, as their situation is unknown and data on host communities is normally available on official records. However, appropriate profiling can also target surrounding communities to get a better appraisal of the IDP situation as well as an updated overview of the situation of the communities.

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| 5. Protect confidentiality | <p>Profiling and other information gathering often involves collection and management of sensitive and confidential information. Inadequate data security and data-protection measures can both violate people’s right to privacy and place them at risk. The safety and best interests of internally displaced persons must be a paramount consideration at all times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that confidentiality guidelines are adopted and implemented, and that confidentiality of data is secured at all times. |
| 6. “Profile” your team members | <p>Teams undertaking profiling may need to gather data from individuals of different age, sex and background, who may have suffered as a result of conflict, displacement and human rights abuses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed interviewing of victims/survivors of human rights abuses should never be undertaken by those undertaking profiling. Interviewing requires skills, a solid understanding of protection, and knowledge of available referral and response mechanisms. It should only be undertaken by trained staff. • Ensure that profiling teams include individuals of different ages, sexes and ethnic, religious, linguistic and other backgrounds to facilitate outreach and counter possible mistrust, fear or perceptions of partiality. |
| 7. Keep in mind ‘invisible’ IDPs | <p>While some IDPs may seek safety in camps, settlements or public areas and buildings where they can easily be identified, many others may seek shelter with friends, family members or ‘host families’ in urban or rural areas. They may thus be difficult to locate or distinguish from the resident population. Certain individuals or groups, such as women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities, often remain ‘hidden’ or lack freedom of movement. As a result they are sometimes neglected or ignored by humanitarian programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that profiling exercises do not ignore certain IDP groups, such as those living with host families or in rural areas, or certain individuals, such as women, children, older persons or persons with disabilities. • Household surveys can be useful in such circumstances as they enable collection of more detailed information, including not only IDPs but also host families. • Information indicating an increase in numbers of people living in certain areas or accessing certain services can also be useful. |
| 8. Ensure data is gathered according to age and sex | <p>Disaggregation of data according to age and sex is necessary to be able to assess the specific situation or needs of men and women of different age groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make an effort to obtain information specific to men, women, girls and boys to minimize the possibility of overlooking specific needs related to age and sex. |
| 9. Formulate specific mechanisms for IDPs on the move | <p>Population movements during displacement can change continuously and it can be difficult to distinguish between those who are still on the move, those who have settled temporarily, and those who are moving back and forth between their homes and hiding places or camps.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to other methodologies, it can be helpful to form a dedicated “population movement committee,” as is the practice in eastern DRC and Somalia. Such committees, which include participation by local authorities, NGOs and civil society, try to obtain regular data on new IDP movements. |
| 10. Coping with pressures related to numbers | <p>Profiling may bring to light that previously known numbers were under-estimated or, in some cases, over-estimated. There may be political or financial pressure to either limit or inflate numbers. Numbers may also be used or misused for political or other purposes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such pressures are best overcome if all involved ensure that profiling exercises are methodologically sound and undertaken in a collaborative and inclusive way. |



Resources

- *Guidance on Profiling of Internally Displaced Persons* (endorsed by the IASC Protection Cluster in July 2007, forthcoming 2008) will be available at www.humanitarianreform.org
- *Improving IDP Data: Prerequisite for More Effective Protection*, by E. Rasmussen, in *Forced Migration Review*, December 2006, p.16-17 www.fmreview.org
- *Handbook on Registration*, UNHCR, 2003 www.refworld.org



Useful websites

- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre www.internal-displacement.org