

Summary of results of FMR Reader Survey 2008

A readership survey form was distributed with FMR31 to all regular readers in all four languages - English, Arabic, French and Spanish. Each FMR language edition website also had a link to an electronic version of the survey.

The total number of responses (the printed and the electronic combined) was 244 in English (3.3% of regular readership), 12 in French (0.5%), 53 in Spanish (3.8%) and 67 in Arabic (3.1%). This is a slightly higher level of response than to the survey in 2004. The small number of French language responses was disappointing.

The Editors are very grateful to all the people who took the time and trouble to fill in this survey.

The profile of FMR readers

The largest constituencies for FMR belong to international agencies (UN, Red Cross/Red Crescent and international NGOs), academic institutions and local NGOs. A small but significant number of respondents work in government agencies.

The readership is very diverse within the hierarchies of all organisations represented, from students to professors, from project officers to executive directors, and so on.

Access to FMR

Both the online and the printed versions of all four languages are widely read. The most significant finding is that over 70% of respondents share their printed copies: slightly more than half share it with between two and five others, while slightly fewer than half share their copy with more than five others.

While we cannot know exactly from responses to the survey how many people read FMR, it is clear that the actual readership is many times the number that are printed and distributed,¹ especially if we add the large number who access it online.

Utilisation of FMR

Research and background reference were the most common reported uses, with material for advocacy and teaching the next most common. Some readers use FMR to help keep them up-to-date or for general interest but there are others who use its contents to support their proposal writing or programme development.

The survey also asked respondents to say whether they look back at previous issues and the majority do, with research being the most common reason for doing so. The claim that FMR has a long shelf-life is substantiated by these responses.

FMR's content and style

Responses overwhelmingly agreed or agreed strongly that FMR's range of subjects, themes, range of authors, balance between reflective and more practice-oriented articles, and design and production qualities are good.

Respondents were asked for their suggestions for themes to be covered in the future; some interesting ideas

emerged that we will take up in considering themes for future issues.

Respondents were also asked if they were interested in contributing articles to FMR. 150 people responded with their suggestions, indicating a high level of engagement.

FMR website

The FMR website (incorporating all four language websites) is widely used and for nearly half of the respondents it is their primary internet source of information on forced migration. The great majority find the FMR website easy to use, and there was general enthusiasm for the indexing of articles that is currently being made available on the site. There were a few additional suggestions for us to consider as the website continues to be developed.

The most common use for the website was research, although many people also use it to read FMR online. Of the currently more than 1,700 individuals who receive our occasional email 'alerts' (telling them when new issues or calls for articles are posted online), some 1,350 of them do not receive print copies but rely on the internet to access FMR.

Other comments

At the end of the survey there was an opportunity for 'other comments'. 101 people took up this opportunity, with the majority of comments being very positive and appreciative; to receive such compliments on the quality, value and usefulness of FMR is very encouraging.

Lessons

A survey such as this cannot show the impact of the magazine except anecdotally. That said, the answers to this survey encourage us to continue broadly along the same lines, seeking strategically important themes for the magazine; retaining a reasonable balance between the parts of the magazine devoted to the feature theme and to general articles; maintaining a wide range of authors; and striving to continue to appeal to a broad range of readers in geography, affiliation, level of seniority, and in terms of activity.

The investment in the website is obviously worthwhile, and the survey results indicate a number of ways for continuing to improve it, and encouragement to do so.

A few respondents encouraged us to seek more authors and to have more themes or articles from 'the South'. These comments show that our efforts along these lines need to be maintained and enhanced. It should help us that the survey also shows the willingness of our readership to engage and contribute to FMR.

The full report is available on the website at <http://www.fmreview.org/2008survey.pdf>

1. Print runs vary from one issue to another but they are approximately 12,000 in English, 3,000 in Arabic, 2,500 in French and 1,800 in Spanish.