

Profiling Refugees and IDPs for the Urban Environment

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Introduction

As refugee and internally displaced persons (IDPs) populations increase over time it is important to take a look at what can be done to bring these populations into the communities at large which they are near and then incorporate them into environment and structure of the urban area making them part of the community rather than living on the outskirts of society. “Cities can absorb large numbers of people virtually unnoticed since most of those displaced to urban areas maintain a low profile (Crisp, 2012, pg. S24). The goal is two-fold. First is to incorporate the refugees and IDPs into the fabric of society melding their culture and contributions into the local community, enhancing the overall society with new and fresh ideas, skills and economic possibilities. The second is to reduce the strain of resources and funding, from governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith based organizations (FBOs), used for care and support of these groups either through camps or direct support to the groups or individuals.

Why Profiling

One way to do this is through the use of profiling. Profiling is useful because it pulls data about the refugees and IDPs into usable chunks of information to analyze the relationships between displaced and host populations; analyze the resilience of urban areas in relation to the availability and limitations of services and provides a dataset available to the humanitarian and development community. (UNHCR, 2016, pg. 5). This information can then be processed to find the best fit and the best location to assist the refugees and IDPs to incorporate themselves into the community.

To start, the work of profiling however one should have an idea of the definitions of refugee and IDPs. A refugee is “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR, 2005, pg. 3).

“Internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border” (OCHA, 2004, pg. 7).

Having a good idea of the intent of profiling, and with these introductory definitions, we can aim to look at our target population and analyze what kind of person is in front of us and what they bring with them. Refugees and IDPs most often come in mass so it’s important to understand that each is an individual with hopes, dreams, wants and needs. We best serve them and the community at large as we see them this way, verses in mass, and involve them in the process of finding stability in their life and context.

Profile data types can be categorized to find links between the target population, the context and the urban community that we can, jointly, between the humanitarian, target population and community, incorporate the refugee or IDP into. As we build these profile data categories we should keep in mind that the end state is to provide the best two-way communication and feedback for the communities and beneficiaries. “Sharing findings about different profiled groups also helps dispel the stereotypes and misconceptions that often exist between the different displaced groups and between the local and the displaced communities” (Jacobsen, 2014, pg. 41).

We want these profiles, once completed, to eliminate as many assumptions as possible that can't be turned into facts. Again, this eliminates the stereotypes and misconceptions that we can control as well as reinforces solid resource allocation and program planning. Moving the refugee or IDP from need to self-reliance is the ultimate end state.

Profile Categories

I group the demographic profiles into five categories; Type, Location, Personal, Health, and Knowledge. These demographic profiles each have sub-categories. Neither the categories nor sub-categories are listed by importance except for Type, which should remain the first. Each category should flow into the next category naturally as we look into move the refugee or IDP into their new urban setting.

Type

I selected Type, with its sub-categories of, refugee, IDP, or even migrant (migrant worker refers to a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national (UNGAR, 1990, pg. 2) and whether they are seeking asylum, as the primary jumping off point to determine why they may be leaving their country or what has brought them to the humanitarian aid area.

Whether one is fleeing their country of origin for asylum purposes will have a determination of what urban area or community is suited for the refugee or IDP. It would not benefit anyone to guide these individuals into urban settings dominated by those they may be fleeing from. "Most governments in countries of first asylum consider displaced people living in camps or settlements to be prima facie refugees and thus to be eligible for assistance; the displaced who are living in urban areas, on the other hand, are often without such recognition and eligibility for

assistance” (Dryden-Peterson, 2006, pg. 384). Subject Related Briefings (SRBs) may elaborate on topics which appear frequently in asylum-claims. They may concern certain political parties, or a description of the organization of which the individual may belong (Attaché, 2010, pg. 13).

For the purpose of this paper it is enough to know that the UN has set up criteria for taking care of refugees, IDPs, and migrants through various conventions, resolutions or protocols, (see sources UNHCR, 2005; OCHA, 2004 and UNGAR, 1990 for guidelines and protocols). Each may have differing way of engaging and resolving issues, but the key to this demographic type is to ask, then know, what type each individual fits so as to manage their situation with proper care.

Location

Location pin points not only where the person or persons are from but gives a more complete picture seeking out original location information (COI), nationality, ethnic group or culture, language spoken, language understood. Connecting the refugees or IDPs with these similarities gives the individuals and better chance of succeeding in the urban environment. The size and anonymity in the urban setting can cause the sense of aloneness and be overwhelming. These connection points can be used to build community, social cohesion, and protection with new arrivals as well as those previous established within the urban area. Individuals bring with them a sense of loss so it is important to start building relationships, networks, and experiences as soon as possible so as to establish a sense of normality early in the transition process (Grabska, 2006, pg. 290).

Personal

The Personal category looks at age, gender, marital status, relatives with them, and local connections. These will be used as building blocks for integration into the urban area as well as

what various types of aid and service could be sought within the various sub-categories. When looking at age, humanitarian can direct towards children and youth programs and services. In addition age may bring health related issues or concerns. Age also points to possible education opportunities. The humanitarian should have / may have already started networking within the urban community seeking out programs and services to meet the age related needs.

Gender brings about questions about possible employment and empowerment but also moves the discussion towards female gender related bias, protections and health related matters. Employers frequently ignore laws forbidding gender discrimination if enforcement mechanisms are weak (Zuckerman, 2004, pg. 71). Marital status and relatives with them not only bring the connections of family, easing some of the tension during this transition, with shared history, experience, tradition, cultural, and language but also brings up questions or challenges with shelter opportunities. The questions of who and how many will be a determining factor as shelter possibilities are reviewed.

Health

The fourth category revolves around Health. Planning and analyzing refugee or IDP health situation and host community availability will be a key to success in this transition. Sub-categories such as health needs, possible disabilities and various forms of trauma should be asked about while interviewing the refugees or IDP. Ensuring the privacy and security of this information is paramount but reassuring the interviewees that this information is secured is equally paramount. Building a trust relationship may be difficult but getting the information will pay dividends in monitoring and surveillance of public health and nutrition, supported by effective information management systems (UNHCR, 2014, pg. 10). Directing these individuals toward urban communities that provide community-based, primary health care facilities &

providers, either through public, private, NGO sources will better address the individual need as well as allow for budget monitoring and evaluation of the programs or services rendered (Couldrey, 2010, pg. 23).

Knowledge

Knowledge is the fifth category suggested. The covers a range of topic to include religion, education, skills or occupation, and student status. Getting the individuals connected into their faith based community, if they have one is essential, also in establishing a sense of normality and community but in addition we want to look at possible protections for faith based bias and violence within the community sectors.

Education, skills or occupation are factors involved with the supply and demand for professionals, skilled or unskilled labor. Having mentioned turning assumptions into facts play a critical part here. The assumptions could very well be that this mass of people are just uneducated, unskilled people fleeing, or leaving, whatever negative environment that turned them into refugees or IDPs. However, the individuals can be bringing with them a wealth of education and skills that can be positively employed at the new urban setting. Diving into this brings out possible self-sustaining opportunities.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) guide on Livelihoods and Economic Recovery in Crisis Situations for example, adopts a three-track approach: Livelihoods stabilization (Track A); local economic recovery for medium- to long-term employment (Track B); and long-term employment creation (Track C). (Mackie, 2017, pg. 367). These three approaches take the education and skill set brought and allows for creation of opportunities of self-sustainment and success with the urban environment they are transitioning to. Rather than asking the question of

what type of aid or support will be needed, the question is now framed as what skills and education do they bring to the community to better achieve positive economic outcomes for both the refugees and community as a whole, in contrast to what each takes from the other.

Their student status fits with their education and skills or occupation by seeking out desires and dreams for ways forward. It also points out possibilities and availabilities. Refugee or IDP status, whether or not seeking asylum, should not be a stumbling point in acquiring new skills and occupations, entering into new social relationships, and engage in economic activities that they may or may not have never contemplated (Fabos, 2007, pg. 5).

Quality Control

Quality Control measures should be adopted in the planning stage when preparing the dataset we're looking for. Reviewing quality control during and after the interview is also a key to the profiling process. Asking questions such as, are we asking the right questions, are we getting correct types of information, is this information usable or do we need to draw up new profiling systems to meet the need for both receivers and providers, is an ongoing task through the process. Looking for mistakes or low quality work is high from data entry clerks who never use our reporting tools (Attaché, 2010, pg. 31). Lastly have we achieved a greater knowledge about persons of concern and their needs to better support them for public policy creation and other protection and solution responses (UNHCR, 2018, pg. 1).

Recommendations

There are four brief recommendations coming out of profiling refugees and IDPs for the urban environment. The first is to remember we may not be the only game in town. Other organizations may be working along with or outside of us. There may be other concentration of

refugees or IDPs in other areas to include possible household members in different locations (Crisp, 2012, pg. S35).

The second recommendation is to ensure targeting assistance and beneficiary selection highlight particular areas of need, and those groups that would benefit most from the proposed programs. Local employment opportunities, sustainability, vulnerabilities and key areas to observe and influence (Barakat, 2003, pg. 10).

The third recommendation resolves around debriefing. “It is important to conduct a discussion/ debriefing with the enumerator team at the end of each data collection day” (Jacobsen, 2011, pg. 30). Making sure we have counted everyone for numbers as well as needs ensures no one is missed, slips through the cracks or need left unaddressed.

The fourth recommendation is to provide feedback to the communities, both the refugees and IDPs but to the local communities as well. “A summarized version of the profiling report can be distributed to all refugee centres” (JIPS, 2013, pg. 19) and urban areas so everyone can work off a common operating picture.

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