

Initiating Implementation of the International Recommendations on IDP Statistics (IRIS) at Country Level

A Pocket Guide for National Statistical Systems (NSS)



Acknowledgements

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About JIPS

JIPS is an interagency technical service established in 2009 and dedicated to bringing governments, displaced persons, host communities, and national and international actors together to collaborate towards durable solutions for internal displacement. JIPS has a unique combination of collaborative leadership skills, expertise on relevant global standards, and technical know-how on how to jointly design, collect, analyse, and use data on displacement situations. JIPS' technical capacities are critical at both the process level – to broker, facilitate, and sustain long-term collaborative data efforts – and the data level – to support the generation of rigorous, context-tailored, and commonly agreed-upon analysis.

Scope

The United Nations Secretary General's **Action Agenda on Internal Displacement**¹ provides a timely reminder of the importance of addressing the effects of internal displacement. The United Nations **2030 Agenda** with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has as a fundamental principle to Leave No One Behind, ensuring that everyone gets to enjoy their full human rights and take part in development. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are often amongst the most vulnerable people on this planet, having been forced to flee their homes due to a number of natural or man-made causes. Until recently, IDPs have been largely invisible in official statistics, making it harder to devise policies and strategies to prevent displacement, assist those affected and provide them with durable solutions to their displacement. With the development of the **International Recommendations on IDP Statistics**²(IRIS), the international statistical community is aiming to make IDPs fully visible in official statistics.

This pocket guide aims to give National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and government agencies within the national statistical system (NSS) a brief overview of the six initial steps to consider when establishing a system for production of IDP statistics in line with the international recommendations. The following pages outline and discuss each of the steps in more detail (see figure 1).



Figure 1: The six very first steps a National Statistical Office can take to implement the IRIS.

1 <https://www.un.org/en/content/action-agenda-on-internal-displacement/>

2 <https://egrisstats.org/recommendations/international-recommendations-on-idp-statistics-iris/>



Step 1:

GET FAMILIAR WITH GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS

The IRIS outline an internationally agreed framework to improve the production, coordination and dissemination of official statistics on IDPs that are consistent over time and comparable between countries.

A key objective of the IRIS, endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2020, is to improve the production and availability of official statistics on IDPs. The IRIS discuss relevant legal and policy frameworks for IDPs, provide an IDP statistical framework and discuss potential data sources and coordination issues. The EGRIS has also developed a Compilers' Manual on Forced Displacement Statistics³ with detailed technical advice on the production of IDP statistics.

This pocket guide is especially relevant in countries where internal displacement is a topic in the national agenda or where causes of internal displacement have increased over time due to compounding risks. This could lead to a sizeable magnitude of IDP population in a country, a protracted situation of displacement or increasing frequency of displacement events due to conflict, natural or man-made disaster and even climate change.

TIP 1: Stay tuned at <https://egrisstats.org/> for up-to-date resources from the EGRIS, such as the Compilers Manual, the E-learning course: Official Statistics for Refugees and IDPs and relevant methodological guidance.

³ <https://egrisstats.org/activities/compilers-manual/>



Step 2

IDENTIFY A FORUM TO DISCUSS IDP STATISTICS

Several government agencies may collect information on IDPs that could be used for official statistics, while others may be key users of IDP statistics. Ministries or government entities in charge of providing services to IDPs often coordinate or collect data on IDPs, but other government agencies may also hold data relevant to building official statistics on IDPs. Where they exist, IDP-specific registers may be useful as well.

In addition to these administrative data sources on IDPs, population censuses and sample-based household surveys are common sources of demographic, social and economic information on a country's population, but often do not include information or ask questions about displaced populations (including IDPs).

In order to decide data needs and plan for future data collections, coordination between all relevant government actors is important. Often, various Technical Working Groups (TWGs) under the NSS structure exist to conduct such coordination work. The issues of displacement and IDPs may be managed by a dedicated TWG, or be part of a larger TWG on migration statistics. An important first step for such a TWG would be to conduct an IDP information landscape mapping (see also step 4).

Another step here is to revise the rules and procedures for exchange and quality assurance of data within the NSS. Normally, an act or other legal provision provides the legal framework for this. This legal framework should be the same for all custodians of data or statistical producers in a country, but the specific agreements when it comes to IDP statistics may need to be specified by the NSS.

TIP 2: IDP statistics, like any other official statistics, should be part of the NSS. Government authorities responsible for responding to IDPs, as key users of IDP statistics, should be part of that structure. Consider whether discussions around IDP statistics may be included in an existing TWG under the NSS or if a new TWG should be formed for that purpose.

TIP 3: Assess whether national legal frameworks clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of different government entities, including the NSO, vis-à-vis IDP data production. If several entities are involved, such an assessment should also investigate the rules governing exchange of data between government entities, especially regarding the NSOs access to data from other agencies.

TIP 4: Review National Development Plans or other plans for objectives or goals related to IDPs, especially if these objectives are expressed as indicators with targets, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). These plans may also be sector-specific, or for instance on solutions to displacement⁴.



See IRIS, chapter 2, on legal and policy frameworks; chapter 7, on coordination; and table 4.1, on recommended SDG indicators for disaggregation by forced displacement.



See Compilers' Manual, use case G, on coordinating and planning for displacement statistics.

⁴ Regional or global commitments related to IDPs that the Government has ratified should also be reviewed, such as the ratified 2009 Kampala Convention commitments in Africa.



Step 3

AN AGREED UPON IDP DEFINITION

In accordance with the **Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement**⁵, the IRIS defines IDPs as 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 remained living in the country's internationally recognised border. This definition should be used as the basis for describing IDPs in statistical reports.

EGRIS has suggested a **standard questionnaire module**⁶ for capturing this definition in household surveys. This module can either be added as a separate module or be integrated in a larger module that also identifies refugees.

TIP 5: If there is a definition of IDP for humanitarian response, review this against the IRIS and lay out a path towards alignment with the IDP definition in IRIS. Check also the IDP definition in national laws and policies addressing displacement. In the absence of a national definition, consider using the definition from IRIS contextualising it to the reality of displacement in the country.



See IRIS, chapter 2, on IDP definitions; and chapter 3, on categories of persons.



See EGRIS Methodological paper 1, for standardised IDP identification questions.

5 <https://www.jips.org/jips-publication/guiding-principles-internal-displacement-2004/>.

6 <https://egrisstats.org/resource/methodological-paper-towards-a-standardized-approach-to-identify-idps-refugees-and-related-populations-in-household-surveys/>.



Step 4

ESTABLISH AN IDP STATISTICAL FRAMEWORK

The IRIS generally describe three types of official statistics on IDPs that an NSS should produce. These three types are stocks, flows, and progress towards solutions. IRIS defines the **stock** of persons with displacement-related needs and vulnerabilities as the total number of IDPs in a specified location, at a defined moment in time. When people acquire the status of IDP, it is described as an **inflow**, and when they lose this status it is labelled an **outflow**.

It may be challenging to establish the end of displacement, i.e. when a person no longer has displacement-related vulnerabilities and thus leaves the IDP stock, just by measuring the geographical location of the internally displaced population. To this end, the IRIS recommends the use of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) **Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs**⁷. By the time this pocket guide was published, there was not an established standard approach to measuring **progress towards solutions**. The IRIS describes two alternative approaches: one dichotomous composite indicator, where households have either overcome key displacement-related vulnerabilities or not, and one approach measuring the share of IDPs who have overcome each individual criterion. EGRISS has published a methodological paper with reflections towards a harmonised statistical **measure for exits from the IDP stock**⁸, and is currently working on the progress measure.

TIP 6: Conduct a mapping exercise of all potential data sources, producers and users of IDP stock, flows and durable solutions statistics within the country, both within and outside the NSS. To conduct the mapping, a stakeholder analysis around IDP data should be included.

TIP 7: Review if the Government is already implementing recovery or durable solutions programs. They normally have indicators to measure progress as part of M&E frameworks; these can be the starting point to discuss the IDP statistical framework.

7 <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/iasc-framework-durable-solutions-internally-displaced-persons/>

8 <https://egrisstats.org/resource/methodological-paper-on-a-harmonized-statistical-measure-for-exits-from-the-stock-of-internally-displaced-persons/>

TIP 8: Visit the Durable Solutions Indicator Library⁹ of the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions to select indicators most relevant to a given context, to measure progress towards solutions.



See *IRIS*, chapter 4, on displacement-related vulnerabilities; and chapter 5, on stock and flows.



See *EGRIS Methodological Paper 2*, on harmonised statistical measure for exits from the stock.



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⁹ <https://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/resources/>



Step 5

IDENTIFY KEY DATA SOURCES FOR IDP OFFICIAL STATISTICS

As for most socio-economic indicators, there are several data sources that can provide information on IDPs. While each source provides opportunities for IDP statistics, there are also several challenges linked to each source. An important first step is to identify data sources that will provide relevant information to the IDP statistical framework (step 4). For some countries where robust administrative data on IDPs is lacking, it may be most cost-efficient to add relevant questions to already planned data collection exercises, such as regular household surveys and the population and housing census. This analysis, which includes quality and interoperability assessments and refinement of questionnaires, should be conducted within the NSS.

Population and housing censuses:

For countries with a sizable estimated IDP population, it may be worthwhile including some key questions in the census questionnaire, as this may be a unique opportunity to estimate the total number of IDPs. Identifying IDPs in the census can also be useful for updating sampling frames for household surveys.

TIP 9: Explore the possibility of including questions to identify IDPs in the next census.



See *IRIS*, chapter 6, on data sources.



See *Compilers' Manual*, use case A, on inclusion in censuses.

Sample household surveys:

The inclusion of displacement-related questions in a household survey can be useful in several ways. If questions that allow for identification of IDPs are included in a survey, statistics on stocks (how many IDPs there are in a country at a given time) and possibly flows may be produced. Depending on the topic of the survey, durable solutions indicators may also be produced.

How well a sample survey can capture IDPs depends on how many they are in relation to the general population and their level of clustering, among other things. If only a small proportion of the general population is internally displaced, it will be challenging, without special measures, to capture them in a regular household survey; people living in camps are also sometimes excluded from general sampling frames often used in regular surveys. In that case, there are two other options to consider: The first is to draw an additional sample of IDPs for inclusion in a specific household survey, which requires that a sampling frame for IDPs exists or can be prepared. This, in turn, will enable comparison with the general population. The second option is to conduct a special survey for IDPs; this, again, requires a sampling frame for IDPs, and is generally conducted when most IDPs are co-located, often in camps or in a geographically confined area. Such a survey may provide a wealth of information on IDPs, but comparison with the general population is more difficult. Either way, including standard IDP identification questions is a good way to start.

TIP 10: Based on the IDP statistical framework, develop a uniform set of durable solutions indicators for inclusion in relevant surveys. Identify what regular surveys are best suited to provide the data¹⁰. Review also upcoming surveys from agencies responding to displacement for methodology and quality assurance.

TIP 11: Use the standard IDP identification questions proposed by EGRISS to identify IDPs in your surveys.



See Compilers' Manual, use case C, on inclusion in sample surveys.



See EGRISS Methodological paper 1, for standardised IDP identification questions.

¹⁰ Examples include the Household Budget Surveys, Labour Force Surveys, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and Demographic and Health Surveys.

Administrative data:

This is potentially an important source of data on IDPs, but not all countries will have such data to rely upon. Some countries may not have government agencies that systematically collect, store and update information on IDPs within their jurisdiction, and some may maintain information management systems but rarely disaggregate by displacement status. There are essentially two main administrative sources of information on IDPs: For countries that maintain a population register with location (or civil registration system), it is possible to keep track of displacement, but it requires that reasons for change of habitual residence are established. A well-functioning population register is potentially an excellent data source for producing stock and flow data on IDPs – if regularly updated.

Other countries with persistent challenges of displacement may keep an IDP register or administrative record, which, if updating routines are well-functioning, can be an important data source for both stock and flows of IDPs, yet a complex and a costly undertaking. Depending on the type of register and what information it contains it may also provide some information on progress and durable solutions. A separate IDP register has the potential to describe the situation of the IDPs but may not allow for comparison with the general population. It should also be noted that in some situations, IDPs may hesitate to provide information for registration.

TIP 12: Establish if there are any administrative data sources in the country that can produce statistics on IDPs. To identify administrative records to measure progress towards solutions, identify the ministry or government agency head of the correspondent sector against the 8 criteria of durable solutions according to the IASC framework.¹¹



See *Compilers' Manual, use case D, on government administrative data.*

¹¹ [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/iasc-framework-durable-solutions-internally-displaced-persons, operationalised by the Interagency Durable Solutions Indicator Library and Analysis Guide, https://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/indicators-2/.](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/iasc-framework-durable-solutions-internally-displaced-persons, operationalised by the Interagency Durable Solutions Indicator Library and Analysis Guide, https://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/indicators-2/)

Operational data:

In some instances, there may not be any government collection of administrative data on IDPs and few regular surveys to rely upon, but humanitarian or development organisations, whether UN or NGOs, may regularly collect various types of information on IDPs and their situation. Such information may take various forms. Some may conduct ad-hoc surveys; others may collect and store data at individual or household level as part of operational procedures such as targeting of assistance. Humanitarian actors may also set up various forms of surveillance systems to inform their operations. Each potential source of IDP statistics should be assessed according to standard quality assurance measures. For censuses, surveys, and administrative data sources used for official statistics, these procedures may already be in place. However, for operational data, it is pertinent that a thorough data quality assurance process is conducted before producing official statistics on IDPs. Such quality assurance can be based on the United Nations Statistical Division's National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF)¹². Sound procedures for data sharing with the data owners will also have to be established.

TIP 13: Any new data source, especially data sources emanating from outside the NSS, should be quality assured, for instance through a NQAF review, before being used for official statistics.



See Compilers' Manual, use case E, on operational data sources.

12 <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/dataquality/un-nqaf-manual/>



Step 6

ASK FOR SUPPORT, BUILD CAPACITY AND GET HANDS-ON WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IRIS

Once the conversation around official statistics on internal displacement has been initiated within the NSS, there is no one-size-fits-all strategy to take it forward. IRIS implementation can get started by planning for the inclusion of an IDP sample frame for the nearest upcoming standard survey run by the NSO. An overarching discussion to include a plan for IDP statistics in the **National Strategy for the Development of Statistics** will be more systemic and will include assessments in regards to technology, human resources and capacity development. In some contexts, the conversation may take longer, however bringing all relevant stakeholders together to agree on definitions, key criteria and data needs is key. Remember that EGRISS is a platform of more than 55 NSOs and over 35 regional and international organisations with vast expertise and hands-on knowledge.

The **Compilers' Manual on Forced Displacement Statistics** is also a great next go-to-place to guide NSOs and the broader NSS along the process.

TIP 14: Reach out, seek out peer-to-peer exchange, and ask for technical support from EGRISS' members, including JIPS, where needed: egrisstats@unhcr.org

Conclusion

Establishing a system for the production of IDP statistics in a country is a long-term commitment. In countries where internal displacement is protracted or recurrent, there might be coordination mechanisms, legal frameworks and ongoing data collection exercises around the issue. These factors could be a starting point to mainstream IDPs into the NSS. The implementation of the IRIS may differ from country to country, not only because of the sensitive nature of the issue, but also due to the institutional capacity available to respond to the challenges of forced displacement. Assess the potential of the current structure of the NSS to develop IDP statistics, leverage with a whole-of-government approach and plan for capacity development.

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