

# IMPROVING THE RESPONSE TO INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Key Findings and Recommendations from the Independent Evaluation of the Internal Displacement Profiling in Chihuahua, Mexico

The need for detailed data and analysis on the living conditions of IDPs is instrumental to find durable solutions for the millions of displaced people worldwide.<sup>1</sup> The independent review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) specifically emphasizes the need for comprehensive, consistent, and interoperable data and analysis on the phenomenon, and points to the importance of profiling to advance joined-up approaches across the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding realm and large-scale responses to forced displacement.<sup>2</sup>

This evaluation brief examines the experiences and lessons learnt from the concrete application of profiling in Chihuahua State, Mexico, between 2020 and 2023. The exercise involved 22 stakeholders from civil society organizations, academia, the federal and state government, and the international community, exemplifying Recommendation 9 of the IASC review that promotes supporting the capacity of diverse national actors to engage in data collection, analysis, and use from the earliest possible stage. The profiling aimed to provide reliable information to improve the government response to internal displacement. The independent evaluation highlights significant achievements in raising awareness of the phenomenon and in strengthening inter-institutional cooperation alongside capacities of government actors such as the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI for its acronyms in Spanish), underscoring the importance of addressing internal displacement at the federal level. It also notes the need to improve the continuity and use of the data collected to maximize its impact. To conclude, the analysis offers insights and recommendations for enhancing future similar efforts in Mexico and other regions affected by internal displacement.

## Summary of Key Findings

- The profiling exercise has **significantly increased the visibility of internal displacement**, bringing the issue into public debate and generating greater attention to the state government's response, prompting a more active response from the authorities.
- The government noted that the exercise reflects the complexity of the process and the technical challenges that would need to be overcome to conduct a representative exercise at the national level in the future, **highlighting the process as an important and enriching experience that provided valuable learning**.
- **Strategic alliances have been established among actors from different sectors**, enhancing the collective response to displacement and improving inter-institutional coordination.
- The **participation of displaced persons was considered of significant value** because, although public policy often emphasizes participation, it is rarely effectively implemented. These actions provide valuable learning for all members of the working group.
- The exercise contributed to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) including, for the first time, a question on **forced displacement in the Public Consultation of the 2025 Intercensal Survey**, helping to recognize the importance of addressing internal displacement at the federal level. INEGI has consolidated its position as a strong advocate for the importance of having statistics on internal displacement.

1 IMDC (2024). Zooming in on internally displaced people's needs to inform better responses. IDMC. Available in: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/expert-analysis/zooming-in-on-internally-displaced-peoples-needs-to-inform-better-responses/>

2 Sida, L., Mooney, E., Lough, O. and Fouad, L. et al. (2024) Independent review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement. HPG report. London: ODI ([www.odi.org/en/publications/independent-review-of-the-humanitarian-response-to-internal-displacement](http://www.odi.org/en/publications/independent-review-of-the-humanitarian-response-to-internal-displacement)).

## BACKGROUND

### Displacement Context

At the end of 2023, approximately 392,000 people were displaced in Mexico due to conflict or violence (accumulated from 2008 to 2023), with 11,000 new internal displacements due to violence recorded in 2023, which represents a 20% increase compared to the previous year.<sup>3</sup> The displacement phenomenon has spread to regions where it had not been recorded before, such as San Luis Potosí and the State of Mexico.

Chihuahua State recorded 11 cases of mass displacements due to generalized violence in 2023, accounting for over 1,700 displaced people. These figures contrast with the 900 displaced persons officially recorded by the State Attorney General's Office of Chihuahua, which reflect a historical cumulative total.<sup>4</sup> The Unit for Migration Policy, Registration, and Identity of Persons (UPMRIP for its acronyms in Spanish) indicates that 19 of the 67 municipalities in the State of Chihuahua reported cases of forced internal displacement (FID) during 2021.<sup>5</sup>

In September 2020, the Mexican Chamber of Deputies approved the draft decree to enact the General Law to Prevent, Address, and Fully Repair Internal Forced Displacement and sent it to the Senate. However, it has not yet been approved by the Senate. The lack of a law hampers the ability of authorities to ensure the respect of human rights, such as effective remedy and access to justice. At the state level, Chiapas, Guerrero, Sinaloa, and Zacatecas have internal displacement laws, while in Chihuahua, a reform in the state penal code was approved to classify internal displacement as a crime.

### The Exercise

The profiling of internal displacement in Chihuahua, carried out between 2020 and 2023, emerged in response to a request from the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights (CMDPDH for its acronyms in Spanish). The objective of the exercise was to provide reliable and consensual information on the magnitude and characteristics

of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the state to provide a basis for government response processes that protect and comprehensively, appropriately, and effectively address IDPs' needs. A Profiling Working Group was established to carry out the exercise, with 22 organizations from the federal and state government, civil society, academia and the international community. The large number of participating organizations made this one of the largest and most complex multi-stakeholder exercises that JIPS has supported.

The exercise employed a mixed methods approach consisting of quantitative and qualitative components. INEGI conducted the Survey to Characterize the Population in a Situation of Internal Forced Displacement in the State of Chihuahua (ECADEFI-CHIH for its acronyms in Spanish) 2021 based on a questionnaire developed in collaboration with the working group. The qualitative component included focus group discussions with IDPs, interviews with key informants, and a normative and public policy mapping exercise. The methodology was developed and agreed upon by all the organizations that make up the TWG.

The exercise results were presented in a comprehensive report published in May 2023.<sup>6</sup> This was later complemented by an interactive data story and two thematic documents on employment and livelihoods on the one hand and housing, land and property on the other.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the National Population Council (CONAPO for its acronyms in Spanish) published a Secondary Data Review Report,<sup>8</sup> which helped to understand the existing body of information on internal displacement in Chihuahua and identify any gaps in the information to be addressed by the profiling exercise.

It is important to note that due to the limitations of the sample composition, the profiling results are indicative rather than statistically representative of the internally displaced population in the state. Nevertheless, the exercise provides valuable insights for a more comprehensive understanding of IDPs' characteristics and the impacts resulting from their displacement.

3 IDMC (2024) Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID). En: <https://api.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/IDMC-GRID-2024-Global-Report-on-Internal-Displacement.pdf>

4 Mayorga, P. (2024) Los desplazaron por violencia, perdieron su territorio...y también el derecho a votar en su región. Raichali, 2 June. Available in: <https://raichali.com/2024/06/02/votar-en-el-desplazamiento-forzado-chihuahua/>. Accessed 16 July 2024.

5 UMRIP (2022) Diagnóstico de la movilidad humana en Chihuahua. Available in: [https://portales.segob.gob.mx/work/models/PoliticaMigratoria/CPM/foros\\_regionales/estados/norte/info\\_diag\\_F\\_norte/diag\\_Chihuahua.pdf](https://portales.segob.gob.mx/work/models/PoliticaMigratoria/CPM/foros_regionales/estados/norte/info_diag_F_norte/diag_Chihuahua.pdf)

6 Available here: [https://www.jips.org/uploads/2023/07/Desp\\_Chihuahua\\_20jun23\\_SDE\\_WEB\\_OK.pdf](https://www.jips.org/uploads/2023/07/Desp_Chihuahua_20jun23_SDE_WEB_OK.pdf)

7 Available here: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d7ebc1a1b8834d4eb8c1025395fa4688>

8 Available here: [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/920010/Informe\\_de\\_revisi\\_n\\_secundaria\\_p\\_gina\\_web.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/920010/Informe_de_revisi_n_secundaria_p_gina_web.pdf)

Working Group	Advisory Group
<p>Profiling Coordinator</p>	<p>Internally Displaced Persons and Communities</p>

## The Independent Evaluation

The independent evaluation, implemented between May and August 2024, examined the relevance and effectiveness of the profiling exercise implemented in Chihuahua State. A detailed analysis of the collaborative process and the impact of the exercise on improving the response to internal displacement was also carried out.

The evaluation draws on a desk review of recent literature on internal displacement in Mexico with a particular focus on Chihuahua, focus group discussions, a collective interview with internally displaced persons, and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. A validation workshop was held with working group members to discuss the preliminary findings and recommendations. A key limitation to the evaluation lies in the fact that not all actors of the profiling working group could be engaged, and staff turnover further affected the knowledge and contributions of some current representatives.

## KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE EVALUATION

Overall, the independent evaluation confirmed the relevance of profiling to support the response to internal displacement. It further revealed significant impacts, either directly attributable to the exercise or as contributions to larger changes that can be observed in Chihuahua and Mexico.

### Visibility of the Phenomenon

The profiling exercise has had a significant impact on raising awareness of internal displacement, a consensus shared by all study respondents. The issue has become part of the public debate and generated greater attention to the state government's response, prompting a more active engagement from the authorities. This can be illustrated by the increase in media mentions of the phenomenon,

which, while not directly attributable to the exercise, coincides temporally with it. Although consultations with organizations and displaced individuals reveal that there are still no concrete responses or lasting solutions, respondents agree that the fact the issue is on the public agenda is a sign of progress. One study participant further points out that the project, while focused on the local level, succeeded in also promoting the issue at the national level.

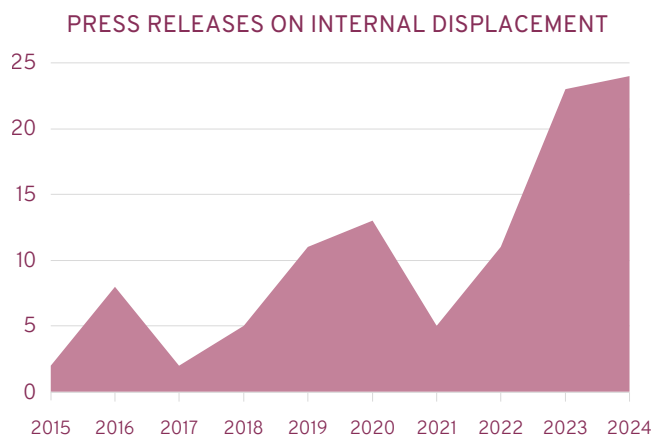


Figure 1: Number of mentions in Chihuahua's press about internal displacement between 2015 and 2024.

## Strengthened State Response and Institutional Structure

Respondents from state government entities observe that the response to internal displacement has improved. This includes the creation of the Commission for Internal Displacement, established by decree of the governor in 2022 and chaired by the General Secretariat of Government (SGG for its acronymous in Spanish). According to some respondents, the profiling exercise alongside the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons<sup>9</sup> were key factors that contributed to the creation of the Commission. Its primary role is to coordinate inter-institutional efforts for defining, implementing, and executing support actions, particularly to address the most complex cases of forced displacement. It operates without its own budget or funds and instead relies on resource allocations from other government departments. Study respondents considered that the Commission has been effective specifically in involving more government actors in assisting the displaced.

That said, study participants from civil society organizations and IDPs still see significant shortcomings in government assistance, including differences in attention and fragmentation as well as a lack of dedicated resources to support the internally displaced population.

## Strengthened Alliances and Cooperation through the Collaborative Process

The evaluation finds that the collaborative approach<sup>10</sup> was crucial in deepening the contextual understanding of the impact of displacement on affected communities, as well as in fostering active and coordinated participation from a wide range of actors (state and federal government entities, international organizations, local and national civil society organizations, academia, and displaced persons). It further reveals that this cooperation has strengthened strategic alliances among Working Group members beyond the immediate objectives of the exercise, establishing significant links particularly within the state government but also between the government and civil society organizations.

Concurrently, as one respondent observed, institutional engagement and commitment are significantly influenced by individuals' motivations and capabilities. To strengthen continuity and effectiveness of the profiling exercise, it is essential to engage more broadly with institutions and their internal processes.

The exercise also contributed to the generation of projects that transcend it, whether in bilateral or multilateral collaborations, benefiting not only Chihuahua but also other federal entities. For instance, it was mentioned that UNHCR is currently working with the State Government of Chiapas to activate responses to mass displacement events, collaborating with a participant from the exercise. This example highlights how these alliances have influenced other regions, fostering collaboration and a shared understanding.

A respondent highlights that

“What is interesting about this exercise is that it was not led by any specific institution. Instead, it facilitated the coordination and collaboration between different entities, which proved to be very timely. This process was highly effective in building alliances and activating responses in Mexico.”

The evaluation concludes that one of the main merits of the exercise was achieving consensus among the 22 participating organizations, thus granting legitimacy to the final report. The magnitude of this collaborative effort represented a significant challenge in terms of coordination and achieving consensus, which caused delays.

These delays were exacerbated by the pandemic. Nevertheless, the participants agree that reaching a consensual document is an important achievement of the collaborative process as it facilitates acceptance by both the authorities and civil society.

9 The visit of the then Special Rapporteur, Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, took place from 29 August to 9 September 2022. The report is available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5335add2-visit-mexico-report-special-rapporteur-human-rights>.

10 The collaborative approach is a fundamental component of profiling as developed and promoted by JIPS.

## International Organizations' Enabling Role in Strengthening Local Responses to Displacement

The support of international organizations is identified as a key factor in strengthening local efforts and reinforcing government responses to internal displacement. The intervention of JIPS and UNHCR as the first international entities to focus on internal displacement in Chihuahua facilitated dialogue and articulation among various government agencies, civil society organizations, and international actors around this critical issue, overall increasing the visibility of existing problems.

## Strengthened Capacities across the Federal and State Levels

From the federal government's perspective, the exercise provided an important and enriching learning experience as to the complexity and technical challenges of generating nationally representative evidence on internal displacement.

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*"I remember that at one point we visited the INEGI officials... Our goal was to stimulate their involvement since we knew they were responsible for the EGRISS, but until then, INEGI had not shown a critical mass on this issue. It was from the profiling exercise that we noticed a change: they began to participate more actively and showed an openness that we had been seeking for a few years without success. It seems that this exercise was the trigger."*

Similarly, the profiling helped strengthen capacities at the state level: by directly involving key actors and by fostering closer collaboration with municipalities, the exercise facilitated the implementation of capacity development activities. Respondents particularly highlighted the training sessions on internal displacement data for COESPO, the training of trainers in the State Human Rights Commission (CEDH for its acronyms in Spanish), and the workshops on basic concepts provided to municipalities are particularly noteworthy.

## Internal Displacement Included in INEGI's Intercensal Survey

The exercise not only strengthened INEGI's technical capacities but also prompted the national statistical office to recognize the importance of addressing internal displacement at the federal level. As a result, for the first time, a specific question on internal displacement is included in the Public Consultation of the 2025 Intercensal Survey. INEGI has also stepped up its involvement in the Expert Group on Refugee, Internally Displaced, and Statelessness Statistics (EGRISS).

## Evidence Developed with the Inclusion of Displaced Persons

The participation of internally displaced persons in the exercise is considered valuable by many of the actors involved. While IDPs were not represented in the Working Group, they were consulted on the methodology to be used and the issues to prioritize in the survey, and participated in the validation of the analysis obtained. Civil society played a crucial role in facilitating their engagement. This initiative was highlighted as significant learning because, although public policy calls for participation, study respondents have rarely seen it being implemented effectively, attributing this issue to a lack of knowledge on how to do it or who to approach.

## Advanced Normative and Policy Landscape for Displacement Response

In Chihuahua, and based on a suggestion from the CMDPDH, a mapping of regulations, policies and relevant instruments for state support for the IDPs was incorporated into the profiling exercise. This involved identifying and analyzing initiatives, laws, programs, services, points of contact, and actions of state and municipal government departments that are or could be oriented to attend to, repair, and prevent internal displacement and the problems arising from this phenomenon. The regulatory mapping was highly valued for its usefulness in identifying strategic areas where normative and policy changes could be promoted. Importantly, the following regulatory changes designed to improve the response to displacement were observed during and after the profiling, which the exercise helped advance alongside other influencing factors:

- **Inclusion of internal displacement into the State Development Plan 2022-2027:** During the exercise, multiple strategic meetings were held with the team responsible for drafting the State Development Plan, in which strong arguments were made about the importance of addressing internal displacement as a priority within the state development framework. This case illustrates the importance of strategic advocacy and effective collaboration with state officials to ensure that critical issues are effectively integrated into government policies and development plans.
- By the end of 2022, the State Congress of Chihuahua approved the classification of Internal Displacement as a crime under Article 206 of the Penal Code of the State of Chihuahua. This allows internally displaced persons to seek access to justice through the current criminal justice system. In the validation workshop, most participants agreed that the exercise had some influence on the classification of internal displacement as a crime in the state.



- In April 2024, **the State of Chihuahua published its first State Human Rights Program** (PEDH for its acronyms in Spanish). It lists IDPs as one of the priority vulnerable groups to support during the 2024-2027 period. The profiling exercise is mentioned as a key source of information in the programme. It also identifies JIPS as a partner in international collaboration agreements along with UNHCR and other international organizations to discuss and document the issues of internal displacement.
- Finally, **in May 2024, the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation granted the first injunction for internal displacement** to a family composed of 67 people who were victims of extortion, murders, kidnappings, and other types of violence imposed by organized crime since 2010 in four municipalities of Chihuahua. The profiling exercise is referenced in point 48 of the injunction as one of the studies/ actions carried out in Chihuahua that helped improve the understanding of the phenomenon in the state. The exercise provided a contextual perspective of the damages and situations faced by internally displaced persons in Chihuahua.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented here build on contributions from the interview participants and the conclusions reached by the evaluation team. They were presented and discussed in a validation workshop held in July 2024 in Chihuahua with former Profiling Working Group members and provide a set of suggestions for improving future profiling exercises.

### Advance Data Use by Ensuring Joint Responsibilities and Resources Beyond Report Publication

The final report of the profiling exercise was viewed as a highly valuable output. It represents the product of extensive and arduous efforts by all members of the Working Group, containing consensual data and analysis that are accepted by both the authorities and civil society, which is on and by itself a significant achievement of the collaborative process.

“*[The report] opened up a lot of perspectives for us in terms of seeing other municipalities in the Sierra, other small communities, and the needs they have there.*”

Respondents also point to opportunities to further strengthen the data use and maintain the momentum generated through the exercise to amplify advocacy

and positive changes. This requires establishing resources and responsibilities that go beyond the publication of the profiling report. The following options offer three complementary avenues for future exercises:

- **Extend JIPS’ participation beyond the publication of the final report:** JIPS’ presence as an international organization increases the visibility of the exercise, and its continued involvement during the dissemination of data and final products would significantly benefit the process.
- Include dissemination activities within the profiling coordinator’s terms of reference and extend their contract to support more systematic and continuous advocacy.
- **Establish a technical secretariat within the Working Group,** composed of representatives from different sectors including civil society, government, and local organization. This secretariat could further strengthen the continuity and effectiveness of the group’s activities after the departure of key figures such as the coordinator or JIPS.

### Amplify Awareness and Accessibility of Results by Diversifying Dissemination Strategies

The evaluation revealed gaps in the dissemination of the profiling results. While the comprehensive report was valued, the data story was not widely used and only mentioned by one respondent highlighting its particular value to the state government in disseminating the results.

Awareness of the profiling data and analysis can be strengthened by tailoring dissemination strategies to different key groups (e.g., government officials, displaced persons, NGOs, and international partners) and contexts. For example, in Chihuahua, the most effective strategy identified for sharing information with the displaced population was through civil society organizations in their regular meetings. Importantly, profiling outputs should equally be promoted among Working Group members.

Additionally, these strategies should ensure that the data and analysis are accessible to, and can be actioned by, each target group to apply the insights effectively to their initiatives. This can be supported by presenting the results in a concise manner that focuses on the essential points, and by translating them into local languages to ensure that affected communities can adequately access and understand the information. Suggested formats include executive summaries, training workshops, community briefings, visual and audiovisual materials, and electronic newsletters.

## Make Collaborative Working More Sustainable

Recognizing the key value and effectiveness of the collaborative approach, the evaluation also highlights ways to amplify the benefits and sustainability of collaborative settings with multiple actors. This includes specifying mechanisms in the terms of reference of the Working Group that can ensure continuity in institutional participation, such as the involvement of at least two individuals per institution and disseminating periodic update reports on the profiling exercise with key personnel in participating organizations. This approach can further facilitate ongoing project monitoring and adaptation as needed in response to administrative or personnel changes.

Avenues can also be explored to make the collaborative process more efficient, such as distinguishing between a smaller core group and an expanded membership of organizations: the core group could represent all key stakeholders (civil society, local and national government, international organizations, displaced persons, and academia), steer the profiling exercise, and remain actively involved throughout the project. The expanded membership, on the other hand, could engage additional actors based on the expertise and experiences needed at different stages in the profiling process. In Chihuahua, for instance, subgroups were formed for the qualitative and quantitative data components with organizations that had the relevant capacities and interests in supporting these aspects of the exercise. Similarly, INEGI played a key role in the design, collection, and analysis of the data, while CSOs are well placed to disseminate the results among displaced populations given their typically close connections with these communities.

Overall, however, it is essential to keep all stakeholders actively informed throughout the process to maintain their interest and commitment as well as nurture greater ownership among all. JIPS, with its extensive experience in profiling exercises, is encouraged to continue investing in advancing best practices regarding collaboration and coordination on internal displacement and data.

## Identify Adequate Terminology That Can Support Consensus and Uptake

While the Working Group had initially agreed to generate joint ‘recommendations’ and reflected this in the group’s terms of reference, this terminology raised broader concerns later in the process, namely from government counterparts due to political and legal considerations associated with the term. As a consequence, alternative terminology that would be agreeable by all members had to be explored, resulting in a focus on “areas of opportunity”.

For future exercises, it is essential to consider political and legal aspects as well as contextual specificities to establish appropriate language for the final recommendations from a profiling exercise. This should be agreed upon from the outset of a project and incorporated in the related terms of reference. Choosing adequate terminology can support greater acceptance and joint uptake of the proposed measures while still clearly pointing out identified areas for improvement. Alternative terminology may be “suggestions” or “proposed actions”, in addition to the term used in the Chihuahua exercise.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

When evaluating the impact of the exercise, it is essential to highlight that its influence extends beyond the analyzed period. A year after the publication of the final report, the visibility and alliances generated are expected to continue contributing to a more effective response to displacement in Mexico, especially in Chihuahua. The profiling exercise, along with the knowledge and lessons learned, is expected to drive, federal and other state-level efforts to protect displaced persons and promote solutions, taking INEGI’s example, which has consolidated its position as a strong advocate for the importance of having statistics on internal displacement.

In this regard, it is important to highlight the support that UNHCR is providing to the General Secretariat of Government of Chihuahua – both entities were members of the Working Group – in their intention to develop a protocol that addresses the issue of internal displacement, for which the results of the exercise will be used. The approval of this protocol would represent a significant achievement within the objectives set during the exercise.

### *About the Evaluation*

This independent evaluation was led by Federico Redin from Max Lock International Associates, with the collaboration of anthropologists Abril Olmos Loya and Tonatiuh Magos from the Center for the Strengthening of Civil Society (CFOSC) of Chihuahua, Mexico. The evaluation was supported by JIPS, who facilitated relevant materials, provided a contact list, and was in constant collaboration with the consulting team, and was also supported by UNHCR.

This independent evaluation was made possible by funding provided to JIPS by the United States Government through its Office of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA).

# Mexico - Chihuahua



Map of the geographic area, where focus groups discussions and interviews with key informants were held for the qualitative data collection of the exercise.

● Places of FGDs

