



METHODOLOGICAL PAPER

IMPACT AND EXPERIENCE

Assessing severity of conflict displacement

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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 are 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. The latter four criteria, already set apart in the IASC framework, have been grouped into one 'civic and social rights' category because of discrepancies in data availability between the categories and in order to ensure the relevance of the assessment.

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. For each question, initial assessment results were used to identify a standardised set of possible responses, scored on a scale of 0 to 2 according to severity (with 2 being most severe).

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 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?

CIVIL AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

- Do IDPs have documentation?
- Are there any family tracing and reunification mechanisms?
- Can IDPs vote in elections in their area of displacement?
- 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.






To code the category itself, the average score of the three questions will be calculated. For each question, the severity is assessed to be low (0 to 0.49), medium (0.5 to 0.99), high (1 to 1.49) or very high (1.5 to 2). Where there is insufficient data to respond to some of the questions in a category, the average is created based on the remaining question(s). If no data is available for a given category, no score will be available.

| 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

					
Ex. 1	Red	Orange	Orange	Orange	Yellow
Ex. 2	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Green	Orange
Ex. 3	Green		Yellow	Yellow	Red



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

MOVING FORWARD

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 displacements, 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.

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.

Chloe Sydney
Research Associate
chloe.sydney@idmc.ch

Leonardo Milano
Senior Data Scientist
leonardo.milano@idmc.ch

IDMC
NRC, 3 rue de Varembe
1202 Geneva, Switzerland
www.internal-displacement.org
+41 22 552 3600
info@idmc.ch