

Geneva, 14 May 2020

Submission to the UN Secretary General's High

1. The need for a more rigorous understanding of the value, use, and impact of internal displacement related data and data processes

Statements like the GRID 2020 reference above are not often questioned publicly and neither are claims about how internal displacement data informs decisions, and thus about how it creates change. This might be due to the often-broad nature of the statements and recommendations about internal displacement IM (around improving the quality of the data; making it more reliable, interoperable, and actionable; harmonizing it; etc.); it might also be due to the technical nature of the topic that in some cases can act as a deterrent for non-data experts to question what seems to be considered established expert knowledge; it might be that there are limited or inadequate incentives for anyone to question statements about the internal displacement related data and data processes.

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analysed by organisations to design their own programs is also clear. But there remains a wide range of information, where the link to its use isn't as clear cut.

Global organisations working on internal displacement have a professionalised information management staff, technically specialised on the gathering and analysis of data. Some of these organisations work exclusively on information management; some receive resources from donors and the UN; some play increasingly important roles within the internal displacement response. All of them should operate based on evidence. That is, all their information-gathering and analysis activities should be planned, executed, and assessed based on evidence about how they contribute to the response to internal displacement. There needs to be a clear understanding of how their work's output leads to outcomes and impacts.

The relationship between data production and impact is often assumed. For example, it is often assumed that policymakers use internal displacement data. IDMC was created in 1998 and "informs policy and operational decisions that improve the lives of the millions of people living in internal displacement, or at risk of becoming displaced in the future"<sup>1</sup>. IOM set up the DTM in 2004 and it has "proven to be highly effective as a preparedness tool, as well as in support of the recovery and transition phase of the response"<sup>2</sup>. UNHCR itself has been increasingly involved in leading profiling exercises that focus on internal displacement and (among other things)



- Review incentive structures: Part of the reason for a lack of questioning and even for a lack of clarity regarding the underlying assumptions about the use of data is that the incentives are not set the right way. Practitioners are systematically required or pressured to justify their value to remain relevant and to secure funding. Unfortunately, requirements and pressure do not always lead to rigorous explanations, in part because organisations lack the resources to adequately study

push for the adoption of such standards and for the adoption of concrete practices<sup>8</sup> among the internal displacement IM community to study (or to facilitate studying) the use and value of their work.

While a lot is yet to be done in holding policymakers, humanitarians, and the development community in general accountable, the discourse about governments and program-operating organisations is more critical. Such organisations are more often questioned and the requirements of proof of impact are higher than for the production and analysis of data – where value is often assumed. The HLP-ID has an opportunity to change this and hold the internal displacement IM community to a higher standard, and it should not shy away from doing so.

## Bibliography

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