



METHODOLOGICAL PAPER

IMPACT AND EXPERIENCE

Assessing severity of conflict displacement

FEBRUARY 2019

The number of people internally displaced by conflict and disasters, and the complexity of internal displacement crises across the world, have substantially increased in the last 15 years.

IDMC recorded 30.6 million new displacements associated with conflict and disasters in 2017, in 143 countries and territories worldwide.¹ Forty million people are estimated to be internally displaced as a result of conflict and violence alone.

There were four times as many internally displaced people in Colombia than in Nigeria at the end of 2017.² Does this mean displacement in Colombia deserves more attention? The experience of IDPs, and their resulting vulnerability, differs significantly across displaced populations. In some contexts, IDPs are exposed to high levels of violence, malnutrition and disease in overcrowded and unsanitary displacement camps. In other cases, IDPs are provided with free social housing and priority access to services.

IDMC has been providing quality data on internal displacement since 1998. Yet in spite of its work, an ongoing shortage of robust data, analysis and evidence on the impacts of displacement makes it difficult for governments, humanitarian and development agencies and other actors to target appropriate and effective response strategies. With this in mind, IDMC has been developing methodologies to assess every dimension and aspect of displacement.

In 2016, IDMC released a global confidence assessment to report systematically and consistently on the main challenges we face when collecting data on conflict IDPs.³ In the same year, we disaggregated for the first time our global conflict stock figure by year of latest data update, showing how IDMC deals with decaying data.

In 2017, IDMC began collecting information regarding the conditions under which return movements took place, highlighting cases where information about conditions following return is too sparse or unavailable.⁴

To call attention to situations of particular concern, highlight key threats to IDPs' safety and wellbeing, and better measure progress towards finding solutions to internal displacement, IDMC now aims to complement displacement figures with an assessment of displacement severity.

By the end of 2019, IDMC aims to provide information on the severity of displacement in about 50 countries affected by conflict displacement, in a further effort to provide high quality data which can support governments, humanitarian organisations and other key stakeholders responding to and preventing situations of displacement.

This severity assessment will compare the severity of displacement across different groups of conflict-related IDPs in different countries and contexts. In some cases, all internally displaced people in a country may be experiencing similar levels of severity. In countries such as Myanmar, in which there are several displacement situations, the severity of each group of conflict-affected IDPs would be evaluated individually.

To enable comparisons on a global level, in the absence of reliable and systematic data collection on quantitative indicators, IDMC will use a standardised set of evaluation criteria to obtain as much consistency and comparability as possible across situations assessed. This report outlines the methodology adopted by IDMC, and provides preliminary results for Colombia and Iraq.

RELATED INITIATIVES

Before developing the methodology for this severity assessment, IDMC considered the possibility of adopting existing relevant tools. However, a review revealed that while these tools could provide valuable input none fit the assessment's specific purpose.

The Global Cluster for Early Recovery's 2017 Handbook on Durable Solutions includes relevant questions along the eight Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) criteria.⁵ As the handbook's objective is to provide information for durable solutions programming, its focus is on identifying barriers to durable solutions, rather than systematically assessing conditions for IDPs. The handbook's suggested questions were able to inform the development of IDMC's methodology, but the Global Cluster's recommended bottom-up approach is not implementable at a global level for all existing displacement situations, due to lack of resources.

JIPS' Durable Solutions Analysis Guide, which offers a comprehensive set of measurable indicators of the IASC criteria, also requires a bottom-up approach.⁶ The indicators require large-scale quantitative data collection among displaced populations. At the global level, such an approach is unrealistic: IDMC's monitoring in 2017 included 178 countries and data is not being collected systematically on these indicators across all those countries.

Similarly, the Return Index developed for Iraq in 2018 by Social Inquiry, IOM-DTM and the Returns Working Group relies on key informant interviews with representatives of the displaced population (in this case, returnees) in each location of interest.⁷ The Index is designed to assess the likelihood of return, and therefore focuses on areas of origin rather than areas of displacement. As a result, the Index's scores are calculated according to the statistical impact of different indicators on return, which goes beyond the scope of IDMC's severity assessment.

ReDSS' Durable Solutions Framework comes closest to the objectives of IDMC's severity assessment.⁸ Using a traffic light system, the framework assesses progress towards durable solutions based on 30 indicators inspired by the IASC criteria. The indicators are rated based on a comparative assessment of conditions between IDPs and their host community. This means that in a context where both the host community and the displaced population are suffering equally from high levels of food insecurity, the indicator would be rated 'green' because IDPs are not experiencing any additional vulnerabilities as a result of their displacement. This methodology cannot therefore be used to compare severity across different groups of displaced populations, nor necessarily to draw attention to threats to IDPs' safety and wellbeing.

These are not the only examples of existing tools which could facilitate the assessment of severity. Humanitarian standards, such as those developed by SPHERE, could be used as proxy indicators for severity. For example, in terms of water and sanitation, SPHERE recommends a minimum of 15 litres of water per person per day, and a minimum of one toilet for every 20 people.⁹ This data is inconsistently collected across all contexts examined, however, and rarely after the emergency phase or in non-camp situations. As a result, these measures could not form the basis of IDMC's severity assessment.

METHODOLOGY

The primary categories of the severity assessment will be aligned with the eight criteria outlined in the IASC framework for durable solutions: safety and security; adequate standard of living; access to livelihoods; restoration of housing, lands and property; access to documentation; family reunification; participation in public affairs; and access to effective remedies and justice.

Three questions were identified for each category, based on the review of existing initiatives and IDMC's expertise on internal displacement. These questions were designed to assess the severity of displacement in the absence of quantitative data on standardised indicators, and without comparing IDPs to their host communities or the national average. To facilitate analysis, questions are closed rather than open-ended. Following review, this approach delivered the following questions:

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Is the area to which IDPs are displaced free from active fighting?
- Is the area to which IDPs are displaced free from explosive hazards?
- Are IDPs free from persecution or human rights abuses (including GBV) in the area to which they have been displaced?

LIVELIHOODS

- Are there income-generating opportunities for IDPs?
- Do IDPs have enough to eat?
- Can IDPs avoid resorting to negative coping strategies such as child labour, prostitution or child marriage?

HOUSING

- Are IDPs living in safe, adequate shelters able to withstand the local climate (i.e. not in unfinished buildings, tents, etc.)?
- Are accessible and effective mechanisms in place for IDPs to apply for property restitution or compensation for their lost or damaged property?
- Are IDPs protected from forced evictions?

SERVICES

- Do IDPs have appropriate access to water and sanitation?
- Are there accessible and affordable health care services?
- Are primary-age IDP children in school?

DOCUMENTATION

- Do IDPs have documentation to access services or assistance track?
- Do IDPs have access to easy and affordable mechanisms for replacement documentation?
- Are IDPs able to travel freely?

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

- Are IDPs living with their close family members?
- Are there any family tracing and reunification mechanisms available to IDPs?
- Are protection mechanisms in place for unaccompanied and separated children?

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

- Can IDPs vote in elections in their area of displacement?
- Are the issues of IDPs represented in the platforms of political parties?
- Are IDPs able to participate in decision-making regarding their displacement?

REMEDIES AND JUSTICE

- Do IDPs have access to legal counsel and/or representation?
- Do IDPs have access to effective law enforcement?
- Do IDPs have access to effective remedies and justice for harms that they suffered?

In order to answer these questions, IDMC monitoring experts will contact their data sources and partners in the field to evaluate each category of displacement severity. Multiple partners will provide input to facilitate triangulation of information. This will be supplemented by an analysis of secondary documentation undertaken by the monitoring experts.

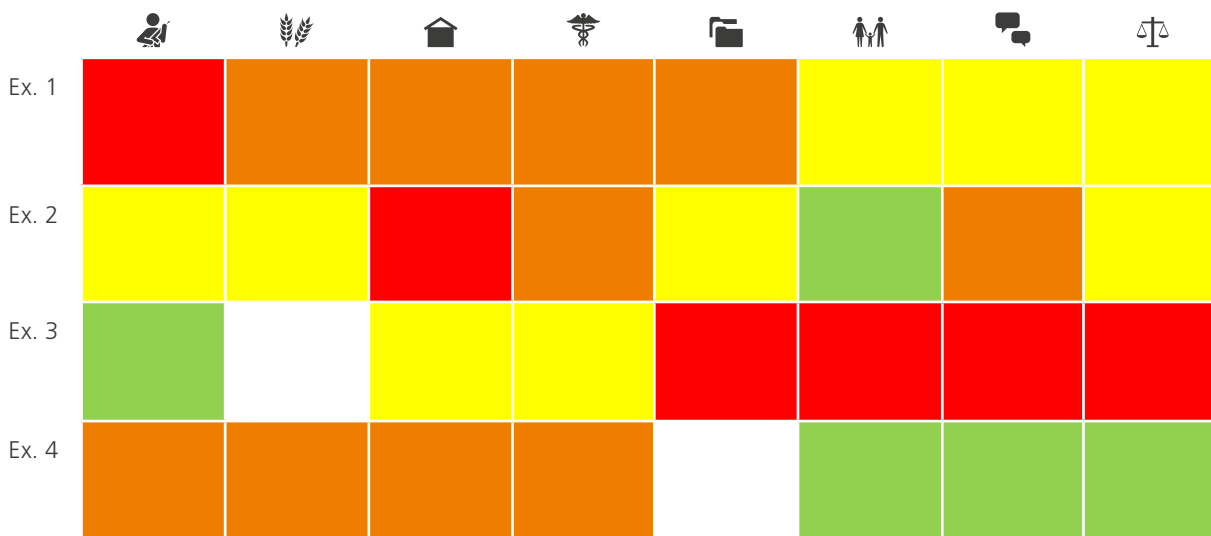
Based on the information obtained from partners and secondary documentation, the monitoring experts will decide whether the relevant indicator should be coded red (2), yellow (1), or green (0) depending on severity (or white, if there is insufficient data available). For example, if IDPs are experiencing significant human rights abuses in their area of displacement, this would be coded red. If there is access to income-generating activities, but that these are mostly limited to daily labour, it would be coded yellow. If IDPs are easily able to obtain replacement documentation, this would be coded green. In order to facilitate subsequent analysis, each colour is attributed a score from 0-2 to reflect increasing levels of severity, as noted above.

To code the category itself, the average score of the three questions will be calculated. To account for higher levels of variation, the categories will then be colour-coded green, yellow, orange or red depending on the average score:

- 0 to 0.49: green
- 0.5 to 0.99: yellow
- 1 to 1.49: orange
- 1.5 to 2: red

Where there is insufficient data to respond to one of the three questions in the category, the average will be created based on the two remaining questions. If two of the three questions had insufficient data, the remaining question will be the basis for the category. Where no data is available on any of the three questions, the category will remain white.

The assessment will therefore result in a matrix highlighting each displacement situation's experience of severity for each of the categories, as per the following example:



LIMITATIONS

While efforts to triangulate information minimise subjectivity, monitoring experts are required to make a judgement based on the information provided. In some cases, it can be challenging to provide a categorical answer to the questions, as the situation may vary among IDPs. In this case, monitoring experts will be required to use their expertise to select the most appropriate coding.

The lack of reliable quantitative data on standard indicators at the global level prevents the creation of an authoritative composite indicator which could rank displacement situations

in terms of severity. Our severity assessment is more qualitative in nature, and expresses the judgement of our experts and our partners in the field. The assessment represents a tool to provide contextual information on the living conditions of IDPs and highlight critical areas for intervention in different settings.

This approach is of course subjective. Even so, as ACAPS has argued, subjective measures may sometimes be more reliable and more valid in humanitarian assessments than measures considered to be objective, which are often narrow in scope and prone to significant error.¹⁰



In October 2017, more than 1,000 people fled to the village of Catrú in Colombia's Chocó region. "They came because they feared that more people would be killed," says one of the community leaders in Catrú, home to the indigenous Embera people. Photo: NRC/ Ana Karina Delgado Díaz, November 2017

THE CASE OF IRAQ AND COLOMBIA

Drawing upon the results of research conducted by an IDMC researcher in Colombia and Iraq in 2018, the following is an example of severity assessments for IDPs surveyed in Colombia (Soacha, Cucuta, and Medellin) and Iraq (Ninewa governorate).¹¹ As noted in the methodology, the severity assessment will not generally be based on primary data collection conducted by IDMC, although where such research is conducted as in the case of Colombia and Iraq the information will inform the analysis. These results are only preliminary, not having been triangulated by actors on the ground.

Based on the information available at the time of drafting, the severity of displacement has different effects and impacts on IDPs in Colombia and Iraq. In both cases, internally displaced people face continued threats to their safety. Persecution,









in particular due to perceived affiliation to armed actors, is common in both settings and explosive hazards also pose a serious threat, in particular in Iraq.

In Colombia, IDPs face challenges in accessing adequate housing, services, and income generating opportunities. Even though a full legal framework is in place, access to effective remedies and justice is limited.

The situation in Iraq's Ninewa governorate is even more complex, partly as a result of widespread destruction of housing and infrastructure. Lack of documentation also represents a serious concern for IDPs, curtailing freedom of movement and undermining access to services.

Based on the methodology detailed above, table 1 presents an overview of severity across the eight categories. Detailed information is available below.

TABLE 1: Preliminary assessment of severity in Colombia and Iraq

								
Colombia	1	1	0.66	0.66	0	0	0	0.66
Iraq	1.33	1.33	1.33	1	1.66	0.5	1	0.5

1. COLOMBIA

		Comment	Code
Safety and security	Is the area to which IDPs are displaced free from active fighting?	Although there is active fighting in parts of Colombia, the majority of IDPs appear to migrate to urban areas, where they are confronted with criminality and extortion but rarely active fighting.	
	Is the area to which IDPs are displaced free from explosive hazards?	Colombia is heavily affected by explosive hazards. However, this is mostly concentrated in rural areas.	
	Are IDPs free from persecution or human rights abuses (including GBV) in the area to which they have been displaced?	IDPs can be persecuted due to perceived affiliation to armed actors, political affiliation, or gender identity. They can also be subject to extortion.	
Livelihoods	Are there income-generating opportunities for IDPs?	Rural IDPs may struggle to access the job market in urban settings. Many are limited to daily labour or informal work. However, income-generating opportunities are generally available.	
	Do IDPs have enough to eat?	In the early stages of displacement, IDPs report experiencing food insecurity. IDPs from rural areas note that hunger is more common in cities due to the lack of natural resources. However, food insecurity does not appear to be widespread.	
	Can IDPs avoid resorting to negative coping strategies such as child labour, prostitution or child marriage?	There are reports of youth engaging with criminal groups in the absence of opportunities for employment.	

Housing	Are IDPs able to avoid resorting to negative coping strategies such as child labour, prostitution or child marriage?	Although free social housing has been made available to a number of IDPs, others are living in informal settlements. There are also reports of homelessness.	
	Are accessible and effective mechanisms in place for IDPs to apply for property restitution or compensation for their lost or damaged property?	Mechanisms are in place, but in practice many are unable or unwilling to apply for restitution due to threats by armed actors in control of their land.	
	Are IDPs protected from forced evictions?	IDPs living in informal settlements may be subject to evictions, but it does not appear to be a significant concern.	
Services	Do IDPs have appropriate access to water and sanitation?	IDPs living in informal settlements struggle to access basic services. They may for example share latrines and rely on water trucks.	
	Are there accessible and affordable health care services?	Particularly vulnerable Colombians are entitled to free health-care under the SISBEN system, although access challenges remain and not all IDPs meet the relevant criteria.	
	Are primary-age IDP children in school?	Primary education is free and compulsory, and most IDP children are therefore in school.	
Documentation	Do IDPs have documentation to access services or assistance track?	The majority of IDPs seem to have ID.	
	Do IDPs have access to easy and affordable mechanisms for replacement documentation?	Mechanisms are in place to ensure displaced populations are able to access documentation, and register as victims.	
	Are IDPs able to travel freely?	The only travel restrictions are due to insecurity – there could, for example, be checkpoints by illegal armed groups.	
Family reunification	Are IDPs living with their close family members?	Most IDPs tend to be displaced as family units. Some families are separated due to disappearances or forced recruitment. Others chose to move individually if they are the target of persecution and the family itself is not threatened.	
	Are there any family tracing and reunification mechanisms available to IDPs?	The Victims' law provides for family reunification, and NGOs are in place to support this.	
	Are protection mechanisms in place for unaccompanied and separated children?	Uncertain.	
Public affairs	Can IDPs vote in elections in their area of displacement?	Yes, but voting may be undermined by persecution and threats due to perceived affiliation.	
	Are IDP-issues represented in the platforms of political parties?	Colombia has a multi-party system. Former guerrilla groups have been able to form political parties, and indigenous groups are also represented.	
	Are IDPs able to participate in decision-making regarding their displacement?	There are efforts to include IDPs. For example, the Victims' Unit has boards of representatives.	

Remedies and justice	Do IDPs have access to legal counsel and/or representation?	Victims' Unit attention points provide legal counsel to IDPs, alongside NGOs such as NRC who provide information, counselling and legal assistance.	Green
	Do IDPs have access to effective law enforcement?	Police presence is limited in informal settlements. In certain neighbourhoods, police access is undermined by criminal groups.	Yellow
	Do IDPs have access to effective remedies and justice for harms that they suffered?	Mechanisms are in place, but the scale of displacement is causing significant delays in implementation, in particular with regards to compensation.	Yellow

2. IRAQ

	Question	Comment	Code
Safety and security	Is the area to which IDPs are displaced free from active fighting?	Although there are some continued security incidents and isolated attacks, IDPs are no longer exposed to active fighting.	Green
	Is the area to which IDPs are displaced free from explosive hazards?	Explosive hazard contamination is widespread. There have been deliberate attempts to booby trap houses; rubble is often contaminated. In addition, IED attacks continue to represent a security risk.	Red
	Are IDPs free from persecution or human rights abuses (including GBV) in the area to which they have been displaced?	IDPs accused of perceived ISIL-affiliation are at high risk of persecution and abuse. Female IDPs also face threats of GBV.	Red
Livelihoods	Are there income-generating opportunities for IDPs?	There are very few opportunities for income generation in displacement camps. Out-of-camp populations have better access.	Yellow
	Do IDPs have enough to eat?	Many IDPs are dependent on food assistance, and lack access to certain food items.	Yellow
	Can IDPs avoid resorting to negative coping strategies such as child labour, prostitution or child marriage?	Some children have been working to generate income for the household. There are reports that child marriage has increased.	Red
Housing	Are IDPs living in safe, adequate shelters able to withstand the local climate (i.e. not in unfinished buildings, tents, etc.)?	IDPs in camps are living in tents which are reported to be very hot in summer, and sometimes unable to withstand rain and wind. Many IDPs outside camps are living in damaged buildings.	Red
	Are accessible and effective mechanisms in place for IDPs to apply for property restitution or compensation for their lost or damaged property?	Although mechanisms are in place in Iraq to facilitate restitution or compensation, the mechanisms are cumbersome and often ineffective.	Yellow
	Are IDPs protected from forced evictions?	Some IDPs report having been evicted by landlords of the properties they were renting. Those in public buildings also face the risk of eviction.	Yellow

Services	Do IDPs have appropriate access to water and sanitation?	Access to water and sanitation can be a challenge for IDPs in damaged buildings, in particular given widespread destruction of infrastructure and curtailed basic services. Challenges are also reported in displacement camps.	Yellow
	Are there accessible and affordable health care services?	Many hospitals and healthcare centres were destroyed, undermining access to basic health care services.	Yellow
	Are primary-age IDP children in school?	Although schools have reopened, many schools were destroyed, and there is still a shortage of teachers as a result of displacement.	Yellow
Documentation	Do IDPs have documentation to access services or assistance track?	Female IDPs whose male family members were lost as a result of the conflict may face challenges in the absence of necessary documentation, including a death certificate. In general, lack of documentation undermines access to education, healthcare, or food distribution.	Red
	Do IDPs have access to easy and affordable mechanisms for replacement documentation?	Efforts are in place to facilitate access to replacement documentation, with support from actors such as NRC.	Yellow
	Are IDPs able to travel freely?	Without the necessary documentation, IDPs are unable to travel. Even when documentation is available, security checks may hinder movements, for example if the IDP's name is similar to that of a known ISIL-supporter.	Red
Family reunification	Are IDPs living with their close family members?	Some have lost family members during flight or as a result of arrest.	Yellow
	Are there any family tracing and reunification mechanisms available to IDPs?	Actors such as UNICEF and IFRC are working to facilitate reunification.	Green
	Are protection mechanisms in place for unaccompanied and separated children?	Uncertain.	Green
Public affairs	Can IDPs vote in elections in their area of displacement?	Efforts were made to enable IDPs to vote in their area of displacement. However, some lacked the necessary documentation to do so.	Yellow
	Are IDP-issues represented in the platforms of political parties?	Uncertain.	Green
	Are IDPs able to participate in decision-making regarding their displacement?	IDPs generally feel as though they are not sufficiently included in decision-making.	Yellow
Remedies and justice	Do IDPs have access to legal counsel and/or representation?	Actors such as NRC attempt to provide information, counseling and legal assistance to IDPs.	Green
	Do IDPs have access to effective law enforcement?	Uncertain. IDPs feel relatively secure in their areas of displacement.	Green
	Do IDPs have access to effective remedies and justice for harms that they suffered?	Government mechanisms are in place to facilitate compensation for physical injury or the death of a family member, but there are significant delays.	Yellow



An internally displaced mother and her children in Lisu camp, Myanmar. She worries about the children in the camp more than she worries about herself. She wants their future to be better. “I want my children to have an education, I want a bright future for my children, but I have no way to pay for their education,” she says. Photo: NRC/Ingrid Prestetun, March 2017

More nuanced information on differentiated impacts and experiences of displacement is needed for operational actors to address key challenges undermining progress towards durable solutions. In the absence of reliable and comparable quantitative data on impacts and experiences of displacement, IDMC’s severity assessment draws upon expert opinion to shine light on particular issues affecting IDPs’ safety or wellbeing. On a global scale, the severity assessment draws attention to severe displacement situations regardless of the scale of displacement, ensuring that no IDP is left behind in response. When examined longitudinally, it also enables better monitoring of progress towards resolving internal displacement.

IDMC plans to examine severity among IDPs in around 50 different countries in 2019. Preliminary results for a selection of displacement situations will be included in this year’s Global Report on Internal Displacement. Moving forward, the results of the assessment will be used to help IDMC monitor countries’ progress towards resolving internal displacement, in combination with other indicators of impacts of displacement, drivers of displace-

ments, and national capacity. This, in turn, will enable IDMC to go beyond the numbers to highlight not only the lived realities of IDPs, but also efforts made to prevent and resolve internal displacement.

NOTES

1. IDMC, [Global Report on Internal Displacement 2018](#)
2. IDMC, [Global Report on Internal Displacement 2018](#)
3. IDMC, [Global Report on Internal Displacement 2016](#)
4. IDMC, [Global Report on Internal Displacement 2018](#)
5. Early Recovery, [Durable Solutions Handbook](#), 2017; IASC, [Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2010
6. JIPS, [Durable Solutions Analysis Guide](#), 2018
7. IOM, Returns Working Group, and Social Inquiry, [Returns Index: Findings Round 1, Iraq](#), 2018
8. ReDSS, [Solutions Framework](#)
9. SPHERE, [Minimum standards in water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion](#), 2005
10. ACAPS, [Subjective Measures in Humanitarian Analysis](#), 2018.
11. IDMC, [Nowhere to Return to : Iraqis’ Search for Durable Solutions Continues](#), 2018; IDMC, [Seeking Durable Solutions in Post-Peace Agreement Colombia](#), 2019 [upcoming].

Cover photo: A truckload of people pass an oil field that was ignited by ISIS as they withdrew from the area of Hamam al-Alil, Iraq. Photo: NRC/Wolfgang Gressman, March 2017.

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