



Global Protection Cluster



THE USE OF DATA TO PROMOTE AGE, GENDER AND DIVERSITY MAINSTREAMING



REPORT OF A GLOBAL PROTECTION CLUSTER THEMATIC ROUND-TABLE
UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE
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KEY POINTS

1. The round-table concluded that our approach to information management needs to change radically: we are collecting a lot of generic information on people in need without considering specific groups and we are not analysing, prioritising or communicating protection risks well enough;
2. The working hypothesis of the round-table is that better information on affected people and their needs leads to better service delivery; it follows that joint and impartial needs assessments are a prerequisite for solid analysis and, in turn, quality programming;
3. The considerations for information management contained in Part V of the GPC Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons (2010) remain valid and should be taken as the point of departure; in the context of a discussion of data and AGDM, the critical point is that we do not collect information without a purpose;
4. Assessment results and other data must be shared in order to be useful and to avoid repetitive assessments; it follows that no assessments should be conducted unless a desk review has taken place;
5. Communication is critical to good coordination; all field protection clusters/working groups should have a communications strategy that includes as a minimum the open sharing of assessment results, analysis and response plans;
6. All field protection clusters/working groups should develop a narrative about the situation, which identifies the factors that increase or create specific risks to specific groups (and doesn't just list vulnerable groups), analyses what barriers are fought by specific groups and how the barriers impact their access to assistance, and looks at intersecting risks for specific groups (e.g. a disabled person from a religious minority);
7. Operations should assume that:
 - ➔ A crisis is going to be protracted and information management resources should be planned for on that basis;
 - ➔ Around half of a crisis-affected population are children;
 - ➔ Around 80% of a crisis-affected population are women and children;
 - ➔ Around 15-20% of a crisis-affected population is going to have a disability, using Washington Group criteria;
 - ➔ Existing identities (e.g. religion, class, caste, sexual orientation) will affect risk in a crisis, impact access to protection and assistance and define resilience; a protection narrative should include an analysis of the risk factors of identified groups;

Cover photo: Yemen. Juma Mohammed Omar stands at the entrance to the collective centre she now lives in, in the Foqoom district in Aden, Yemen.

She fled together with her children from their home in Al Khawkhah, Hudaydah after hostilities intensified. The conflict in Yemen has disrupted millions of lives, with 2 million internally displaced and a further 1 million having returned home to dangerous conditions. More than 20 million Yemenis need humanitarian assistance. © UNHCR/Shabia Mantoo



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BACKGROUND

Humanitarian agencies collect vast amounts of information on the 130 million people living in fragile states who are in need of protection and assistance. At the same time, we often lack information about the age, gender or characteristics of people in need and this inhibits our efforts. A lack of coherence and innovation in information gathering leads to multiple information gathering exercises, which exhausts people in need, stretches resources and often fails to provide helpful data.

A crisis impacts people differently, depending on age, gender and diversity. Understanding and analysing the impact of intersecting personal characteristics on people's experience of crisis are necessary for an effective response. Effective and accountable humanitarian responses therefore require: (i) continuous and meaningful engagement with affected people; (ii) understanding their needs and protection risks; (iii) building on their capacities; and (iv) pursuing protection, assistance and solutions that take into account their perspectives and priorities.

AIM

The aim of the workshop was to bring together experts in protection and in information management from the field, government, international organisations and academics for an exploration about what is and is not possible for humanitarian agencies to do in promoting AGDM through data: to challenge ourselves to do more and better but to set realistic expectations of what can be achieved.

SCOPE

Almost all of the operations with a Humanitarian Country Team are characterised by conflict based on ethnic and religious lines or where such differences affect the humanitarian response. Conflict differentially impacts men, women, boys and girls and those with particular vulnerabilities, as well as creating further vulnerability. In addition, these operations are in the main characterised by difficulties in accessing people in need, gathering reliable information, analysing the severity of need and defining priorities. An approach to humanitarian assistance, which requires working towards a reduction in risk (per the IASC Protection Policy), demands that humanitarian agencies identify needs accurately and work in an imaginative way to respond to need- be it to stay, to flee, to receive aid or psychosocial support. Individually, none of these questions are easy to answer and together they present a sizeable problem

1 What do we need to know about affected people and why? The example of disability inclusion

For the purposes of mainstreaming disability data, it is important to acknowledge the relationship between disability and humanitarian action as humanitarian crises become worse for marginalized people. Stigma and discrimination are heightened in times of crisis and existing vulnerabilities are compounded on account of lack of access to health-care facilities, employment and education opportunities and increased poverty levels. In addition to this, people with disabilities do not constitute a homogenous group with same vulnerabilities, needs and capacities. Diverse aspects of gender, age, LGTBQ, etc. need to be taken into account even in situations of crises. For this purpose, addressing needs of people with disabilities requires a combination of:

- people-centred approaches that include both mainstreaming and targeted responses;
- broader forms of context analysis and processes for ensuring participation in all stages;
- engagement and representation in decision-making bodies
- data disaggregated by disability and other characteristics that can be embedded into existing systems;
- fostering respect for non-discrimination as a fundamental principle;
- building resilience through effective long-term empowerment;
- inclusive integrated approaches to humanitarian response

A review of the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) and the Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNOs), carried out by the DFID-UN Single Business Case Disability Workstream¹, revealed that 28% of HNOs already have quantitative data on persons with disabilities, but the quality of this data varies and 70% of the HNOs reviewed recognised the need to know more about the group in question. While a vast majority (78%) recognise that disabled people face barriers to accessing services and amenities, these barriers have not been specified. It was noted that most HNOs include people with disabilities under the category of "vulnerable groups" which also include older people, isolated and separated children, etc.

While there is this level of information in HNOs, the link between assessment and action is not being seen in HRPs, with only 14% containing any reference to disability or reduce the risks to people with disabilities. The majority of the HRPs focused on prioritisation and provision of targeted services but challenges remain in respect of accessibility and mainstreaming. In terms of methodology, the need for qualitative data is the most urgent along with a need for qualitative "disaggregation". There are also concerns about data being collected but not being used for reporting. For this purpose, it is essential to make the collected quantitative data meaningful. However, it has been observed that donors fund very few protection projects because these are resource intensive. The reason why data that is gathered and not used in the HRPs is that this data is intended for the donors and for procuring funds. At this point it becomes important to note that data collection exercises, especially concerning disability, fail to utilise the already existing data. Hence, it is important to push for quality data as opposed to mere data collection. This would also aid the analysis process.

2 Field practices in collecting and using data on affected people

The Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), a tool used by IOM in countries affected by conflict or natural disaster, is being used extensively in combination with other tools that help identify key indicators to help collect better information. However, the analysis challenge remains even with the use of DTM.

Profiling is another method of data collection that can produce quality data and enables analysis of the gathered data to have a strong evidence base. The Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) is an interagency project that provides technical

¹ Includes six UN agencies OCHA, UNICEF, WFP, IOM, WHO, CERF and UNHCR.

support to governments and other humanitarian agencies for profiling exercises. Profiling as a method is particularly helpful for gathering disaggregated data because it allows an analysis of the underlying dynamics and causes and relates it to the solution. Profiling, thus, can produce meaningful data by breaking it down and taking into account the socio-political contexts of a situation.

Developing practical guidance for protection staff dealing with disability concerns is recognised as crucial. However, this guidance must go beyond how-to leaflets and be modular and allows to contextualise the challenges faced. These can guidance needs simple and straightforward tools for case management and provision of services, for family sensitisation, etc. Protection cluster made guidance to be user-friendly to provide guidance on HRP. It has also developed protection guidance on older people. It is recommended to have guidance developed not just for humanitarians, but also development actors. Development actors have also been brought into the training process so they can share their perspectives, making sure everyone is included. The Age and Disability Technical working group has also provided guidance for other sectors, such as WASH by introducing hygiene kits for disabled persons; these contain tips on what organisations should take into consideration before and after distribution.

3 Challenges in collecting and using data for AGDM

There are several challenges with reference to data being collected but not utilised appropriately. Often the case is that the data is readily available, but its use needs to be maximised. A good analysis that gives a good understanding of the general situation, would allow a review of requirements for new data in the future. Thus, good analysis is key to better use of currently available data and, in the future, will translate into less need for data. Humanitarian agencies also lack one single preferred data collection approach which can serve as the default approach for all operations and a basic minimum requirement.

There is also the question of data sharing. Country specific data is often kept confidential by humanitarian actors on account of the nature of their operations. On the other hand, development actors have more of a national approach. In this context, it becomes difficult to determine the limits and restrictions on sharing data with the government and other national/local institutions.

4 Other data sources: the use of big data and secondary data

The University of Essex Human Rights Centre is engaged in a project concerning the nexus between data, technology, human rights and social media. The project has four work-streams:

1. Brings together all the work of the other work-streams and discusses the overarching issues such as bias.
2. Surveillance and big data
3. Health and big data
4. Humanitarian intervention and big data: how can big data be used to enhance hum operations?

Big data includes data that can be collected remotely through social media platforms, search engine data trends, etc. The Centre is working with the UNHCR Innovation Team for this project. However, the use and collection of big data has its own share of problems. There are concerns about the violation of privacy and human rights through the use of big data, including concerns regarding a variety of ethical implications.

5 When should we not collect data and why?

There is a principled belief that more data leads to better programming and strategies. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are points when data should be not collected and also, there are restrictions on the kind of data being collected. This is recognised in the Handbook on the Protection of IDPs and also in more recent work by the ICRC on data risks. This is especially relevant in the face of affected populations' frustration with data being collected and no immediate results being seen by them. Additionally, there are always risks of data being compromised and misused, as we have seen in Yemen and Iraq.

There is certain sensitive information about individuals and communities, such as ethnic and religious identities, that should not be collected or documented. However, even this is not a black and white matter. For example, if talking about Myanmar, it would be important to collect data related to religious and ethnic identities because minorities are at risk of being discriminated against and targeted and thus require protection. Here it is suggested that rather than gathering data at the individual level, profiling at the group or community levels might be more beneficial.

There are risks to over-collection of data as well and in relation to this it becomes important to look into the risks of not collecting data. The principles of do-no-harm applies to data collection and if data is not being collected for a specific purpose and ultimately is not used, then it should not be collected at all. There should be a plan in place for the extent of its use. This calls for the use of pre-analysis plans that prescribe specific protocols and minimize risks. Pre-analysis is a mechanism to identify what is needed to collect but also should data be collected at all. It also indicates who needs to be involved at which stage. Further, there's the issue of analysis capacity - there's often a lot of pressure for IM colleagues to alone push that analysis further and provide ground-breaking conclusions, but they need to work with protection colleague and others to pull that from the data. There needs to be a lot more exchange and bringing in experts from different fields. Additionally, there is a significant difference between programmatic data and data for large-scale assessments – for the later data collection is essential but the task of assessing the data is not immediate and takes time.

6 How should we analyse and present data on affected people?

It is important to understand the link between funding and data. In relation to this, it becomes essential to draw a distinction between assessments and analysis. Assessments are meant to give confidence that people on the ground know what they are doing and know the problem they are trying to face. There is no difficulty to budget funds for assessment or analysis - anything that makes the intervention effective and efficient. If one wants to try to push for additional funding for analysis, then this contribution needs to be transformative and improve effectiveness of intervention.

Apart from this, narratives are important for operational success. Communicating efficiently is key to effective coordination because if all the work being done is not being communicated, then the work is practically going to waste. For example, in Afghanistan, DFID said there was no leadership and the Kabul office came back showing all the things they have achieved but had not communicated on. The prioritization of different needs is essential. Every humanitarian document is not very useful because it is so big and full, some needs are more important than others. For external communication there is a need to get better at prioritizing, as there are not unlimited funds.



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