A baseline for action: understanding and estimating internal displacement in Central America

Terms of reference: Research consultant (3), individual or research/academic institution

Background and purpose

In September 2017, IDMC launched a two-year research and monitoring project funded by the US Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. The project has two overarching and complementary objectives:

1. To develop a conceptual framework and common understanding of what constitutes internal displacement in the context of generalized criminal violence in the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA), including its drivers, triggers, impacts and patterns, that is presented to government institutions and other IOs and NGOs as a baseline for action for working with the population affected/at risk.
2. To contribute to a more comprehensive picture of the scope and scale of internal displacement in the NTCA, prioritizing the generation of more robust estimations of the numbers, profile, location and needs of the most vulnerable internally displaced people (IDPs), by consolidating existing data and research, helping shape upcoming data collection plans and identifying persisting data gaps.

The goal of these two objectives is to identify regional commonalities, to generate a more comprehensive, common understanding of the phenomenon and to estimate the scope and scale of internal displacement in these three countries to present to government institutions as well as IOs and NGOs working with the population affected by or at risk of displacement. In coordination and complementarity with efforts already taking place, the project seeks to consolidate and provide the much-needed baseline information for the unfolding action in the region: expertise and evidence to inform policy and programming choices that will improve the response to the plight of IDPs and help those at risk of displacement.

Primary research objective: building the evidence for a conceptual framework on the drivers, triggers, impacts and patterns of displacement in the NTCA

The intense nature of generalized criminal violence in the NTCA has driven population movements in a variety of ways. Some people move in response to direct coercion and physical threats, others because of a general erosion of their day-to-day quality of life and

livelihood opportunities.[1] Many flee after refusing to sell their land to drug traffickers and receiving death threats as a result, or to keep their children safe from gang recruitment and violence.[2] Some move in anticipation of violence in the neighborhoods where they live or work, some as a result of its impacts. Others only flee when friends or family members have been attacked or killed.[3]

Any effective, coordinated effort to prevent and respond to the growing displacement crisis in the region must begin with a clear and shared understanding of what constitutes internal displacement in the context of generalized criminal violence and why, how and at what point people flee areas plagued by such violence. A number of stakeholders and observers have emphasized the urgent need for a common understanding of the phenomenon, better data and more robust analysis.[4] [5] [6]

To this end, IDMC will work in concert with key stakeholders to develop a conceptual framework for internal displacement in the context of generalized criminal violence in the NTCA, on the basis of key normative frameworks such as the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the IASC Framework for Durable Solutions, and the Cartegena Declaration on Refugees that can guide government institutions and others working with IDPs. Our study will seek to address the following four streams of research questions, depending on the availability of data and information:

1. What are the main drivers, root causes or underlying structural factors that combine to result in generalized criminal violence, disasters and displacement in the region? Research will focus on:
    - economic drivers, including poverty, unemployment and income inequality;
    - social drivers, such as limited or unequal access to education opportunities; inter-communal tensions and urban violence; gender inequality; discrimination against certain groups such as indigenous groups or LGBTI; urban vs. rural opportunities, etc.;
    - political drivers, for example, availability and effectiveness of state protection mechanisms, rule of law, urban planning, etc.;
    - environmental drivers, including drought, natural hazards and food insecurity;
    - developmental drivers, including the impact of business enterprises, extractive industries such as mining or logging, and development projects.

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[1] Forced Migration Review, Criminal violence, displacement and migration in Mexico and Central America, February 2014, available at http://goo.gl/jc9MK8.
[2] ACAPS, Other Situations of Violence in the Northern Triangle of Central America, July 2014, p.15, available at http://goo.gl/xGJUDI.
[3] Cantor, David. Forced Migration Review, Criminal violence, displacement and migration in Mexico and Central America, February 2014, p.2, available at http://goo.gl/jc9MK8; UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from El Salvador*, 15 March 2016, HCR/EG/SLV/16/01, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/56e706e94.html; UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Honduras*, 27 July 2016, HCR/EG/HND/16/03, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/579767434.html
[4] Draft outcome statement from the San Jose Call to Action conference in July 2016, on file with IDMC.
[5] CIPPDV, Characterization of internal displacement in Honduras, November 2015, p .10, available at http://goo.gl/TXqrBm.
[6] Report of the former Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons on his mission to Honduras, April 2016, para. 84, available here. Draft outcome statement from the San Jose Call to Action conference in July 2016, on file with IDMC.

2. What are the main <u>triggers or shocks that compel people to leave</u> their homes? Research will seek to define, quantify and differentiate between direct/actual violence, threats, perceived violence, or general effects of violence (such as people who move in search of income and who would not have done so were it not for the impact of insecurity and violence on their livelihoods).

3. What are the <u>individual and structural impacts of displacement</u> and who are the most at risk of or vulnerable to displacement, or abuse and harm once displaced? How do mixed migration flows affect the assistance and protection that displaced people receive? Research will focus on key protection concerns for IDPs, such as threats to physical security, family separation, lack of access to livelihoods or basic services, impacts of lost identification documents, harmful coping strategies etc., with a focus on the specific protection needs and vulnerabilities of women, children and other groups. Internal displacement impacts not only IDPs but also host communities and societies as a whole, including through the cost of protecting and assisting IDPs, lost productivity or reduced trade from damaged international reputation. Longer-term, less immediate impacts should also be considered, such as the effect of diminished health and education levels or disrupted social networks on the economy. Research will look to identify the key socioeconomic dimensions that are affected by internal displacement and propose indicators to assess this impact quantitatively and qualitatively.

4. What are the resulting patterns of displacement? In particular, what are the main challenges to address and opportunities to explore in relation to durable solutions for IDPs, and how does failure to address protection concerns and secure durable solutions result in protracted displacement or tipping points for onward movement across borders to neighboring countries and the United States, sometimes multiple times? What is the situation of asylum seekers of migrants deported or returning back to their countries of origin but cannot go back to their place of origin due to protection concerns?

IDMC's research will be conducted in close collaboration with partners working on the ground (UNHCR, NRC, ICRC, IOM, JIPS, Cristosal and other local NGOs and research centers) and carried out with the aim of informing programs and policies.

A system dynamics approach

In order to capture, untangle and illustrate the complex and highly fragmented nature of displacement in the region, IDMC will make use of a system dynamic model to formalize a conceptualization of the phenomenon. This model will enhance our understanding of the underlying structure of this phenomenon in which a number of factors are interconnected. We believe that system dynamics[7] modeling offers an ideal tool to explore this phenomenon because it facilitates the assessment of cause and effect factors and the relationship between different factors in particularly complex systems.

To map a relationship model, each causal link in the model is assigned a "link polarity", either positive or negative, represented by the sign on the arrow. A positive sign implies a positive correlation between factors (e.g. the increase of the phenomenon of "land appropriation" in the model below will increase the number of "landowners' refusals" which in turn will increase the exposure to "threats, kidnapping of family members" which will finally increase the level of "insecurity" perceived by the population). The modeling process does not only

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[7] Sterman, John. "System Dynamics: systems thinking and modeling for a complex world." (2002).

identify the relationship between single factors but also causal loops in the system, possibly identifying negative cycles causing displacement in the area. The dynamic model will be developed in collaboration with regional experts making use of the data that we are able to collect. Links among variables in the model will be documented and supported by the desk and field research done throughout the project.

The final model will represent a holistic and dynamic representation of the project's findings. This tool, together with our descriptive final report, will provide a vital tool to inform policy choices, identifying potential risks and strategic entry points for programs and policies. The model and our final report will also highlight the main information gaps so as to inform future data collection efforts. Given the continued gap of information concerning internal displacement in the region, the dynamic model will provide a useful qualitative deliverable of the causal relationships between drivers and displacement. As quantitative data become increasingly available, in the coming years, we will be able to better constrain the parameters of the model eventually transforming it into a quantitative decision-support tool. This will require a significant data collection effort which lies outside of the scope of the current proposal but could become possible, in the future.

Secondary research objective: identifying data sources and information on the numbers, profile, location and needs of IDPs

Internal displacement due to organized criminal violence in the region appears to be widespread, even if data remain fragmentary. IDMC will help to address these data gaps by consolidating existing data across the region, working with our partners (including IOM, ICRC, UNHCR, JIPS, Cristosal, and other local research centers and grass-roots community-based organisations on the ground) to continue helping to shape upcoming data collection efforts, and identifying persisting blind spots. Ultimately, we will provide a more comprehensive picture of the scope and scale of internal displacement in the NTCA that will identify the numbers, profile, location and urgent needs of the most vulnerable IDPs.

As a result of this research, IDMC will centralize all of the data collected and analysis preformed for the three countries in a publically available database. This comprehensive database will be accessible from our IDMC's website which will include links to other research and resources (in Spanish and English) on the topic. Our aim is to create a principal reference tool that should be of great added value to stakeholders in various fields (government, humanitarian, development, academic and other) seeking to respond to the crisis, but who are currently constrained by fragmentary limited information. We will also seek to identify and recommend collaborative ways to collect data on IDPs in a regular and systematic way.

Consultancy needs

IDMC is looking for three research consultants, either senior researcher individuals or research/academic institutions, one in each of the three NTCA countries (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras), to conduct desk research and expert/key informant interviews along the two objectives outlined above.
- The primary objective of this research will be to build an evidence base along the four streams outlined above on the drivers, triggers, impacts and patterns of displacement in the NTCA, to feed into a conceptual framework (including its causal loop diagrams, dynamic hypotheses/narratives) and a final synthesis report of research findings.
- The secondary objective of this research is to identify and share data sources and information that are relevant to the numbers, profile, location and needs of IDPs.

Research findings will be communicated regularly, on a weekly basis, to IDMC's Monitoring Expert for the Americas and IDMC's Senior Data Scientist (or hired consultant) through written summaries and teleconference presentations/discussions. The research consultant (individual or focal point from research/academic institute) will also participate in monthly IDMC/NRC/Cristosal meetings that review the progress of the NTCA project more broadly, and will present an update on the research findings at the meeting.

The research consultant should be based in their respective countries of research but will work in close coordination with the IDMC team, including Policy and Research, Data and Analysis, and Communications, as well as the NRC country and regional offices.

Timeframe: 1 February - 30 May 2018.
Expected number of consultancy days: Approximately 80 person days over a four-month period.

Expected outputs

- Draft research plan and timeline for accomplishing primary research objectives, including literature review bibliography and list of key informants for expert interviews: by 15 February 2018
- Conduct desk/literature review and key informant/expert interviews on the basis of methodolody and interview templates provided by IDMC
- Written summaries of desk research/literature review and summaries of key informant interviews to feed into a conceptual framework (including its causal loop diagrams, dynamic hypotheses/narratives) shared with and presented to IDMC's Monitoring Expert and Senior Data Scientist (or hired consultant) on a weekly basis
- Monthly presentations to IDMC/NRC/Cristosal team on research progress, including key findings for the conceptual framework, as well as proposed and prioritized next steps (four presentations in total)
- Regular feedback/technical review of conceptual framework designed by the Senior Data Scientist, including its causal loop diagrams, dynamic hypotheses/narratives
- Draft synthesis report of research findings, 40 to 60 pages: by 15 May 2018
- At least one blog on displacement-related findings, TBD with IDMC team.

Desired qualifications

Research consultants, either senior researcher individuals or research/academic institutions , should have proven knowledge of human mobility and displacement issues in the context of conflict and generalized criminal violence and experience working with a diversity of institutions in different regional contexts, including universities, UN agencies, NGOs, and national research institutes.

Applicants should have experience with designing and conducting interviews and stakeholder consultations and the ability and desire to develop networks and engage with new research partners. Applicants should demonstrate the ability to clearly communicate research findings and their global and regional policy relevance and apply judgement in cooperation with partners. Understanding of and experience with system dynamics modeling is a plus.

An individual researcher applicant should have a Master's degree (or higher degree) related to international development, migration, humanitarian affairs, or related field. She or he should be a skilled and independent researcher with strong analytical skills and at least 10 years of experience, with excellent communication skills and ability to represent the organization. He or she should be fluent in English and Spanish, with strong writing skills in English (Spanish a plus), and have experience working with a diversity of institutions in different regional contexts, including universities, UN agencies, NGOs, and national research institutes.

A research/institution applicant should have recognized authority and established research base on migration and displacement in their country, as well as an interest in building a longer-term relationship with IDMC on displacement monitoring, research and policy work in the region. The institution should designate a focal point who is a skilled and independent researcher with strong analytical skills and at least 10 years of experience, with excellent communication skills and ability to represent the organization.

Please submit your application via NRC's recruitment platform by Friday, 12 January 2018. Please be sure to include your CV and a cover letter expressing your relevant experience, preliminary ideas/proposals and daily consultancy rate. https://www.nrc.no/vacancies/
Any questions regarding the position can be sent to: elizabeth.rushing@idmc.ch