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IDENTIFYING INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN SURVEYS

APPROACHES AND RECOMMENDED
QUESTIONNAIRE MODULE



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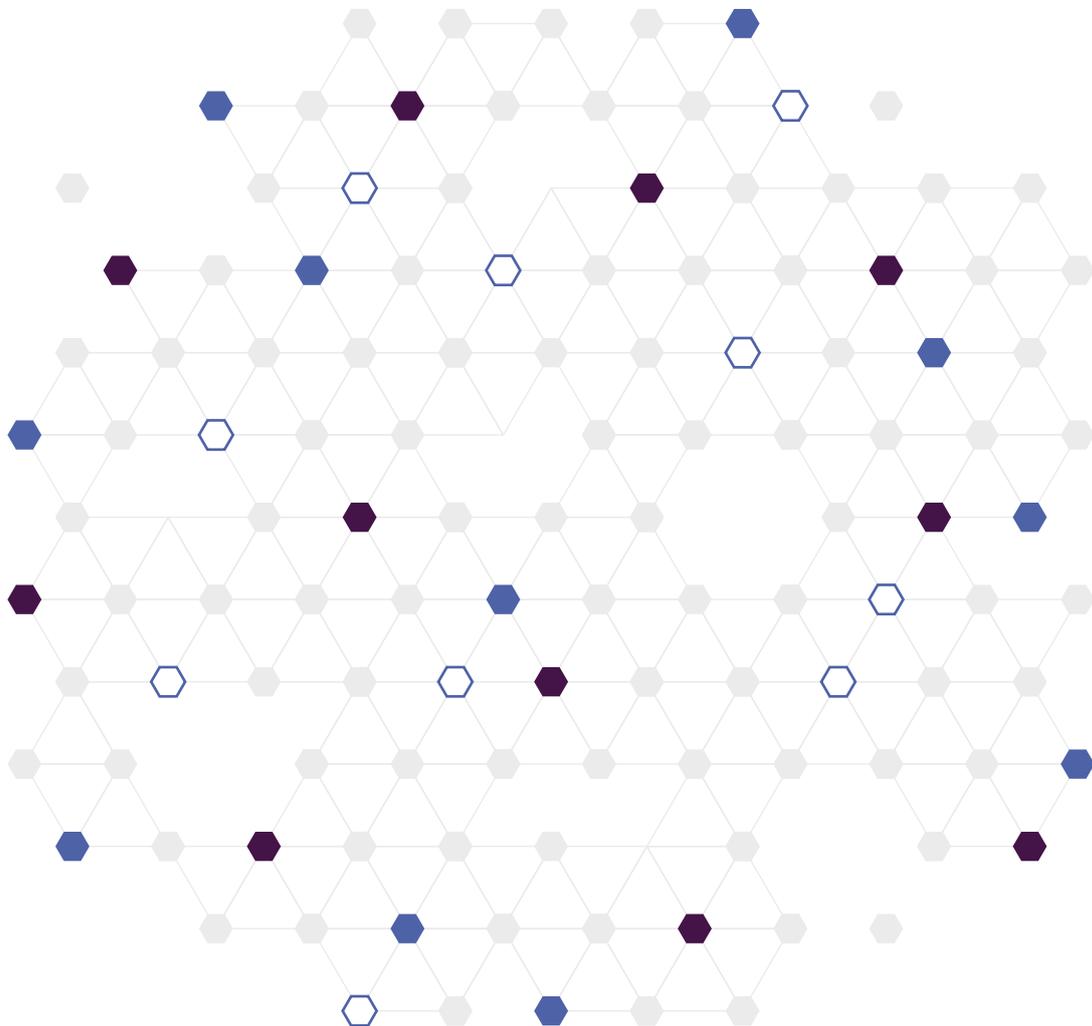
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01

INTRODUCTION



In this publication JIPS presents the result of an in-depth questionnaire review of different approaches used to identify Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in profiling surveys supported by JIPS between 2011 and 2019. We also reflect on the set of questions suggested by the recently endorsed International Recommendations on IDP Statistics (IRIS)¹ for censuses, and discuss key considerations for the different stages of the questionnaire design related to IDP identification.

The insights from the review are consolidated into a set of recommendations that offer an original approach for a more inclusive and accurate identification of IDPs when conducting surveys. We hope this will help enhance practice of the wider community working on IDP data, and advance the ongoing work of the [Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics \(EGRIS\)](#) on expanding the IRIS question set for censuses into a broader set of questions for surveys on forced displacement.

The questionnaire review covers 24 profiling tools, mostly on household level, used in exercises in 21 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and South America, and is conducted from a questionnaire methodology perspective.² In addition, the review is based on three key sources for thematic contextualisation: the Interagency Durable Solutions Indicator Library³, the related Question Bank⁴ and the IRIS.



Figure 1. Countries included in the questionnaire review

- 1 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/12257846/KS-GQ-20-005-EN-N.pdf/714a7ba0-7ae6-1707-fef4-984a760e0034?t=1610984164036>
- 2 Such as Lessler, J. T., and Forsyth, B. H. (1996). A coding system for appraising questionnaires. In N. Schwarz and S. Sudman (Eds.), *Answering questions: Methodology for determining cognitive and communicative processes in survey research* (pp. 259-291). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, and D. A., Smyth, J. D., Christian, L. M., & Dillman, D. A. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method*.
- 3 <https://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/indicators-2/>
- 4 <https://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/resources/>

We start this review with the internationally recognised definition of who is an Internally Displaced Person and its statistical operationalisation in the IRIS. We then explain the importance of developing standardised IDP identification questions. In Chapter 2 we proceed with an analysis of the different approaches for identifying IDPs. In Chapter 3 we outline the key considerations when defining IDP identification questions following four key phases of the questionnaire development process: specification, operationalisation, questionnaire design, and testing and evaluation. In Chapter 4, we review the question set for censuses recommended in the IRIS. Finally, in Chapter 5, we conclude with key recommendations and a suggested set of questions for a more accurate identification of IDPs in surveys.

1. Who is an IDP?

Unlike refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are not governed by an internationally agreed, legally binding framework. However, a definition of IDPs is given in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.⁵ While the Guiding Principles do not create a legal status for, or confer a legal status on, the internally displaced, they have been recognised globally as “an important international framework for the protection of internally displaced persons”⁶, particularly as they draw from international human rights law (IHRL) and international humanitarian law (IHL).

According to the Guiding Principles, IDPs are understood to be “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid, the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border.”

The IRIS operationalises this definition for statistical purposes outlining the different criteria for a person to be categorised as an IDP. Accordingly, an IDP is defined as a person who⁷:

- Has been usually resident at the place where a causing event occurred, at the time of the event;
- Has been forcibly displaced, including preventative movements, by:
 - Armed conflict;
 - Generalised violence;
 - Violations of human rights;
 - Natural or human-made disasters;
 - Other forced displacements or evictions;

5 <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>

6 UN General Assembly, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 16 September 2005, A/Res/60/L.1, 2005, paragraph 132 (available at https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_60_1.pdf).

7 The statistical definition of an IDP includes a fifth criterion that complements the four criteria outlined by the Guiding Principles and relates to the outflow from the IDP stock, namely: “key displacement-related vulnerabilities (as derived from the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons) have not been assessed or, upon assessment, it is established that they have not been overcome.” As this criterion is not relevant for the IDP identification questions discussed in this document, it is not reflected in the text.

- Following these, has been physically living away from the dwelling in which they were living at the time of the causing event;
- Has remained within the internationally recognised borders of the country where they were displaced (even if they temporarily went abroad for a period of less than 12 months after the causing event).

2. Why is a standardised approach for IDP identification in surveys needed?

The questionnaire review indicates low standardisation across the reviewed surveys which can be explained by the absence of globally agreed-upon standardised IDP identification and a need for tailoring surveys to specific contexts. While recognising that balancing the use of a standardised approach with the need for context-relevant data is challenging, it is commonly recommended to use a conventional set of questions as a starting point, for three main reasons:

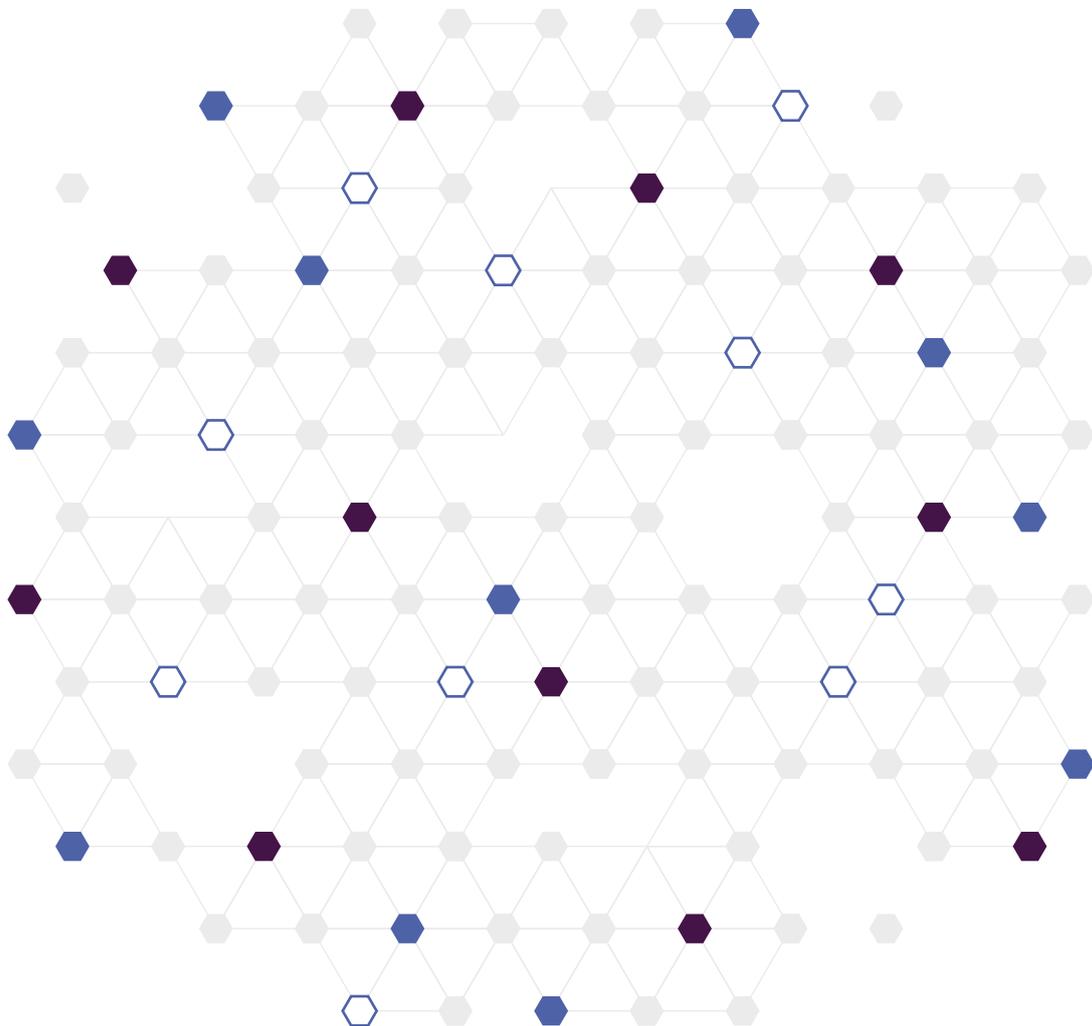
1. **Standardisation enables accurate identification of IDPs, and interoperability and comparison** across surveys, contexts and over time while ensuring consistent data quality;
2. **Standardisation saves time and effort for the users** as it builds upon a consolidation of insights from research and tested approaches into a solid set of questions. These can still be complemented by more targeted questions relevant to the context;
3. **Having a standardised question template can help overcome political sensitivities** that often surround IDP identification and that can lead to different practices between countries.

The recently endorsed statistical framework on internal displacement outlined in the IRIS allows for the development of a standardised approach to identify IDPs in surveys across displacement contexts. The recommended minimum set of questions for censuses⁸ is a good starting point. The EGRIS is currently working on expanding the minimum set into a broader set of questions to be used in surveys and this review can feed into this ongoing discussion.

⁸ International Recommendations on IDP Statistics (Ch. 6, IRIS, 2020)

02

REVIEW OF APPROACHES USED FOR IDP IDENTIFICATION



The 24 surveys reviewed used various approaches to identify IDPs⁹, differing among others in the criteria based on which the identification took place and in who administered the categorisation (the respondent, the interviewer during the survey, or the researcher later on). The review outlines three types of approaches:

- **Self-identification**, which requires the respondent to identify as an IDP;
- **Criteria-based approach**, which uses a set of questions to categorise who is an IDP;
- **Proxy identification**, in which case the researcher identifies an IDP population included in a survey through proxy indicators, in a situation where none of the above approaches are feasible.

The identification of IDPs can take place prior to a survey using pre-existing information, during the survey, or after the survey based on a combination of a number of questions. In most examples reviewed, the identification was done during the survey in the form of a dedicated displacement identification module, relying either on self-identification or criteria-based questions. However, in eight of the reviewed studies, the identification took place prior to the survey: In the **Democratic Republic of Congo 2015** and **Ivory Coast 2014**), the identification was based on an enumeration, meaning that during the survey no further identification was done; in **Burundi 2012**, **Mali 2013**, **Iraq 2016**, **Afghanistan 2018**, and **Sudan – El Fasher 2019**, the identification drew on an enumeration as well as an identification module during the survey to validate the accuracy of the prior identification; and in **Ukraine 2020**), IDPs were pre-identified through local IDP registers for welfare benefits (see next section).

In this chapter, the different approaches identified in the reviewed questionnaires are outlined and their benefits and limitations discussed.

1. Self-identification

Self-identification was used in eight out of the 24 reviewed surveys. However, only three surveys used self-identification as the only approach, while in the other five cases it was used in combination with criteria-based questions. The approach requires the respondents to **provide information by answering a direct question** such as: “Are you displaced?”

Examples of self-identification questions can be found in the surveys from **Ecuador (2014)**, **Central African Republic (2012)** and **Ukraine (2020)**:

- Before coming to Ecuador had you been internally displaced in Colombia?
- How many people in this HH are displaced?¹⁰
- Is the respondent/household member an IDP?¹¹

⁹ One tool does not include any questions related to IDP identification and was thus excluded from the review.

¹⁰ Self-identification was used in a combination with criteria-based questions and pre-survey identification.

¹¹ Ibid.

The main advantage of this approach is that it saves time during the interview as it requires only one question, as opposed to several questions related to the criteria outlined in the IRIS for identifying IDPs. Another possible advantage is that this approach allows respondents to share how they identify themselves.

However, there are several challenges with this type of identification. Firstly, accurate self-identification requires that the respondent's interpretation of the IDP concept aligns with the researcher's intentions. That is, the respondent would need to be familiar with the definition of an Internally Displaced Person. If this is not the case, the interpretation of the IDP concept will most likely vary from one person or place to another, and the information gathered will subsequently not be reliable nor comparable. Secondly, having to interpret presumably abstract concepts (such as "being an IDP" or self-identify as such) adds to the response burden. Thirdly, self-identification can lead to over- or under-reporting, for instance in cases where being identified as an IDP is linked to assistance provision, or where it evokes fear of social stigma, discrimination or persecution.

PROS

- Saves time during the interview;
- Reduces response burden due to only one question being asked.



CONS

- Abstract;
- Risk of gathering non-reliable and non-comparable data;
- Increases response burden due to difficult interpretation of question and concept;
- Exposes to biased reporting.



Overall, while self-identification should not be used as the only source of information for identifying IDPs, the approach can be useful, especially when a survey aims to measure how the respondents identify themselves, as well as in situations where there is less ambiguity in identifying IDPs, e.g. in an IDP camp or when an IDP register is available. This was the case for the government-led IDP registers in Ukraine, Georgia and Colombia.

However, even when such a register exists and is accessible to the researcher, we should keep in mind that they could fall short of correctly identifying IDPs. That might typically happen when registration requires an application; is linked to assistance provision or other benefits; or might be affected by political considerations or social stigma. Hence, to objectively identify IDPs, one should couple self-identification with criteria-based questions for verification.

2. Criteria-based identification

Criteria-based IDP identification was used in 19 out of the 24 reviewed surveys. The criteria were operationalised into a set of specific survey questions that would allow to categorise the respondent as an IDP. The criteria used differed between the contexts as reflected in the examples below:

Philippines (2021):

- Which place do you consider as your place of origin?
- When did the most recent displacement occur for you and your household?
- What is the cause of displacement you and your household experienced recently?
- Where did you live before you were displaced?

Somalia - Mogadishu (2016):

- Did you move from your place of origin?
- Why did you move from your place of origin? (Two main reasons)
- When did you leave your place of origin?

Kosovo (2018):

- Has anyone in your household at any time been forced to leave your home due to conflict?
- When was your household displaced?

Iraq (2016):

- Has your household ever been displaced from your place of origin?
- Where is your place of origin?
- Which governorate in Iraq is your place of origin? From which district? When was your household displaced from your place of origin? (The date of the most recent displacement)
- Was your household displaced from your place of origin after December 2013?

The main advantage of this approach is that it allows for a more objective categorisation of respondents into displaced and non-displaced, by using a series of questions (or an identification module) to collect information on the reasons, place and time of the displacement. Additionally, the approach does not require the respondents to interpret abstract concepts. Hence, although several questions need to be answered, which adds to the length of the interview and introduces more sources of error, the response burden is kept low: a set of concrete questions requires less effort to process and answer than fewer but more complex

questions. **This ensures better quality data and is recommended from a questionnaire methodology perspective.**

Overall, the approach aligns with the IRIS, which suggests a set of standardised, criteria-based questions for IDP identification in censuses (see [Chapter 4](#)). Careful consideration, however, is needed when operationalising the criteria into questions and defining, in a given context, which answer combination should lead to the categorisation of the respondent as an IDP.

PROS

- Concrete and precise;
- Yields objective responses;
- Provides detailed and quality data;
- Reduces respondent burden due to easy-to-process questions.



CONS

- Higher number of questions;
- Higher number of error sources;
- Possibly adds to the length of interview and response burden.



3. Proxy identification

When there is no option for targeted identification of IDPs, the **response to questions about other thematic areas could be used as proxies for IDP identification**. This approach was potentially used in two of the reviewed surveys (**Turkey 2016** and **Ethiopia 2016**), which were focused on refugees but may have used proxy indicators to identify IDPs during the data analysis.

Questions about the following topics could be considered as proxies: current location, time lived in current location, mother tongue, language spoken in the household, type of personal documents owned, having previously lived in an IDP camp, or questions implying IDP status/registration.

Overall, it should be underlined that **alternative sources cannot be considered a satisfactory replacement to targeted approaches**. For IDP identification purposes, figures from such analysis would be affiliated with too much uncertainty and must only be regarded as a “better than nothing” approach.

PROS

- Saves time during the interview;
- Low response burden.



CONS

- Misses precise categorisation.

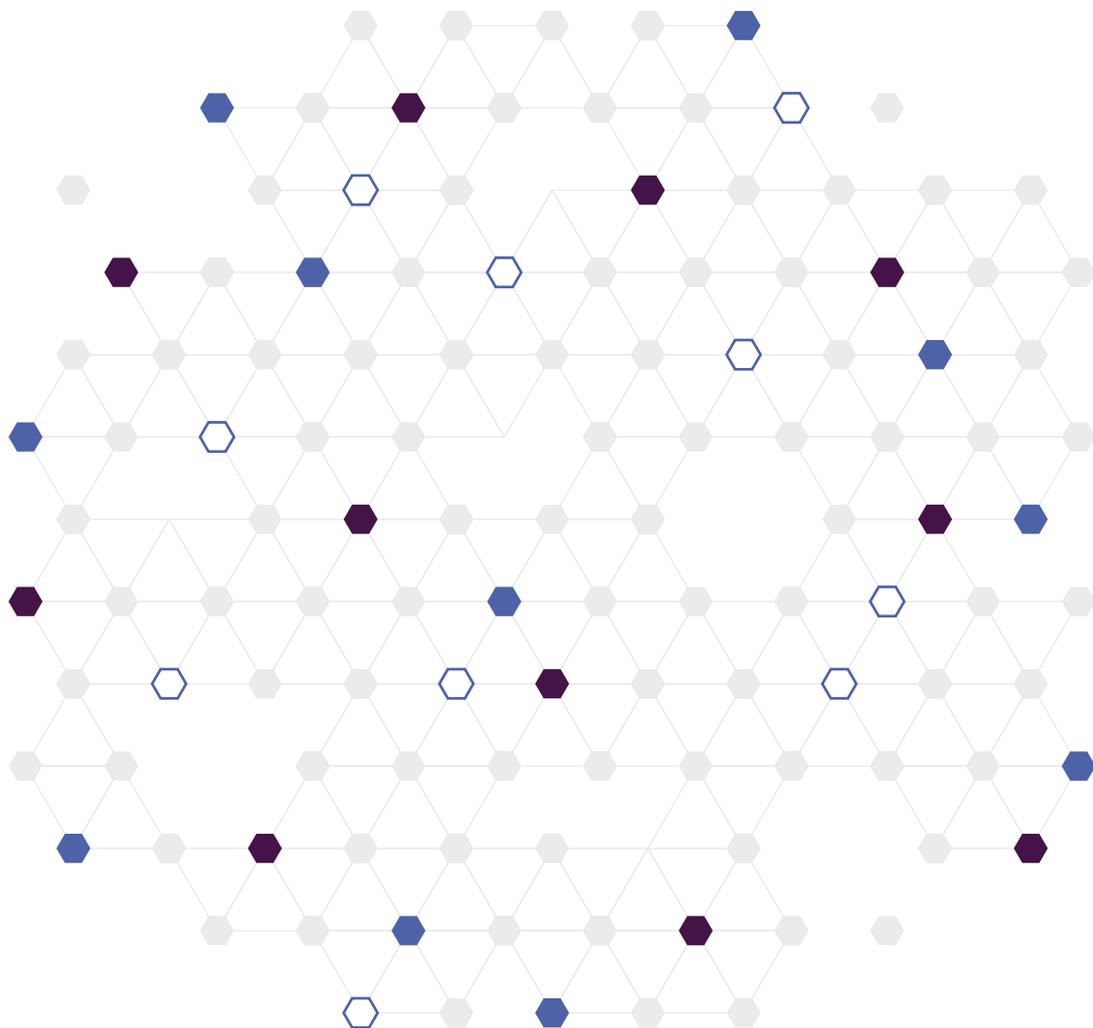


	PROS	CONS
1. Self-identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saves time during the interview; • Reduces respondent burden due to only one question being asked. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstract; • Risk of gathering non-reliable and non-comparable data; • Increases respondent burden due to difficult interpretation of question and concept; • Exposes to biased reporting.
2. Criteria-based identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concrete and precise; • Yields objective responses; • Provides detailed and quality data; • Reduces respondent burden due to easy-to-process questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher number of questions; • Higher number of error sources; • Possibly adds to the length of interview and respondent burden.
3. Proxy identification <i>(Should none of the above options be possible)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saves time during the interview; • Low respondent burden. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misses precise categorisation. 

Table 1. Summary of pros and cons for each approach

03

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS FOR IDP IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONS



Questionnaire development is the process of designing and testing questions in the survey tool that will be used to collect data about a particular phenomenon, in this case the identification of IDPs. Building on the insights from the 24 surveys reviewed, in this section we outline the specificities and key considerations related to the identification of IDPs along four key phases of a questionnaire development process¹², as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

The questionnaire development should be considered as an iterative process. In particular, the operationalisation of the questions must take into account what comes out of the testing and evaluation.

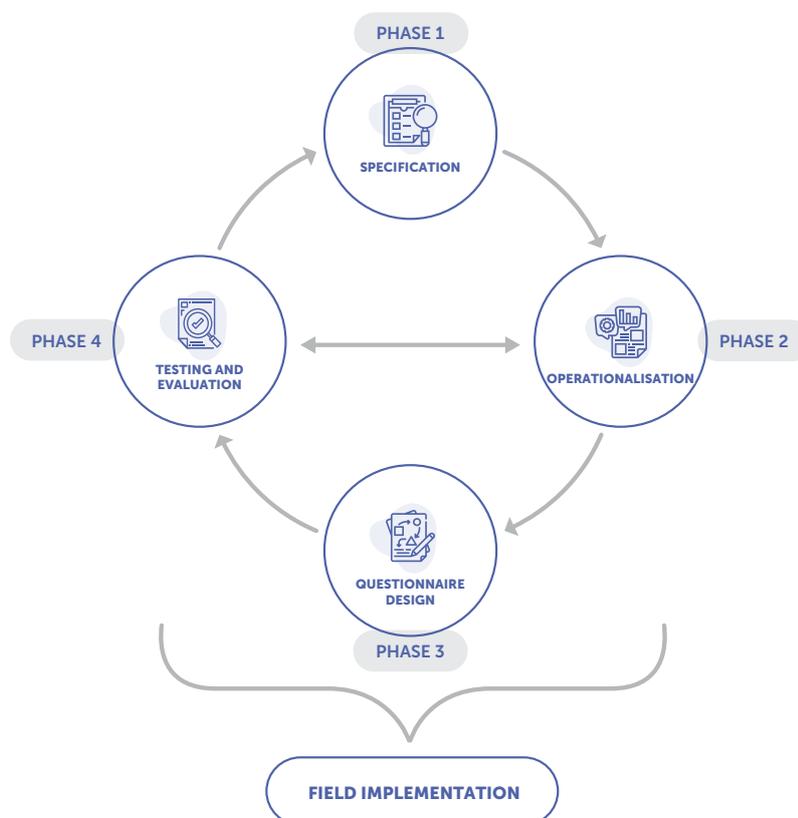


Figure 2. The four key stages of the questionnaire development process

Phase 1. Specification of information needs

The first task in developing IDP identification questions for a survey is to understand and specify the information requirements. **The choice of the approach to identify IDPs in surveys depends on the objectives of the data collection.** Additionally, the respondents' access to information should always be considered. In the following, we present and discuss key questions we recommend to clarify during the specification phase:

¹² See for instance the “questionnaire development and testing” course by Statistics Norway: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7935097>

1. What is the concept of interest?

An important element of the specification phase is to describe and limit the concept of interest¹³. **Though the definition of an IDP might differ between countries, for the purpose of standardisation it is recommended to follow the definition given in the Guiding Principles¹⁴.** This definition emphasises the involuntary move that stems from the nature of the causing event, and staying within country borders.

2. What is the measurement unit?

The choice of the measurement unit affects the precision level of the identification of IDPs. Identification on household level will not be precise as a household may contain both displaced and non-displaced members. Hence, there is a risk of wrongly categorising non-displaced individuals as IDPs as they belong to what would be categorised as a displaced household. **Collecting data on individual level for each household member will provide more accurate identification of the IDPs.** This could be done either by asking the respondent each question on behalf of each member, or in a combined approach with follow-up questions to verify the displacement for all members (see example from Ecuador below).

Below is an example from the survey in **Ecuador (2014)**¹⁵ of the combined approach where questions are initially targeted to an individual in the household, then generalised to all members by asking some additional verification questions for the other members:

- In what places of Colombia did ... live and in what years did ... arrive at said places before coming to Ecuador? (Enter department and year of arrival)
- Did all the people who composed ... home in Colombia arrive with you in Ecuador?

Nevertheless, the review shows that none of the surveys collected data on individual level, i.e. for each person in the household, presumably because this requires many questions, especially in contexts where the average household size is large. In addition to adding to the response burden, asking many questions adds to the length of the questionnaire, which typically increases the resources required for the survey. In addition, a general concern about asking many follow-up questions is that respondents might learn that a particular answer results in more questions and might thus be inclined to adjust their answers to avoid follow-up questions. However, given that the identification questions are typically placed at the beginning of the questionnaire, this risk may be tolerable.

13 This applies to the specification of the overall concept of interest of the survey. However, for the purpose of this document the section focuses on outlining the specificities related to the identification of IDPs.

14 For more information about challenges when implementing the Guiding Principles definition, refer to Improving IDP data to help implement the Guiding Principles <https://www.fmreview.org/GuidingPrinciples20/krynskybaal-kivela-weihmayer> and Obtaining representative data on IDPs: challenges and recommendations <https://www.jips.org/uploads/2018/11/UNHCR-techseries-Obtaining-representative-data-on-IDP-2017.pdf>

15 This is an example from a survey of refugees, however still relevant to showcase the approach.

Another caveat is that respondents may not always have full information about each household member, which could for example be the case when a household consists of two or several families.¹⁶

Phase 2. Operationalisation: transforming data requirements into survey questions

After the concept of interest and measurement unit are defined, they need to be operationalised, i.e. translated into well phrased questions that clearly define the issue being asked, are easily understandable by the respondents, and consequently allow for a proper measurement of the concept.

It is important that the identification questions are phrased in a way that captures all IDPs but avoids categorising “everyone” as an IDP. This could be especially relevant in situations of long-term conflict, where almost everyone is affected in similar ways as IDPs, but not everyone has necessarily been forced to flee, such as in the case of Syria. In such cases, too many could be considered IDPs if the definition is not clearly limited. Specific elements we should consider during this phase are:

1. Which term do we use to describe the place the IDPs were forced to leave?

In order to avoid misunderstanding and inaccurate measurement, special attention must be paid to the terms referring to the place where respondents lived at the time of the displacement. In many of the reviewed surveys, the wording of the question assumes that forced displacement occurred from the place of origin. This is not always accurate since respondents have not necessarily been displaced from their place of birth. Other terms found in the surveys reviewed are *original place of residence* or *home*:

- **Burundi (2012):** Why did you leave your original place of residence?
- **Kosovo (2018):** Has anyone in your household at any time been forced to leave your home due to conflict?

An alternative option is to use the other term from the Guiding Principles definition, namely **habitual place of residence**¹⁷. For statistical purposes, the IRIS defines this as the usual place of residence at the time of the initial displacement (i.e. their usual place of residence pre-displacement)¹⁸. However, given that this definition refers to the smallest administrative

16 As per the Glossary of the System of National Accounts 1993 and the UN classifications registry, "a household is a small group of persons who share the same living accommodation, who pool some, or all, of their income and wealth and who consume certain types of goods and services collectively, mainly housing and food." <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/glossresults.asp?gID=243>

17 <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>

18 IRIS, Chapter 3, box 3.3

division, such as a village or town, it will not be precise enough to capture displacement situations where people remained close to their original dwellings or did not cross an administrative border¹⁹. Therefore, another alternative is to avoid specifying the place the IDPs were displaced from, e.g. by asking a question such as the one recommended for censuses in the IRIS: “Has (NAME) ever been forced or obliged to flee?”

2. To what extent do the surveys address the involuntary nature of the move?

In the questionnaire review we identified two ways to capture if the move was involuntary or forced, similar to the first IRIS question “Has (NAME) ever been forced or obliged to flee?”. However, few surveys asked respondents directly if they had to flee at any point.

Examples from the exercises in **Sudan (2019)** and **Greece (2019)**²⁰:

- Were you forced to leave your place of origin in the past?
- Were you forced to change location within your country of nationality before you came to Europe due to violence/conflict/war/persecution?

Most surveys asked instead for the reason for leaving the habitual place of residence²¹. The provided reasons were then analysed to check if they corresponded to a forced displacement causing event, in which case the person was identified as forcibly displaced. This approach requires that the list of response options is exhaustive, including both reasons for forced displacement as well as for other types of migration.

Below are examples from surveys from **Sudan (2019)**, **Somalia-Mogadishu (2016)** and **Burundi (2011)** asking about the reason for migration:

- What was the main reason for you to leave the place you were staying before coming to this place?
- Why did you move from your place of origin? (Provide two main reasons)
- Why did you leave your original place of residence?

3. Which reasons for migration/displacement are listed to identify IDPs?

An important consideration is which reasons for displacement we list in the answering options of a survey. That is, whether we include all displacement causing events as outlined in the Guiding Principles or only those relevant to the context; and whether we include

¹⁹ IRIS, para 62

²⁰ Even though the survey focuses on refugees, this question attempts to capture displacement within the country of origin prior to becoming a refugee.

²¹ Usual place of residence at the time of the displacement, see footnote 17

other reasons for migration such as economic reasons, e.g. lack of job opportunities, family reasons, education reasons in order to distinguish forced displacement from other types of migration.

We should also take into consideration that **displacement might be triggered by one direct event, but initiated by another underlying cause**. For example, in the case of slow onset disasters such as droughts, respondents might indicate that they moved because of loss of livelihood (trigger cause), e.g. losing their crops, hence being classified as economic migrants. However, the loss of their livelihood is caused by the drought (underlying cause). As described in the IRIS,²² they would consequently be regarded as forcibly displaced due to slow onset disaster. It is, therefore, important to verify how the different levels of reasons are reflected in the answer options and whether it is possible to capture both underlying and trigger causes for displacement. The different reasons (trigger or underlying) would need to be assessed when designing the survey. For example, qualitative data, such as results from focus group discussions, could help ensure that the provided reasons are tailored to the given context.

Below is an example from the survey from **Honduras (2018)** capturing the underlying cause of generalised violence with a follow-up open question on the specific trigger cause.

Underlying causes: What were the reasons for leaving those places?

1. Work reasons (seeking opportunities, better access to workplaces, etc.);
2. Better living conditions (lower costs, more space, own housing, etc.);
3. Family reasons (marriage, etc.);
4. Educational reasons;
5. Health reasons;
6. Violence or lack of security for their family, neighbours or colleagues (threats, extortion, crime, etc.);
7. Natural disasters;
8. Other.

Follow-up question to capture trigger cause: Could you tell me about the specific circumstances that led (name) to change their place of residence in that occasion?

Phase 3. Questionnaire design

An effective questionnaire is more than a list of questions. The order, the format, the visual design and the flow of the questionnaire may all affect the quality of the measurement.

The most important aspect to consider during this phase is where to place the identification questions in the questionnaire. In most of the reviewed surveys, they are placed at the beginning, followed by questions about migration history. We consider this to be good practice. Provided that the questions establish accurate identification, they serve as a filter

to ensure that respondents are only asked relevant questions and not questions meant for other target groups. This is essential both for keeping the response burden low and for ensuring the flow of the questionnaire. Additionally, as IDP Identification and migration history are closely linked, it is recommended to keep these sections together.

One consideration to keep in mind when placing the identification questions at the beginning of the questionnaire is the respondent's possible inclination towards justifying their responses to these questions in other sections, which could result in biased reporting. This might especially be a risk when the respondents are asked to categorise themselves as either displaced or non-displaced through self-identification questions. However, the advantage of having filtering questions at the beginning of the survey outweighs this risk.

Phase 4. Testing and evaluation

A key to developing well performing questions and reduce measurement errors is to involve real respondents or representatives from the target group in the development work. **To gather accurate information, the researcher's need for data must be balanced with the type of information respondents are able and willing to provide.** That is, the way IDP identification questions are asked should align with the respondents' interpretation and their response process.

1. Suggested topics for testing

It would be of particular interest to investigate the respondents' interpretation of the IDP concept and to what extent it matches the researcher's. This can be assessed by examining **internal consistency** by comparing the data from self-identification and criteria-based questions if both were used in previous survey(s). Another option is to identify terminology and concepts that are familiar to the respondents through **user testing** in order to limit the room for misunderstanding. User testing could also reveal to what extent identifying as an IDP is a sensitive issue, for instance if there is either social stigma or assistance provision linked to the forced displacement that could result in biased reporting.

It is important to acknowledge that **nuances in terminology might get lost when the questions are translated into another language.** During the testing phase we should therefore ensure that important nuances are included in the translation to the relevant local language and tested. Examples of such terms could be *household* or *habitual place of residence*.

2. Methods for testing and evaluation

User testing could be done through **cognitive interviews**²³ with a focus on the interpretation of concepts. This method helps reveal both observable problems with question phrasing and language, as well as hidden problems related to the respondent's interpretation of the

²³ In a cognitive interview, we study the ways in which respondents mentally process and respond to questionnaires. Cognitive testing prior to the survey thus helps ensure the questions are understandable.

questions. For example, even though the respondent provides an answer, the purpose of the question could differ from how the respondent has understood it. To achieve this insight, the respondents should be asked what considerations they made in order to answer the question.

Examples of questions that would be relevant for cognitive testing:

- Is information readily available to report, or does the information need any adjustments to fit the format of the questions?
- Would it be possible to differentiate between trigger and underlying reasons for displacement?
- Is it easy for IDPs to retrieve information relevant to record migration routes?
- How is this information structured, how to ask for a mapping of migration routes that is in accordance with respondents' cognitive information?
- To what extent do their memories include the details asked for?

Cognitive interviews can alternatively be supplemented with **behaviour coding**. This method involves observing respondents as they respond to the survey (in a pilot or cognitive interviews) and their behaviour on the questions of interest are coded in a standardised scheme. Data from behaviour coding can indicate to the surveyor and the researchers which questions are problematic and should be investigated in more detail.

Typical behaviours to code would be if the respondents ask the interviewer to repeat the question; if they leave a question unanswered; if they respond “do not know”; or if they change the response to a previous question.

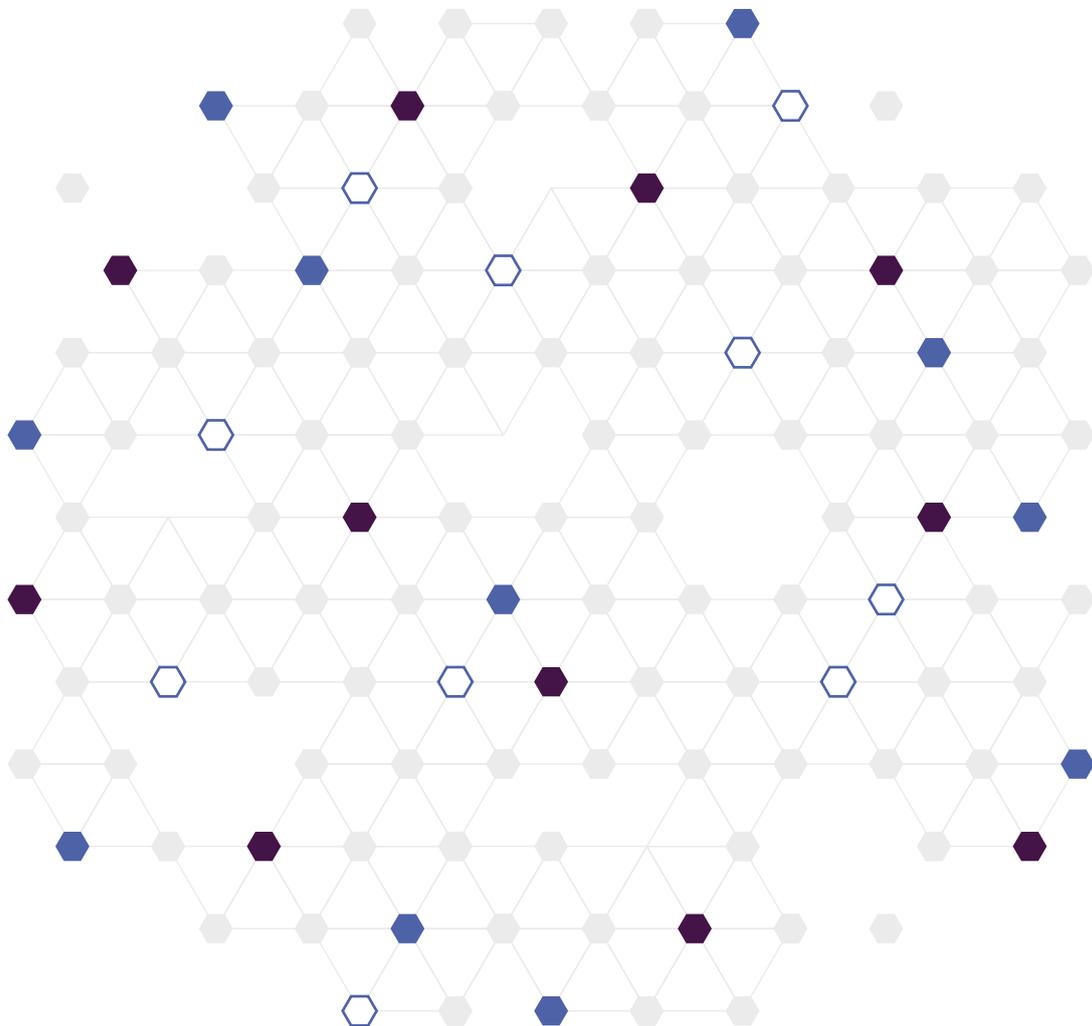
Another option for user testing is **focus groups** where the aim is to stimulate debate and capture common experiences or different views amongst respondents. Such discussions could also provide insight into the topics pertinent for examination from the respondent's perspective, as well as the terminology used and their motivation to answer.

Examples of questions that could be included in an interview guide:

- To what extent are respondents motivated to report the data asked for?
- Is the data readily available, or do respondents need to adjust their information to fit the format of the questions?
- Which terms do respondents use in their day-to-day language?
- How do respondents store and structure information?

04

REVIEW OF THE IRIS-SUGGESTED QUESTION SET



The IRIS recommends the below set of questions to identify IDPs in censuses:

- Has (NAME) ever been forced or obliged to flee?
- If yes, when was this?
- If yes, where did you move from? Where did you reside before you were forcibly displaced?
- If yes, where did you move to (within country borders/abroad)?

Has (NAME) ever been forced or obliged to flee?

Using the wording “ever” avoids introducing a limitation to how long ago the displacement might have been. Similarly, the question avoids introducing a geographical limitation, which is in line with the recommendations in the IRIS stating that a person can be displaced on a smaller geographical scale within the administrative unit they live in. However, this open-ended question phrasing, i.e. not including a qualifier on “from where” the respondents were forced or obliged to flee, could possibly create confusion if the respondent interprets the question as incomplete. Nevertheless, as outlined in [Chapter 3](#), adding a term such as “home” or “habitual place of residence” could be equally misinterpreted and would be misaligned with the IRIS statistical framework.

The term “forced or obliged” could be subjective as it does not specify what defines the “forced/obliged” element of the move. We would therefore need to verify the response to this question **through a follow-up question about the reason for the move or the time of the move** (as in the second question) if linked to a specific displacement-causing event.

The term “flee” is mentioned in the Guiding Principle’s definition of an IDP but is not part of the IDP definition in the IRIS. According to the latter, to be categorised as an IDP, it suffices that someone had to change their place of habitual residence because of a forced displacement-causing event, even if they were temporarily absent from that place at the time of the event. **An alternative could therefore be to replace the word “flee” with “move”.**

Another consideration is how we address the respondent – directly by using “you” or by using their name. In an interview setting, addressing the respondent with “you” rather than with their first name typically creates a more natural dialogue. However, if we ask questions for each member of the household, each member would need to be addressed by their name.

If yes, when was this?

“When” is a broad term that opens up for different levels of detail in the provided responses. We could therefore **provide a specific format for the response options**, reflecting the respondents’ access to cognitive information, namely referring either to **specific events or the year/month**.

An alternative question specification could be considered in the context of specific events

causing large displacement. By referring to the given event, the forced element of the move from the first question can then be verified. An example of such a question specification is found in the Iraq survey: **“Was your household displaced from your place of origin after December 2013?”** This question specification could also provide information about the different levels of reasons for the displacement, namely the trigger or underlying causes, as it can be assumed that the well known main event/overall situation mentioned in the question, such as “the '93 conflict” in Iraq, is the underlying reason that forced someone to flee. The aim should then be to capture if there was another more specific reason that triggered the displacement and what it was.

If yes, where did you move from? / Where did you reside before you were forcibly displaced?

This is also an open-ended question that opens up for different levels of detail in the provided responses. As for the previous question, this could be avoided by **offering answer options that refer to administrative divisions**, such as “municipality/commune” and/or “village/town”.

The alternative question specification (where did you reside before you were forcibly displaced?) introduces a new term, namely “being forcibly displaced”, which could be misinterpreted by respondents. We could avoid this by reusing the wording from the first question, phrasing the question **“where did you reside before you were forced or obliged to flee?”**

If yes, where did you move to (within country borders/ abroad)?

There are two elements in the suggested question:

1. Where did you move to within country borders, and
2. Whether you moved within country borders or abroad.

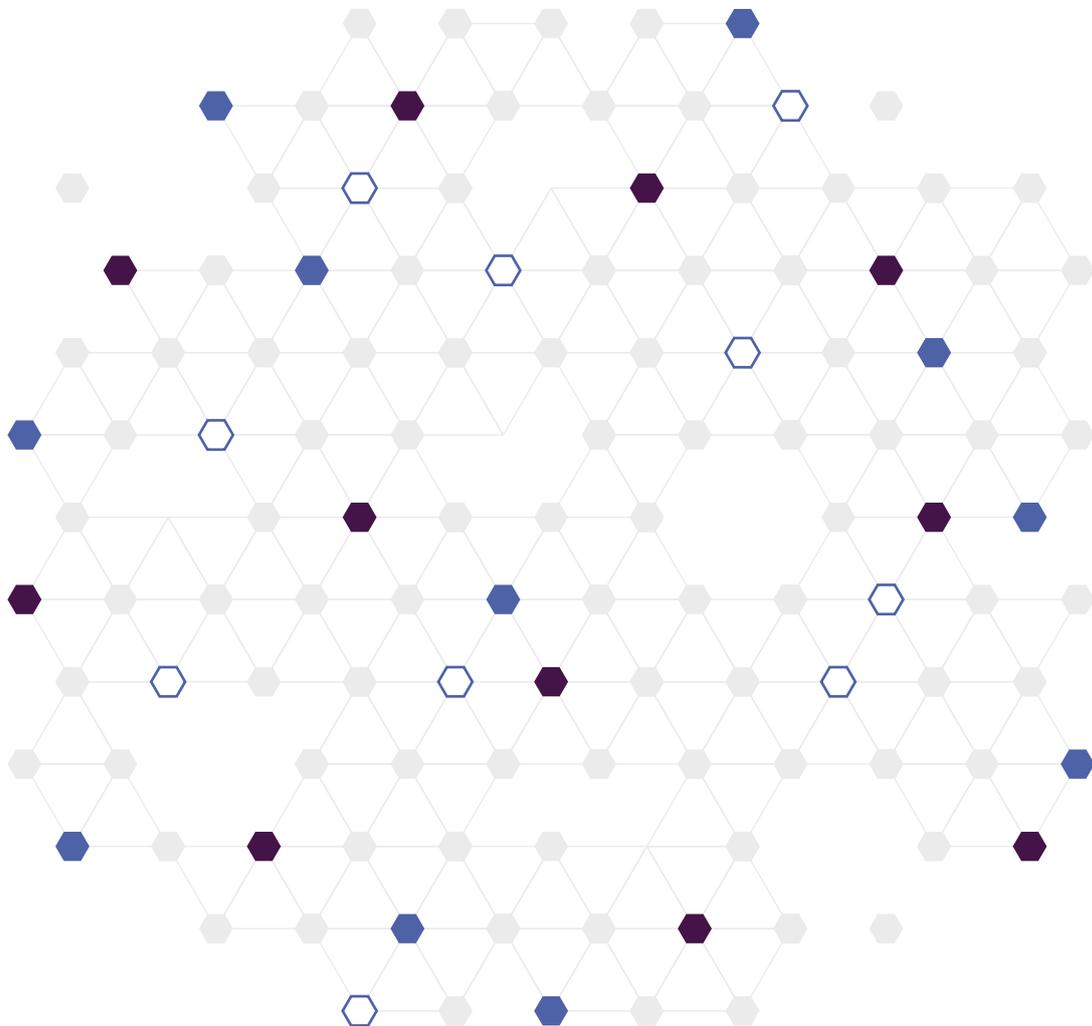
In order to avoid such a double-barrelled question, an alternative question phrasing could be **“Where did you move to when you were forced or obliged to flee?”** with answer options in a specific format, such as “commune/village within the country” and “abroad”.

Additionally, to enable distinguishing IDPs from refugees, a **follow-up question** for those responding “abroad” would be needed to clarify the length of the stay abroad.²⁴

²⁴ Ref. the IDP definition in the IRIS (section 1.1): “has remained within the internationally recognised borders of the country where they were displaced (even if they temporarily went abroad for a period of less than 12 months after the causing event”.

05

RECOMMENDATIONS



1 Criteria-based questions are best fit-for-purpose to accurately identify IDPs

Our review of past profiling tools has shown that there are different approaches that can be used to identify IDPs in surveys, each one with its advantages and disadvantages. To objectively identify and measure the number of IDPs in a country, in line with the IRIS **we highly recommend asking criteria-based questions as part of a dedicated IDP identification module at the beginning of the questionnaire.** By asking a set of precise questions, it is easier for respondents to answer accurately, thus diminishing the risk of biased responses and measurement errors.

For the purpose of standardisation for enhanced data quality, interoperability and comparability between contexts and over time, we recommend that the criteria used to identify IDPs **align with the definition given in the Guiding Principles and with the statistical framework on internal displacement provided by the IRIS.**

If other sources of information are available, a combination of approaches could be applied, for example verifying a pre-survey identification through criteria-based questions. This would be advantageous particularly if the household composition and/or the displacement situation of an individual/household has changed, or if the pre-identified individual/household has moved to another location after the enumeration and is no longer reachable for the actual survey. However, even when pre-survey information is available, a criteria-based question module should always be included.

2 Careful consideration needs to be given to the choice of the measurement unit

As discussed in [Chapter 3](#), and as per the IRIS statistical framework, **a criteria-based identification of each household member is the most accurate way of identifying IDPs.** This approach is thus our recommended one, in particular for the purpose of official statistics and standardisation.

Identifying IDPs on a household level does not allow for understanding whether the provided responses equally apply to all household members. This, however, may not be an issue if the purpose of the survey is to generate aggregate-level analysis to inform broader initiatives, such as policy design and development planning.

Overall, we recommend that the need for details to accurately categorise each member of a household is balanced against both the objectives of the survey as well as the length and response burden of the interview. One way to achieve this is to use **a combined approach, whereby follow-up questions are asked to the respondent** to check whether the provided response applies to all household members. In order to also capture the experiences of the member to whom it does not apply, these members would need to be mapped individually in the roster.

3 The IRIS question set should be applied consistently and complemented

The set of questions recommended in the IRIS should be applied equally and consistently across censuses and surveys as it can be considered a core set for IDP identification. Given that surveys have more space, the core set can be complemented with **additional questions for a more refined IDP identification**. Nevertheless, based on the reflections in the previous section, we suggest **some adjustments to the phrasing** of the question set and answer options recommended for censuses in the IRIS (see the *Suggested extended question set for surveys* below).

Suggested extended question set for surveys:

1. Have you ever been forced or obliged to flee²⁵?
 - a. Does this apply to all members of the household? If not, which members?
2. If yes, when was this?
Answer options: year/month or specific event.
 - a. Does this apply to all members of the household? If not, which members?
3. If yes, where did you move from? / Where did you reside before you were forced or obliged to flee²⁶?
Answer options: higher administrative unit (e.g. municipality/commune); lower administrative unit (e.g. village/town).
 - a. Does this apply to all members of the household? If not, which members?
4. If yes, where did you move to when you were forced or obliged to flee?
Answer options: higher administrative unit (e.g. municipality/commune); lower administrative unit (e.g. village/town) within the country, or abroad.
 - a. If abroad, did you stay more than 12 months?
 - b. Does this apply to all members of the household? If not, which members?
5. If yes, why did you move from where you resided? / What was the reason you had to move?
Answer options: reasons for forced displacement; other reasons for migration as relevant to the context (e.g. economic reasons).
 - a. Does this apply to all members of the household? If not, which members?

For the question “where did you move to when you were forced or obliged to flee?”, we recommend adding a **follow-up question for those responding “abroad”** in order to be consistent with the statistical framework as per the IRIS²⁷ and to ensure a refined IDP identification.

25 To address the point made in section 4, we could alternatively replace the word "flee" with "move".

26 To address the point made in section 4, we could alternatively replace the word "flee" with "move".

27 IRIS, para 117

We also recommend **adding a question about the reason for displacement/migration**, as the Guiding Principles specifically mention the causing event in its IDP definition. This is particularly important as the term “forced or obliged” can be interpreted subjectively. Responses to the first question are therefore difficult to verify without complementary information on the causing event. To avoid inclusion/exclusion errors, we encourage **including other reasons for migration in the response options**, such as economic reasons or family reasons. This will allow for better distinguishing between forced displacement and other types of migration.

We furthermore recommend adding the **follow-up question “Does this apply to all members of the household? If not, which members?”** to all IDP identification questions: The importance of proper identification of IDPs justifies the possible burden of adding follow-up questions in surveys. A combined approach, as presented in the extended suggested question set, will be an improvement to the widespread practice of generalising the response of one individual to all members of a household.

Finally, as discussed in [Chapter 3](#), when it comes to designing the questions and answer options, general concepts and abstract terminology beyond the specification phase should be avoided. We recommend using concrete **respondent-tailored language, which should be informed by the respondents themselves through cognitive interviews or focus groups**. We also recommend ensuring that nuances in terminology are reflected in the translation to the relevant language(s).

Annex I: Overview of the IDP identification approaches used in the 24 profiling surveys reviewed

Survey	Measurement unit	Year of completion	Pre-survey identification	Self-identification	Criteria-based	Proxy-identification	Similar to IRIS-recommended questions for censuses ²⁸
Afghanistan	IND	2012	●	●	●		1, 2, 3
Burundi	HH	2012	●		●		1, 2, 3
Central African Republic	HH	2012		●	●		1, 2, 3
Colombia	HH	2012		●			2, 3
Democratic Republic of Congo	HH	2015	●	●	●		1, 2, 3
Ecuador	HH	2014		●	●		1, 2, 3
Ethiopia*	HH	2016				●	2
Greece	IND	2019			●		1, 2, 3
Honduras	HH	2018			●		1, 2, 3
India	HH	2013			●		1, 2, 3
Iraq	HH	2016	●		●		1, 2, 3
Ivory Coast	HH	2014	●		●		1, 2, 3
Kosovo	HH	2018			●		1, 2, 3
Mali	IND	2013	●		●		1, 2, 3
Philippines	HH	2019			●		1, 2, 3
Serbia	HH	2015		●			2, 3
Serbia	HH	2011		●			2, 3
Somalia (Hargeisa)	HH	2015			●		1, 2, 3
Somalia (Mogadishu)	HH	2016			●		1, 2, 3

²⁸ That is, whether the questions asked in the surveys appear similar to the four questions suggested in the IRIS:

1. Has (NAME) ever been forced or obliged to flee?
2. If yes, when was this?
3. If yes, where did you move from? Where did you reside before you were forcibly displaced?
4. If yes, where did you move to (within country borders/abroad)?

Survey	Measurement unit	Year of completion	Pre-survey identification	Self-identification	Criteria-based	Proxy-identification	Similar to IRIS-recommended questions for censuses ²⁸
Sudan (Darfur)	HH	2021			●		1, 2, 3
Sudan (El Fasher)	HH	2019	●		●		1, 2, 3
Sweden	IND	2015			●		1, 2, 3
Turkey*	HH	2016				●	N/A
Ukraine	IND	2020	●	●	●		2, 3
Total	20 HH 5 IND		8/24	8/24	19/24		

* These surveys targeted refugees and did not include an IDP identification module. If IDPs were to be identified during the analysis, proxy indicators may have been used.