1. Profiling of urban IDP situations

Description

The general lack of information about IDPs is a major challenge for those advocating for the fulfillment of their rights. Tools such as the urban profiling exercise developed by JIPS are useful ways of collecting baseline demographic data on displaced communities. Given that urban IDPs tend to be dispersed and are difficult to distinguish from the urban poor more generally, the JIPS methodology gathers comparative data on both IDPs and their counterparts in the general population in the same neighbourhood. Since the experiences of different groups can vary, there is a need to better understand the realities of different groups who reside in the same area (e.g., IDPs, refugees, economic migrants and urban poor with different backgrounds).

Profiling provides a comprehensive picture of the target populations, including demographics, indicators of strengths and vulnerabilities, their preferences in terms of settlement options and their degree of local integration. As such, it forms a solid basis from which to determine policies on durable solutions and the development of other strategies addressing problems identified during the profiling exercise. Profiling combines quantitative and qualitative methods at the individual, household or community level to provide data disaggregated by location, sex, age and diversity. The analysis can be enriched with key informant interviews and a review of secondary data, leading to an extensive profile of urban populations affected by displacement and the local infrastructure and policy environment they face.

Profiling is not, however, limited to data collection. It is a sequence of interlinked steps that begins by building a consensus around the need for the exercise, and ends with the validation of its findings by the profiling partners and target populations themselves and the dissemination of results. It is a collaborative and ethical process based on the principles of transparency, and actively promotes the buy-in of partner organisations and governments at all stages.

By bringing central and local authorities and their humanitarian and development partners together to collect information on demographics, migration patterns, and factors related to the process of attaining durable solutions, including housing, land and property issues, profiling by design aims to ensure that the data obtained is widely accepted and used. It helps to ensure that those working in the same urban setting share a common understanding of the displacement situation, and reduces the need for parallel surveys by different organisations and the costs they involve.

IDPs often face specific challenges in securing housing and livelihoods, ensuring community support and building social networks. In many urban areas affected by displacement, however, the local population live in similar conditions and face similar issues. Profiling aims to understand both the crossover and the divergence between the different communities’ realities, which in turn allows policymakers and practitioners to incorporate them into the development of targeted responses. Profiling works towards durable solutions by creating an evidence base for decision making.

Displaced people, like all migrants, bring with them particular skills and experiences that can benefit their host families and communities, and which, if tapped into, form the foundation for durable solutions. Profiling sheds light on such positive attributes and those of IDPs’ counterparts in the local population (host families and other non-displaced neighbours) as well as their vulnerabilities. By looking at future aspirations, plans and decision-making criteria it forms the basis of a forward-looking response, even in volatile contexts.

Methodology and process

JIPS was established in 2009 to provide technical support and coordination for governments and their humanitarian and development partners in conducting collaborative profiling exercises. Given the rapid rate of urbanisation worldwide, the ever increasing numbers of IDPs who flee to towns and cities, and the distinct challenges of data collection in urban areas, JIPS has produced a specific profiling methodology for them. JIPS also specialises in profiling to inform strategies for durable solutions, and advocates for the operationalization of the criteria for durable solutions set out in the IASC’s framework on the issue as the starting point for planning an exercise.

Each profiling exercise uses a methodology tailored to the specific information needs of those who will use the data, and established via jointly agreed objectives. A mixed methods approach tends to be used to capture different types of data and triangulate findings. Consultation with national entities responsible for compiling statistics ensures that the methodology is compatible with existing population data sources such as censuses.

When possible, profiling aims to provide statistically representative information of the target populations acquired through an anonymous sample-based household survey. The surveys may also include individual-level questions for each household member. The quantitative data is used to inform housing programs and policies that support durable solutions for urban IDPs.
complemented with focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The anonymity of the process is important on a number of levels. It has ethical and protection implications, particularly when dealing with sensitive topics, and it helps to guarantee more reliable data by clearly disassociating responses from eligibility for assistance.

Given the consultative and time-consuming nature of profiling exercises, they generally take several months to complete. Findings are validated and disseminated among the partners in the exercise, wider groups of stakeholders and the target populations.

Using profiling to improve housing policies and programmes

Urban profiling can support more effective and sustainable housing policies and programmes for IDPs in a number of important ways. In Afghanistan, JIPS supported NRC in conducting a protection study of IDPs that identified a series of housing, land and property (HLP) issues and the need to improve the humanitarian response to them. The findings led to greater investment in an existing HLP taskforce that enhanced its expertise and reach. The study also played a significant role in bringing about official recognition of urban IDPs and the inclusion of area-based approaches in a national policy on displacement. Both the survey and the policy highlight in a number of areas the importance of urban IDPs and the need for a more inclusive approach to the development of objectives, methodology, collection tools, analysis and recommendations.

The recommendations highlighted the need to use the definition of an IDP set out in the Guiding Principles to shape the government’s response, and to assist other people with similar needs living in the same areas. The recommendation corresponded to the finding that differentiating between various groups in urban areas, including IDPs, could be highly complex and sometimes unnecessary.

Hall’s survey underlined the need to facilitate all three options for durable solutions rather than focussing on return, and emphasised that addressing displacement was as much a development challenge as a humanitarian one. The study also highlighted the need for a comprehensive profiling exercise to gather countrywide data to support the design and implementation of the national policy on IDPs.

Notes

1. JIPS, Guidance for Profiling Urban Displacement Situations: Challenges and Solutions, June 2014
2. Interview with a staff member of the Norwegian Refugee Council on 9 December 2014
3. Ministry of State, Ministry of Planning and Development, the National Statistics Office (INS) and UNHCR in Afghanistan, Monthly IDP update, 1-31 December 2014
4. UNHCR Afghanistan, Monthly IDP update, 1-31 December 2014
5. OCHA, Afghanistan 2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview, p.10
6. IDMC, Still at risk: security of tenure and the forced eviction of IDPs and refugees in urban Afghanistan, February 2014, pp.5-6
7. ODI, Sanctuary in the city: urban displacement and vulnerability, 23 June 2013, pp.6-7
8. IDMC, February 2014, op. cit, p.18

In terms of IDPs’ registration, it states that “it is not necessary in the case of area-based responses to internal displacement [notably in urban areas] which do not require the explicit identification of individual IDPs”. It also recognises profiling as a tool to design response. “In such cases, general profiling will be sufficient for purposes of planning and implementing such response” (para 3.3 ii, p.20).

Adequate housing for informal settlers is also identified as a key element of durable solutions. “Where there are large numbers of IDPs living in informal settlements and in substandard conditions, (authorities) will consider strategies to formalise informal settlements and improve living conditions there, and to provide the urban poor, including IDPs, with low-cost social housing” (4.22 Para 14, p.26).

Housing programs and policies that support durable solutions for urban IDPs

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