JIPS
Essential
Toolkit

What is the
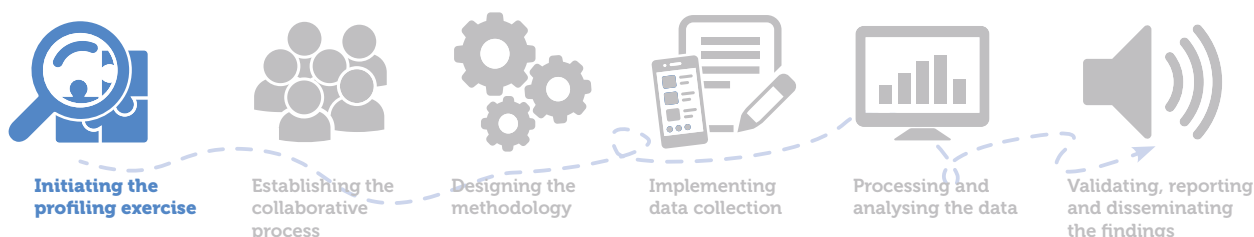# profiling process?

WE ARE HERE!

Initiating the profiling exercise

Establishing the collaborative process

Designing the methodology

Implementing data collection

Processing and analysing the data

Validating, reporting and disseminating the findings

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What is profiling, really?

Simply stated, profiling is a collaborative process for analysing displacement situations. This entails gathering information on populations affected by displacement, including local populations.

We emphasise **the collaborative process** because this is what makes profiling unique; it establishes a collaborative platform early on to guide decision-making and to share ownership and responsibility. Partners work together and with affected populations to create an evidence base on the displacement situation. JIPS' experience shows that when different actors including government authorities as well as humanitarian and development actors work together throughout the process, they are more likely to agree on the results. Hence, this can be an important step in establishing a shared understanding of the situation and therefore a starting point for to design effective responses.

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Profiling is **well-suited to collecting information in internal displacement situations** for two reasons:

1) its collaborative approach is especially relevant where many actors are involved and the issues tend to take a political dimension, which is characteristic of contexts with protracted internal displacement; and

2) it uses a comparative approach to compare the situation of the displaced with that of local populations.

This comparative approach helps to identify in what ways displaced populations are worse or better off than local populations.

A **profiling exercise** can produce a wide range of information needed for decision-making. It provides a snapshot of the displacement situation, which often includes a demographic profile of the displacement-affected populations disaggregated by displacement status, location, sex, age and diversity characteristics as well as a wide range of information on their humanitarian and development needs, living conditions and coping mechanisms. The results can provide a solid and trusted baseline, which may be critical if no data exists or the available data are disputed. It can also provide a basis for identifying where more specific follow-up data collection needs to happen. But most importantly, **profiling can be used to inform programs and policies to protect the rights and improve the well being of displaced populations**, and to plan complementary government, humanitarian, and development responses to support displaced persons and communities in their efforts to reach durable solutions.

Why is a comparative approach useful? It helps to inform the plans for response. This is because the results could either suggest that programs or policies specifically for displaced populations are needed, or that a broader development approach would be more effective for improving overall well being. In actuality the response often requires a mix of both depending on the situation, for instance a broader development plan for creating job opportunities in a city's rapidly growing periphery combined with specific programming for providing job training to populations that had been displaced from rural areas.
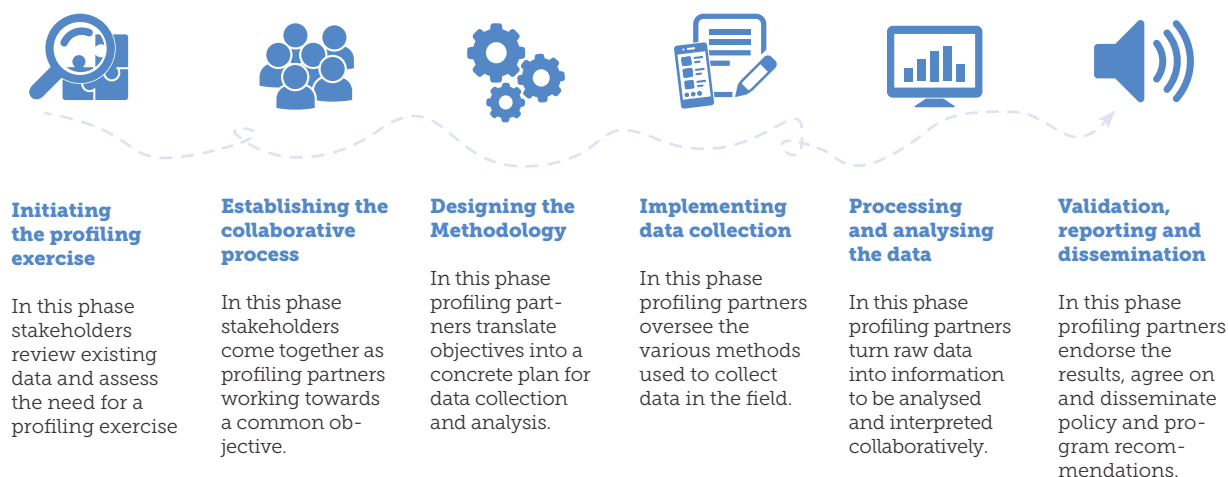
Context matters

Profiling is not a one-size-fits-all process. Profiling exercises always differ based on context: the process and methods must be adapted to suit the partners' information needs and capacities for data collection, the displacement dynamics, and the field realities.

The six phases of the profiling process

Despite the need to adapt every profiling process to the local context, the phases are generally the same. Each phase entails a series of smaller steps. These include organising meetings and workshops for the collaborative development of key documents that record decisions made and help the process move forward.

Here are the six phases, and the key outputs for each phase.

Initiating the profiling exercise

In this phase stakeholders review existing data and assess the need for a profiling exercise

Establishing the collaborative process

In this phase stakeholders come together as profiling partners working towards a common objective.

Designing the Methodology

In this phase profiling partners translate objectives into a concrete plan for data collection and analysis.

Implementing data collection

In this phase profiling partners oversee the various methods used to collect data in the field.

Processing and analysing the data

In this phase profiling partners turn raw data into information to be analysed and interpreted collaboratively.

Validation, reporting and dissemination

In this phase profiling partners endorse the results, agree on and disseminate policy and program recommendations.

Methods used in profiling

The best way to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the displacement situation is to use a **mixed-methods approach combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools**. Specifically, this entails collecting a sample-based household questionnaire combined with a series of focus group discussions and key informant interviews and analysing the results of each of these methods together.

There are several methods available to collect disaggregated population data, and the choice or combination of any of these methods depends on the objectives of the profiling (purpose and information needs), the implementation capacity, amount of resources, and situational context (e.g. access to locations) amongst other. Each of the methods yields different types of information and are appropriate for addressing different aspects of the profiling objectives. The combination of all three methods is conducive to producing a comprehensive profile of the targeted populations. The methods are discussed in more detail in the Designing the Methodology phase.

A process for analysing durable solutions

IASC Framework on durable solutions for IDPs

Because profiling is most often used for analysing internal displacement situations, the 2010 Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs serves as the basis for the analysis. This approach is called a durable solutions analysis. The Framework presents eight main criteria for evaluating whether displaced populations have overcome specific vulnerabilities caused by their displacement. It suggests that displaced populations have not actually reached a durable solution unless they have met the criteria to the same extent as those living around them that were not displaced. The way to establish this is by comparing the situation of the displaced populations to local populations, in other words populations that have not been displaced, to see what additional or different challenges the displaced are facing.

Find out more about the profiling exercises in Mogadishu, Somalia (2016) and Rakhine, Myanmar (2017)

Indeed, the IASC Framework for the Durable Solutions of IDPs as an analytical framework and approach has become a critical component of most recent profiling exercises. An interagency process led by the Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of IDPs and coordinated by JIPS has developed an agreed-upon set of indicators for measuring progress towards durable solutions, which features prominently in the methodology of recent profiling exercises. This has resulted in useful data for programming and policies in support of durable solutions in varied contexts such as Mogadishu, Somalia and Rakhine State, Myanmar.

Defining profiling:
a look back

The official definition of profiling that was agreed-upon by the international community in 2008 is as follows:

Guidance on
IDP profiling

> **Profiling is the collaborative process of identifying internally displaced groups or individuals through data collection, including counting, and analysis, in order to take action to advocate on their behalf, to protect and assist them and, eventually, to help bring about a solution to their displacement.**

Source: Guidance on IDP Profiling, 2008

The official definition of profiling has evolved since it was first endorsed in 2008. A nuanced discussion of the pros and cons of this definition are discussed in Shaking the Box of Profiling IDP Situations: Forced Displacement Go Figure!, which sets the scene for an inter-agency revision of the original Profiling Guidance planned for 2018.

The best working definition we have at this point based on prior JIPS and partner experience is featured in the Guidance for Profiling Urban Displacement Situations (2014):

Guidance for
profiling urban
displacement
situations

> **Profiling is a collaborative, information-gathering process that provides disaggregated, comparative data about displacement situations. This information is intended to guide programming, to advocate for protection and assistance, and to inform policy and long-term solutions.**

Source : Guidance for Profiling Urban Displacement Situations (2014)

A strong emphasis here is on its comprehensive consensus-building process, which makes profiling distinct from other types of data collection approaches. The definition also highlights the following elements: bringing together different actors to work on the same data collection exercise, the comparative approach, the use of methodologies that provide disaggregated data, and the ability to inform programs in support of solutions to displacement, for example with information on preferences for integrating, returning or moving elsewhere.

Three years later, profiling still reflects all these attributes. Building off of this work, however, the task now is to clarify the link between profiling and durable solutions analysis, and to show how profiling can adapt to new information needs, for instance understanding cross-cutting issues such as protection concerns, social cohesion and discrimination, and exploring how profiling can be repeated to assess changes in the situation over time.

Shaking the box of profiling IDP situations: forced displacement Go Figure!

Lastly, the following suggestions from Shaking the Box of Profiling IDP Situations: Forced Displacement Go Figure! remain especially relevant. These are:
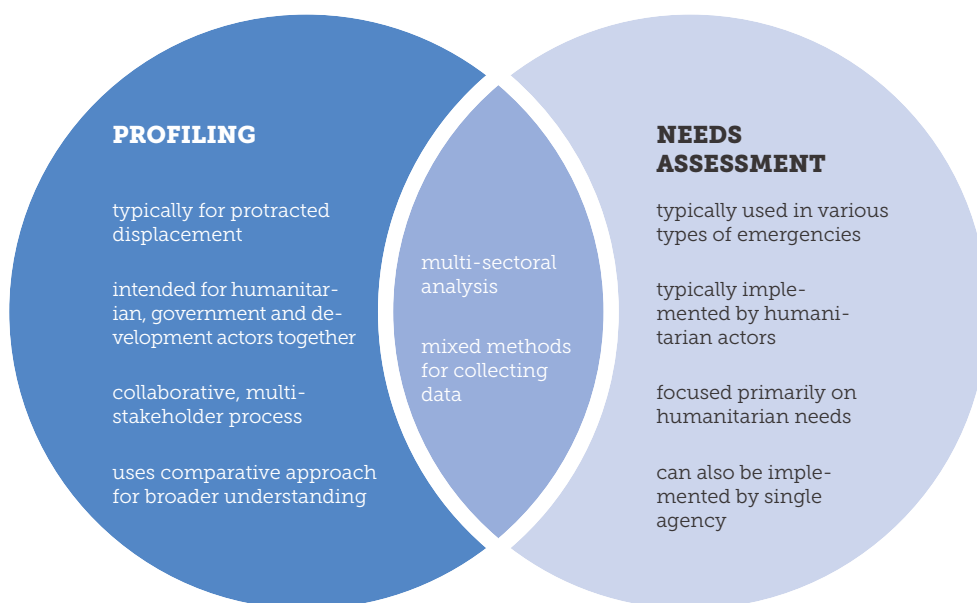
- **Semantics**: Changing the way we talk about profiling from IDP profiling to profiling IDP situations or profiling displacement situations, reminds us that profiling is useful beyond IDP contexts, and displacement-affected populations extend beyond IDPs to include the local populations hosting them

- **Content**:
  - The focus of profiling IDP situations should be not on accurate numbers but rather on displacement trends or ranges. Relevance and reliability are more useful than precision.
  - Diversity should be included in profiling objectives alongside sex, age and location disaggregation.
  - Protection concerns, humanitarian needs and displacement patterns are important, but the Guidance should also consider other factors such as coping mechanisms, skills and capacities.

- **Use**: A profiling exercise should be shaped to inform the best expected use of results in any given context.

- **Methods**:
  - Profiling always combines more than one data collection method. The definition of profiling should reflect a balanced quantitative and qualitative approach.
  - The limitations of a profiling methodology should be always openly shared.
  - Some methods should not be considered at the outset as profiling methodologies (registration, census, rapid population estimations) but can contribute to a profiling analysis.
  - Profiling methods can include non-traditional approaches to data collection such as the analysis of big data, population mapping, the Delphi method, etc.

The difference between profiling and needs assessments

1 UNHCR Needs Assessment Handbook (2017)

Profiling and needs assessments are both adaptable data collection exercises conducted at a single point in time to gain an understanding of a particular crisis situation.[1] They differ in:

- the **contexts** they are used in;

- the **actors** that implement them;

- the **type of information** they seek to collect; and,

- the **level of engagement** by partners.

PROFILING

typically for protracted displacement

intended for humanitarian, government and development actors together

collaborative, multi-stakeholder process

uses comparative approach for broader understanding

multi-sectoral analysis

mixed methods for collecting data

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

typically used in various types of emergencies

typically implemented by humanitarian actors

focused primarily on humanitarian needs

can also be implemented by single agency

Needs assessments are not exclusively for displacement **contexts**, and often are used as a quick way to get information in an emergency while profiling is used most often in protracted internal displacement situations because it takes longer to bring partners together.

It is typically humanitarian **actors** that conduct needs assessments, while profiling exercises can bring together actors from different fields such as development and government at local and national levels.

As a result of these two factors, needs assessments differ in **content**: needs assessments tend to focus on humanitarian needs, including protection issues, availability of resources, sources of problems and their impact on the affected population, in order to inform humanitarian programming. Profiling exercises may also investigate humanitarian needs but often go beyond this to understand issues that are specific to displacement, such as a population's migration history, what kinds of vulnerabilities might they have that are caused by their displacement, and what they plan to do in the near future.

It is helpful to note that the data that a profiling exercise collects is most similar to that collected by a multi-sector needs assessment (sometimes referred to by its acronym MSNA). This is because these are also comprehensive and explore how different issues relate to one another.

Needs assessments and profiling produce complementary **types of information**. An in-depth needs assessment on a specific issue such as shelter conditions provides useful input to a profiling exercise, and similarly a more comprehensive profiling exercise can serve as a solid baseline for follow-up in-depth needs assessments. Similarly, an MSNA conducted by humanitarian agencies in recent years can provide a basis and useful lessons learned for a profiling exercise.

Finally, the **process** and **level of engagement of partners** tend to be different; a needs assessment can be done by a single agency, in a coordinated way with other agencies, or can be done jointly, while a profiling exercise is by definition always done jointly under one process.

In light of these, **profiling exercises and needs assessments are complementary and related processes**. As needs assessments become more comprehensive, multi-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder in nature, these two data gathering processes will become increasingly similar, and the discourse and guidance at the global level should evolve to reflect that.

Profiling compared to registration and monitoring

Profiling is not the only process used to gather information on displaced populations or displacement situations. There are many others, the most commonly talked about being registration and protection monitoring. The main difference between these and profiling is the fact that while profiling does collect information on populations at the community, household and individual level, the data collected is always anonymous. These other methods listed require identifying information in order to track specific cases over time. Profiling is not a case management system and is therefore not used in registering populations for inclusion in specific programs. Where it can complement these other systems, however, is by providing the comprehensive baseline that informs the methodologies used in, for instance, exploring criteria for identifying vulnerable households in a specific area.

A detailed discussion comparing these different data systems can be found as part of the Protection Information Management (PIM) initiative's matrix.

Profiling collects data on populations: which ones?

In short, there are many groups affected by displacement. Profiling of displacement situations was initially developed as a method and process to enable and improve the quality of the data collected in contexts with internally displaced persons (IDPs). This has evolved in the past decade to include a comparative analysis with the local populations due to the complexity of displacement and the need for a more holistic analysis of the situation. Additionally, recent profiling exercises have also captured the characteristics of different displaced groups as well, including refugees and asylum-seekers, so-called economic migrants, and populations returning after they have been forcibly displaced.