GOOD PRACTICE review RRN

5

Counting and identification of beneficiary populations in emergency operations: registration and its alternatives

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This Review is intended to stimulate discussion as to what constitutes 'good practice' in the field of counting and identification of beneficiary populations in emergency operations: including registration as one of a number of alternative methods. Comments are therefore welcomed, as are suggestions of actual examples which illustrate particular contexts and practices. Comments should be sent to:

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Comments received may be used in future Newsletters.

Subsequent versions of this Review will, at the Coordinator's discretion, take account of comments and suggestions received.

Abstract

The aim of this fifth review in the RRN series is to stimulate discussion as to what constitutes 'good practice' in the quantification, identification and registration of beneficiaries in humanitarian assistance operations. The emphasis is on providing practical information concisely and accessibly but the Review does not seek to offer a guide to registration. Indeed, it concludes that total population registration is but one option for establishing numbers and constituent groups within a beneficiary population and discusses registration and alternatives in relation to internally displaced persons (IDP's), as well as refugees and victims of 'natural-disasters'.

Notes on the author

John Telford, the lead author of this fifth Review in the *RRN Good Practice Review* series, has extensive experience of UN humanitarian and refugee emergency and rehabilitation management in major crises, including Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, the former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union and Central and South America. He has been head of UN offices and Senior Emergency Preparedness Response Officer in a number of countries, leading and training Emergency Teams and coordinating UN and NGO responses. He currently undertakes consultancy work and training for the UN, European Commission and governments worldwide, working from his own company EMMA Ltd, based in County Laois, Ireland.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

1.1   Objectives

This Review aims to set out 'good practice' in the counting and identification of individuals requiring humanitarian assistance.

The author does not seek to address the issue of general needs and resources assessment in any depth. Guidance is based on the assumption that certain needs have been identified. The Review deals with the task of establishing the most appropriate means of determining how many people may be in need, and identifying who they are. Full, formal registration of a beneficiary population has, over recent years increasingly been considered to yield the most reliable set of quantitative and qualitative data on which to base planning and delivery of the different types of protection and assistance which make up a humanitarian assistance programme. However, in light of the rapid onset of many of today's 'emergencies', the size, expense and often controversial nature of registration exercises, this Review argues that, given such constraints, total population registration is but one option for the establishment of reliable figures for the effective delivery of assistance. As the title suggests, this is therefore not just, nor even principally, a guide to registration.

RRN Good Practice Reviews[2] (GPR's) are not manuals. They are intended as general guides. The advice they contain aims to be relevant, practical, and easily

accessible to field personnel in emergency operations. This GPR outlines the considerations that should lead to good, (or perhaps 'better'), practice in ascertaining both the number and the composition of an affected population. While specific and detailed guidance may be given, the emphasis is on recommended principles and methods which may challenge received wisdom in this important area of humanitarian work.

1.2   Terminology

For the purposes of this Review, the key terms are defined as follows:

i)   '*Counting*' is used to describe the method of obtaining total figures of potential beneficiaries in an emergency operation, in order to plan the global allocation of resources. The terms *quantification*, *enumeration*, and *quantitative data gathering* also refer to numbers rather than qualities;

ii)   '*Identification*' of individuals or groups of concern (e.g. for distribution of assistance) goes beyond just counting or estimating total numbers. It is essentially a matter of 'knowing' which individuals and communities are involved in or affected by the crisis. This is obviously important in the assessment of who should have access to what resources, and/or may require what degree of assistance or, crucially, protection. It is also essential in determining the distribution of assistance and the provision of protection. There are a number of ways of obtaining such information. The method used will depend upon the overall objective – water provision, food distribution, protection, etc. Individuals might be identified for participation in an assistance programme, by, for example, the community itself, without necessarily being formally registered.

iii)   The term '*registration*' describes the activity of expressly collecting and formally recording specific qualitative and/or quantitative information about individuals of concern to emergency operations, somtimes called a 'head count' or 'person to person' exercise. Certain needs, such as protection or the conferring of refugee status may demand full registration of individuals. Registration may, or may not, however, be an appropriate means of obtaining other types of information described in i) and ii) above (counting and identification).

iv)   The term '*beneficiary*' is used to describe those affected by a crisis, and in need of assistance. It is recognised that the term is somewhat wanting, in that it implies a passivity that is by no means intended. So-called beneficiaries are generally – and should be – active participants in determining their own fates. More than

just 'beneficiaries', they should be seen as actors, partners, and even directors of international relief operations. The term beneficiary is used in this Review, however, simply because it is the term used most commonly in literature on this subject. The recommendations given in this Review apply to internally displaced persons (IDP's), refugees and victims of 'natural disasters'[3].

v) '*Emergency assistance operations*': for the purposes of this Review, the use of the term *emergency* is taken to mean any life-threatening situation in which the means, resources and capacities immediately available are overwhelmed by the critical needs of any individual or group of people. It is thus a relative term, and can cover emergencies in which as few as tens of people are under threat, but the situation is well beyond the means available. It also covers 'mega-emergencies' in which hundreds of thousands, even millions of people have critical needs that cannot be met by the resources immediately available. The threat to life can be measured by morbidity and mortality rates.[4] While all *humanitarian assistance* is by no means delivered through international aid programmes, this Review deals principally with such large-scale international operations.

1.3   Target audience

While the assistance of certain professionals such as a demographer, anthropologist, or expert in quantitative methods is recommended, it is assumed that such specialist guidance is unlikely to be available. The following advice is therefore aimed at the generalist emergency manager. The target audience is primarily field-based personnel of assistance programmes (for the purposes of this Review, this includes staff of non-governmental organisations (NGO's), other international agencies including the UN, Red Cross Movement, government or donor agencies, and affected communities). It is also intended for use at central decision-making levels. Whatever the situation, decisions made centrally should be based primarily on input from field staff.

1.4   Structure

Chapter 2 looks at the basic principles that should underlie any information gathering exercise needed to inform a humanitarian assistance programme. It is followed by a chapter on the rationale for counting and identifying beneficiaries including a look at the linkages between numbers and distribution. Chapter 4 considers registration as the main tool for developing a more detailed profile of a population.

Chapter 5 considers other methods of quantitative estimation of populations. Chapter 6 considers methods other than registration for obtaining a social, cultural, economic and political profile of target populations. Finally Chapter 7 looks at determinants that individually, and in combination, shape actual practice in counting and identifying beneficiary populations. For this purpose, case study examples have been grouped into 'typical' scenarios to help the reader visualise situations with which they may be confronted in the course of their work.

2

Basic Principles

The overriding principle in identification and counting exercises in emergencies is to ensure that everyone receives adequate assistance to sustain life with dignity. However, it is recognised that in many situations, resources will not always be sufficient to meet total need and that within this reality, certain basic principles should be adhered to to ensure minimum standards are respected. This Review recommends that the following basic principles should underpin all beneficiary counting and identification exercises in emergency conditions:

2.1   Continuous information gathering

Collection, analysis, processing and use of information about a beneficiary population are priority activities in preparing and implementing a humanitarian assistance programme. These activities should start immediately, and where possible, before an 'emergency' situation arises, and should be a continual, integral part of any programme. Adequate, professional resources must be made available specifically for the creation and maintenance of an appropriate information capacity. All populations are dynamic: people are born, move and die. Population counting and identification therefore needs to be conducted as a continual process, gradually reflecting with increasing accuracy the numbers and composition of the beneficiary population. This requires sustained access to the members of the population, and

a professional assessment capacity, normally including some form of computerisation. The mix of information collection methods chosen at the start of an emergency operation is critical and should be designed to allow for regular verification and cross-checking of new information.

2.2 Clear and consistent definitions

Unclear definitions, or the collection of unimportant information weakens any information gathering exercise. Different units may be used in both estimating and identifying beneficiary population qualities and number – individual, family, household, community, etc. The significance of a particular unit may vary according to the emergency situation, or programme. The basic unit or units must be clearly defined, as must its significance to the planning process.

How counting or estimation is conducted, including the very choice of the unit of enumeration, can reflect basic assumptions upon which an assistance operation has been constructed. Several units of enumeration can be used to quantify a population – the individual beneficiary, head of household, household, family, dwelling, or targeted group (e.g. the vulnerable, political or ethnic group). Such an apparently innocuous step as the choice of statistical unit can in fact be a clear statement of priority within an assistance programme. The common approach of counting heads of household and dependents, without paying specific attention to gender, is a case in point. It is now widely recognised that single female heads of household, for instance, require a specific and priority approach in assistance and protection planning. They ought, therefore, to be specifically identified and enumerated. Yet this unit of identification and enumeration is only now becoming a serious part of enumeration exercises. Similarly the definition of 'family' can be a value laden exercise; the reality of polygamous 'families' made up of several households may be overlooked, to the point of rendering the results quite unusable. A resultant statistic on the number of 'families' within a particular population may be a serious misrepresentation of the demographic nature of that population. Similarly, the distorting effect that forced displacement has on family and household structure is rarely fully appreciated by managers of emergency operations. Assumptions are made on average household size and gender composition in the absence of serious qualitative and quantitative evidence to support them. Misconceptions and erroneous assumptions (e.g. under-estimations) can therefore have an obviously detrimental effect on the welfare of the population to be assisted.

2.3   Accuracy

Despite the need to obtain accurate information, rarely in the heat of an emergency will a high degree of accuracy be feasible. Instability, confusion, and the primacy of life-saving activities may severely restrict access to and capacity to identify a beneficiary population. The objective, therefore, should be to establish a comprehensive information and verification capacity that will gradually reduce the margin of error. This can most effectively be achieved through the use of 'triangulation' – a combination of estimation methods rather than reliance on a single system.

Humanitarian assistance activities require varying levels of accuracy. For example, appropriate food distribution generally requires as accurate a knowledge of numbers of beneficiaries as possible. At some stage, each individual beneficiary has to be identified and counted, be it by the beneficiary community itself, host government, or by the international community. The adequate supply of water, however, rarely requires the precise identification of every potential user. Often no more is required than a generous estimate of the number of households, coupled with an equally generous estimate of the average household size. This will enable the planner to gauge the number of potential users of the water system, which will in turn, permit an estimate of the total daily consumption, and storage requirements.
Equally, for the delivery of most health services, a reasonable approximation rather than an accurate number suffices to determine early levels of provision, such as initial drug and staff requirements. Up to a certain point this is also true for vaccination programmes in which coverage is essential. Although the objective is to provide full individual protection from vaccine-preventable diseases as early as possible, for epidemiological control in large populations a coverage rate of about 80% is the pragmatic objective. An accurate register may give a figure of the number of children but is unlikely to break it down by age or age bracket. Typically a preliminary vaccination coverage survey will be done prior to setting up Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI) services, which will also give indications about the target population of infants and young children with additional information provided by a sample survey.

Box 1

Rapid epidemiological assessment of Kurdish refugee populations in Iran

In May 1991, two months after the large scale displacement of Kurds from northern Iraq, MSF Belgium conducted a rapid epidemiological survey in the camps of Hafez and Kaliche. Overall population estimates of the two camps were obtained from the Iranian authorities and the refugees. A 30 cluster sampling survey was prepared, carried out and processed within a week. The information of the survey questionnaires was complemented by an assessment of the nutritional status of the children under five in the selected households. The exercise yielded basic demographic information, notably the male : female ratio and the proportion of under fives, provided insights into mortality and morbidity, and established a nutritional status baseline. The results enabled the organisation to plan and prioritise its health intervention, but also revealed that the condition of the refugees in Iran was less severe than in Turkey, so that resources needed to be concentrated there (Porter *et al*, 1993).

International organisations have different objectives, mandates and institutional approaches. UNHCR and the ICRC both have a clear protection function, while emergency NGOs concentrate mostly, though not uniquely, on assistance activities. The required degree of numerical accuracy required in population figures may also be a function of the institutional approach or mandated responsibilities of the organisations concerned. For instance, protection functions frequently require a high degree of accuracy, including actual registration of all individuals requiring that protection, so that their individual legal as well as physical status and well-being can be monitored.

Accepting the need to obtain at least reasonably accurate figures to enable an effective assistance programme to beneficiary populations, but recognising that accurate statistics are not always readily available under emergency conditions (often conflict-related), a priority objective in emergencies must be to establish mechanisms for continual improvement in the precision of data. It is the frequency and cross-checking of population estimates – the critical follow-up monitoring of new arrivals, departures, births and deaths – which will determine the quality of information underpinning an emergency assistance programme.

2.4   Respect for human safety, well-being, and dignity

Population identification and quantification activities should be governed by universal standards of respect for human rights and dignity, and for confidentiality and security. Degrading methods of 'herding', or marking people without their consent should obviously be avoided. (While rare, on occasion these methods have been used during mass influx emergencies, for example in East Africa). As far as possible, the timing of formal information gathering exercises and location should be chosen with respect for local custom, religion and culture (preferably avoiding religious, cultural, or national festivals, or times of collective mourning). Special attention should be accorded to the well-being and comfort of vulnerable groups.

2.5   Communication and transparency

Good communication with and among all those involved in an assistance programme is a *sine qua non* for the reliable collection, analysis, and processing of information on individuals, groups, or populations. In turn, trust, based on an absence of real or perceived threat to interests, is essential for good communication. Good practice in the enumeration and identification of beneficiary populations requires the capacity to distinguish between conditions which are conducive to good communication and trust within an assistance programme, and those that are not. Experience shows that secrecy severely impedes good communication when carrying out such an exercise.

Increasingly in humanitarian operations a mutually trusting environment does not seem to exist. This may reflect as much the politics into which humanitarian assistance delivery is becoming drawn, as the poor management of some of its programmes.

A lack of trust and communication creates a vicious circle: it is generally assumed that beneficiaries lie to make 'unfair' gain from the assistance operation. Increased and exponentially more expensive technology used in registration systems in humanitarian operations does and will continue to elicit an ever more sophisticated response from those who want to subvert those systems. In the words of an experienced emergency aid worker[5]: "if someone wants to beat a registration system, s/he has 24 hours a day to think of ways around whatever system is put in

place, no matter how technical and sophisticated that system may be." Highly resourced and sophisticated national border control systems are seemingly circumvented with ease. Currency and document falsification seems to be possible in virtually any context, if the stakes are sufficiently high.[6]

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Box 2

Beating the system

A number of ingenious methods of beating the registration system have been noted: the use of animal urine to remove 'indelible ink' in Kenya; cutting and re-sticking wrist bands in Tanzania; sophisticated forgery of cards and passbooks in Pakistan etc. Even snow was recently reported as being used in Croatia for the removal of 'indelible ink'.

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Nonetheless, with the notable exception of mandated international protection functions, e.g. for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) whose protection activities may demand confidentiality and discretion), successful information gathering in emergencies should be an open process with key actors (beneficiaries, authorities, implementing partners, and donors) participating fully. In most countries, for example, there is a legal requirement for the authorities to be involved in quantifying and registering displaced populations within their territories. The relevant communities should also be an integral part of the process from the beginning. Ideally, beneficiary groups should plan and conduct the process themselves, in close coordination with other actors, especially national/local authorities. Transparency throughout the process is necessary to dispel misunderstandings, or misapprehensions, particularly where conflicting interests may be involved.

If participation of the authorities is seen to be either inadvisable, or in some cases, even to pose a risk to the beneficiaries of the programme, then fundamental issues of protection, responsibilities under international and national law, authority, and sovereignty must be addressed before an adequate information gathering process and capacity can be established. Similarly, if a significant degree of secrecy is deemed to be necessary, it is likely to indicate fundamental inadequacies within the operation. Tensions, distrust and a basic lack of communication probably exist; at worst, enumerators or beneficiaries may even be exposed to serious risk.

It must be remembered, however, that in emergencies, available resources are, by definition, less than needs. By multiple registration, or registering fictitious dependents for example, a head of household may increase the chances of the household's survival.

2.6   Vested interests

RRN Good Practice Review 3 on General Food Distribution points out that "inflation of numbers for food distribution is one of the most common sources of friction between donors, local governments, UNHCR and WFP" (Jaspars and Young, 1995:108). The same document also comments that there may also be significant and serious under-estimation of numbers, resulting in inadequate distribution taking place – a fact that is rarely appreciated.

Box 3

Different total population figures: Goma, Zaire

At no point during the Goma crisis (from mid 1994 to late 1996) was there an accurate calculation of the refugee population there. More than one global population figure was used simultaneously. One was an indicative figure for planning purposes that allowed for an increase in the actual population over the planning period. The other was an estimate of that actual population, corresponding to a particular point in time.

3

Counting and identification: why, by and for whom?

3.1   Introduction

The objective of this Chapter is to examine, briefly, the principal reasons for undertaking a quantification and/or identification exercise, before going on in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 to look at the different methods of carrying out these activities. In particular, the important link between numbers and distribution is considered.

Why?

There are two principal reasons to establish accurate numbers of and identify a beneficiary population: i) entitlement to material assistance, and ii) legal identity and protection. This Review contends that the choice of methodology used to count and identify will be a function of a) the objectives sought and b) the conditions pertaining at any given time.

Though quantitative information is only part of the picture, and information provided may be of only limited use in the longer term, without a reasonably accurate estimate of numbers, the delivery of assistance to beneficiaries, particularly in the early stages of an emergency, will be impaired. Global numbers and an ethnic, gender and age breakdown are clearly important for a range of humanitarian

assistance activities: including programme planning, protection, fund-raising, and advocacy. Without statistics, effective assistance and protection would ultimately become impossible. Quite probably, major financial or 'in kind' donations would not continue to flow either. Beneficiaries have the right to be counted as accurately as possible, if that is a pre-condition for assistance or protection.

By and for whom?

International organisations, the media, host authorities (including the military), beneficiary community leaders, political, military or social groups related to the beneficiaries, and neighbouring communities or their representatives, are all potential sources and consumers of beneficiary population statistics. Sectoral specialists – such as water and sanitation, health and nutrition – while they need to know the number of potential users of the services they are being asked to provide, may also be able to supply information on how many people use their services.

For ease of presentation, unless otherwise stated, it is assumed for this Review that the quantification exercise is undertaken by managers of an international assistance programme. This is frequently so, particularly in the case of large influxes into remote rural areas where resources and overall capacity are very limited. It must be said, however, that the responsibility for counting (and possibly registering) those in need of humanitarian assistance generally should, and often does, lie with the host authorities. Therefore, the advice given in this Review should be assessed within the overall context of local official policy, requirements and capacity.

Box 4

Counting and registration by official authorities

In Armenia, during 1992 and 1993, the government responded to the Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) exodus by establishing a refugee ministry to process and assist the estimated quarter of a million refugees. Registration was undertaken through the comprehensive network of municipal social welfare offices (it was obligatory for all new arrivals in any municipality to register). The refugee ministry then compiled consolidated national lists from the municipal lists. The task severely taxed their capacity, and international support in terms of computer equipment and funding of staff was needed. The counting and registration process was, however, managed by the authorities considerably more efficiently, and at considerably less cost, than any international agency could have achieved over the same period of time.

3.2 Distribution

3.2.1 Introduction

One of the principal reasons for counting beneficiaries in emergency operations is to facilitate distribution of humanitarian assistance. Given the central importance of distribution in relief programmes, this section considers in more detail the specific links between quantitative as well as qualitative data gathering and effective distribution of assistance. *RRN Good Practice Review 3* (Jaspars and Young, 1995) offers a more in-depth guide to general food distribution in emergencies and it is recommended that this is read in conjunction with this chapter.

3.2.2 Intended programme beneficiaries

Donors and major international agencies have traditionally seen formal quantification and identification, particularly registration of beneficiaries, as a *sine qua non* for good distribution. This view is at least partly founded on a common assumption that beneficiaries, local host communities and authorities alike will exaggerate beneficiary numbers, and that registration is the way to avoid this. It is the author's conclusion that while accurate numbers are undoubtedly a condition for 'better' distribution – it helps to calculate inputs and to know who needs what – there are other equally important considerations which tend to be overshadowed by the preoccupation with quantification and registration. For example, if quantification leads to a reduction in assistance, then operation managers must guarantee that the reduction is warranted, and that no individual will suffer as a result: assistance may be reduced on the basis that planning figures appear to have been exaggerated, but the distribution system may be inadequate to ensure that the weak do not experience a disproportionate cut.

3.2.3 Formal quantification and distribution

In the heat of an emergency, distribution will probably start spontaneously, often by local populations to the victims, and will generally begin before there is any formal attempt at accurate counting. Experience has shown that local host families, communities, religious and civil groups, etc. do not make their assistance contingent upon the existence of reliable statistics. They simply respond, on the basis that needs outweigh resources, and that therefore whatever physical assistance can be

distributed, should be. This experience would imply that while formal and accurate quantification may represent a desirable, recommended activity, it is not a necessary precondition for effective emergency distribution. However, for international agencies, such an approach is not sufficient to allow for adequate planning or implementation of a distribution and some form of quantification is necessary. The key question is – does it have to be registration?

Box 5

Food distribution in Nepal and Mesa Grande, Honduras

In both the refugee camp for Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, and Salvadoran refugees in Mesa Grande, Honduras, food distribution was managed by the refugees themselves. The identification of the beneficiaries and updating of lists were conducted by refugee food distributors. The accuracy of these lists was very impressive indeed. While official registration in Mesa Grande was renowned for being out of date, and patently inaccurate, the refugee lists were invariably accurate. Because food distribution did not depend on the official registration and resultant ID cards, the inaccuracies of that system had little impact.

The quest for one seemingly magical population planning figure reflects a simplicity of approach that may ignore the complexity of both a particular population, and a particular emergency operation. Not only is there nothing methodologically wrong with having various, and significantly different planning figures, it is generally good practice. Such figures may include an overall total population planning figure which allows for future growth of a beneficiary population, alongside an estimate of the actual population, needed for immediate food distribution. For shelter (e.g. distribution of plastic sheeting) an estimated number of households might be used to calculate required quantities, rather than the actual number of persons in each one. Rough estimates of specific vulnerable groups, compiled from varying survey methods, might be used for planning services for vulnerable groups. More precise figures, or even registrations of vulnerable individuals needing targeted assistance or special protection might be used simultaneously for day-to-day management of those services. Thus, many figures quantifying the same groups may exist simultaneously for different purposes. The important thing is to know, and to explain clearly to the beneficiary population and donors alike, why each figure exists.

3.2.4　Registration and distribution

Registration is increasingly seen by donors and implementing partners alike as the most reliable means of arriving at planning figures for distribution. Persistent calls for registration exercises have been made in recent major humanitarian crises, often as a response to seemingly huge exaggeration in planning figures. This *RRN Good Practice Review* challenges the assumption, also questioned by Harrell-Bond *et al* (1991) that registration is a necessary prelude to an effective distribution: "...we have challenged the belief that counting the refugees is a necessary and often a sufficient condition for the cost-effective handling of refugee assistance" [this quote can be applied to humanitarian assistance operations in general, not just refugee operations].

If appropriate and feasible, (a rare thing under emergency conditions), registration may be recommended. But first, fundamental questions must be answered. Tidy figures, definitions and categories may be attractive, and convincing for donors, authorities and the media, but are they real? And, importantly, if we can identify beneficiaries clearly, are we honestly capable of distributing to them as an isolated group? Are we, in fact, capable of distributing to them with any level of adequacy at all? Can we actually guarantee that through error, or a lack of resources or professionalism we will not exclude entitled individuals or groups from the process? Can we really maintain a continuously accurate quantification and/or registration process to allow for all births, deaths and movements of population? Given the importance of obtaining progressively more accurate estimates of numbers of potential beneficiaries in planning a distribution, it is questionable whether, in light of the effort and resources expended in registration during emergencies, a repeat of the exercise is possible. And if it is feasible, what is the opportunity cost: could the resources have been more usefully invested in finding other methods of overcoming inadequacies in the distribution system? If the process indicates dramatically rising numbers, can we rapidly adapt the pipeline and distribution to meet the need? Conversely, if the process indicates that numbers are lower than previously estimated, and distribution is reduced accordingly, do we have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the distribution system to guarantee that vulnerable groups will not suffer unduly? During emergencies, the answer to most, or all these questions is no.

Box 6

Basic service provision to IDPs in Sri Lanka

In 1991 the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam expelled several tens of thousands of Muslims from the area in north Sri Lanka that had come under their control. A significant number of them settled in northern Puttalam district along the west coast, almost doubling the resident population there. Assistance was extended by local people, the government of Sri Lanka and some international agencies. Despite the fact that all internally displaced people were properly registered by the authorities, entitling them to food rations, for several years the government failed to adjust the staffing, stock and budgetary allocations for the health and educational services in Puttalam, (which in principle it could have done by scaling down those for the northern districts from which the Muslims had been expelled). Over time, this frustrated the local government officials and contributed to friction with the initially very generous host population. The Italian Cooperation and some international NGOs eventually provided additional resources, constructed additional schools and paid auxiliary staff, but not without misgivings about whether there was indeed a genuine resource gap for the government.

By setting registration as a precondition for access to life-saving distributions, we imply that all those registered will in fact receive their rightful entitlements, and on time. Not only is this quite untrue in most emergencies, but it is also a system that rewards exaggeration of numbers and dishonesty. The self-fulfilling prophecy that ever more strict registration systems are required to eliminate exaggerated figures, is thus perpetuated.

Box 7

Linking distribution to registration: Hartisheik, eastern Ethiopia, 1990

In early 1990, a British television documentary entitled 'Killing by Kindness' exposed serious deficiencies in UNHCR's assistance programme in Hartisheik, eastern Sudan. The refugee camp was home to a large population of Somalis, the majority of whom had fled from neighbouring Hargeisa. The writer Graham Hancock identified on camera significant problems related to the registration system in the camp. General food distribution had been linked to registration through the issuance of ration cards, giving rise to two major problems: assistance could only be accessed through registration, resulting, not surprisingly, in the flourishing of a black market in false ration cards; compounding this problem was the sporadic nature of efforts to update the registration. Potentially genuine

cases of refugees therefore had to wait for a re-registration exercise before they could get access to their entitlements. A strong argument was made in the documentary that the delays in updating registration led to undue suffering for individuals arriving between the infrequent re-registration exercises.

On the evidence of the documentary (see box 7 above), it is debatable as to whether food distribution should have been linked to registration in the first place at all. The black market in forged documents was apparently so well organised that registration did nothing to avoid abuse. It may even have facilitated it by obliging all recipients to possess a ration card that was not easily accessible through legal means, even for some of those entitled to it (e.g. new arrivals). The lack of a permanent capacity to register all new arrivals, and births led to injustice and suffering. In short, irrespective of alternatives, registration was not an ideal option.

An alternative, according to Mitchell and Slim (1990), is to rely on beneficiary distribution through 'indirect distribution programme(s)'. The following section looks at some of the other elements, beyond obtaining numbers, which influence the success or otherwise of a planned distribution.

Tensions frequently arise in emergency operations over population planning figures – how they are arrived at, by whom, and for what purpose. These are political questions. Information is power. It is only by being aware of and understanding underlying political and economic interests that the practitioner can approach the often loaded question of whether or not to attempt to register, count, or estimate beneficiary populations. Conflict already plaguing an assistance programme may become exacerbated over the choice of which numbers are used to determine who needs, and who will receive what. In any society, the question of access to resources is a potential source of conflict. Anyone who has worked in modern humanitarian operations will be aware that relations among local populations, beneficiaries, and humanitarian aid workers can become strained. In rare cases they can lead to violence. In order to better understand the political implications that may accompany the counting of recipients of international aid, it is necessary first to recognise that emergency aid programmes themselves are increasingly an arena for conflict.

Quantification and description of any population is, therefore, a potentially value-laden, politically significant exercise. It can go the very heart of important individual and collective interests. The various needs for information may or may not coincide.

Donors need numbers for planning grants, but also increasingly for 'visibility', or publicity activities. The media needs numbers to inform the public, and sell their media product. The local authorities need numbers for assistance, security and control activities, and perhaps to attract or dispel public concern, or to inform their political constituencies. Beneficiary leaders and related groups may need numbers for their own political, and even para-military uses. These interests are not necessarily complementary; they may even become contradictory.

The physical counting of every individual in an affected population is often set by major donors as a pre-condition for their aid, particularly food, as one of the largest and most expensive components of an emergency assistance programme. Such counting may not be immediately feasible, or advisable. And even if it is possible, it may not be an immediate priority for the beneficiary population itself, or for the implementing authorities and agencies. Good management should seek to balance all competing interests, without prejudice to any. This may sound difficult, but by bringing representatives of all grps together, and by constructively exposing each to alternative perspectives and realities, very often a compromise solution can be arrived at. This Review recommends the 'co-opting of critics': involve them, and expose them constructively to the real constraints that you as a manager face. That said, in the face of irreconcilably competing interests, those of the beneficiary must take precedence (while showing due respect for the law of the land).

3.2.5 Distribution methods

As important as obtaining an overall planning figure is a qualitative approach to distribution planning; for instance, the type of distribution system, who manages it and who physically receives items at various stages. Similarly, the location and layout of distribution sites, determining eligibility, monitoring effectiveness and equity of the system, including the identification of gaps (eligible groups that are excluded by intent or omission), and the inclusion of options for control mechanisms, are all important.

As noted below, registration alone cannot guarantee fair distribution. Such a guarantee is also dependent on the final link in the distribution chain, be it a government authority, or a group of community representatives, and its capacity to ensure fair and adequate distribution of resources.

Box 8

Inadequate distribution: Sarajevo, 1992

The initial planning for the Sarajevo airlift, in 1992, was a simple matter. An assumed population of 380,000 (an inflated estimate, as subsequent evidence indicated), multiplied by a standard ration of 500g per person per day resulted in a target food supply of 190 Metric Tonnes of food per day. Serious malnutrition was reported in subsequent nutrition surveys, however, despite the initial general achievement of the target tonnages. Distribution monitoring showed that not only was the nutritional content of the food transported at times seriously inadequate (e.g. potatoes with a high water content), but that distribution overall fell far short of meeting needs. For instance, one family over the last six months of 1992 received a total of 92 kilos of food and non-food items for four people i.e. a starvation diet. In addition to the food aid, they survived, as did most inhabitants of the besieged city, thanks to scavenging and the purchase of food smuggled into the black-market (paid for through savings, and remittances also smuggled in, especially from Germany).

The question is, does the last transaction of all distribution systems – i.e. the delivery of assistance from the penultimate link in the chain to the final recipient – require precise and detailed information about the recipient, that only registration is believed to be able to provide? The answer must be reached in consultation with those managing that penultimate link in the chain, where distribution is 'direct', and where the recipient unit (family, household, individual, or whoever) needs to be clearly identified and known in some detail.

3.2.6   Registration for material assistance

Full registration may turn out to be a poor choice of counting and identification methods for material assistance, for a variety of reasons:

- inadequate coverage of the target population may result in inaccurate and unfair distribution
- where registration is a one off exercise, 'losses', through e.g. death or migration, are hard to monitor, thus causing the information gained to lose its value over time.
- Registration says nothing about the fairness or equitableness of the eventual distribution of material assistance. Establishing a fair share in principle, does not in its turn ensure that a fair share is indeed received.

3.3   Identification and legal status

Despite its limitations as a tool for distribution, registration is strongly recommended when the objective is to strengthen or secure legal status and thereby improve protection.[7]

In order to access basic rights to identity and protection within society, each individual requires formal identification and the recording of their details in the country in which they reside. Without such formal identification, individuals may lose their rights to land, social welfare and support, and importantly, where people live in fear of their lives, a record of their very existence. This aspect of identity becomes expecially important in complex emergencies where diplaced people lose their rights in their home country and become literally dispossessed.

Most countries have national laws pertaining to aliens, asylum seekers and refugees which require them to carry out formal registration of individuals. On the one hand, this operation gives the country a mechanism to exercise control, but it is also the mechanism by which forcibly displaced people, especially those that have crossed international borders, acquire a legal existence and rights to residence or abode. Registration can legitimise marriages and births, create a legal entitlement for refugees to international protection, and may offer access to scholarships and asylum applications in third countries.

While such laws tend to apply to refugees who cross international borders, a major problem exists for internally displaced people, who now constitute the majority of the global population of displaced populations. Although these individuals in principle retain a legal status and legal rights in their home country, it is often the very refusal of these rights which has caused their displacement. Yet by remaining within their own borders, these populations find it much more difficult to claim international assistance and protection. Where their displacement is the direct result of conflict or oppression in which the government itself is involved, they will have mixed feelings about registration by national authorities. In such instances, there is a strong case for registration to strengthen or secure the legal status of forcibly displaced people, as a step in extending protection.

4

Registration

4.1   Introduction

"Since the time international humanitarian agencies became involved in assisting refugees in developing countries, this seemingly entirely reasonable requirement – the need to count the refugees – has, to a significant extent, dominated policy, planning, implementation and evaluation... Specifically...the numerical criterion is insufficient as a basis for assessing need, as it is usually not possible to count refugees with any accuracy...the requirement to count refugees leads to highly undesirable, oppressive consequences for refugee populations. It forms a central component in an ideology of control which is part and parcel of most assistance programmes. Furthermore, and integrally connected, balancing food and numbers of individual refugees, as a criterion of accountability to donors, fails, both contingently (because of the difficulties of accurate counting) and substantively, since no normative definition of the structure of binding mutual obligations has been established. Finally, as a mechanism to guarantee the fair distribution of food to those in need, i.e. that each gets the same, it does not address the question of whether everyone gets enough." (Harrell-Bond *et al*, 1991)

This Chapter does not seek to offer advice on the actual undertaking of a full population registration. A number of useful manuals exist which offer step by

step guidance to help practitioners plan and carry out the exercise; once a decision has been taken to register, the UNHCR guidelines (UNHCR, 1994a) in particular offer comprehensive and practical advice (Annex 3 of this paper offers a résumé of the main steps to planning and implementing a registration). Rather it seeks to encourage the reader to consider; i) whether registration is necessary, and ii) whether it is feasible.

In modern society, worldwide, registration is an indispensable and acceptable means of reaching many everyday objectives – enrolling for education, admission to hospital, opening a bank account, subscribing to a periodical, and more fundamentally, for recording birth, matrimony and death. In the context of international humanitarian assistance programmes, its use is linked to both enumeration and assessment. It is not, however, synonymous with either. A clear definition of registration, and the objectives for which it should be used, is needed if the frequent and at times serious misunderstandings of its function and worth are to be avoided.

Box 9

Situations in which registration may be necessary

- When the objective is to determine entitlements to resources that are highly valued – a particular status such as refugee, or POW, the distribution of land, repatriation grants or compensation for victims, etc. ;
- When an entitlement is of major individual, personal significance, e.g. family reunion, communications and tracing ;
- For the protection of specific groups (refugees, women, children, prisoners, wounded, victims of a specific event, etc.) ;
- For travel, and movement including return, and immigration/emigration ;
- For access to target programmes – medical, supplementary or therapeutic feeding, special training or counselling, for example ;
- When it is required for official reasons by the government or local authorities etc.;
- To record normal demographic data (birth, death, etc.) ;
- To enable voting in elections that may be relevant to the assistance programme (e.g. of community representatives).

Registration is a tool; a means to an end. Any tool can be misused – a vice-grip will undo most bolts, if enough force is applied, but it may also damage those bolts if too much force is applied. The correct gauge wrench is recommended. Registration

is not a neutral tool; it can generate, or more accurately, bring to the surface, latent tensions in an assistance programme. This is because it touches upon fundamental relationships and vested interests – relationships of power, control of resources, and ultimately even control of destinies. To carry out a registration therefore, agencies need to examine the often contentious issues related to the objectives of a registration i.e. whose interests it is perceived to favour, and whose it is perceived to prejudice.

In addition to clarifying the objectives of a registration, the conditions in which an exercise is to be carried out should influence decision makers' actions. Successful and continuous registration requires minimum levels of stability, rarely, if ever, experienced during the initial stages of an emergency. It is often suggested that registration is needed to achieve the levels of quantitative and qualitative information required to carry out a successful emergency operation. But a fundamental determinant of accuracy is the political context of the emergency operation (e.g. the perceived links between that information and access to assistance or economic gain). The achievement of greater accuracy requires, therefore, that fundamental political issues within an operation be addressed.

Box 10
The politics of registration in post-conflict situations: Bosnia-Herzegovina

In anticipation of the municipal elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina in September 1996, all Bosnians who had taken refuge outside Bosnia-Herzegovina, were also asked to register. This was coordinated by the Out-of-Country voting office of the OECD in Vienna. The reference document used was the census of 1991, but prospective voters were asked to indicate the municipality in Bosnia-Herzegovina where they intended to go and live. Various sources subsequently indicated an unacceptable political manipulation of the registration process: Bosnian Serbs that had taken refuge in the current Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Kosovo) were presented with registration forms where a municipality in the Republica Srspka (the autonomous Serb region of Bosnia-Herzegovina) had already been filled in, or were told that further humanitarian aid would be withheld unless they chose this municipality. This manipulation of the registration process was not for the benefit of particular political candidates, but to control ethnic-territorial developments (International Crisis Group, 1996:36-37).

One experienced expert has argued that "registration (in emergency operations) is...a necessary evil"[8]. However, this position needs qualifying. Minimum conditions of stability are required for successful registration, conditions which are almost always absent during the heat of an emergency. More than this however, the pressure to count, and the priority given to registering have led to an imbalance in many international aid operations between quantitative and qualitative analysis and planning, and exacerbation of bad relations. In some cases, it has led to conflict, both amongst and between beneficiaries and the aid community. In more than one recent instance, registration has led to confusion, disruption, and discord. Finally, it is an expensive exercise.

Box 11

How bad can relations really become?

In 1991, the 'Safe Haven' and 'Operation Provide Comfort' operations were mounted to assist, and convince the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Kurds to return to Northern Iraq. Since then a protracted international humanitarian programme has been implemented there by NGOs and the UN. Following the withdrawal of the approximately 30,000 strong multinational force, some half a dozen international personnel involved in the relief operation have been murdered. Despite the absence of official authority, various levels of investigation were carried out by international organisations; there subsequently seems to be little doubt that the causes of at least some of these deaths were rooted in perceived conflicts of interest directly, or indirectly related to the overall management of the humanitarian assistance programme. Innocent lives were needlessly lost as a result of these perceptions, or misperceptions.

However, despite the considerable drawbacks to registration, experience has shown that considerable pressure may be exerted to register. The decision as to whether or not to register thus requires specific analysis.

4.2 Why register?

4.2.1 The legal obligation to register

Most countries in the world, (the UK being one exception), impose a legal obligation on non-citizens to register. In Sierra Leone for example, the relevant legislation would be the 'Non-citizens (Registration, Immigration and Expulsion) (Amendment) Act', of 1965, amended in 1980. In Uganda, the relevant legislation

is the 'Control of Aliens and Refugees Act' of 1966 and the 'Alien Refugee Registration Act'. In Sudan the 'Regulation of Asylum Act' would apply.

Box 12

Unregistered refugees in Khartoum

In March 1987, the police conducted a campaign in various Khartoum neighbourhoods and rounded up a number of unregistered refugees. Many of these had not registered at the border as asylum seekers as legally required, or had come to Khartoum without official permit to leave the refugee camp.

Typically, there is no domestic legislation regarding internally displaced persons. This can give rise to serious legal problems. Uganda, for example, does not issue national identity cards; proof of citizenship is through a graduated tax slip for each adult. Several impoverished internally displaced people fail to pay tax and therefore no longer have tax documents, as a result of which they risk being imprisoned for not being able to prove citizenship.

Box 13

Asylum applications restricted in Japan

Japan has been seriously criticised by Amnesty International and even UNHCR for not providing information on asylum procedures to potential applicants and not providing them with application forms. Most are categorised as illegal entrants and even though the Government may be at risk of human rights violations, are routinely refused protection. Their legal right to registration is denied. (Takahashi, 1995:33).

4.2.2   The legal right to registration

The right to registration at birth is enshrined in international instruments. According to art. 24 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and art. 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child shall be registered immediately after birth and has the right to acquire a nationality.[9] In that sense registration can be the precondition for the granting of rights and entitlements.

Box 14

Hill tribe registration in Thailand

A 1985-1988 registration of the hill tribe population in 20 provinces in northern Thailand revealed that only half of its estimated 1.5m members were holders of Thai citizenship. A subsequent exercise in the early 1990s indicated that still only about two-thirds had acquired citizenship. The Tribal Research Institute in 1995 put the total hill tribe population at just under 700,000, but the Registration Office of the Ministry of the Interior had an unpublished figure of some 815,000. The uncoordinated involvement of different agencies in the registration system, and a fluctuating population, contributed to these disparities.

However, population registration has gradually become a key issue in the integration policy of the Thai government for a number of reasons: for the government, it is a means of extending its control and jurisdiction over its territory and the people living in it. Tribal peoples have become aware that registration and citizenship now offer important benefits: they are a precondition for recognition in national policies e.g. regarding watershed classification or land use, and for better access to services. For individuals, citizenship offers access to enrolment in government schools at a higher grade, and to more jobs. It makes it possible to officially own rice fields and to register livestock. Another outcome of registration has been its influence in the change from shifting to permanent settlement. At a collective level, the unit for registration is the village community, but registration in the Village Directory of the Department of Local Administration (DOCA) requires permanent settlement. Registration has also affected the formal structure of authority in the village. In 1983, the DOCA introduced village committees that formally replaced the role of the village elders. The chairman of the committee would be paid by the government, and therefore be expected to act as government representative. The second unit of registration is the household. Households have a card, whose colour coding indicates whether they have formal citizenship or not. (Aguettant, 1995).

Registration of forcibly displaced people is primarily a tool for the protection of rights and entitlements, rather than for quantification of populations. An effective and sustainable registration system for births and deaths can be established through, for instance, public health facilities, well before a comprehensive population registration system is established.

Registration may be a precondition to confer citizenship with all accompanying rights, also for populations within the territory of a state that are not affected by forced migration.

Often displaced populations cannot register marriages and births. Such registration may not exist in camps at all, or exist in camps but not be available for the spontaneously settled, or only be available in urban settings and not in rural ones. As a consequence marriages are not recognised. The children of these marriages are then technically illegitimate and in turn also often stateless.

Registration may not always be the ideal tool for population enumeration, but in specific cases it is a right in itself. It is also closely linked to the protection of other rights, entitlements, or eligibility (e.g. recognition of refugee status, protection of POW's etc.).

4.2.3   Entitlement to material assistance

Although, as we have seen in Section 3.2 on Distribution, registration cannot always ensure equitable access to entitlements, where registration is accorded central importance either by donors or operational agencies, being registered becomes an inescapable precondition to entitlement to material assistance; the practical, administrative realisation of basic rights or entitlement.

Box 15

Afghan refugees in Pakistan

Between November 1986 and early 1987, NGOs recorded concern over an influx of possibly as many as 100,000 Afghan refugees into the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan. There had been no registration of new refugees since October 1985, and not having been registered, new arrivals were only assisted by NGOs and not by the Government or the United Nations. According to UNHCR the responsibility lay with the Pakistani authorities. One reason for not registering given by the national authorities was the plan to move many Afghans refugees from the Northwest Frontier Province to the Punjab in the east. After continued insistence from UNHCR the authorities began to register the new arrivals, but the caseload which had arrived between late 1985 and late 1986 remained unregistered.

Planning

One of the most common purposes of registering populations is to provide the quantitative information on which to base programme planning, particularly with regard to food aid and rations, the most expensive form of humanitarian assistance,

especially when imported from abroad. The need for accuracy therefore tends to be justified in terms of cost. There is also a widespread, though poorly substantiated belief that free food aid, more than anything else, makes displaced people dependent on external assistance. (Listening to the displaced or even better, undergoing the same experiences as displaced people is likely to challenge this widespread assumption, although this is not what decision-makers tend to do).

Box 16

Re-registering IDPs for new programme planning:
Khartoum, Sudan

In October 1992, the Commissioner of Displaced, together with the INGO CARE, conducted a registration exercise of the internally displaced in the camps of Al Salam Omdurman and Jebel Awliya in Khartoum. At the time, several figures for displaced people in Khartoum existed. The census of February 1990 had given a total of 845,000 drought and war displaced, although this also included general squatter sites. The High Committee for the Relocation of the Displaced of the Council of Ministers, worked with a figure of 757,000, while the Commissioner of Displaced records stated a figure of 712,000.

Previously, the Emergency Unit of UNHCR had conducted a rapid assessment. In it, the size of the occupied area had been related to population size, a technique used for the rapid estimation of squatter populations. The Commissioner of Displaced and CARE argued that the margin of error of the exercise was problematic for operational and budgetary planning, notably with regard to distribution.

The purpose of the October 1992 exercise was therefore to carry out a baseline survey, in which everyone would be given a new and uniform registration card. This would be the basis for the distribution of rations, but also for the planning of further service delivery, or the relocation of the displaced population. The ration card would only be valid for 12 months, so that a new registration would have to be carried out on an annual basis. Meanwhile, two staff would be permanently deployed in the registration office of each camp, who, together with local leaders, government officials and NGO staff, would monitor drop outs, thus avoiding duplication and ensuring ongoing figures were available for planning. (Commissioner of the Displaced and Care International Sudan, 1992).

Avoiding duplication

A common motive for accurate registration is to avoid inflation of numbers and endeavour to ensure appropriate and cost effective disposal of resources. It is widely assumed that refugees and internally displaced people will try and register more than once to get more than their official entitlement. While this is often true, it again must be emphasised that if you cut rations, you must be able to ensure that those in need still receive their entitlement.

Box 17

Concern over duplication: Uganda, Ethiopia and Chechnya

Uganda
A directive of the Director of Refugees in Uganda on 'Procedures for Reception, Registration, Eligibility and Transportation of new Refugees' (Ministry of Local Government, 1995) explicitly states that conscious double registration and the unauthorized movement of refugees from one camp to another to benefit from relief items is illegal, an abuse of Ugandan hospitality and of the refugee status accorded them. To minimise the chances of such 'abuse' of the system, registration is carried out by registration clerks of the Ministry of Local Government and UNHCR officials, refugees have to stay in designated settlements or camps and cannot reside elsewhere without a written permit to do so. The directive also adds that the communication of official refugee numbers is the prerogative of the Government only, and that other agencies have no mandate to independently make public statements about refugee numbers.

Ethiopia
In 1984 the then League of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (now the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent) was involved in two major registration exercises to assist Ethiopians who had taken refuge abroad mostly during and after the Ogaden war with Somalia, and were now returning to Hararghe region. Between April 1983 and January 1984 almost 92,000 returnees were registered. By June 1984 it was estimated that another 240,000 might have arrived. UNHCR decided upon a second registration exercise to plan the assistance programme to these new arrivals which took place between July and the end of October 1984. Just under 226,000 further returnees were registered, but a full computer verification process was carried out following the registration, 'cross-referencing' the name of the head of household and the name of the spouse. The results of the verification indicated considerable double registration had been attempted. In some cases returnees registering twice had

continued overleaf

Box 17 (continued)

changed the name of the head of household but not that of the spouse, while in others, the husband and spouse had registered separately (League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 1984).

Chechnya

In and around Chechnya, internally displaced people were nicknamed 'aid tourists' by international agency staff, because many tended to come and register in the frontier regions, attend distributions and then return to Chechnya. However, rather than being primarily motivated by material opportunism, the behaviour was considered to reflect the transience of warfare in Chechnya (Hansen and Seely, 1996:52-53).

Inaccurate figures are almost systematically assumed to be deliberately inflated figures yet, while this be true of a minority of beneficiaries, there is substantial evidence that many others that are entitled to material assistance for a variety of reasons have not been registered and are therefore overlooked. Moreover, by systematically ascribing inaccurate figures to the manipulations of displaced people (or of national authorities), other fundamental flaws in the whole registration system may go overlooked.

Reductions in assistance

In many operations the results of registration are used to justify a significant reduction in assistance (on the basis that the new population figures indicate that previous planning figures were too high). Assistance is reduced on the assumption that the distribution system is sufficiently accurate to guarantee that all intended recipients receive assistance equitably. But reality is commonly the reverse; controlling interests may retain an inordinately large portion of the distribution, while weaker individuals receive rations insufficient to sustain life. If reductions take place in the absence of accompanying efforts to ensure that the weakest members of the community do not suffer as a result of the cutbacks, then registration has not achieved its stated goal.

However, certain types of information can only be obtained by means of a registration. It is best suited to the collection of specific, detailed information on individuals or small groups (e.g. households). For certain purposes, therefore, registration is indispensable and may be the only, or perhaps the best way to acquire information. Box 9 sets out those situations in which a registration may be necessary.

> **Box 18**
>
> ## Registration for resettlement support and compensation: Lebanon
>
> There have been hundreds of thousands of displaced people in Lebanon for decades, including over 265,000 Palestinian refugees, perhaps as many as 500,000 long term displaced and those from South Lebanon in particular, that have been displaced for shorter periods during the periodic Israeli military operations, the last time in April 1996. After the Taif peace agreement in 1990 in order to address the discontent of the large number of long term internally displaced. The Government created a Ministry of the Displaced and registration, monitoring and disbursement procedures were rapidly set up. The UNDP and NGOs supported the programme. People registered were then paid compensation: owners of damaged property for repairs, and squatters to evacuate the houses that had been abandoned by displacing families.
>
> However, although it was officially claimed that the registration process had been fair and accurate, there were significant weaknesses in the whole exercise. Those without essential legal papers found it difficult to proof ownership; due to the unclear definitions, economic migrants also managed to obtain compensation and the same promptness of execution did not happen everywhere. In general the whole programme was criticised for not having been sufficiently well thought through and carefully planned, ignoring, for example, the absence of means of livelihood in villages of return, or changed family dynamics and gender roles due to long term displacement. Morover, a degree of political manipulation took place in which the resettlement was used for patronage and constituency building. Thus, whereas from a technical point of view the registration exercise was relatively effective, the programme showed significant deficiencies in the formulation of objectives, criteria and equitable treatment of those entitled to assistance.

4.2.4   Registration and protection

Responsibility for the protection of populations in danger rests, first and foremost, with national authorities. In principle, the work of UNHCR and ICRC, the two international organisations with formal mandates for protection of displaced populations and civilians caught in conflict, is therefore dependent on the cooperation of these authorities. UNHCR's protection role is, strictly speaking, limited to recognised refugees (although this has gradually been extended to 'others of concern to UNHCR'), while the ICRC's mandate encompasses internally

displaced people, civilians caught between warring parties and prisoners. Increasingly, the changes in the nature of conflict in the post Cold War era – the predominance of internal, civil wars over traditional inter-state conflict, the involvement of governments in the prosecution of that conflict and the targeting of civilians – has meant that in practice, more often than not, the international community is looked to for sole provision of protection.

The possession of a refugee identity card makes it easier for displaced people to appeal to UNHCR for protection, and for UNHCR to assert its mandate and responsibility in a case of threat or abuse. The sort of information required to confer a specific identity on an individual is considerably more detailed and of a different kind than that needed to deliver material assistance.

The ICRC, for its part, does not distinguish between internally displaced populations and refugees as its mandate is defined differently. Unlike UNHCR it therefore relies less upon registration to enable it to carry out its role. An individual registration however may be required for prisoners, who are a particularly vulnerable group. For example, to prevent 'disappearances' in prisons, it has been recommended that the authorities be required to maintain proper registers indicating the identity of each prisoner, the reasons for imprisonment, the date of arrest, the sentencing authority as well as details of release or transfer to another establishment. Further, a national register of all places of detention should be maintained (Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, 1986:89).

Box 19

Registration and protection: IDPs in Latin America

A particularly sensitive situation in many of today's internal conflicts may be that of internally displaced people who face a protection threat from their own authorities or the military. Peru and Colombia, among other Central and Latin American states provide distressing examples. Here registration of the population should be conducted as a priority. While registration as such cannot itself provide effective protection, it will at the very least provide a way of identifying each individual and, for refugees, mandates UNHCR to act on their behalf. It may help to discourage any unwelcome official intervention, facilitate the tracing of missing persons, and in the worst cases, provide an official record of people that have 'disappeared'.

4.3 Registration and special groups

Individual registration is also important to ensure that specific groups are not overlooked. Global figures which may be sufficient for the planning of material assistance do not identify vulnerability which may result from gender, age, religious, ethnic or other defining characteristics.

4.3.1 Women

In emergency situations, over time women may become separated from men, either because the latter have been accorded refugee status and granted asylum in a third country, from choice or due to circumstances beyond their control (disappearance, death, contact lost in a during displacement, etc.). Displaced women therefore need to be able to independently make, and prove their right to protection as distinct from their relationship to the (usually) male head of household or community.

Box 20

Entitlement to humanitarian assistance for Rwandese women in Uganda

In the late 1950s and early 60s Rwandans fled to Uganda where they received assistance from UNHCR. Registration focused on the mostly male heads of households. UNHCR's support was gradually phased out as the refugees integrated locally. During a subsequent upheaval however the local people and Rwandese refugees were again separated. Although UNHCR started a new relief programme, many of the refugee women, who had become separated from their men, and who had never had their own refugee documentation, lost out. (Forbes Martin, 1991:28).

It is also vital to recognise that many displaced women may have suffered forms of sexual assault. Although persecution on the grounds of sex is not explicitly included in universal refugee definitions, recipient countries may take such consideration into account. Women will normally be very reluctant to mention and discuss what they may have suffered during an interview, certainly with a male interviewer and it is vital therefore to have qualified female staff present at all levels of the registration and identification process.

4.3.2   Children

A Good Practice Guide on Family Tracing was produced by the Save the Children Fund (UK) in 1994. This Review therefore does not seek to reproduce the information produced by SCF but to summarise basic points and relate them to the question of general registration and identification.

The most common objective of tracing for children is family reunification. Tracing can consist of the search for parents and relatives to return unaccompanied children to, or the search by families for children lost. When the tracing of family is not successful, or when there are compelling reasons, in the best interests of the child, not to reunite a family, the objective of tracing becomes the search for a satisfactory long term alternative for the child.

The four key stages of tracing consist of identification, documentation, tracing and reunification (IDTR). Given the overriding importance to the individuals concerned, both parent and child, the identification of children who need help in tracing families should not be left to the initiative of the children but should be undertaken, proactively, by responsible governmental and international organisations.

For unaccompanied children then, individual registration and specific documentation are required. Identification should happen as early as possible, and may very well be undertaken prior to any general registration, and as populations continue to move, spontaneously or forced, identification procedures will need to be repeated.

Box 21

Identification of unaccompanied children in Rwanda

In December 1994, Save the Children Fund (UK) and UNICEF decided to carry out a rapid registration of unaccompanied children in IDP camps such as Rukondo and Cyanika in Gikongoro prefecture in Rwanda. Shortly before this, Muko camp had been closed and over 200 unaccompanied children left behind. There was concern that a similar situation would arise if IDPs from the other camps were moved back to their commune of origin. Although the ICRC had been registering unaccompanied children, SCF felt that many had been missed out. Moreover, many of those registered were no longer in the original place of registration so that a new exercise was deemed necessary.

Children without adults to look after them can be identified by community leaders or general community workers such as social workers, teachers, or district officers, by a specialist team or a combination of both. The specific contextual circumstances will have to be considered in determining who is best placed and has the capacity to carry out the task. A broad based public information campaign on the purposes and procedures will significantly help the effort. Early on, it is recommended to identify children in different locations, such as transit or displaced population camps, with local communities, in hospitals, police stations, orphanages or children's homes, on the street or in soldiers' camps, and prioritise these in function of the risk to the child. Simple and flexible forms are required to record the basic information, that can be used in the field by people with little formal educational skills, while at the same time allowing cross-referencing at a central point. Usually there are various organisations involved simultaneously, such as the Ministry of Social Welfare, UNICEF, UNHCR and specialised and child-focused NGOs, which tend to use different systems.

Photographs can be extremely helpful. In the Great Lakes, the ICRC, UNICEF and SCF(UK) developed a regional tracing programme in which thousands of children were photographed. But tracing systems made dependent on photo cameras and film are vulnerable due to problems with the equipment, or when it is stolen. Computers again can be a powerful tool, but there is a risk of making the system dependent on the expensive hardware and technical support. Often national government departments prefer to use computer technology for what they consider to be more pressing priorities.

4.4   Registration and accountability

In some situations the power and influence of relevant interested parties – donors, authorities, representatives of the population itself, and/or neighbouring communities – may well determine whether registration is attempted, irrespective of an objective assessment of the probability of success.

The close link that has been created (particularly by donors) between registration and accountability is largely a myth. Even if registration were able to guarantee largely accurate results, there is a tendency for it to be miscast as a substantive measure of accountability. While it is true that responsibility should be defined, in part, in financial or quantitative terms – reporting requirements for the purchase,

transport, receipt and distribution of assistance items, in function of a specific number of beneficiaries, are obviously necessary, and are increasingly stringently imposed by donors – this is by no means the whole story. Yet quantitative evaluation and reporting is generally regarded as more attractive, less difficult, and able to generate more immediate results, than qualitative. (This, incidentally, may be a measure of how limited they perceive their options to be for measuring the effectiveness of their donations.)

However, an equally important form of accountability with which registration does not adequately deal is that of accountability to the beneficiary population. As mentioned above, once registration is set as a precondition for access to assistance, then that registration system needs to be run extremely professionally, on a continuous basis, in order to avoid any potential beneficiary being excluded unjustly from assistance (genuine new arrivals, births, movement, inadequate distribution systems, etc.). Regrettably, registration systems in emergencies rarely pass this test of accountability.

A deeper analysis is therefore required of the definition of 'success' or 'failure'. Such an analysis might be based on a concept of responsibility for the general well-being of human beings, rather than the elimination of 'cheating' by beneficiaries and associated populations that are 'not to be trusted'. Accountability is first and foremost about seeing that human beings continue to live, and that they do so in dignity. Such an analysis would also need to define, and apportion responsibility for 'success' and 'failure' to those who have been entrusted with, or have taken upon themselves, the task of protecting the population in question. These groups might include, for instance, leaders of the respective community and any external agencies or personnel involved in the assistance operation. The more decision-making power over resources held by these groups, the greater the need for rigorous evaluation. It is again worth emphasising that the community itself should play the central role in this process of determining accountability.

Pressure for registration sometimes amounts to no more than an understandable attempt to show that reasonable measures towards accountability have been taken. The frustration is that registration may be seen as one of the few options for rectifying a programme that is at best inefficient, and at worst very seriously flawed in its whole design. In such a plight, understandably, pressure for registration may come from donors, or those channelling donations, in the belief that whoever is managing

the assistance programme is not in possession of such basic information as how many people they are assisting, and that registration is the only accurate method of solving this priority dilemma. Registration may thus actually serve to perpetuate other flaws, only tackling secondary problems.

It must be said, however, that if registration results in placating donors or authorities, or any actor of importance in influencing the future of the population in question, then it does indeed serve a valuable purpose. This is blatantly clear in the case where the flow of assistance is interrupted until registration is conducted. If registration is required in such circumstances and irrespective of other considerations, then so be it. The decision to register is a recognition that, like it or not, it is the piper that calls the tune; an acceptance of a hard reality, or real politik.

4.5   Deciding when to register

4.5.1   Introduction

This Review has tried to communicate the importance of distinguishing motives for carrying out a registration or not: on the one hand there are certain types of assistance, such as therapeutic feeding programmes or legal identity, whereby, if one individual were to be excluded by an inaccurate process, then s/he would suffer as a result. On the other hand, however, where such precision is not so essential, and more general information for broad planning purposes is required, then simpler, cheaper and perhaps less contentious alternatives would be more appropriate for the collection of that information.

In certain cases, the very fact that a registration exercise has been attempted, irrespective of the results, appears to satisfy the needs of whoever insisted upon registration in the first place. The questions 'when will registration be carried out?' or 'why has it not been carried out?' are more frequently heard in aid operations, than such questions as 'why did you register?, 'what have you achieved by registering that could not have been achieved by alternative, perhaps less disruptive and less costly means?', or 'was it necessary at all?','what was the cost to whom, and what was the precise benefit to whom?'. At times, it is as if a necessary bureaucratic step has to be taken, and be seen to be taken. Thus, that step becomes sufficient in itself, irrespective of the information it provides, and how reliable that information is, no matter what the cost, inconvenience, or confusion. One can

only conclude, in such cases, that the very exercise itself was the objective.

This section looks at the considerations which come into effect once the right questions have been asked and once it has been established that a registration is needed: do conditions (especially political and security) allow for registration? The prevailing conditions of an emergency operation may dictate whether a registration, even if advisable, is indeed feasible.

4.5.2   Key considerations

A number of practical questions need to be asked:

- Does the registration exercise need to have access to all the target population?
- Has the population stabilised sufficiently to permit active and sufficient involvement in the exercise?
- Do the physical location and facilities allow for registration (risks include mines, potential for crowd stampedes, health hazards)?
- Are there resources enough to carry out the exercise with an acceptable probability of success, and in a way that will not disrupt more important activities to the serious detriment of the population, or segments of it?
- Will the information collected through registration arrive too late to be of immediate use in the designing of an emergency assistance programme?

Most features of humanitarian assistance programmes are established within the first weeks, before any accurate registration system can be put in place. Once established, programmes can be difficult to alter, even when found to be faulty.

Conditions and resources

A shortage of resources for quantification is a recurring problem. If, for example, the optimum method of population quantification is registration, but the resources to achieve it are not available, what action is recommended? The knee-jerk response is to postpone registration and quantification until the resources become available. An alternative however, is to use less costly methods, at least in the interim. This will probably mean that interested parties (e.g. donors) will have to be approached and convinced of the difficulties involved. A clear assessment of the probable waste of resources, damage to the programme, not to mention the potential risk to

staff and beneficiaries (if such risk exists), should be made and communicated. The very low probability of a registration being successful in such adverse conditions should be stressed, and estimation of numbers proposed.

If such an argument fails, then in the words of an experienced UN emergency manager who has served many years working in humanitarian emergencies in the Horn of Africa, an attempt to "co-opt your critics should be made... Put them in the hot seat, involve them deeply in the registration process, and request that they or their representatives answer the difficult questions, and face the difficult issues and situations as they arise" (see also 3.2.4 above).

Security

Registration of large groups of people at the same time in the same place may lead to discomfort, at the very least, and possible risk for all concerned. Climatic conditions, physical layout of the registration facilities, timing and categories of people being registered (more or less vulnerable – special arrangements need to be made for vulnerable groups), are all factors that may exacerbate or cause the problem. Staff who are inadequately prepared, equipped and managed may also be a factor (there have been cases of physical beatings by security staff of those registering). The possibility of sabotage, or attack by groups opposed to the registration, thus reflecting serious disagreement with the exercise, should also be considered as a possible risk. An assessment specifically covering such risk should be part of the preparation process, and appropriate measures taken – physical planning, timing, staff training, information dissemination, human resources selection and preparation, involvement of the relevant security authorities etc.

Timing

The timing of registration is a frequently encountered dilemma. To register early is to dramatically increase the possibility of failure. The closer the registration exercise to the beginning of an emergency, the less likely it is that the population will have stabilised sufficiently to allow for successful registration. Continuing population movement, unacceptably high mortality and morbidity rates which require immediate priority life-saving activities, general confusion leading to inadequate or inaccurate knowledge and understanding by planners of the situation and the relevant population, fragile leadership and representative structures within the population etc. will all militate against proper registration. These will generally

lead to the postponement of registration to a later, more stable phase. Leaving registration to this stage, however, brings other problems, since any errors in statistics and in the distribution programme will become increasingly established before registration takes place.

On balance, registration should be conducted later rather than sooner, when conditions have a better chance of being ripe. Therefore, in the early stages of an emergency, decision makers must be sensitised to the real comparative advantage of alternative assessment methods over registration.

Box 22

Registration immediately following the onset of an emergency

No reliable statistics exist on how many major emergency operations have managed to register a beneficiary population even once during the first two months. Experience indicates, however, that such instances are in an absolute minority. The only cases that seem to have achieved it are operations in which the official authorities carried out the registration, using existing highly centralised (normally social welfare) capacities. Sri Lanka and countries in the Former Yugoslavia and the Former Soviet Union are cases in point. In 1992, just one month after the outbreak of the Bosnia Herzegovina war the Croatian authorities managed a general registration of the refugees flooding into the country. Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian authorities achieved significant refugee and IDP registration immediately upon the outbreak of the respective conflicts in the Caucasus. It is not suggested however, that these registrations were comprehensive. They are exceptions and no international emergency operation comes to mind as having registered the beneficiary population within the first two months.

Local authorities

The best case scenario for a full registration, if it is well managed, is where beneficiary population is being assisted by host populations in a relatively developed, well organised country or area. In such a situation the facilities for conducting a registration will either already exist, or can be set in place without major disruption to programmes. These will generally be through existing official, government channels (e.g. through government or municipal social welfare offices).

Box 23
Relying on continued host population support: the Caucasus and Sri Lanka

In the border regions of Chechnya, notably Ingushetia and Daghestan, the international assistance programme was premised on the principle that the host families would provide significant support for those displaced from Chechnya. The combined displaced population from Prigorodnyi and Chechnya nearly doubled the population of Ingushetia. Some Ingush households were giving food and shelter to more than 20 IDPs. However, a year into the war, a DHA mission noted that the UN's earlier assumption that the host population could provide minimal external support, was becoming increasingly untenable (Hansen and Seely, 1996:35).

In Sri Lanka, the overwhelming majority of Tamil inhabitants that fled Jaffna city to the Vanni region in Autumn 1995 were taken in by local residents. Only some 10% were accommodated in so-called 'welfare centres' – schools, temples and other public buildings. When the pressure increased on the host households and people wanted the schools vacated to restart classes again, the aid agencies planned a distribution of shelter materials to the households that had taken in IDPs. A methodology was established which prioritised poorer and more vulnerable families that had taken in internally displaced, to strengthen their capacity to continue doing so.

What is often lacking in such situations, however, are local organisational and financial resources for the exercise. This scenario is typified by emergencies in Eastern Europe, and the Former Soviet Union. Another example is the 1991 general distribution of WFP 'top-up food rations' to the population of Northern Iraq, which was channelled through the existing food-ration registration and distribution system.

In such cases, the principle constraints tend to be related to planning and implementation. While by no means as complex, and fundamental as the sort of political constraints, they can nonetheless be sufficient to render an exercise virtually useless. The principal frustrations may come from a feeling of impotence when faced with a seemingly immovable official bureaucracy, that at the same time is indispensable in that it is the only realistic means of registering a widely dispersed population, lodged either with host households or in collective centres. While there may be a temptation to dismiss apparent lack of action as a problem of

attitudes and culture, as often as not, the inability to react rapidly to the emergency may well be due to very concrete problems. Many quite understandable weaknesses can conspire to undermine the value and credibility of the information eventually produced:

- lack of clarity on what information is to be collected, about whom, and where;
- registration staff may be inadequately trained and prepared (e.g. government social welfare clerks or officers who may not understand sufficiently well the entitlements linked to registration);
- problem of access to the target group, or of the target group to the registration centres (frequently the result of inadequate information on when, where, and how to register);
- lack of resources – a common complaint. Insufficient vehicles, fuel, computers, printers, communications equipment, desks, stationary, etc., combined with miserably low official salary levels, frequently result in a quite unreliable data collection and processing exercise;
- problem of attitude, communication and understanding between the international emergency managers and local officials. The latter will have their own systems, approaches and parameters. These, and the real limitations they imply, may be misunderstood by the former.
- misunderstanding, and a lack of patience can lead to frustrations that will in no way help the registration process.

Suggested action includes the following:

- support registration as a solution;
- use official channels; do not try to circumvent them;
- set up coordination mechanisms between the external (international) support and assistance operation managers, and the official entities;
- identify the strengths and weaknesses of those channels faced with the job in hand;
- plan exactly how the weaknesses will be dealt with. Specifically, identify the resources in short supply, and seek ways of providing them (computers, etc.);
- ensure good human resources management is in place. The selection, briefing, training, supervision and recognition (bonuses, etc.) of the staff will require a specific plan and action.

4.5.3 Conclusion

The following list attempts to create broad, generally applicable categories of conditions in which registration is or is not to be advised, at least in the early stages – in some cases it is a matter of waiting until a later stage, when conditions may be better, rather than deciding not to register at all.

Box 24
Deciding when to register

Advisable

- When a programme lasts well beyond the acute emergency phase (for the purposes of this Review, this period is taken to be around 3 months).

- When the scale of the task is relatively small compared with the resources available – a small population, in a large programme for instance.

- When distribution arrives at a point at which it is direct, i.e. the last link in the distribution chain (see Section 3.2.5 on distribution). This is especially so if assistance is targeted.

Not Advisable

- When conditions of chaos or disorganisation prevent any organised, comprehensive and systematic registration exercise.

- When sufficient access to the population concerned is not guaranteed (geographical dispersion, political/physical conditions etc.).

- When continuing population movements are so great as to render meaningless any 'snapshot' which registration would provide, e.g. constant alterations in location, size, composition and profile of the population.[10]

- When the perceived threat to vested interests is so great that the risk to people reaches an unacceptable level.

- When the beneficiary community, or closely related host community, is in a position to manage its own assistance programme and, based on an intimate knowledge of the potential bene-ficiaries, obviates the need for a formal registration exercise.

- When a humanitarian assistance programme is expected to be so shortlived that the investment required is not considered worthwhile.

4.6   Principal failings of registration

4.6.1   Inaccuracy

Even the most developed societies, acting under quite stable conditions, and with immense resources and sophisticated systems at their disposal have frequently failed to register adequately. A perfunctory glance at the proven, and repeated inaccuracies of social welfare registration, agricultural support programme registration, national 'aliens' registration, voter registration etc., is sufficient to show that the exercise is prone to error. Governments are often either incapable of, or disinterested in registering sufficiently accurately or efficiently. Much more difficult, therefore, is the registration of populations in an emergency. There are many reasons for inaccuracy in emergency registration:

- a lack of clarity as to who is to be registered (formally recognised refugees, needy host families, IDPs, victims of drought and food shortage, etc.);
- even when well-defined, beneficiary populations are generally highly mobile and dynamic;
- the target group may be mixed with other populations;
- beneficiary populations are often dispersed over large geographical areas and access to them is limited;
- conflict and security considerations may also restrict access;
- seasonal population fluctuations may distort results;
- if registration is a condition for assistance, wilful misinformation may occur;
- there may be inadequate resources and preparation for registration;
- adequate support from key actors may be lacking and in some cases, active sabotage may be attempted;
- error or negligence;
- if the process is not continuous, natural demographic change (births and deaths) will immediately undermine the results;
- anything that inhibits clear and trustworthy communication will compromise the accuracy of the information collected.

4.6.2   Technical problems

Certain technical problems encountered during registration exercises, such as wristbands that can be re-used and therefore allow multiple registration, have

undermined major efforts to register. In 1995, the supply of the wrong type of wrist bands led to the postponement of a major registration exercise in Ngara, Tanzania, during the Rwandese refugee emergency operation there. Considerable financial, time and human investment was lost, and significant disruption caused. The evidence is that this is not rare.

Box 25

Failed registration: Dabaab, northern Kenya

During the early 1990s, a major refugee registration was carried out in Dadaab, in northern Kenya. Of some three locations, the process in two was quite comprehensive. In the third however, it was regarded as a failure. The results were insufficiently comprehensive, and an ongoing registration capacity and system did not exist. A 'snapshot' of the total population numbers was attempted and failed. The cost and disruption to the programme was considerable.

4.6.3   Coverage

This is arguably the most frequent reason for which registration exercises are of limited, or even of no value, when completed. If important groups or individuals are not registered when they should have been, and were entitled to be, or inadequate information is collected on them, the effort and resources invested in the exercise may have been wasted. Under-registration is as important as over-registration, though it is less frequently referred to as a serious problem. An imprecise definition of objectives, and therefore of what information is required from and about whom, is often the root cause. Forms and guidelines for registration staff will reflect this basic lack of clarity. Inadequate preparation and briefing of staff may be a secondary cause, as may be a lack of support and collaboration from the population concerned. An additional cause might simply be an incapacity to cover all geographical areas, and population groups, due to a shortage of resources or information as to who is where.

Time, skills, and experience dedicated to the objective setting, planning, and preparation stages should reduce the level of error. Systematic informing and involvement at all stages, of all relevant parties, especially those to be registered, should reduce confusion, and wilful witholding of information. It will also help identify who should be registered and how to gain access to them.

Box 26

Inadequate registration of Mozambican refugees in Malawi

In 1988 the Technical Support Services of UNHCR assessed the accuracy of refugee registration in Malawi.   It was estimated that between the census of August 1987 and the time of the mission in July 1988, the refugee population had increased by 130%, but that this had not been adequately dealt with by the existing registration system. A series of fundamental weaknesses were revealed:

- primary level registration records were only partly established and irregularly maintained by the official registrars;
- in some places registration records had not been updated since the census in 1987;
- no method existed, such as an ID card, to uniquely identify individuals and link them to the registration record;
- registration records were essentially cumulative; no systematic de-registration took place on account of departures, inter-area movements, deaths, misregistration etc.;
- distribution operations led to a revision of the registration totals instead of the other way around;
- the existing arrangements therefore did not meet the implementing agencies' needs for up-to-date registration lists which could be used for operational purposes. Consequently, they were tempted to draw up their own separate lists and population figures;
- the available socio-economic and demographic characteristics appeared fragmentary and impressionistic, and did not provide an adequate base for the planning of assistance.

To overcome some of these weaknesses, the technical advisors recommended the phasing in of a simplified registration system, and focused sample surveys for the collection of more detailed socio-economic and demographic information. It was felt that a unified coordination and management system was essential, and the creation of a professional staff Registration and Survey Unit, under Joint Operations Committee of the Government of Malawi/UNHCR authority was proposed (UNHCR, 1988).

4.6.4   Cost

Financial cost

If ideal conditions exist for accurate registration, it is theoretically a *prima inter pares* in the task of enumeration because it sets out to make physical contact with each individual unit to be counted (person, family, household, etc.). It is, however, a voracious consumer of resources – financial, physical and human.

Box 27
Costing Registration
Current estimates by UNHCR in East and Central Africa put the cost of registering each beneficiary once (i.e. not counting any re-registration exercise) at 1 USD per head. This does not include hidden costs such as staff time and vehicles already covered under the regular budget. The cost, therefore, of registering on a one-off basis the Rwandese beneficiary population in Goma, Zaire, came to well over half-a-million dollars.

Opportunity cost

In addition to such financial costs, it is usually a highly disruptive activity. For registration to be comprehensive, and simultaneous (to limit the possibility of multiple registration) a cessation of most other assistance activities is required. The population will most likely be requested to move to a central location. Queuing, frequently in sub-optimal conditions, is common. Under emergency conditions, these factors imply very considerable disruption to the operation, which in extreme cases may even result in considerable risk to the very population it is designed to benefit.

4.7   Conclusion

The above chapters, it is hoped, encourage the reader to ask a number of key questions before embarking on what can be an expensive exercise which may not attain the hoped for objectives, but which more worryingly may also prove damaging to relations between beneficiary and assistance programme staff, and in some cases lead to violence and death.

What degree of accuracy is necessary in quantitative population estimation during emergencies? What degree of accuracy is feasible in quantitative population estimation during emergencies given the prevailing conditions? What price is necessary, and who pays the price, to achieve a particular degree of statistical accuracy? Crucially, will registration provide sufficiently accurate quantitative information in emergencies, compared to alternative and potentially less disruptive, and less costly, methods? Most importantly, will the information made available through registration be used to improve the situation of the population in need, or will it in fact restrict, hamper, or even exclude them?

While increasingly accurate identification of emergency operation beneficiary populations is an important and necessary ongoing activity in emergencies, registration is rarely the ideal method to achieve it. A combination of the methods outlined in the following two chapters should be used first. Finally, if registration is set as a precondition for access to assistance, then a continuous and comprehensive registration system must be put in place before that precondition is set.

5

Identifying a beneficiary population: quantitative approximation techniques

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have emphasised the need to look outside formal registration exercises in the identificationof beneficiaries where acceptable levels of accuracy can be obtained using less costly, less disruptive and less controversial methods. The objective of this chapter is to examine various methods of population counting or estimation and offers guidance on the strengths and weaknesses of those methods.

Many counting/estimation techniques exist. All are approximations of one sort or another. It has been emphasised above that to improve accuracy, or reduce margins of error, the results of several counting methods must be continually compared. The following methods should not, therefore, be seen as mutually exclusive options; they can, and should, be used as complements to each other. Over time, this 'triangulation', or cross-referencing of sources of information, should result in increasingly refined figures. The range of different counting methods includes:

- beneficiary, official, or local community estimates;
- habitation count, through visual observation and rough extrapolation;
- screening of under-fives;
- flow monitoring;

- overflights and aerial photography;
- existing secondary sources such as census data on the community prior to the emergency;
- registration, while a useful technique for identification of individuals and groups, and importantly, for issues of legal identity and protection, is also frequently used as a method of quantifying populations. As mentioned above, this Review does not, however, recommend it as necessarily the most effective, or the most efficient method of quantification – reminiscent of the analogy of using a hammer to crack a nut.

Few methods can claim to be entirely rigorous (neither scientific nor statistically sound) and each is prone to varying and sometimes high degrees of error. A brief introduction to statistics and quantitative methods of population estimation is given in Annex 1.

5.2 Community estimates

Community estimates of potential beneficiary populations should be sought as one of the first steps in an emergency operation. At the initial stages of an emergency, this can be a particularly efficient, rapid and valuable source of information. While there is often a degree of mistrust of such sources among the staff of many international aid agencies, experience has shown that in the early stages of an emergency, before vested interests can become consolidated, such estimates can be quite accurate. Moreover, they can be an important source of alternative or complementary data used to compare results thrown up by other methods.

5.3 Estimation from visual habitation count

The selection of the sample of households or habitations used in this method is not likely to be statistically sound (or at least not 100% representative of the total population), due to the conditions characteristic of an emergency settlement. A truly 'random' sample will be difficult to conduct, in particular, in situations where populations are highly dispersed (as was the experience of refugees in eastern Zaire in late 1996, early 1997). It is, however, still a practical solution to the problem of quantification in cases where the beneficiary population is highly concentrated.

Where speed is of the essence (likely in a situation where a population is in urgent need of food and healthcare), a very approximate estimation of a population can be achieved rapidly by visiting and measuring an area considered representative of the population density of the settlement in question, and then observing the total settlement from a high vantage point (a hill, building, tower, or aircraft, for example) – see box below. If the total settlement cannot be observed as one large unit (too dispersed, or parts are blocked from view by mountains), it will be necessary to estimate by observing the settlement sub-unit by sub-unit, or area by area.

Box 28

Visual habitation count

Using the steps outlined below, the population estimated for each of these units can then be totalled to give an approximate total population for the whole settlement.

Step 1 – estimate average household size

- Select at random a few (e.g. 10) households or dwellings (huts, tents, rooms in a building); wander around the site, covering as much of it as reasonably possible, and drop into them at will (with the permission of, and paying due respect to householders).
- Calculate the average population per dwelling (100 divided by 10 = 10 persons per dwelling). In order to minimise the level of error in the average population per dwelling, this step can be repeated several times, in different locations.
- Formal sampling (see Annex 1) should be carried out if time and resources permit.

Step 2 – estimate average population density of site

- Roughly measure an area of the site that seems representative of the overall population or dwellings density.
- Measure 50 long steps in one direction and 50 in the other, forming a square of approximately 50m x 50m. The area to be measured is thus roughly 2,500 m^2.
- Count the number of dwellings in that area of the site (e.g. 50). Multiply that number (50) by the average population per dwelling (10). This gives a result of 500 people estimated to be living in an area of 2,500 m^2, or a density of one person to every 5 m^2 (2,500 divided by 500).

Box 28 (continued)

• Significant error may result from assuming that all areas of the settlement have a similar population density, when in fact important differences exist due to significant differences in topography or dwelling type – hillside versus plain, open land versus wooded areas, or individual dwellings versus collective units, for example. If areas of varying density are evident, a number of averages may need to be taken to arrive at a realistic total.

Step 3 – estimate total area of the relevant site

• Roughly estimate, with the help of the beneficiaries, locals, or experts if necessary, the total area of all sites being assessed (e.g. a total of one square kilometre – 1,000m x 1,000m = 1,000,000m^2). Aerial surveillance, or at least a high vantage point will facilitate this task. Serious error can result at this stage because insufficient consultation may result in the exclusion of whole areas, unknown to the estimator.

Using GPS
An excellent tool that is becoming increasingly available to programme managers is the 'Global Positioning System' (GPS). A hand held electronic device searches the skies for at least two GPS satellites. The satellites reply with an electronic signal, and the handheld device on the surface of the earth correlates the signals to determine the longitude, latitude and even altitude of the device (and its holder). By taking these measurements at key points at the extremities of the site to be measured, a rough map can be drawn relatively quickly and easily, giving the total area of that site. GPS techniques are highly recommended for population estimation, and general mapping of emergency sites. At the time of writing, a quality GPS hand-held device could be purchased for some 600 US Dollars.

Step 4 – estimate total population

• By dividing the estimated total area of the site (1,000,000 m^2) by the estimated average (arithmetic mean, see annex 1) number of m^2 per person (5), you will obtain a very rough calculation of how many people might be in that area i.e. 200,000. This figure then needs to be compared with the results of other techniques, such as screening, sampling, etc.

It is worth repeating that a high incidence of error is associated with this method sites missing, measurements wrong, averages not representative of the whole site, etc. It should however, and has in practice, provided a basis upon which to do an early (if rough), evaluation of whether other estimates e.g. media, government or beneficiary are reasonable or grossly exaggerated.

5.4   Screening of under fives

This method relies upon the assumption that the number of children under five within a certain population represent a given percentage (15 to 20%, or one sixth to one fifth) of the total. Therefore, by counting or estimating the number of under-fives, it should be possible to estimate the total population. A method used for estimating the under-fives is to assume that they will not measure more than a maximum height (according to UNHCR, the common measurement is 110 cms). A horizontal cross-bar can be mounted at that height on two vertical posts (in the shape of a set of low goal posts), and all children in the population are asked to walk upright underneath. Those who pass under without touching their heads on the cross-bar are assumed to be under five years of age. A more accurate alternative is to actually measure each child (Young, 1992). The total population is then estimated by multiplying the under-five population figure by the required multiple (i.e. 5 or 6, the accepted ratio of under-fives to the total population).

A strength of this method is its relative simplicity. Several weaknesses exist, however. Firstly, the screening of all under-fives or even a significant sample of them, is not an easy task, and error through omission is frequent. Secondly, the assumption of a direct, fixed relationship between the number of under-fives and the total population is open to question in certain populations that are in emergency. A major distortion in the demography of the population may have been caused by the particular conditions of the emergency e.g. a higher or lower ratio of under-fives to adults due to war, serious illness, etc. For whatever reason, a particularly high proportion of a particular age group may have died, or be physically absent, thus distorting the assumed population pyramid. Finally, significant error may occur in the identification and subsequent measurement of the children.

5.5   Flow monitoring

This method is based on monitoring and quantification of populations moving into or away from certain locations. By establishing teams of quantifiers at key points of entry or exit to the emergency settlements (border crossing points, major road junctions, ports, etc.), an estimate of population flows per defined time-period can be established. Existing government estimates at border points, if available, may be particularly useful. If established from the very beginning of an operation,

simultaneous with, or before the first arrivals, flow monitoring may even give an estimate of the total population in an emergency settlement. This method is dependent upon the monitoring being comprehensive, and there being adequate staff to cover all significant entry and exit points. Key questions include the following:

- Are there enough staff to be present at all significant population movement times (populations may move at the dead of night)?
- Are the teams, or individual members, sufficiently well trained and if necessary, equipped for the task? e.g. do they have handheld counters similar to those used by airline staff when checking passengers onto a plane?
- Is there significant confusion as to who is counting whom and where (the same populations may be counted twice if counting points are placed so that the same movement is monitored at two separate locations
- Have normal, or seasonal population movements (associated with seasonal labour patterns such as migrant workers entering or leaving an area seeking harvest employment) been understood and factored in to allow for movements unrelated to the emergency? The impact of this latter point may be reduced if locals are employed as monitors/quantifiers, and if sporadic interviewing of those passing the selected points is conducted (to ascertain destinations, and reason for moving).

Box 29

Flow monitoring in northern Iraq

Following their return to northern Iraq from both Iran and Turkey, several hundred thousand Iraqi Kurds decided to remain in destroyed border villages in mountainous areas, rather than move down to towns and collective villages. Many of them were from the town of Kirkuk, which remained under Iraqi government control. Emergency operations were mounted to assist them. For obvious planning purposes, continual estimates of populations in and moving to and from particular areas were required. Flow monitoring of population movements was carried out over a period of months. Though it was a very approximate tool, in combination with other methods such as household surveys, sectoral and geographic data collection, etc. a level of quantification was achieved that allowed for the successful planning and implementation of a huge winter shelter programme. Teams of enumerators and interviewers were based at Kurdish 'Peshmerga' para-military check-points at key transit points (border

points, road junctions, etc). They counted all population movements through these points. Sample interviewing was conducted to establish intended destination, number of travellers in the group, reason for travel (e.g. commerce), or critically if the movement represented a resettlement of a household or individuals from one area to another. This data was then analysed to extrapolate or 'induce' overall assumptions as to how many people were moving where, why, and whether they would be likely to stay.

5.6   Correlation of existing data sources

Sources of population estimates within an operation abound. Community health, water and food consumption statistics, can all be indicative of the overall size of the population to be assisted. While none alone will be sufficient to provide an overall picture of the size of the population, combined they can help in testing assumptions. Local staff working in such assistance facilities are a particularly good source of information and estimates. Other general sources include the authorities (especially those in charge of migration), the media, again especially the local media, and local religious or civic bodies.

A wealth of already published or recorded information probably exists on particular groups, populations, and communities established prior to the emergency. Computer databases, printed country profiles and year books, encyclopaedias, UN publications, university and specialised periodicals and journals, embassies and cultural centres, tourist authorities, and school text books, amongst others, can supply a wealth of information on most countries in the world. In emergencies where the beneficiary population corresponds to the total, or near total population of a particular town or area, then the population of that location prior to the emergency will be a good starting point for any estimation. The problem is that few programmes have the resources necessary to sift and process these sources into usable information for planning. Nonetheless, a specific request to a headquarters office from the field, for example, might lead to a rapid response on the population of a particular town prior to a crisis. Much of this information is now also available, either 'on-line' via the World Wide Web, or on 'CD-ROM', and may thus be accessed from remote locations.

5.7   Overflights and aerial photography

Despite a number of associated difficulties, this method could be more frequently utilised. In large-scale emergencies, air transport is increasingly available – both military and donor funded charter flights. Costs may be high, and permission to over-fly areas difficult to obtain. Despite these disadvantages, aerial observation and photography can facilitate population estimation considerably, especially when a settlement is widely dispersed in rural areas.

Light, fixed-wing aircraft or a helicopter are the ideal options (considering price, availability, ease of landing and take-off, etc.). What could take days or even weeks to survey by land can be covered in one day by air. It is also particularly advantageous when road access is impeded either due to topography, or conflict. As ever, care is required, however. In certain cases this technique may be misleading (exact locations and contexts are not always clear from the air) and more sophisticated than effective. Therefore, again, it requires verification through other methods (ground estimates, observation, interviews, etc.).

Naturally, key to the whole exercise are the photographic equipment, and photographer. It is not easy to photograph from the air. Ideally, an expert, preferably one with access to a specially equipped aircraft (including a fixed remote control zoom camera slung under the belly of the aircraft) would be used. Video equipment would also be a plus, especially since it can be edited, and manipulated. Video allows for various options including scanning of large areas. The arrival of digital video and still photography is a major advance for assessment in general, but for aerial emergency quantification in particular, since images can be loaded onto a Personal Computer or laptop immediately, and printed and reproduced in high quality resolution and colour. The photographs or video footage can also be transmitted by radio or telephone lines, thus permitting expert analysis elsewhere.

Finally, if satellite images are rapidly available, all the better. A word of warning, however; access normally takes longer than one imagines, as layers of bureaucracy have to be penetrated to get official authorisation, and actual possession, or use of the images.

This method was used in Zaire in 1994 during the huge influx of refugees from Rwanda. The presence of military aircraft at the disposal of the humanitarian

operation was a major advantage. Aerial observation and assessment was also used in Southern Turkey in 1991 (again using military helicopters, which had the added advantage of allowing for associated ground assessments). During 1988 aerial assessment was also used when a large-scale voluntary repatriation operation from Honduras to El Salvador turned into an emergency. As a result of the confusion on the border, one of the only methods of assessing the situation was to charter a light-aircraft and over-fly the area. More recently, events in eastern Zaire also illustrate the use of such a method, when US and UK military overflights (albeit relatively late in the day, despite calls by international aid agencies for recognition of the refugees' existence and the scale of the problem), confirmed fears that several thousand Hutu refugees were hiding in the forests.

5.8 Computerisation

The results of quantification should subsequently be recorded on computer programmes. Standard spreadsheets or databases (found in any package of 'office' software) can be used. They can be adapted to the particular requirements of the operation. They should, however, be kept as simple as possible. A frequent weakness is to design overly complicated or detailed systems that become difficult to use. A spreadsheet showing initial estimated totals of population by zone and/or category of population, and allowing for daily, weekly or eventually monthly updates (showing new arrivals, departures, births and deaths), would probably suffice for the initial emergency stage.

5.9 From quantitative to qualitative information

While this chapter has dealt with predominantly quantitative estimation methods, it must be stressed that for certain tasks, such as targeted feeding programmes or identification for protection purposes, qualitative information gathering is essential. Without a comprehensive understanding of who the beneficiaries are, and the significance of their individual and collective needs, resources and capacities, an estimate of their number is of limited use. The following chapter examines how to identify individuals and groups requiring assistance and protection.

6

Identifying a beneficiary population: a social, cultural, economic and political profile

6.1   Introduction

Programme planning, implementation and evaluation should be rooted in an ever deeper, more comprehensive, more detailed and more accurate understanding of the beneficiary population – their needs and resources, backgrounds, cultures and systems, and the conditions in which they now live. Information on who the beneficiaries are, from where they have come, what they do, control and possess (skills, qualities, capacities and physical resources), and what they themselves believe their priority needs and principal resources to be, should constitute the foundation for ongoing programmes or operations.

A particularly important aspect of information collection and analysis is gender – including an analysis of the roles, strengths, needs, and resources of men and women, and the specific risks they run – not only of those to be registered, but also of those conducting the registration. Moreover, the aims of the identification exercise (what information is to be recorded, about whom, and for what purpose, for example, protection) will all have gender implications.

This chapter considers ways of obtaining such qualitative information and concentrates on the need to obtain lists. A list is a fundamental tool needed for the

effective and efficient delivery of both material assistance and protection. The need for lists arises immediately when an emergency programme has begun. A list may need to be as comprehensive as the entire beneficiary population, or it may represent a sub-section of that population requiring specific targeted assistance to meet particular needs, e.g. therapeutic feeding. In order to constitute such lists, a degree of qualitative information is needed. The following are examples of areas where planning can be improved by considering qualitative factors:

- *demography*: what definitions are used for an identification exercise ('head of household', 'bread-winner', 'household possessions', 'land and livestock tenancy', 'parent', 'family', etc.), and what are the gender implications of these?

- *protection*: what threats to their safety and security are experienced by whom, why, and how can people be protected from these risks?

- *food distribution*: which foods (religious concerns?) should be supplied and to whom, and how should they be distributed?

- *healthcare*: what are the most critical medical needs? Who needs what and to whom will they explain these needs? What were the patterns of healthcare for the people before the event or crisis? What method of healthcare delivery will now best reach the intended target group?

- *accommodation and shelter*: who should live where? What are the salient protection issues in the siting of accommodation and provision of shelter? For instance water and firewood is collected for the household by whom, and what risks does the location of accommodation in relation to these resources entail)?

- *socio-cultural profile*: segmentary lineage (clan) systems, or other tribal and ethnic identity codings, typically lead to such groups seeking to reside together. Understanding the tribal dynamics and affiliations and community identities is extremely relevant. Very often 'outsiders' of a dominant identity group will be more vulnerable and at greater risk. This was the case for example of Somalis in Mogadishu who belonged to clans not well represented in that city, and of Ethiopians, who had been taken to Mogadishu as POWs during the Ogaden war. Once in Mogadishu, they could not rely on the mutual support and protection of a kin network. Similarly, many ethnic Slavs left Chechnya and especially Grozny, between 1989 and the outbreak of war in December 1994. Those remaining were mostly the elderly who were financially or physically unable to leave (Hansen and Seely, 1996:7).

> **Box 30**
>
> ### Ethnic identity as risk factor in camp situations
>
> In 1993, the Ethiopian Refugee Administration and UNHCR relocated several Somali families belonging to the Marehan lineage from a camp in the southern Ogaden, mostly inhabited by Ogadeni lineage members, to Kebri Bayeh camp 500 kms further north. The Kebri Bayeh camp was made up of Somalis belonging to the Abasqul, Yeberre and Bartire lineage segments, which did not have an antagonistic relationship with the Marehan.

> **Box 31**
>
> ### Gender and class
>
> Women in South Kivu, eastern Zaire, experienced exclusion from communication with, representation to and in turn, forms of assistance from the camp authorities. Most communications between refugees and humanitarian agencies for instance tended to be between men and on the occasions when women were consulted, they would tend to be educated women, and therefore mostly from the elite. Women from modest backgrounds would thus be doubly excluded.

Programme needs and resources assessment planning should provide answers to these types of questions. Skills and techniques for collecting, analysing, and using information on demographic (especially gender and age), social, political, cultural and economic aspects of the population are then required. Again, different degrees of accuracy are needed and there are different methods of obtaining the information. This chapter is divided roughly into discussion of three broad approaches – community based, or community worker based, rapid appraisal using researchers with appropriate skills and household surveys.

6.2   Community based identification

6.2.1   By leaders

Lists of beneficiaries can be drawn up rapidly, and generally quite efficiently by representatives of the community. Many international organisations and staff underestimate, and in some cases, distrust beneficiary community representatives or leaders. Sometimes such distrust is merited, as was the case in a number of Hutu refugee camps following the 1994 genocide and war in Rwanda.

Box 32

Leadership domination: Rwandan refugees in eastern Zaire

In the mainly Hutu refugee camps along the eastern Zaire border with Rwanda in 1994/5, aid agencies were criticised for continuing to distribute food for too long through the former 'prefet' and 'bourgmestre' authorities and officials, rather than the more local leaders at the level of the 'secteur' or 'cellule' or households. At the higher level, significant diversion and inequalities in distribution became apparent, which not only prolonged the existing levels of malnutrition, but caused the beneficiary populations to remain dependent on their old leaders, many of whom had been directly implicated in the genocide. Changes took place when several 'bourgmestres' left after UNHCR cut their salaries, or when NGOs chose to appoint their own distributors from among the refugees, thereby bringing the distribution of food more directly to the household. It has also been argued that the agencies underestimated the internal opposition to the leaders which the latter, through intimidation and by controlling communications, had masked successfully. And perhaps more damaging in the long term, by working through the higher level leadership, that not only proved corrupt but which had been implicated in the genocide, failed to support challenges to the extremist elements of the former regime (Pottier, 1996).

Box 33

Social stratification

Somalia, Thailand, Tanzania
Researchers working in the camps of Ethiopian Somalis that had taken refuge in Somalia during and after the Ogaden war of 1977-78 noticed an apparent stratification of the population in terms of access to food. In 10-15% of the huts, mostly those belonging to the section and sub-section leaders and their deputies, they saw 5 to 10 bags of food piled up. In 70% of the huts they noticed 1 to 3 bags, while the poorer and more marginalised 10 to 15% of the camp population had no food bags stored at all (Christensen, 1982:22).

The majority of the Cambodians in refugee camps in Thailand felt intimidated by their generally middle class and English or French speaking section leaders. They talked about them as 'big people' in contrast to themselves – the 'small people' – and were reluctant to express their views or register complaints with them (Reynell, 1989:70). Similarly educated Burundian refugees in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in the early 90s were at times found to refer to their non-elite brethren in the rural settlements as 'little people' or 'very low people'. Legally

residing in the capital, sophisticated speakers of French and/or English, they would have access to officials and be given an authoritative voice, that the estimated 20,000 uneducated and illegal urban refugees from Burundi, never had (Sommers, 1995).

Tamils in Sri Lanka

In August 1995, a rapid informal survey of new internally displaced people fleeing Jaffna city for the agricultural Vanni region in northern Sri Lanka, revealed them as being divided into three broad categories: the overwhelming majority had been taken in by local residents; about 10% found themselves in so-called 'welfare centres'; and a small number were living on the streets of Kilinochchi town. It transpired that the population in the welfare centres (temples, schools and other public buildings) was predominantly of 'lower caste'. Among the population taken in by local residents there was a tendency to follow a pattern of socio-economic affinity, with internally displaced people of lower caste origin concentrated in poorer neighbourhoods of lower caste local residents. However, caste is not easily discussed among this mostly urban population, which tends to dismiss it in public as a thing of the past. Moreover, the ideology of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam is against caste. The limited amounts of material assistance available thus targeted to those in the welfare centres and the poorer neighbourhoods, as being the most vulnerable groups.

While corruption and wilful misinformation amongst the beneficiary population, for individual or collective economic and political gain, has undeniably been a feature of a number of international aid programmes, accurate information about the community is still most likely to be held by the community. Indeed, external actors may also have an interest in misrepresenting reality about the community. Information given by the community should therefore be valued at least on a par with that from other sources, particularly during the very earliest stage of a crisis when people are in dire need and vested interests may not yet have had time to organise. In fact, the experience of the author (in Central America, south eastern Turkey, and Sarajevo to name but three cases) suggests that information from the beneficiary community may actually be considerably more accurate than that supplied from external sources.

To facilitate community information collection, leaders of civic or political groups, elders, elected or appointed political leaders (such as mayors or other local officials), village chiefs, heads of clans, etc. need to be identified and supported from the outset, to form channels of communication and representative bodies. While doing

so however, it should be recognised that in any given community there are always different, often dynamically balanced, sources of power and authority, e.g. wealth, family prestige, religious belief, knowledge of the ways and the language of foreigners, capacity to use and mobilise weapons etc. In order to 'flush out' any such imbalances in information sources early on, it is recommended to communicate as publicly as possible, and to continue doing so, enabling the beneficiary population to exercise checks and balances on their own 'leadership'.

The establishment of such representative bodies can also help develop a capacity for the subsequent management of certain programme activities. Once trustworthy representatives or 'leaders' have been identified, they can be organised into working committees. A committee might be set up to draw up quantitative and qualitative demographic profiles of the beneficiary populations. They could help identify areas or regions of origin, which might in turn shed light on possible future movements or needs.

Other key informants apart from traditional leadership include intellectuals and activists, local traders and shopkeepers – who tend to be underutilised and are often a rich source of information on the socio-economic conditions of the population with whom they do business every day.

6.2.2   By collectors of community service information

It is not unusual to see whole programmes being planned on the basis of assumptions that have never been tested through direct contact and consultation with the people concerned. Teams formed specifically for information collection and processing, including social or community services staff in particular, can be of tremendous potential value. For instance, lists of beneficiaries can be verified by them, or even drawn up from scratch, if conditions permit. These teams should liaise with and feed back to community representatives, but should work independently. They are a primary resource for data collection, both quantitative and qualitative. Communication and language skills, combined with an affinity for the local culture are important criteria when selecting staff. Preferably, a number of teams would be established for full-time information collection and dissemination, to work among the individuals, households, groups and communities concerned. If effective, this resource should provide an ongoing link between the programme planners,

managers and populations (not just those being assisted, but also host households, and neighbouring communities). The teams should be regarded as key members of the management process at all levels. They should be consulted on a regular and frequent basis; in emergencies this would be daily.

While circumstances and resources will determine the composition of the team (numbers, profiles, backgrounds, etc.) certain principles should be adhered to:

- at least half of the team members should be women;
- ideally, representatives should be selected from and by the communities involved in the programme, and about whom the information is being collected. If for any reason this is not possible or desirable, then the team should be constituted by people from similar backgrounds;
- teams need to be resourced sufficiently to cover all locations;
- they should form an integral part of the programme or operation (and not be seen as a marginal resource). Technical specialists, for instance, should have regular and structured contact (in an organised context such as formal planning meetings) with these teams for planning of the technical sectors (water, sanitation, nutrition, etc.) They should also constitute a key resource for the planning of any registration process. Rather than acting as mere substitutes for various information collection methods, the teams can be a permanent complement to all substantive activities in the programme;
- the teams should be used to fulfil a double function – collection of information from the relevant communities and individuals, and dissemination of information to those communities and individuals – an invaluable two-way channel of communication;

6.2.3   Village Committee Assessments

The best known example of an integrated socio-economic needs assessment by village committees comes from Tigray and Eritrea during their long years of war with Mengistu's government in Ethiopia. In Tigray this participatory assessment method derived from a pre-existing traditional structure, the 'baito'. In Eritrea it was created by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). Elected village committees would publicly assess each household, not only for its composition but also in terms of its past and existing assets. That socio-economic analysis of

productive capacity and needs would be passed on through higher level geographical structures, and eventually be centralised by the Fronts into an overall needs assessment. Distribution of food aid, would subsequently be organised on the basis of the assessment, and channelled through the village committees (Duffield and Prendergast, 1994:27-28)

6.3   Rapid research techniques

Often, though seldom from the very beginning, do social scientists conduct research among displaced populations. Where registers have been established, these may be of some, albeit limited, use to them. Even though they may not be accurate in their precise figures, they can, in principle, provide a basic demographic profile with breakdowns of age, sex, family composition, place of origin and date of arrival or registration. Still, such basic profiles should be cross-checked: even simple observation can reveal that a camp population is mostly made up of women and children, the men having registered but then left for work or to fight.

Although for certain types of research, especially demographic and epidemiological, the data contained in registers is useful, additional sample surveys will usually be conducted, due to doubts over the accuracy of the register. Registers, moreover, will typically not contain the information that is relevant for research into the socio-economic characteristics and conditions of a displaced population, for example employment history, level of education, household income, or age of marriage (e.g. Christensen and Scott, 1988).

Rapid research may also highlight highly relevant differences within a displaced population that are ignored by the 'uniform' administrative picture that is portrayed by registers. Looking at a displaced population as a registered entity, decision-making can become dangerously simple, without regard for the conditions and the consequences of those affected by it.

6.4   Household surveys

Household samples can be used both for obtaining and verifying information. As already stated, a wide range of types of information may be directly relevant to the planning of an assistance programme: cultural, religious, ethnic, economic, social and political contexts in which a population either has been, or now finds itself, are obviously of great importance in understanding the needs and resources of that population. Naturally, the need to enquire into any specific aspect (e.g. religion, possessions or ethnic background), and how access is to be gained to such information if it is sufficiently important, must be decided with respect for privacy and confidentiality. Since the 'household' is a basic planning unit for humanitarian programmes, a professionally conducted household survey (preferably responded to by the women of the household) can be a productive exercise. A household survey can provide the hard data to confirm or reject initial impressions (for example on the number of inhabitants of the average household) arrived at using other methods, such as visual inspection.

Box 35

Qualitative research and household surveys in northern Iraq

During the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s the government of Iraq started food distributions in the Kurdish region in the north. Households registered with the Food Department would receive food rations at highly subsidised prices through designated agents. A study immediately after the Gulf War concluded that the system was exemplary in terms of coverage, equity, efficiency and contribution to the nutritional needs of the population. Some time after the Kurdish uprising however the government reduced the amount of food for distribution and imposed an economic blockade against the North. UN agencies and NGOs began to distribute food through the system of food agents, but that programme got criticised for being untargeted. Rather than effect a re-registration, rapid research was carried out in two phases. First informal, qualitative research on the overall food security situation identified processes of impoverishment and strategies for coping, and suggested indicators of poverty and vulnerability. To enable precise targeting and to assess the number and distribution of poor and vulnerable households however, this had to be followed by a household survey in which a questionnaire was used (Ward and Rimmer, 1995).

Given obvious time and resource constraints during an initial assessment, it will rarely, if ever, be possible to consult every household. Therefore, a group, or 'sample', may need to be selected to represent the composition of the whole group. Several sampling methods can be used for choosing the group, or sample to be surveyed (see box below and for a fuller explanation, Annex 1).

Box 36

Sampling methods

Random sampling
Every person or household in the population has an equal probability of being included in a random sample (e.g. picking names from a hat, or the 'blindfold and pin exercise' used to pick from a list). But again, to draw any valid conclusion, the sample must be representative of the whole population. For example, nutritional data obtained from health services are not representative of the total population. Nor are those collected in the most accessible villages or centres, or in camps that are reported to be in a particularly bad state.

Interval sampling

Here, cases are selected at given 'intervals'. For example, if 200 cases are to be selected at given intervals from a listed population of 10,000, every fiftieth case may be chosen.

Cluster or stratified sampling

Instead of selecting individual units as above, in this case the researcher divides the population into groups or categories, called 'strata' or 'clusters' (e.g. by location, ethnic origin, religion, gender, age). By doing this, certain priority groups are guaranteed to be represented. The total population in that group may be surveyed, or random samples drawn from each group or stratum. While not as statistically sound as 'pure random sampling', this method will guarantee that known priority groups or sites are not overlooked. However, the danger is that because the spread of samples is artificially decided, significant groups or sites not singled out may be ignored, and the sample skewed (distorted) as a result, thus devaluing the information collected.

7

'Typical' Scenarios

7.1　Introduction

Given the number and range of variables which influence the choice and application of different population quantification and identification techniques, it is not possible to give concrete and uniform guidance applicable in all emergency operations. Therefore, it is recognised that the following section on 'typical' scenarios does not cover the huge range of conditions facing humanitarian agencies and the reader may feel that some circumstances are inadequately reflected. A strength, on the other hand, is that the scenarios may help to focus elements of the advice given on preceding pages and enable the reader to visualise certain frequently encountered situations.

It should be noted, however, that what has become apparent during the drafting of this paper is the limited evidence, or at least availability of evaluations or concrete examples of both good and bad practice in quantification, identification and registration exercises in emergency operations.

For the purposes of this section therefore, we have identified certain distinguishing features of situations in which emergency operations are carried out, which may determine the sort of response needed and sought illustrating points with case study material from a number of emergency situations.

The following five features have been identified and are discussed in the following pages:

- planning: is the displacement rapid and overwhelming or gradual and continuing? Has the movement been anticipated and partially prepared for?
- population location and distribution: is the displaced population concentrated in particular sites, or is it dispersed?
- level of cooperation: is the registration likely to be highly controversial or not, and hence, what level of cooperation is to be expected from the population?
- host governments and registration: are host governments involved?
- donor pressure: is there strong donor pressure to register, or not?

7.3   Scenarios

7.3.1   Scenario one: Planning

Under emergency circumstances, and certainly in the 'acute phase', there is typically a high degree of confusion, and mortality and morbidity rates are high or start going up very quickly. Yet population numbers are needed for planning.

Registration under such circumstances can be very difficult and may be disruptive to life-saving activities. At such times, distribution systems requiring ration cards and 'person to person' or 'head count' registration should be avoided for the time being. A selection of quantitative and qualitative identification methods is called for and a number of approaches planned, including the setting up of information sub-groups (to include women and representatives of the target population) for an initial assessment. In drawing up an information and assessment plan, questions such as, what data is important, and can realistically be obtained?, what information is a priority?, who will collect it, how and by when?, must be answered.

Both the 1994 influx of Rwandans into Goma in eastern Zaire and a number of situations in Liberia during 8 year civil war, which has caused hundreds of thousands of people to flee the fighting in both rural and urban areas, have been characterised by the absence of time to plan. Such major movements of displaced people, as both civilians and combatants sought refuge from opposing rebel groups, have severely tested the capacity of the international community to identify and register IDPs and refugees.

A number of different methods were thus sought to address the population's needs in the very short time available. In the early phases in Goma, Bukavu and Uvira in 1994 some accuracy of enumeration was achieved by movement monitoring checkpoints established at key locations, which was followed by aerial observation and photography, and a rapid 'on the ground' sampling of households to come up with basic information such as average household size. Although expensive, aerial photographs were taken at regular (2-3 week) intervals as more huts were set up.

In Liberia, where populations needing to be identified for international assistance were again literally on the move, strategic assessment points were set up, monitored by several organisations specialising in this activity, including the national Red Cross as well as local NGOs. The figures obtained were then used as indicators and initial reference points and followed up with more detailed and thorough identification and registration processes once they reached their 'final' destinations. Following such 'global' estimation, daily estimates, and separate planning figures should be obtained, and, particularly in situations such as the Great Lakes and Liberia, where hostility to identification exercises can be high, need to be agreed by all concerned. Donors and the authorities should be clearly informed, and involved in the whole process.

7.2.2   Scenario two: Population location and distribution

It has been argued that closed camps, such as those set up for the Cambodian refugees in Thailand (1979-1993), facilitate accurate registration by reducing population movements and mixing of target and non-target groups. In Liberia, aid agencies, especially the UN-affiliated, have often encouraged and assisted in the creation of camps for this reason and to assist the implementation of interventions – at the time of writing, the total number of IDPs estimated to be in camps in Liberia was 300,000.

However, it should be noted that the very fact that the camp or settlement is closed may actually reduce the need for registration. Given the greatly reduced chances of mixing ineligible populations in a closed setting, there is all the more reason in to simply concentrate on achieving increasingly accurate estimates of a population. These estimates can be tested against the results of observation, nutritional surveys etc. In other words, the very conditions that facilitate registration in closed settlements, also reduce the need for registration.

Evidence provided by one international agency in Liberia shows that registering urban populations can be achieved in relatively short time – tens of thousands in days, while depending on the security situation, severe infrastructure deterioration and terrain and climate conditions, rural registration exercises can take up to 2-3 weeks. Although in rural environments, there is a greater likelihood that refugees/IDPs can be integrated into local communities, where it has been difficult to identify the displaced outside camps and urban areas, general food distributions have been recommended.

One of the principal disadvantages of concentrating assistance on displaced populations in camps, is the discrepancy which results in terms of entitlements to refugee or IDP populations and the local populations. Displaced persons are perceived to be more vulnerable and interventions on their behalf tend to be greater than for resident communities. This perception is reinforced when only in-camp populations are formally identified and the imbalance in support can create tensions between camp residents and surrounding communities. In extreme cases, targeted interventions carried out on the basis of such 'partial' identification processes can compromise the security and safety of the intended beneficiaries as they become targets for abuse and violence.

For example, in Nepal, the majority of Bhutanese refugees have been registered, but only those living in Government/UNHCR managed camps are entitled to material assistance. Those living outside the camps, even when registered, are considered as employed, and able to sustain themselves.

Somalia, 1992 offers a very different situation, in which the target population was widely dispersed and for security reasons either not identifiable or reachable. At that time the Somali population was experiencing acute food shortages, with food deliveries rendered very dangerous or virtually impossible by factional fighting, looting and banditry. There was no way that need, entitlement and food delivery could be met through registration or even any formal identification process. In these cases, it is important that both donors and agencies are aware that distributions cannot be dependent on formal population figures alone. In this case, the ICRC adopted a strategy of 'flooding' the market with food. Food was delivered by air and sea at a large number of landing points all over the country, and also used to pay staff and rights of way. This meant that food relief reached the market place, and drove prices down, bringing the cost within reach of most people. In order to

reach the most needy and vulnerable groups, wet kitchens were set up and operated – those not absolutely in need would have found it below their dignity to attend these. Most wet kitchens were deliberately placed away from camps, inside neighbouring communities (Netherlands Development Cooperation, 1994:139-145). In this case although general registration was not attempted, and registration at feeding centres proved inadequate as a mechanism to identify all vulnerable children (subsequent targeted surveys also revealed that a proportion of malnourished children were not attending any feeding centre (African Rights, 1993:12), the strategy was generally considered successful in light of the levels of insecurity prevalent at the time.

7.2.3   Scenario three: Levels of cooperation

Where there is controversy over formal registration of a population, for example where it is expected that entitlements will be reduced or controlling elements within a displaced population or camp stand to lose control over commodities in demand and hence over the population in need, alternatives may need to be found.

Good relations and cooperation with a beneficiary population can mean the difference between success or failure of perhaps an entire assistance operation. Failure, whether due to sabotage by the elements within the beneficiary population, inadequate participation in the planning process or poor quality material not only allows already over-powerful leaders to become more powerful but can also destroy the community structure, cooperation, and trust between refugees and relief workers. The implications of such failure are far greater than simply not being able to obtain accurate figures.

It is essential for community social workers and field staff in any identification or registration exercise in contested circumstances to try to understand the role, motives and effectivness of leadership in order to obtain reliable estimates. In the Great Lakes region, refugee leadership played a major role and had enormous influence over the refugee population. Similarly, with the southern Sudanese populations in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. Understanding the characteristics of the refugee and host population in Goma, for example, led to the decision to redirect distributions from commune leadership which was known to be diverting the assistance to strengthen its influence on the refugee population for political reasons, towards the household to lessen this stranglehold. Ngara, Tanzania, in 1995,

Kakuma, Kenya in 1994, and Liberia throughout its multi-factional civil war up to late 1996, offer examples of how registrations in controversial situations can be rescued, but only after considerable efforts were made to re-establish good relations.

Problems in Ngara centred around political tensions and in particular the power structures within the beneficiary population and the perceived threat to those in power posed by registration. In Kakuma, Kenya and Gambella, western Ethiopia, the tensions were complicated by cultural/religious sensitivies. Efforts in both to register the populations posed major threats to the humanitarian assistance programmes.

Relations in Ngara were rescued following a failed registration attempt, planned for February 1995, which had to be called off due to non-cooperation of refugees and the delivery of poor quality wristbands. However, there were concerns that the pre-registration population as of February 1995 of 502,000 was over-inflated. Refugee elders, community leaders, womens groups and other social sectors were then informed that the exercise had failed due to their non-cooperation and that a new registration exercise was planned for the month of June. Continuous dialogue and negotiations were established with the refugee community and leadership over the next few months to seek their cooperation and support for the next exercise. They were informed that lists of refugees submitted by the communities were inflated and the elders were asked to provide more accurate lists of each commune which would form the basis of commodity distribution. Lists were revised several times following lengthy discussions and negotiations and were finally accepted by UNHCR in May 1995, on the condition that the numbers be physically verified using a head count. Initially, the revised lists showed population numbers to have fallen to from 502,000 to 458,000, but subsequent figures resulting from further verification (using invisible electoral ink and UV torches) on 23-24 July revealed the population figure to be no more than 421,000. This strategy not only resulted in reduction of population figures from 502,000 to 421,000, but importantly, it also helped in reinforcing the community structure and re-establishing trust between the refugees and relief workers.

Cultural and religious sensitivity while planning for an exercise can play a crucial role in the success of an exercise. Insensitivity or lack of knowledge of such elements in a community/society may result in total failure. In Kakuma, lengthy discussions and negotiations continued for three months after a sabotaged registration exercise

in June 1994, in an attempt to re-establish trust between the refugees and relief workers. Eventually a registration exercise was carried out at seven church compounds in the camp. It was the refugee leaders' own proposal to hold a registration exercise in the church compounds, on the grounds that it would greatly improve levels of cooperation from the refugees. The centres were thus designated as 'church compounds' rather than the more usual 'registration centres'. Although some difficulty was encountered with the camp's muslim population, who refused to enter a church compound, a compromise was found whereby the area outside one of the churches was reserved for muslims and the exercise was completed without any crowd control problems.

A similar approach was adopted in Gambella, western Ethiopia, in March 1997, where, after agreement with church leaders, and refugee elders, seven church compounds were selected for registration. One of the church compounds was extended to accommodate the number of refugees living around the centre. On the eve of registration exercise, only the extension part of the church was damaged by a group of refugees. The exercise was nevertheless completed smoothly in the original church compounds.

A number of major registration exercises over recent years have thus shown the benefits to be gained from close cooperation with and inclusion of the target population and host governments in planning. Indeed, experiences of this kind demonstrate that by working with the refugee population over a prolonged period to refine the quality and usefulness of the information gathered, can itself contribute to the preparation of durable solutions for the population concerned, and can record and document developments such as spontaneous repatriation which indicate changes or trends in the mood of the refugees. It has also been observed that such cooperative relationships can be fostered over time, and that efforts to actively promote community understanding and responsibility in registration activities of any kind are generally well rewarded.

Programme managers and staff may find themselves confronted with a very different, but sometimes equally difficult sort of problem – when populations which are not included in a planned registration exercise, wish to be registered, but may be thwarted by external forces, such as political reasons of host governments.

In late 1995, in the face of a military offensive against Jaffna city in north Sri Lanka,

some 400,000 people, virtually the entire urban population became internally displaced. About 250,000 moved into the agricultural region south of Jaffna lagoon known as the Vanni and the majority were taken in by local residents. The government of Sri Lanka, which had maintained a skeleton administration in the north, (the region then largely controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)), moved rapidly to register all newly displaced people at local level, and statistics were compiled for each district. When a subsequent wave of IDPs into Vanni followed the army's move eastwards to occupy most of the Jaffna peninsula in Spring 1996, the government gave instructions that they could not be registered as legitimate IDPs, choosing to consider them as active supporters of the LTTE and therefore not 'forcibly' displaced people. This led to demonstrations in the Vanni in front of the office of the government agent and of some international agency office, by people who wanted to be registered. At no point was registration controversial for the internally displaced; on the contrary, they actively wanted to register, as they knew it would legitimise their claim to food rations and other relief. The reservations about registration essentially came from the government authorities and seem to have been inspired principally by budgetary and political considerations.

7.2.4   Scenario four: Host governments and registration

Where there is a functioning state, the host government is ultimately responsible for refugees within their borders and therefore registration is also primarily their responsibility. In situations where registration is deemed necessary and appropriate, all efforts should be made to involve the host government and make it responsible for the success of the operation (although UNHCR normally undertakes the exercise when requested by the government).

As present day emergencies are more often than not politically motivated, the host government's lead role in registration is crucial, without which even a well prepared plan will often fail. Refugee leadership, the political elements in particular, is on the whole, more responsive to host government's instructions than to relief agencies. In 1996 registration exercises in Bukavu and Goma were sabotaged and aborted respectively due to the direct influence of political leaders in the camps and the token involvement of Zaire as host government. Such problems need to be identified and arrangements made with the government to counter such negative political elements in a beneficiary population before attempting to implement a registration exercise. (Local administrative structures of the host country can be effective, in

particular for security arrangements).

A host government's ministry of census/statistics can play a major role in assisting in a registration exercise. In the Sudan and Guinea, these ministries took the lead in sensitising the local population and central and regional governments to provide full support for a major registration exercise.

In areas where no such local agencies/departments exist, local populations and structures can play a major role in registration. The degree of involvement however, depends to a large extent on the political situation and underlying factors. Experiences in Ethiopia, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire and Tanzania support this conclusion. A concerted effort of all parties to obtain cooperation of a community and its leaders can help avert failure of the an identification exercise and lay the groundwork for greater cooperation in the other areas of relief work. In areas where an emergency situation has existed for some time – Liberia's population have moved several times over the past 8 years – local communities will often be well aware of the sort of information aid agencies require and have become proficient at producing data. As noted above, the problem is that this information is often regarded as inaccurate. Nevertheless, it can be used as an indicator in situations where a full registration exercise is not recommended.

7.2.5   Scenario five: Donor pressure

The pressure from donors and in turn the World Food Programme for accurate population figures during an emergency varies from situation to situation and at different stages of an emergency, but can be considerable.

During the 1991-92 Somali exodus, the priority of all agencies was to save lives, and there was thus very little pressure to obtain accurate figures. However, as soon as the state of the population and situation improved, the need for more accurate population figure resurfaced. A similar process could be observed in the Great Lakes Region during the Rwandese crisis. Consideration should be given to the degree of pressure relief agencies may be under, either from within, or from donors and host governments, to produce results quickly. Even under considerable pressure, it is important to plan identification and particularly registration strategies in such a way that accurate results are obtained, but not at the expense of longer-term cooperation with the beneficiary population.

Annex 1

Statistics

The following is included as a complement to information provided in Chapters 5 and 6 on methods of population estimation.[11]

An introduction to statistics – sampling and statistical inference

Statistics is the science of analysing data. It tells us how data can be collected, organised and analysed, and how to draw conclusions from the data correctly. Without statistics, it would be impossible to perform the calculations behind many familiar things such as political polls, the approval of new medicines, unemployment figures, etc.

In statistics, 'population' does not only refer to people; it is used to mean any group about which you wish to make generalisations. Unless otherwise stated, in this Review, population refers to the beneficiary population of emergency operations. If you make a complete study of a population, i.e. collecting information on each individual within that population, you are taking a 'census'. However, there are a number of situations in which it is necessary to take a sample rather than a census.

Sampling – the examination of only part of a population and then making assumptions about the total population based on the results of that sample), is the key to understanding statistics.

When collecting information on a given population or group, it is more likely that a sample will be used than a full census of all members of the population. 'Hypothesis testing' is used to check that the right conclusion has been reached, based on the results of the sample. There are many statistical methods for testing a hypothesis, some of which are explained briefly in this chapter. For a deeper understanding of statistics a professional manual, or course is recommended.

Using the characteristics of the sample to generalise about a parent population is known as 'induction' – if 3% of a sample possess a particular characteristic, it may be assumed by induction that approximately 3% of the total population possess the same characteristic. This is an important technique for estimating the total population in an emergency settlement, for example, based on information collected on only part of the settlement. A condition of such a method of representative sampling is that all members of the population have the same chance of being selected for examination.

Ensuring that the sample is representative can be harder than it seems. It is important to define the population as well as the sample. For example, sampling inhabitants of a particular emergency-affected area will tell you about the population of that area; it will not necessarily give you specific information about the beneficiaries of the emergency operation, because the inhabitants of the area will not necessarily be beneficiaries of the emergency programme. There are two kinds of statistical inference, estimation and hypothesis testing.

Random sampling

Every person or household in the population has an equal probability of being included in a random sample (e.g. picking names from a hat, or the 'blindfold and pin exercise' to pick them from a list). To draw any valid conclusion, the sample must be representative of the whole population. For example, nutritional data obtained from health services are not representative of all the population. Nor are those collected in the most accessible villages or centres, or in camps that are reported to be in a particularly bad state.

Interval sampling

Here, cases are selected at given 'intervals'. For example, if 200 cases are to be selected at given intervals from a listed population of 10,000, one can select every fiftieth case.

Cluster or stratified sampling

Instead of selecting individual units as above, in this case the researcher divides the population into groups or categories, called strata or clusters (e.g. by location,

ethnic origin, religion, gender, age etc.). By doing this, one can guarantee that certain priority groups are represented. The total population in that group may be surveyed, or random samples may be drawn from each group or stratum. While not as statistically sound as 'pure random sampling', it will guarantee that known priority groups or sites are represented. The danger is that because the spread of samples is artificially decided, significant groups or sites may be ignored, and the sample skewed as a result, thus devaluing the information collected.

Estimation

Estimation is when you take a random sample from a population and use it to estimate some parameter of the population. The best estimate of the mean (average) of a population is just the mean of the sample that has been selected.

Confidence

Knowing that our samples will have some errors, how can we quantify that error? If we know that our sample was 100% of the total population, we could be 100% confident of the accuracy of our calculations. For example, the results of a population registration that covers 100% of the population would theoretically be 100% accurate. In many cases, we would be happy with being 99% confident, or perhaps only 69%. Quite small samples can give us a high confidence level.

The use of increasingly large samples does not necessarily increase the level of confidence of the resulting assumptions. The way the samples have been chosen is of greater importance. The way the sample is chosen will determine how representative it is of the whole population. Tests exist for working out how much error is associated with any particular assumption on the whole population based on data from only a sample of the population. These can be found in any text book on quantitative methods.

Averages – arithmetic mean, the median, the mean of two means

Averages: averages express the middle point in a set of numbers (known as 'observations'). There are three principle ways to calculate an average. Each method produces a number with a different meaning, so it is important to check how any average was calculated.

The arithmetic mean: this is the most commonly used average. To calculate it, add together all the observations (numbers in the set) and divide the sum by the number of observations. The arithmetical mean is usually the best way to get an average. The trouble with this average is that one non-typical observation distorts the results.

The median: calculate the median by ranking the numbers in order of value, and taking the middle number. If there is an even number of observations, take the two in the middle and divide by 2.

The mode: the mode tells you the most commonly appearing or 'popular' number in a series of observations. Modes are more useful with large number of observations. Sometimes a series of observations has more than one mode.

Standard deviation: the standard deviation is calculated in a similar way to the arithmetic mean. It is basically the mean of the deviations of each observation from the mean. In normal distributions, roughly 68% of a distribution is contained within one standard deviation either side of the mean, and 95% within two standard deviations. Among other things, standard deviation is a very useful statistical method for estimating the variability we can expect in the future. Some of the deviations are minus numbers. If you add all the deviations together, the sum is zero.

Other measures of dispersion

The range: the range is the difference between the highest and lowest numbers in a set. For example, the range of (3; 5; 6; 7; 9; 23; 145) is 145-3 = 142. The trouble with this is that the highest number, 145, is so extreme and thus distorts the range. To deal with this , we can carve up the set into quarters, tenths or hundredths. The values at the dividing points are known as quartiles, deciles and percentiles respectively.

The semi-interquartile: to prevent the distortion mentioned above, we can ignore the first and last quarters of the set of observations, and calculate the range between the first quartile and third quartile, the middle is 50% of the set.

Skew: skews are related to graphs of distribution. Example: a survey of the

distribution of a country's wealth amongst its people. Expressing this on a graph with the number of people on the vertical axis and the amount of wealth on the horizontal might show a distribution with positive skew (longer tail to the right). If you had the observations, you could discover this skew, and hence the distribution shape, using the quartile method described above, so you would know, without drawing the graph, that many people had little wealth and a few people had a lot.

Distributions – normal distribution, coefficients of variation

It is a mysterious fact that, in many circumstances, if you have produced a set of numbers that is influenced by many small independent forces, they form the 'bell-shaped' curve known as the normal curve or 'Gaussian' curve after its discoverer, Gauss. All kinds of measurements have a normal distribution, for example, the levels of IQ in people, small differences in the size of a manufactured item and the height of trees in a forest. You will very often find that data, if sufficiently large, will have a normal distribution. If you know the mean and the standard deviation, you can draw the normal curve; this is the principal reason why standard deviation is so widely used. The mathematics of the normal curve is simpler than that of other curves, and the results obtained often apply quite well to other distribution shapes.

Characteristics of the normal curve: the mean marks the mid-point of the curve. 50% of the distribution is on one side, and 50% on the other.

Almost 100% of the distribution is within three standard deviations either side of the mid-point.

95% of the distribution is within two standard deviations either side of the mid-point.

68% of the distribution is within one standard deviation either side of the mid point.

Correlation

Is there a connection between smoking and heart disease? Are people who buy novels likely to own a CD player? Statisticians can examine questions like these to see if two such variables are correlated. No correlation is scored as 0 and a perfect

correlation is scored as 1. Negative scores mean that high numbers on one variable are correlated with low scores on the other. Correlations can give clues to a relationship, for example, tall people tend to be heavier, but they do not of themselves prove that one variable is causing changes in the other.

Annex 2
Sample registration form
(Emergency Assistance Operations)

Short registration form (for population quantification)

1. Name
2. Date of Birth (DOB)
3. Gender
4. Number of Dependents

Long registration form (for quantification, and assistance distribution)

1. Register ID number
2. Date of registration
3. Name – first and family
4. DOB
5. Gender
6. Current address – camp, sub-camp, house/tent
7. Date of arrival
8. Place of origin – country, province or department, town
9. Number of dependants
11. Names, DOB and gender of all dependants
12. Nationality
13. Ethnic group
14. Special needs of case (registered, or dependants)
15. Date of last update of this register
16. Comments

Annex 3

Steps for conducting a registration

Once the decision to register has been taken and before registering, ask the following questions:

- What are the objectives of a programme or activity?
- How are you planning to implement the programme – directly, indirectly, to all the population, targeting just a portion, etc?
- Who are you dealing with – the target group of beneficiaries?
- What kind of information is required to carry out these activities? And in what detail?
- How much of this information already exists? How much has to be generated, and over what time-frame and with what regularity?
- What methods exist for obtaining the rest of the information – assessment methods, monitoring, consultation directly with the population?
- What precise and necessary role will registration fulfil?
- What is the capacity needed to carry through the task?
- What are the legal requirements for registration?
- Is it necessary to register?
- Who should be involved in the decision making process? It should not be donors alone.

Plan the registration – setting objectives, coverage, and content; ask:

- Who will represent the relevant populations and how, in practical terms, will they be involved?
- What authority and legitimacy will they have when, and if, critical, and potentially divisive issues arise?
- What precisely is the registration to achieve?
- What information do you need to implement your programme? Do you require ration cards, for instance?
- When is the information required by? Is it all required immediately, or just

some e.g. is an estimate of numbers sufficient to proceed? Over what period of time will the various stages of registration take place?

- What will registration signify for the person registered, and for those 'screened out', or who applied for registration, but who failed the criteria?
- What entitlement will registration bestow?
- How will that entitlement be protected – to avoid fraud, and mis-registration by intent or error?
- What criteria will be used for deciding who is eligible for registration and who is not? What is the basic unit – family, household, individual, group (e.g. for return to an area)? Will those to be registered have to present any documentation – passports, ID, birth certificates, etc. Will exceptions be made?
- What is your population, and what proportion of it should be registered?
- Is there intermixing of various populations and therefore any difficulties singling out the target group? Are host families involved? and what impact will their inclusion/exclusion have on the registration?
- How will you ensure that it is an ongoing exercise? Look to the future and ensure that the initial exercise is constructed in a way that can feed into a continuous process – this includes setting up an appropriate computer system. Will cards be replaced if lost and how etc?

Decide how the process will be carried out, on the basis of the answers to the questions above, asking:

- When should the registration take place, how long should each of the stages take and when should the cut-off date for all registration activities be. The central question is whether it will be 'early' or 'late', and when no more registrations will be accepted. If a registration is to be carried out 'early', then basic background information (demographic profile, locations, flows, etc.) may not be sufficiently clear. If 'late', distribution systems will be in place and hard to adapt, so vested interests and reliance on inaccurate numbers may have been established in the programme.
- In what order will the different stages – preparation, fixing, registration, and analysis, verification and continuation – be carried out? Will it be one exercise, or will it happen over stages, with different information being collected at each stage (fixing being just one of these)?
- Will it be necessary to fix the population (in some way to identify – not register yet – the target population)?

- Will processing be undertaken by individuals or by batch?
- Where will the registration take place? Safety and distance from the border for refugees must be a consideration.
- Will alternative or complementary techniques be used?
- How will those screened out of the process be dealt with? This could be a major source of discontent and disruption.
- Will there be stages ('forward capture', reception centres)?
- What system will be used to verify accuracy?
- How will the process be continued to cover new cases?
- What significant problems can be anticipated? Prepare for risks such as fire, fraud, crowd problems, sabotage etc.
- What remedial action is in place or might be needed to deal with such problems?

Assess existing and necessary resources for collection of the information and analysing stages, asking:

- What resources and conditions are necessary for at least minimum conditions of security and comfort?
- What is the geographical, physical layout required, and the implications?
- Will it all happen as one exercise, or, as the initial registration goes ahead, will other layers and levels be fed into it?
- What is the political environment, i.e. the degree of support to be expected from local authorities, level of agreement, and resources made available?
- What human resources (use professional teams, including females), material, physical resources (including hard and software) and financial resources are available?

Conduct physical and basic services planning (of the locations):

- Map/assess your population distribution
- Map physical locations for registration, identifying concentrations.
- Assess the number and type of installations – for safety, security, health, sustenance and comfort. Are there legal requirements?
- Design, map installations.
- Build or adapt as required.
- Equip as required.

Identify and prepare staff and participants. Go through the normal human resources cycle:

- dentify the tasks required as per the number of people to be registered, the number and dispersion of locations, type of registration to be conducted (manual, automated, politically sensitive, etc.), and the time-frame (these four variables will determine the number and types).
- Assess the number and profile of people to conduct those tasks.
- Identify them – give particular attention to the participation of the population themselves – ideally they should manage it.
- Prepare and train them etc.
- Monitor, perhaps through a trial or 'dummy run'.
- Adapt human resources to needs – training, hiring and firing, etc.
- Integrate/manage staff from outside the direct programme (secondees, government officers, 'beneficiary' participants etc.).

Design the registration forms, cards, etc. – define precisely the information to be collected:

- Set out the categories of information to be collected, and the broad categories to be excluded, or to be collected through alternative methods.
- Design the registration forms, cards, etc. – give guidance for this, either here or in an annex i.e. how to design forms efficiently and effectively – see the Rob Stevenson materials for WFP.
- Prepare and inform the population to be registered (this should all be done with the involvement of key actors, principally the beneficiaries, and authorities).
- Decide on the messages and information to be disseminated – why is the exercise happening, and for whose benefit? what will be the outcome and the benefit for them?
- Decide who will be targeted, when and where.
- Decide how information and messages will be disseminated, what media will be used – written, visual, oral.
- Design, prepare and distribute newsletter/newspaper, leaflets and posters.
- Design, prepare and diffuse radio/TV programmes.
- Design, prepare and dispatch teams with megaphones.

- Test the effectiveness of the message – use a method that is adequate for the situation.
- Adapt the information campaign accordingly.

Fix (this may or may not be necessary, according to the way registration is to be carried out)

- Choose the method, which should not insult or debase, and be in accordance with standards of human dignity (distribute cards, dip fingers, etc.).
- Do the fixing (detail the steps).

Register (collection of the information)

- Convoke the population as per the agreed time plan (each category, including special groups, when, where, etc.).
- Register – manage the process, the centres, the staff, the people, etc.
- Review at a certain stage to check for the need to adapt. This should include some spot checks to identify attempts at fraud, including by the staff conducting the registration.

Analyse and process the information

- *RRN Good Practice Review 3* pointed out the dearth of guidance on how "to interpret or how to make sense of the information (collected for and during an assistance programme)". This underlines the obvious, but surprisingly frequently overlooked need to decide before one does something, exactly why one is doing it. A serious weakness of aid operations, particularly emergencies, is the information overload, and the inability to set priorities among categories of information to be collected and how to process it. Registration is no exception.
- Centralise the information.
- Verify receipt of all forms and documentation.
- Process it according to the agreed criteria and process.
- Present it.

Data Processing Tools

- It is important to try to structure the data-gathering so that it can be quickly fed into a computer and analysed. Processing of surveys can be done using simple spreadsheet computer software (e.g. Lotus 123), or more appropriately, data processing software. And also give tips for information processing.

Verify

- According to the system you have already decided upon.
- On the basis of initial results, determine if any specific action is required (repeat a part of the process?).

Manage the screened out, those that do not fit the definition of the target population

- Those that have applied for registration, or have gone through the process, but are not accepted, have to be managed. Depending on the situation, this may be a source of difficulty, even conflict.

Continue the process, especially for new arrivals, or other groups

- Are there other phases or levels of registration that need to be led into – such as in the case of Jordan where, depending upon the outcome of the initial registration to enter Jordan, the people were then channelled to their own governments for registration for exit.
- Repeat the process/cycle.
- If it has to be adapted as an ongoing process, then decide how.

Acronyms

ICRC   International Committee of the Red Cross
IDPs   Internally Displaced Persons
IOM   International Organisation for Migration
INGOs   International Non-Governmental Organisations
NGOs   Non-Governmental Organisations
POW   Prisoner of War
WFP   World Food Programme
UNHCR   United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF   United Nations Children's Fund

Endnotes

1   The 'Peer Group' is an editorial board made up of respected experts in emergency and rehabilitation assistance programmes from a range of humanitarian backgrounds, including UN, NGO and research organisations.

2   'Water and Sanitation in Emergencies' by Andrew Chalinder (GPR 1), 'Emergency Supplementary Feeding Programmes' by Jeremy Shoham (GPR 2) and 'General Food Distribution in Emergencies: from Nutritional Needs to Political Priorities' by Susanne Jaspars and Helen Young (GPR 3), 'Seed Provision During and After Emergencies', ODI Seeds and Biodiversity Programme, (GPR 4).

3   The term 'natural-disaster' is increasingly questioned (e.g. by the Latin America' and South Asia based disaster networks, 'La Red' and 'Duryog Nivaran', respectively) on the basis that no natural event or phenomenon would become a disaster were adequate measures taken to prevent, mitigate, and prepare. Thus, it is argued, natural disasters are, in fact, more human-made disasters in that insufficient steps were taken to prevent the disaster, or at least to avoid injury, damage to property, and loss of life.

4   A mortality rate of more than 2 deaths per 10,000 per day is regarded as an emergency that is out of control. An initial target is therefore to reduce mortality to below 2 deaths per 10,000 people, per day, until they fall below 1.5 deaths per 10,000 people per day.

5   Jim Borton, head of the Addis Ababa based UNDP Emergency Unit.

6   For instance, the United States of America 100 dollar note is now unacceptable tender in many currency exchange bureaux worldwide due to massive, and highly sophisticated, falsification. A new note has had to be designed.

7   This protection function is central to the role of UNHCR in humanitarian operations. As such, its emphasis on the importance of registering beneficiary populations may be seen in context (see UNHCR, 1994: *Registration: A practical guide for fieldstaff*).

8   The late Fred Cuny of the US based Intertect company.

9   See *RRN Network Paper 19* by James Darcy on 'Human Rights and international Legal Standards'.

10   This covers 'classical' emergency conditions as well as nomadic populations for example (though non-registration of the latter category is situation specific and registration may well be possible if movements can be anticipated, and obey certain cycles).

11   The information on statistics is taken from on 'The Financial Times guide to Business Numeracy', by Leo Gough, 1994

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RRN

Background

The Relief and Rehabilitation Network was conceived in 1992 and launched in 1994 as a mechanism for professional information exchange in the expanding field of humanitarian aid. The need for such a mechanism was identified in the course of research undertaken by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) on the changing role of NGOs in relief and rehabilitation operations, and was developed in consultation with other Networks operated within ODI. Since April 1994, the RRN has produced publications in three different formats, in French and English: Good Practice Reviews, Network Papers and Newsletters. The RRN is now in its second three-year phase (1996-1999), supported by four new donors – DANIDA, ECHO, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland and the Department for International Development. Over the three year phase, the RRN will seek to expand its reach and relevance amongst humanitarian agency personnel and to further promote good practice.

Objective

To improve aid policy and practice as it is applied in complex political emergencies.

Purpose

To contribute to individual and institutional learning by encouraging the exchange and dissemination of information relevant to the professional development of those engaged in the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Activities

To commission, publish and disseminate analysis and reflection on issues of good practice in policy and programming in humanitarian operations, primarily in the form of written publications, in both French and English.

Target audience

Individuals and organisations actively engaged in the provision of humanitarian assistance at national and international, field-based and head office level in the 'North' and 'South'.

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