

EVIDENCE ON THE ETHICS AND EFFICACY OF DATA-DRIVEN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE: THE CASE OF SOUTH SUDAN



South Sudan gained independence on the 9th of July 2011 but conflict broke out in December 2013 leading to high levels of violence and displacement as South Sudanese were forced to leave their homes and seek safety in other parts of the country. This policy brief highlights the dire situation for IDPs in South Sudan and emphasises how a more effective and ethical approach to data use could improve the provision of humanitarian assistance in camps.

Context: There are currently 5 Protection of Civilian Sites (PoCs), redesignated as Internally Displaced Persons Camps (IDP Camps) in 2020, with a total of 180,505 IDPs, including 103,242 in Bentiu and 29,437 in Juba where the Data and Displacement team conducted research on the ethical and operational challenges of data-driven humanitarian assistance. There are 12 service clusters at the camps which comprise a range of international humanitarian organisations and provide many services, such as camp management, water, sanitation and hygiene, health, psychosocial support, food, shelter, education and protection.

Key Observations: In 2021 70 interviews were conducted with IDPs (10 in Juba and 40 in Bentiu), and humanitarian stakeholders (5 in Juba and 15 in Bentiu). The key findings of this research are:

- ▶ There is large-scale humanitarian data collection in the 2 camps, indicative of the growing commitment to data collection in ascertaining both the immediate and long term needs of IDPs.
- ▶ There are different understandings and processes of data collection among IDPs, humanitarian actors, and service clusters.
- ▶ Rapid data collection as IDPs flee danger is prioritised, followed by immediate distribution of lifesaving emergency assistance and admission into a secure camp.
- ▶ There are numerous cases of poor ethical practice in data collection, including lack of informed consent, lack of data, access to data, and lack of follow-up information.

... "sometimes they come home and ask us questions, but they hardly get back to us"
SS.01.04

What can be done?

Understand the process of data collection and review approaches around the collection, use, and dissemination of data.

Prioritise updating data and feedback for IDPs on the use of their data.

Ensure ethical standards are followed in all data collection, especially informed consent.

How can we achieve these?

Provide IDPs with regular feedback after each data cycle to enhance IDP inclusion in decision making and data transparency.

Place community information boards for provision of data feedback at the camps.

Disseminate information in easy to use and accessible methods, e.g illustrations, radio.

Develop a central data repository for IDPs to be able to update data and keep humanitarian organisations informed of changing situations.

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