

Global IDP PROJECT

Displaced children: more information available

by Stacey White

The Global IDP Project is frequently asked for statistical information on internally displaced children. Donors, partner agencies, and academics want to know how many internally displaced children and young people there are worldwide, what their most urgent needs are and how well the humanitarian community is responding to this widely-affected and vulnerable group of displaced people.

The good news is that improved information about displaced children is now available. Since the launch of the Global IDP Database (www.idpproject.org) in 1999, the Database has grown to include profiles on 48 differ-

ent countries, each of which contains increasingly accurate and comprehensive information on displaced children. By July 2002, there was a total of 338 'envelopes' with information on children, the bulk of which were related to children's educational needs (89 envelopes), their health and nutritional status (84) and risks to their personal security (39). In addition, there were over 70 envelopes on the international humanitarian response to the needs of IDP children. Reports on humanitarian programming generally focused on activities or planned activities designed to provide support in the above-mentioned areas.

In each region, reports tend to focus on different sets of needs. Interestingly, the countries in the Database with the most information on educational needs of IDP children were in Asia, with Indonesia, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka topping the list. The countries with the most data on nutrition and health needs were from the African continent, where Angola, DRC, Somalia and Sudan contained the greatest number of envelopes. Reports of personal security risks also featured widely in the various country profiles. Here again, information in the Database seemed to indicate that IDP children in Africa were at greatest risk with some of the most alarming reports coming out of Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Uganda. This said, it should be noted that no geographic region under consideration in the Database is free of protection risks to children. In all five of the regions monitored, reports of rape, sexual exploitation, military recruitment and abduction figure in the different country profiles, with girls most vulnerable to abuses.

Global data on displaced children remains hard to establish. While the Database is increasingly able to collect and compile illustrative examples of general trends regarding children, either through regional assessments

or emergency bulletins, global data on the situation of IDP children in a particular country, as well as medium- and long-term data, is harder to come by. Information on the total number of children displaced as a consequence of any particular conflict remains vague at best. If global figures or statistics are available on IDP children, they are nearly always rough percentages presented in the context of the UN Consolidated Appeals (CAPs) process or other annual funding documents. At present, the majority of profiles in the Database containing global statistics on children come from UN CAPs and indicate that around 60% of IDPs in any one country are children.

Lack of high quality data is also a problem when trying to assess situations over the medium or long term. Good assessments - for example, on the nutritional or physical security situation of IDP children - may be undertaken in a given camp or region at a given time; the difficulty, however, is to make sure this information remains useful after its immediate release. Its value will be limited if released in a vacuum with no possibility for comparison or tracking over time.

Facing these challenges, the Global IDP Database has been striving to collect and compile ever better data on IDP children. We hope that, through intensified outreach to international and national organisations working with children, we will be able to provide our users with more reliable information on displaced children and, in doing so, provide a stronger basis for international advocacy and assistance work to help displaced children.

1. The country profiles of the Global IDP Database are organised by category of information (which loosely follow the structure of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, i.e. patterns of displacement, subsistence needs, physical security, etc). Each category in the Database contains subject-specific information in the form of 'envelopes'.

The **Global IDP Project** is a project of the Norwegian Refugee Council and is administered through its Geneva office.

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Website

Visit our database on internal displacement and get more information about the Global IDP Project at:

www.idpproject.org

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us at:

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