

Laura Ronkainen – JIPS

25 November 2016

Forum on Minority Issues

Mr. Chair, Madame Special Rapporteur, ladies and gentlemen. The need to take into consideration the specific situations of minorities in humanitarian crises is a fact, and already stated many times on this forum. Minority groups often face intersectional vulnerabilities that can enforce the negative impacts of crisis on them, restrict their access to or exclude them from assistance, and hinder the process of recovery. At the same time, humanitarian actors, faced with more and more dire needs and limited resources, aim to target their assistance to the most vulnerable. Standardized vulnerability criteria that assume same vulnerabilities are cross cutting from context to context, often overlook the specific vulnerabilities that minority groups may face, and that are further exacerbated by conflict or disaster. Fully understanding the diverse characteristics of populations affected by a crisis is crucial for humanitarian response to be effective in the immediate crisis, as well as for inclusive recovery and peace building processes.

- I represent the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS), an interagency service that supports governments, humanitarian and development actors on profiling – collaborative data collection and analysis in displacement situations to inform evidence-based response. JIPS is honored to be part of the panel to discuss these important issues, although when preparing for this presentation we also realized how scarce concrete good practice on obtaining disaggregated data on minorities in humanitarian situations is.
- This data gap exists because actors often do not think about this need amidst a humanitarian crisis, and consequently data systems are not sensitive enough to capture minorities. Secondly, data gaps also exist because this is not an easy topic to collect data on. For example, when supporting displacement profiling exercises to inform national responses, strategy or policy development processes in different displacement contexts, it is almost invariably recognized that understanding the linkages of displacement and different diversity characteristics such as clan, religion or ethnicity are crucial for supporting comprehensive durable solutions to displacement. However, explicitly and adequately collecting data on these characteristics is almost always avoided in order not to further aggravate existing tensions, or not to discourage certain stakeholders or minority groups

themselves from participating in the process. And thirdly, even if capturing data on minorities is recognized as a priority, designing appropriate methodologies for this is often a challenge due to incomplete pre-existing information on them for example in pre-crisis statistics.

- Nonetheless, JIPS is convinced that improving the practice of collecting and analyzing data in a way that captures minority populations' distinct situations, is at the core of overcoming humanitarian challenges, finding durable solutions to displacement, and building and sustaining peace.
- Profiling as a process has a lot of potential to address the challenge of providing this type of evidence. It is not a standard methodology, but a mixture of different data collection tools aiming to capture both statistical and narrative data. It aims to provide a comprehensive profile of the populations of concern, disaggregated by age, sex and diversity, complemented by thematic analysis and qualitative data that can highlight diverse perspectives also within minority groups.
- But as much as profiling is about developing the most suitable technical tools and methodologies for each context, it is also about the process through which it is carried out: Through a collaborative approach that involves relevant government, humanitarian and development actors, profiling aims to build consensus around the results from the start. Through a continuous dialogue by different partners from the development of objectives and methodologies to analysis and the formulation of joint recommendations, the aim is to make sure that sensitive issues are explicitly discussed from the start, and that data that is collected will be accepted and used. In JIPS' experience this type of dialogue can help make important advances on political issues through technical solutions.
- Through a combination of different methods profiling aims to give a voice to various groups affected by a humanitarian crisis, and aims to move away from generalized assumptions on people's vulnerabilities, needs, strengths and priorities. In this way it can also be used to complement assessments and other data collection that is used to inform immediate programmatic responses, by including minority populations' concerns, and assessing the effectiveness and impacts of humanitarian assistance on different groups.
- Finally, profiling aims to establish a two-way communication with communities by presenting findings and conclusions to them, and receiving feedback and suggestions. This validation can also help highlight the distinct concerns of minorities even when they may not

have been adequately represented in the initial methodology. A profiling process, just like any data collection process, should always include this type of an accountability mechanism, however unfortunately it is rarely prioritized.

- To conclude, it is easy to justify why data and analysis on minorities in situations of humanitarian crisis is needed. However, it is also important to consider how this is done, and for what purpose. Any data collection in humanitarian contexts should result in actionable information for improved protection and assistance for the populations concerned. Thus, people also have the right to express their humanitarian needs and access assistance mechanisms without identifying themselves as members of a minority group. Data collection systems must be implemented in a way that ensures that people of different backgrounds, including minorities, have the opportunity to voice their concerns and access assistance on the basis of need, without discrimination.