



Responsible Disaggregation of Data on Refugee and Other Forcibly Displaced Children

UNICEF-UNHCR Guidance Note

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AGD	age, gender and diversity
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DPIA	Data Protection Impact Assessment
EGRIS	Expert Group on Refugee, Internally Displaced Persons and Statelessness Statistics
EU	European Union
FDP	forcibly displaced persons
IASC	Inter-agency Standing Committee
IAEG-SDGs	Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	internally displaced person
INEE	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRIS	International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics
IRRS	International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISP	information sharing protocol
JIPS	Joint Internal Displacement Profiling Service
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PRIMES	Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem
RD4C	Responsible Data for Children
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSC	United Nations Statistical Commission
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
WHO	World Health Organization



GLOSSARY OF DEFINED TERMS

Asylum-seekers is a “general term for any person who is seeking international protection. In some countries, it is used as a legal term referring to a person who has applied for refugee status or a complementary international protection status and has not yet received a final decision on their claim. It can also refer to a person who has not yet submitted an application but may intend to do so, or may be in need of international protection. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee is initially an asylum-seeker. However, an asylum-seeker may not be sent back to their country of origin until their asylum claim has been examined in a fair procedure, and is entitled to certain minimum standards of treatment pending determination of their status.”¹

Categories refer to the different characteristics under a certain disaggregation dimension (such as male/female/other designation/prefer not to say under the sex dimension). As defined in the United Nations Glossary, “[...] categories are usually identified by codes (alphabetical or numerical) which provide both a unique identifier for each category and denote their place within the hierarchy.”²

Child as defined in Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)³ is “[...] every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” The term includes adolescents aged 10 to 17 years and is preferable to the term *minor*.

Dimension refers to the characteristics by which data are disaggregated (such as sex). In the context of this guidance note, the term ‘dimension’ relates to the term ‘classification’ as defined in the United Nations Glossary: “Is a set of discrete, exhaustive and mutually exclusive observations which can be assigned to one or more variables to be measured in the collation and/or presentation of data. [...] The structure of a classification can be either hierarchical or flat. Hierarchical classifications range from the broadest level (e.g., division) to the detailed level (e.g., class). Flat classifications (e.g., sex classification) are not hierarchical. The characteristics of a good classification are [that] the categories are exhaustive and mutually exclusive (i.e., each member of a population can only be allocated to one category without duplication or omission); the classification is comparable to other related (national or international) standard classifications. [...]”⁴, among other characteristics.

1 See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Glossary, available at <www.unhcr.org/glossary>.

2 Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2021; United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), 1999.

3 CRC, 1989.

4 UNSD, 1999.



Disaggregation is the “[...] breakdown of observations, usually within a common branch of a hierarchy, to a more detailed level to that at which detailed observations are taken. With standard hierarchical classifications, statistics for related categories can be grouped or collated (aggregated) to provide a broader picture, or categories can be split (disaggregated) when finer details are required and made possible by the codes given to the primary observations.”⁵

Host community is a “community that hosts large populations of refugees or internally displaced persons, whether in camps, integrated into households, or independently.”⁶

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are “those 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 generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.”⁷ See Section 4.1 and annex for a more complete definition of IDPs and IDP-related populations under a statistical framework.

Refugees are those “who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”⁸ Notably, in statistical contexts, the word refugee is sometimes used to designate individuals or groups who have been formally recognized by States or UNHCR as entitled to refugee status following an asylum or other status-determination procedure. This is a limited non-legal meaning. See Section 4.1 and annex for a more complete definition of refugee and refugee-related populations under a statistical framework.

5 Ibid.

6 See UNHCR Glossary, available at <www.unhcr.org/glossary>.

7 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2004.

8 See the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. See also UNHCR Glossary, available at <www.unhcr.org/glossary>.



1

Introduction

UNICEF and UNHCR recognize the importance of data to achieving better outcomes for refugee children and their families. Strengthening data systems, including improving the collection, analysis and use of comparable, reliable, timely, accessible and disaggregated data on the situation of refugee children, is a priority of the Strategic Collaboration Framework between UNICEF and UNHCR.⁹

This joint UNICEF-UNHCR guidance note is the result of both agencies' joint work on Activity 2 of the Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children on data disaggregation. It aims to identify and outline opportunities and recommendations to responsibly improve the identification of quality and disaggregated data on refugee and other forcibly displaced children, within data systems in both agencies and in national data systems. The note brings together international recommendations and guidance on data disaggregation with policies and standards on personal and non-personal data protection and responsible data management, highlighting practical tools that can be used for responsible data disaggregation.¹⁰

This publication offers UNICEF and UNHCR country offices practical resources and tools to jointly identify data disaggregation needs and gaps related to refugee and other forcibly displaced children¹¹ and puts forth responsible options to fill these gaps. By highlighting the importance of data disaggregation for and about refugee children, it also aims to guide both agencies' advocacy efforts with national and local institutions responsible for the collection, storage, analysis and dissemination of data related to the situation of children (i.e., national statistical offices and line ministries), along with options for strengthening data systems for this purpose.

With this in mind, this introductory section further details the rationale and background of this document and introduces the data disaggregation activity as a key data component in different international frameworks. Section 2 presents the most frequent risks and challenges that both agencies and other stakeholders can encounter when attempting to produce disaggregated data at key steps of the data management process, from collection to dissemination. Section 3 introduces the sets of principles, legal agreements and building blocks for responsible data disaggregation on refugee children. Section 4 provides internationally agreed disaggregation standards for a minimum set of dimensions relevant in this context: forced displacement status, age and sex, as well as for further dimensions of disaggregation (e.g., disability status, education level). Section 5 presents strengths and limitations of the different sources for data disaggregation and introduces the methodology of data integration to strengthen data from different sources.

⁹ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNHCR, 2023.

¹⁰ Any existing mandatory requirements within both agencies are not replaced by this document. Each agency's respective policies, notably those regarding data protection, take precedence. This guidance note does not establish any mandatory action.

¹¹ In this publication, 'other forcibly displaced children' include other children in need of international protection, children in refugee-like situations and internally displaced children, as defined in Section 4.1, and excludes Palestine refugee children under UNRWA's mandate.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

To identify and understand who and where refugee and other forcibly displaced children are, as well as what their needs and capacities are, statistics are often necessary. For instance, how many refugee children are arriving every day, week, month? How many are coming unaccompanied? From where, to where? Do refugee children complete school at the same rates as children of the host country? Are out-of-school rates higher for girls than they are for boys? Do children with disabilities face additional barriers to accessing education? Additionally, donors increasingly require humanitarian and development organizations to provide evidence about the measured impact of their programmes on men, women and children, which requires the collection and reporting of disaggregated data. For instance, is the project advancing children's rights? What is the impact of the project on children? What are the outcomes for girls versus boys, of different places of origin, by age, by socio-economic and educational backgrounds?

Disaggregated data are essential to better understand differences between various population

groups. Within the scope of this document, complete, reliable and internationally comparable disaggregated data on refugee and other forcibly displaced children are necessary to have a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of their specific needs and capacities, including in relation to host communities. These data also provide valuable insights for evidence-informed policymaking, strategic planning, programming and advocacy. Thus, collecting, analysing and utilizing data disaggregated by key characteristics is critical when assessing how well programmes are achieving targeted outcomes.

Furthermore, disaggregated data help identify who is being excluded or discriminated against, and why, and help gather evidence to explain the nature of existing inequalities, facilitating a more equitable allocation of assistance and resources, and supporting and monitoring excluded groups' inclusion in host societies. Having disaggregated data of good quality is crucial to addressing existing data gaps and identifying population groups lacking protection, assistance or other types of support.

BOX 1. Example case: School enrolment rates of refugee children

According to the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), children in fragile, conflict-affected countries are **more than twice as likely to be out of school** than children in countries not affected by conflict, while adolescents in **fragile, conflict-affected countries are more than two thirds** more likely to be out of school than their peers in countries not affected by conflict.¹² Similarly, results from a UNICEF poll carried out between September and October 2018 with 3,922 respondents showed that, among children and young people forced to leave their home countries because of war, conflict or violence, **80 per cent said they lost one year or more of education.**¹³

UNHCR's 2022 education report, *All Inclusive:*

The campaign for refugee education, highlights that, when analysing data from more than 40 countries around the world for the academic year 2020/21, gross enrolment rates of refugee children at primary education levels stood at 68 per cent, yet dramatically fell after primary school, standing at 37 and 6 per cent for secondary school and tertiary¹⁴ education, respectively. The report also demonstrated that enrolment rates vary by sex. The sex disaggregation of the data showed that refugee boys do slightly better than girls in terms of school enrolment, with 68 per cent and 36 per cent of boys enrolled in primary and secondary education levels, respectively, compared to 67 per cent and 34 per cent of girls at the same levels.

¹² INEE, 2022.

¹³ UNICEF, 2018.

¹⁴ 33 countries reported data for higher education level.

However, disaggregated data are neither always nor regularly collected or reported. For instance, data on the total number¹⁵ of refugees and IDPs often lack minimum dimensions for disaggregation, such as age or sex. By the end of 2022, the age- and sex-disaggregation was reported for 76 per cent of the total refugee population worldwide, but only for 45 per cent of the total population of IDPs.¹⁶ Consequently, UNHCR uses statistical imputation and modelling approaches to fill data gaps on the population distribution by age and sex for the remaining 24 per cent of refugees, but is not able to do so for the remaining 55 per cent of IDPs, as the level of uncertainty would be too high.

The invisibility of forcibly displaced children can limit their inclusion in policy plans. It can also lead to the development of separate systems to collect data on refugees and fill information gaps, rather than joint efforts and resources for more and better statistics on refugees and other forcibly displaced children.

A main driver of existing data gaps is the lack of identification of refugees and other forcibly displaced children in available data systems, i.e., programmatic or monitoring data systems of humanitarian and development organizations, as well as in national systems such as administrative records, population censuses and household surveys. This is due to a combination of issues, namely: (i) technical challenges related to the maturity and capacity of systems to capture, analyse and use disaggregated data on forcibly displaced children, (ii) lack of political will to recognize and accept these populations and address their needs, (iii) risks inherent to the data life

cycle, such as duplicative data collection, inaccurate analysis, and data misuse, breach or exposure of sensitive information on refugees and other forcibly displaced children, (iv) risks of discouraging persons from seeking access to essential services or of being denied access to them because of their legal status, especially those who are undocumented. Moreover, issues related to the risks of data disaggregation can be exacerbated when multiple disaggregation dimensions interact, such as forced displacement status, age, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation and disability. For example, discrimination and refusal of access to services to refugee children could be amplified when the refugee is identified as transgender or as a person with disabilities.

In addition, there is an overall lack of comparability between disaggregated statistics on different populations produced by countries and across displacement situations within countries. Comparability enables the identification of differences in experiences between different population groups, such as refugee children, internally displaced children and host children, allowing the most benefit for each of these population groups. Statistical methods must be consistent over time and across regions and countries to make them comparable. Comparability across time would allow for questions to be answered such as: Have refugee children's conditions improved or deteriorated in the last five years? Meanwhile, comparability across countries or regions would inform questions such as: Who fares better: refugee children living in or out of camps?



15 Note that the 'total number of refugees' is also commonly referred as 'total stock of refugees' in refugee statistics. By definition, the stocks 'provide information about the total number of refugees in a country at a given time, usually the end of the year'. More information available at <www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/explainers/forcibly-displaced-flow-data.html>.

16 UNHCR's Refugee Data Finder, accessed 13 July 2023, available at <www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=2z1B08>.

1.2 DISAGGREGATION IN DIFFERENT INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

Disaggregating data by key dimensions is the basis for ensuring that the main commitment of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)¹⁷ to leave no one behind is met, since disaggregation enables the identification of populations in need. The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are devoted to the full realization and protection of human rights for all. To contribute to monitoring implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as to help accelerate progress of this ambitious commitment where most needed, disaggregated statistical information is necessary to identify who is being left behind, why and in which ways.

In developing the SDG global indicator framework, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) – the agency in charge of developing the measurement and indicators framework that monitors progress of the 2030 Agenda – states:

Sustainable Development Goal indicators should be disaggregated, where relevant, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location, or other characteristics, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics¹⁸.

Improving the quality and availability of disaggregated data related to the SDG indicator framework means:

- i. *“to be able to identify vulnerable groups or populations that are most likely to be left behind, analysing and understanding the factors that keep them in or move them out of that position; and”*
- ii. *“to report on the indicators for these groups to monitor their progress in achieving the development targets and goals.”¹⁹*

Furthermore, data disaggregation is a component of the [Human Rights-Based Approach to Data](#)

(HRBAD),²⁰ an approach aimed at statisticians, data specialists and policymakers to ensure respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Disaggregated data to compare population groups or characteristics are central to the HRBAD and those in authority are obliged to collect and publish them. It is important to note that the HRBAD also recommends the principles of participation and self-identification, advocating for the involvement of groups of interest in all aspects of data collection activities, and emphasizes that individuals should have the option to disclose or withhold information about their personal characteristics. The HRBAD recognizes that data collection should not be used as a means to override legitimate community fears and concerns in the interest of better data.

The [Global Compact on Refugees](#) highlights the importance of timely, reliable and comparable data for evidence-based responses for refugees and other forcibly displaced people (FDPs), requesting enhanced international cooperation to improve data collection that is consistent with national legislation on data protection and international obligations related to privacy:

To support evidence-based responses, States and relevant stakeholders will, as appropriate, promote the development of harmonized or interoperable standards for the collection, analysis, and sharing of age, gender, disability, and diversity disaggregated data on refugees and returnees. Upon the request of concerned States, support will be provided for the inclusion of refugees and host communities, as well as returnees and stateless persons as relevant, within national data and statistical collection processes; and to strengthen national data collection systems on the situation of refugees and host communities, as well as returnees.²¹

17 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

18 Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, p. 24.

19 ADB, 2021.

20 The HRBAD approach describes six components: participation, disaggregation, self-identification, transparency, privacy and accountability. Further information on the principles, recommendations and good practices formulated under these headings can be found at Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2018.

21 Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018.



Responding to the call to support the improvement of statistical information on FDPs and the countries where they reside, the Expert Group on Refugee, Internally Displaced Persons and Statelessness Statistics (EGRISS) developed the [International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics \(IRRS\)](#)²² and the [International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics \(IRIS\)](#)²³. Alongside EGRISS's [Compilers' Manual on Displacement Statistics](#)²⁴, both sets of recommendations provide guidance on how to improve data availability by forced displacement categories as well as by age and sex whenever possible. EGRISS also identified a list of 12 SDG indicators as priority for disaggregation by forced displacement status, recommending that national statistics providers include statistics on these priority indicators in the reporting plans for the 2030 Agenda.²⁵ In 2020, UNHCR and the Joint Internal Displacement Profiling Service (JIPS) used this set of indicators to produce a report, [Data Disaggregation of SDG Indicators by Forced Displacement](#).²⁶ It reviews the availability of published disaggregated indicators and assesses the feasibility of estimating them based on existing data, while also highlighting challenges related to the exploration of data sets and computation of indicators, noting that variables and categories used

for identification of FDPs are not standardized across time and geographies and rarely coincide with IRRS and IRIS.

International frameworks on children's rights also encompass the safe use of disaggregated data for refugee children. [The Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, emphasizes the obligation of States to respect and ensure the rights of each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind. This non-discrimination obligation requires States to actively identify individual children and groups of children who may require special measures in order to ensure the recognition and realization of their rights. Adequate disaggregation of data is essential for detecting discrimination or the possibility of it. However, it is also crucial to have a strong regulatory framework and community of practice to prevent discrimination and inequality resulting from the use of disaggregated data. The Convention on the Rights of the Child entrusts States to give protection and assistance to refugee children, referenced explicitly in Article 22, and to "ensure the collection of robust, comprehensive data that is adequately resourced, and that data are disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographical

22 European Union (EU) and EGRISS, 2018.

23 EU and EGRISS, 2020a.

24 EU and EGRISS, 2020b.

25 The proposed list of priority indicators was included in the background document on Data Disaggregation for SDG Indicators prepared by UNSD for the Fiftieth Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. Background document: Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), 2019.

26 UNHCR and JIPS, 2020.



location, ethnic and national origin and socio-economic background” as per General Comment No. 25.²⁷ UNICEF further emphasizes the need for disaggregated data in its regulatory frameworks for humanitarian action. The UNICEF Core Commitments for Children²⁸ call for disaggregated data to be “collected, analysed and disseminated to understand and address the diverse needs, risks and vulnerabilities of children and their communities” and present “in all assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation activities.” UNICEF’s Strategic Plan 2022–2025²⁹ emphasizes the importance of closely examining progress indicators with a focus on the most significant equity dimensions that need to be measured and monitored. This ensures that progress is tracked at the disaggregated level, with increasing investments in data that are disaggregated by sex and on children with disabilities. Finally, the International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC), a coalition including governments, international organizations, NGOs and civil society organizations, advocates for the collection of data that can be disaggregated by age, sex and migratory status to ensure that migrant and displaced children are not excluded from the efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.³⁰

Despite the established commitments and efforts made to improve these data, the availability of disaggregated statistical information on refugees and other forcibly displaced populations, particularly on forcibly displaced children, is still limited in some cases. This could be due to factors including budgetary and capacity constraints, the small number of observations within dimensions or categories that cannot guarantee a robust disaggregation, risks related to data protection, or the potential for discrimination or persecution against broader groups. Improving the capacity for disaggregating data by improving the design of data collection activities, engaging with communities to strengthen safe disaggregation, and developing, using and promoting better and more standardized tools and resources to overcome these limitations is key to contributing to the realization of these commitments. These measures will also help fill data gaps where possible and benefit national and international statistical systems by contributing to a more systematic production and dissemination of statistics that are consistent and comparable between subnational areas, countries, regions and population groups, and over time.

27 United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2021.

28 UNICEF, 2020.

29 UNICEF, 2022.

30 IDAC, 2022.





2

Common risks and challenges of data disaggregation

Producing disaggregated data to secure refugee children's rights also requires certain sensitivities and considerations at key steps of the data management process, from collection to dissemination of data. This section outlines the most frequent risks and challenges when collecting, analysing, sharing and disseminating disaggregated data about and for refugee children, a group especially in need of personal data protection and advocacy for the responsible use of their data. These issues must be given critical importance due to this population's high vulnerability and the sometimes irreparable damage data can cause to refugee and other forcibly displaced children.

Every successful data activity that enables refugee- and age, gender and diversity- (AGD) sensitive programming, resource mobilization, advocacy and policymaking needs to be designed properly.³¹ Before undertaking data collection, analysis or dissemination of results, it is imperative to appropriately design every data activity to define and prioritize all information needs and usage, including the dimensions and categories for data disaggregation. The design step clearly establishes the purpose and objectives of the data activity, determining the type of data needed and what is not needed. It also determines who is involved during each step of the process, who needs to know what and why, and who is accountable. This step may also define how to ensure participation and fulfilment of child rights, including specifying who needs to know which data are being collected about them, for what purpose, and what their rights are in retrieving their data. A clear and well-defined design helps to ensure data are of high quality for the intended purposes and that data collection, storage, analysis and visualization, among other factors, are in line with principles on data privacy and protection from the onset of the process.

2.1 DATA COLLECTION

The collection of data about and for refugee and other forcibly displaced children must be based on a defined purpose and in accordance with responsible data principles in protection and humanitarian settings. While the collection of disaggregated data is essential to many data activities, this can also come with risks at the individual, family and community level that should be identified and mitigated as far as possible. These risks may apply across these levels, irrespective of whether the data are de-identified during the data collection process. For example, when collecting data on children's forced displacement status, some potential risks and unintended consequences could be:

- **Risk of harm in the form of violence, discrimination or exclusion:** Enumerators, the institution they represent, or children or families providing information during interviews could become targets of violence or discrimination. This may also happen when there is a negative narrative about refugees or the displaced population within the community, or in settings where the host community has high levels of deprivation and there is a sense of 'competition' between the resources and the services available.
- **Risk of losing access to services or essential assistance due to concerns of revealing forced displacement status:** The data collection exercise could be perceived as a threat due to fears that data will be shared with authorities and used against the informant, fears that may already prevent refugee children and their families from seeking services and essential support in the first place. Unless there is a strong common understanding that the collection of information has a clear and safe purpose, questions about their displacement history and current legal status may feel dangerous or 'off limits'. In other cases, the collection of data could be seen as a formalization of their status and, consequently, negatively impact a child's current access to services. For example, if undocumented children are attending local schools under a 'don't ask/don't tell' arrangement, their enrolment or attendance could stop if they are asked to provide formal documents for continuation.

- **Risk of informants becoming hostile and uncooperative:** This may happen if a refugee or forcibly displaced child, or member of his or her family, assume that humanitarian assistance will follow their participation in the collection exercise. This situation may occur when the purpose of the collection exercise is not clearly explained and expectations are not addressed before the activity begins.
- **Risk of harm due to touching upon sensitive topics that might relive trauma:** This is particularly relevant in the case of children who suffered traumatic experiences in the past, such as being witnesses to conflict or being subject to persecution, or who are still exposed to difficult or dangerous situations. Some questions may be triggers of traumatic experiences or may re-traumatize the informant. This may occur when the assistance to refugee and other forcibly displaced children is inadequate, follow-up support is limited or absent, or the protection mechanisms in place are inadequate. This may also happen when enumerators and other staff working on the collection are not properly trained to carry out interviews with sensitive questions.

There are also risks related to the inclusion of other types of sensitive questions, including those pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity, racial identification or gender-based violence. Forcibly displaced children from diverse backgrounds and experiences could be under potential harm of violence, discrimination or exclusion in their own or host community, which could discourage them from participating in the collection exercise. This could be exacerbated in activities that have not taken specific steps to identify and address potential risks associated with inadequate training, cultural norms and interviewer bias (real or perceived). For instance, in data collection exercises where there is a low proportion of women as trainers, supervisors, enumerators, data coders or data editors, there may be gender biases that create an environment that fails to reflect gender-based realities, which can result in low confidence among girls and women respondents.³²

31 See <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/AGD%20Tip%20Sheet_2022.pdf>.

32 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2013.



The design and implementation of the collection of disaggregated data should uphold the ‘do no harm’ humanitarian commitment and should be conducted in a way that puts the ‘best interest of the child’³³ at the centre. This should be based on a thorough understanding of their context and the information that may be sensitive for them and their families and the capacity and data protection capabilities of the agencies/partners involved. Proper assessment of the benefits and risks of carrying out the collection exercise should be conducted, especially when underage respondents are involved (see next section for tools and resources). Appropriate ways to prevent and mitigate risks can include testing the data collection instrument in pilot studies, which will allow for a proper assessment of the clarity and cultural appropriateness of the questions, and

ensuring translation into understandable language(s). This should also include adequate training for data collectors, an assessment of context-specific risks associated with the type of data to be collected, and the implementation of appropriate mitigation strategies, along with an independent ethical review prior to commencing the exercise where required by organizational standards/regulations.³⁴

One of the key challenges of disaggregation is the importance of engagement with the affected community to understand the potential risks, challenges and sensitivities that may be involved in the proposed data collection (as required under the HRBAD) and to adapt and plan around these, while aiming to have standardized and comparable data collection instruments.

33 CRC 3(1): “In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”

34 UNICEF requires that evidence-generation activities – including the collection of data from children and their families – conform to the 2021 [UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis](#).

Assent and consent to participate

Assent³⁵ should be sought from children in addition to parents/guardians wherever appropriate. Children do not typically have full agency to decide on their participation in programmes or services that collect and generate data about themselves. In addition, families may not be aware of potential outcomes and risks of participating in the data collection exercise and may force children to participate.³⁶ Therefore, in the context of data subjects who are children, it is essential to respect the views of the child and consider their evolving capacities as an enabler for their gradual acquisition of competencies, understanding and agency over their data.

Consent to participate³⁷ should include a clear narrative – this could be in the form of a simplified and tailored consent/assent form using child-friendly language that describes how the data will be used, protected and destroyed, including any potential data sharing and re-use. Sufficient information should be provided about the purposes of the collection exercise, using appropriate and non-technical language.

Alongside the general concerns that may be faced in obtaining meaningful consent from children and their parents, as well as potential language and communication barriers, specific consideration must also be given both to the real and perceived agency of individuals and respondents to choose whether to participate in a data collection, and whether this will affect the determination of their status, access

to services or other types of support. Inherent power imbalances most often make it impossible to rely on consent as a legitimate basis for processing of personal data of refugees and other displaced populations, especially children.

Data collection and processing of personal data must comply with the data protection principle of legal/legitimate and fair processing. This principle requires that data processing be based on an identified legal/legitimate basis that is set out by the applicable data protection framework and with due consideration to the specified purposes of its processing.

Consent to participate, even when collected with due precautions, may not meet the stricter requirements for informed consent elaborated in the data protection and privacy law applicable in such situations. In the face of significant power imbalances, the ethics concept of justice also requires that the burden of decision-making about the potential risks and implications of participating should not be simply abdicated to potential data subjects through consent, and that the collecting/managing organization bears a higher level of responsibility to determine the appropriateness of the proposed collection activity. While other data protection frameworks may provide other legitimate bases, data collection should not take place where risks cannot be adequately managed (do no harm), benefits do not substantially outweigh potential for harm (both to individuals and groups), or when an appropriate ethics review (if required by the organization) has not been undertaken.



35 See UNHCR, 2018a. “‘Assent’ is the expressed willingness and views of a child to participate in assistance or protection activities and services in situations where he/she cannot legally provide formal consent to the processing of personal data due to age, level of maturity and/or other factors.”

36 See [Responsible Data for Children; General Data Protection Regulation; UNICEF-IRC, Ethical Research Involving Children, 2013.](#)

37 See UNHCR, 2018a. “‘Consent’ means any freely given and informed indication of an agreement by the data subject to the processing of his/her personal data, which may be given either by a written or oral statement or by a clear affirmative action.”

Further resources

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Principles of [Protection Information Management](#) (PIM, 2017): Puts forth practical standards and guidance on how to undertake data collection activities in line with protection information management (PIM) principles.
- 

[Guidance on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR](#) (UNHCR, 2018): Assists UNHCR personnel on the application and interpretation of the policy on the [Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern \(DPP\)](#), particularly Section 3.2 on consent and Section 3.7 on seeking consent/assent from children.
- 

[Child Privacy in the Age of Web 2.0 and 3.0: Challenges and opportunities for policy](#) (Viola de Azevedo Cunha, M., 2017, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti): Examines the risks of child privacy from recent digital technologies and the approaches of governments to tackle this topic. Includes recommendations on how to address the protection of children’s online privacy.
- 

[Artificial intelligence and privacy, and children’s privacy](#) (HRC, 2021): Report of the Special Rapporteur that considers the right to privacy, outlining guidance and recommendations to address the challenges of artificial intelligence and privacy, including children’s privacy, particularly privacy’s role in supporting autonomy and positive participation in society.
- 

[Ethical Considerations When Using Social Media for Evidence Generation](#) (Berman, G., et al., 2018, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti): Provides an overview of the critical ethical considerations when undertaking evidence generation using social media platforms and using third-party data collected and analysed by social media services. Supplemented by checklists that may be used to support reflections on the ethical use of social media platforms and social media data.
- 

[UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis](#) (UNICEF, 2021): Sets minimum standards for UNICEF evaluations to ensure ethical oversight and accountability.
- 

[UNICEF Policy on Personal Data Protection](#) (UNICEF, 2020): Regulates the handling of individuals’ personal information by UNICEF and establishes a set of guidelines for ensuring the proper protection of personal data at every stage of processing.
- 

[Data Privacy, Ethics and Protection: Guidance note on big data for achievement of the 2030 Agenda](#) (UNDG, 2017): Provides a framework of principles and a risk management tool to protect human rights when using big data sources to achieve the SDGs.
- 

[International Data Alliance for Children on the Move \(IDAC\)](#): Global coalition that consists of various sectors – governments (e.g., national statistical offices, line ministries), international and regional organizations, NGOs, think tanks, academics, civil society organizations and youth. Regularly organizes events and releases guidance and other publications to enhance ethical data and statistics on migrant and forcibly displaced children and promotes evidence-based policymaking that safeguards these children.

2.2 DATA ANALYSIS



As with data collection, data analysis can also create or aggravate risks when disaggregating data on refugee and other forcibly displaced children. Biased or poorly designed processes can generate misleading or incorrect findings about refugee children and directly impact their lives in negative ways. Faulty data analysis can create harmful narratives or misrepresent the population through inaccurate estimates of the dimensions, location and characteristics that may further disadvantage children in need of protection or assistance. This inaccuracy can result in the diversion of funds away from the locations and/or groups that need them most. Incorrect interpretation of the data can also affect the security of children. If the limitations and uncertainties of data are not presented clearly and understood properly, even accurate data have the potential to contribute to harmful or false narratives or decisions.

Ensuring the validity and having high analysis standards of collected data are crucial to ensuring the data fulfil the purpose for which they were collected. The analysis and further dissemination of data should be accompanied by measures of accuracy attached to direct estimates whenever possible, as publicly

known accuracy measures help build public trust in data and their use, guaranteeing a better and comprehensive interpretation of statistics.

As in data collection, the analysis of data can also put individuals at risk depending on the level of aggregation of the data. Due regard should be paid to the level of disaggregation and how it could expose refugee children to harm, the potential for reidentification (including when combined with other data sources) or how data analyses could be interpreted or misinterpreted to their detriment. For instance, incorrect interpretation of the reasons for displacement can affect children's legal status in the country and their rights as forcibly displaced persons. Analysing disaggregated data by identifying age, sex and diversity groups is crucial to ensure timely and accurate analyses and to avoid misinterpretation of results. Developing a plan for this purpose is important. Additionally, proper protocols and documentation should be established and maintained to achieve these goals. When possible, initial results should be presented and discussed with members of the community, so their interpretations and comments can be integrated into the final analysis.


Further resources

- 


[ACAPS Analytical Thinking Package](#) (ACAPS, 2016): Offers materials and tools on how to improve analytical practices and skills.
- 

[Rapid Gender Analysis Toolkit](#) (Save the Children, 2013): Provides quick guidance to help collect information to perform a rapid gender analysis report in emergency settings. Provides information about the different needs, capacities and coping strategies for boys and girls in a crisis situation.
- 

UNICEF [Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis](#) (UNICEF, 2021): Establishes internal procedures for UNICEF staff for any data analysis involving human subjects or analysing sensitive secondary data.
- 

[Data 2X](#): A civil society organization and gender data alliance that works with partners to improve the production and use of gender data through strategic partnerships, research, advocacy and communications. Provides resources on how to improve the quality and use of gender data.
- 

[Sex and Age Matter: Improving humanitarian response in emergencies](#) (Feinstein International Center and Tufts University, 2011): Provides information on the collection and use of age- and sex-disaggregated data and gender and generational analyses. Intended to inform humanitarian actors' assessment processes when responding to natural disasters and situations of armed conflict.
- 

[Acquiring and Analyzing Data in Support of Evidence-Based Decisions: A guide for humanitarian work](#) (ICRC, 2020): Supports field staff who need to collect and analyse data in connection with assessments and monitoring and evaluation.
- 

[Research Ethics and New Forms of Data for Social and Economic Research](#) (OECD, 2016): Provides a framework and set of recommendations for the ethical governance of research using data in social and economic research.
- 

[Addressing Causation in Humanitarian Evaluation: A discussion on designs, approaches and examples](#) (ALNAP, 2015): Offers designs, approaches and examples in the context of humanitarian evaluation exercises.
- 

[Contribution Analysis: An approach to exploring cause and effect](#) (Mayne, 2008 – ILAC Brief 16): Provides a practical guide to designing an experiment to provide evidence of cause and effect in the context of humanitarian programmes and projects.

2.3 DATA SHARING

Data sharing is a highly sensitive step of the data management process and can have severe consequences for refugee children if mishandled. UNICEF and UNHCR should follow a coordinated organizational-level data sharing practice to increase and enhance data sharing at country, regional and global levels, as agreed under and in line with the [UNICEF and UNHCR Strategic Collaboration Framework](#), which aims to: “[...] enhance collaboration on data sharing and protection, to strengthen national data systems and the interoperability of the two organizations' data systems (as agreed under the Global Data Sharing Framework)³⁸, and to support the strengthening of national availability and accessibility of non-identifying data on the situation of refugee and returnee children, to inform timely resourcing and programmatic preparation and response.” Sharing information on both agencies' humanitarian operations could be related to names, ages, sex,



disability status, places of residence, countries of origin or ethnicity. Some potential risks and unintended consequences of sharing personal data about refugee children are:

- **Risk of data breaches and exposure of sensitive information:** If collected data reach organizations or institutions that have lax or no data protection/privacy laws or low standards of confidentiality/ ethical conduct, there is a higher probability of data misuse or breaches in confidentiality. In addition, some of the collected data may be politically sensitive and could be manipulated to create negative or damaging narratives about refugee children and their families.
- **Risk of data reaching inexperienced or malicious users that may deliberately or inadvertently endanger children's privacy and security:** Sharing personal data – e.g., names, ages, locations or ethnic groups – may allow children to be identified or reidentified. Children's safety can be directly threatened by the exposure of information such as their places of origin or diversity backgrounds (e.g., sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status). Additionally, this situation also damages the reputation and trust in the organization or institution in charge of the data activity, compromising future data collection activities or humanitarian interventions.
- **Risk of affecting children's mental health by sharing information about their life or the life of their family:** For children, and especially for those who have experienced trauma, sharing personal information about their past and current situation could cause revictimization or bring about unwarranted feelings of shame and guilt in them.
- **Risk of data being used with a different purpose than the one initially collected for – i.e., function creep:** Unless specific consent has been obtained, personal data should not be disclosed or transferred for purposes other than those for which they were originally collected and for which the consent was given.

³⁸ UNICEF and UNHCR are currently working on a global-level data sharing framework that will facilitate a principled, transparent and predictable data flow between the two agencies.

To mitigate these risks, data should be shared responsibly in accordance with the defined purpose of the data activity and the information-sharing protocols established during the activity design (see next section for resources) and should be proportional to need.

Decisions such as what to share, at what level of disaggregation, with which actors (whether between UNICEF and UNHCR, or with other partners and governments), and how and how often, are to be

made and established in a data sharing protocol during the design phase. This should be subject to an appropriate risk review (and ethics approval if required) and communicated clearly to participants at the time of data collection. Personal data should be stored with adequate technical and organizational measures for data security, as defined under applicable frameworks, with due regard to their sensitivity and risks identified. In most cases, data sharing will require legal documentation if not already in place.



Further resources



[Framework for Data Sharing in Practice](#) (PIM and OCHA, 2018): Offers practical guidance for how to undertake or assess the benefits and risks of a data sharing exercise. Includes steps to maximize benefits and mitigate risks.



[Guidance on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR](#) (UNHCR, 2018a): Assists UNHCR personnel in the application and interpretation of the Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern, including that on data sharing and transfers.



[Data Sharing and Children](#) (Information Commissioner's Office, UK, 2022): Shares practical guidance that organizations can use to share personal data in compliance with data protection law. Aims to provide confidence to share data fairly and proportionately.

2.4 DATA DISSEMINATION



In the context of this document, data dissemination refers to the publication of results and products such as academic papers, reports, dashboards or infographics using or referring to disaggregated data about refugee children. Possible risks related to data dissemination, and suggested actions to mitigate them, are:


- Risk of privacy violation of children, and of their families, in cases where the level of disaggregation and results presented are used for their reidentification:** To mitigate this risk, a review and monitoring of what data are published – applying statistical disclosure controls – is required. In case of incidents or breaches, it is necessary to establish appropriate protocols that encompass notification, classification, treatment, closure of the incident and rectification for individuals affected. This can help identify and address or mitigate privacy and security risks. Before publishing data or results, assent or informed consent should be obtained from children or their parents/guardians, especially if the data are sensitive in nature. This helps ensure that everyone understands the potential risks and benefits of the data being published.
- Risk of harm to the reputation and future opportunities of children:** For example, if sensitive information about a child's performance or behaviour is released or can be deduced from published information, this can negatively impact a child's current mental health and performance and prospects. To help mitigate


this risk, data need to be de-identified to protect individual privacy, which includes removal of personally identifiable information or application of techniques such as generalization and suppression.


- Risk of misuse or misinterpretation of data:** Data in reports or infographics can be misused or misinterpreted, leading to false or harmful conclusions, or creating negative narratives about refugee and other forcibly displaced children. For example, data could be used to make false generalizations about a particular group of children or to support discriminatory policies. Even accurate data may contribute to harmful outcomes when presented in certain contexts. When publishing aggregated data, it is important to provide context and transparency about how the data were collected, processed and analysed. The intended use of the data is an important part of any upfront risk assessment or ethical review.


Data to be disseminated in the form of output tables or cross-tabulations, for instance, must be prepared to minimize the risk of re-identification and maintain the confidentiality of personal data, including when the person is no longer of concern to UNICEF or UNHCR. When disseminating data, data should be curated and anonymized irreversibly by applying technical, organizational or legal measures or otherwise binding commitments to render the risks of re-identifying individuals insignificant, based on the data alone or in combination with other data.

Further resources

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[Ethical Reporting Guidelines](#) (UNICEF, 2021): Supports ethical reporting on, and representation of, children and young people, and helps journalists cover children’s issues in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner.
- 

[Guidance on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR](#) (UNHCR, 2018a): Assists UNHCR personnel in the application and interpretation of the Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern, including that on data sharing and transfers.
- 

[Joint Analysis Guide](#) (JIPS, 2021): Provides guidelines on how a joint analysis can be structured and planned typically in an exercise of validation, reporting and dissemination of profiling results.
- 

[Ethical Research Involving Children](#) (Graham, A., et al., 2013. UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. pp. 29–54): Guides and improves research involving children by providing a compendium of evidence-based information and resources. Identifies key ethical considerations arising from research involving children as a starting point to generate discussion among researchers.





3

Principles and tools for responsible data disaggregation

This section introduces key guiding principles and policies to consider when disaggregating data for refugee and other forcibly displaced children, as well as helpful tools to mitigate risks related to the collection, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated data presented in the previous section. It starts by describing international and regional instruments regarding safety about children and refugee data. This is followed by a summary of the most important documents relating to principles and policies on refugees and on children. The third part introduces available practical tools for the identification and mitigation of disaggregation-related risks.

3.1 INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL INSTRUMENTS

Multiple international and regional instruments provide principles that guide each step of the data management process. Institutions at the national or international level dealing with data disaggregation for refugee and other forcibly displaced children must respect children’s right to privacy and adhere to human rights conventions, principles, national legislation and policies for children’s and refugee’s right to privacy and applicable data protection.

The right to privacy, including that of forcibly displaced children, is enshrined in human rights instruments such as in Article 12 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and Article 16 of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), which states, “No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy.” Also relevant are some regional instruments such as [Convention 108](#) (C108; 1981), and its modernization [Convention 108+ for the Protection of Individuals with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data](#) (C108+; 2018) for the Protection of Individuals with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data, which calls for specific attention to the data protection rights of children and other vulnerable individuals, and the [International Standards on the Protection of Personal Data and Privacy, the Madrid Resolution](#), of the International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners (2009).

Frameworks by international organizations on data privacy and protection

Privacy of children can also be found in the [OECD Guidelines on the Protection of Privacy and Transborder Flows of Personal Data](#).

The United Nations and its agencies have adopted several principles and policies regarding data protection. Most relevant to refugee children are the [United Nations Principles on Personal Data Protection and Privacy](#), the [UNHCR General Policy on Personal Data Protection and Privacy](#) and the [UNICEF Policy on Personal Data Protection](#).

Principle 19 of the [OHCHR Principles and Guidelines, supported by practical guidance, on the human rights protection of migrants in vulnerable situations](#) calls for “the collection of disaggregated data on the human rights situation of migrants while protecting personal data and their right to privacy.” Actors involved in data for refugee children, such as States, international organizations and other entities, need to meet the globally recognized data protection principles derived from the above instruments.



3.2 EXISTING FRAMEWORKS FOR RESPONSIBLE DATA DISAGGREGATION

Disaggregated data inevitably raise concerns about personal data privacy and protection and questions about how data collectors use, transfer, store and disseminate individuals' personal data. This means that national statistical offices, or any other government office or humanitarian organization that collects and analyses personal and/or non-personal information, must develop data systems under high ethical standards that can enable compliance with existing policies and standards for responsible data collection, storage, analysis and dissemination. Furthermore, beyond considerations on personal data processing, any data management activity must carefully study possible additional uses of anonymized data, final analysis and messaging, potential narratives and public opinion that may be created, and contexts in which the work is done. In addition, it should assess and mitigate possible impacts on vulnerable groups.

Refugee and other forcibly displaced children need protection from threats and to be given due consideration for vulnerabilities specific to children, to refugees and to other forcibly displaced populations. Thus, all phases of the data management process for refugee and other forcibly displaced children must uphold ethical research principles to protect them as children and as refugees, IDPs or returnees, in line with and across: (i) international human rights law, (ii) child rights in international law and (iii) rights of affected populations in humanitarian settings, including refugees and refugee-related populations' rights.

Data activities that aim to manage personal and non-personal data on refugee and other forcibly displaced children should follow principles and actions for responsible data management established in the Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action by the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC).³⁹ IASC's guidance presents principles and key actions to inform safe, ethical and effective data management for operational responses, in accordance with national and regional data protection laws and organizational data protection policies. Regarding the disaggregation of data, the guidance states: "[...] Where feasible and appropriate, and without compromising these Principles, organizations should strive to collect and analyze data by age, sex and



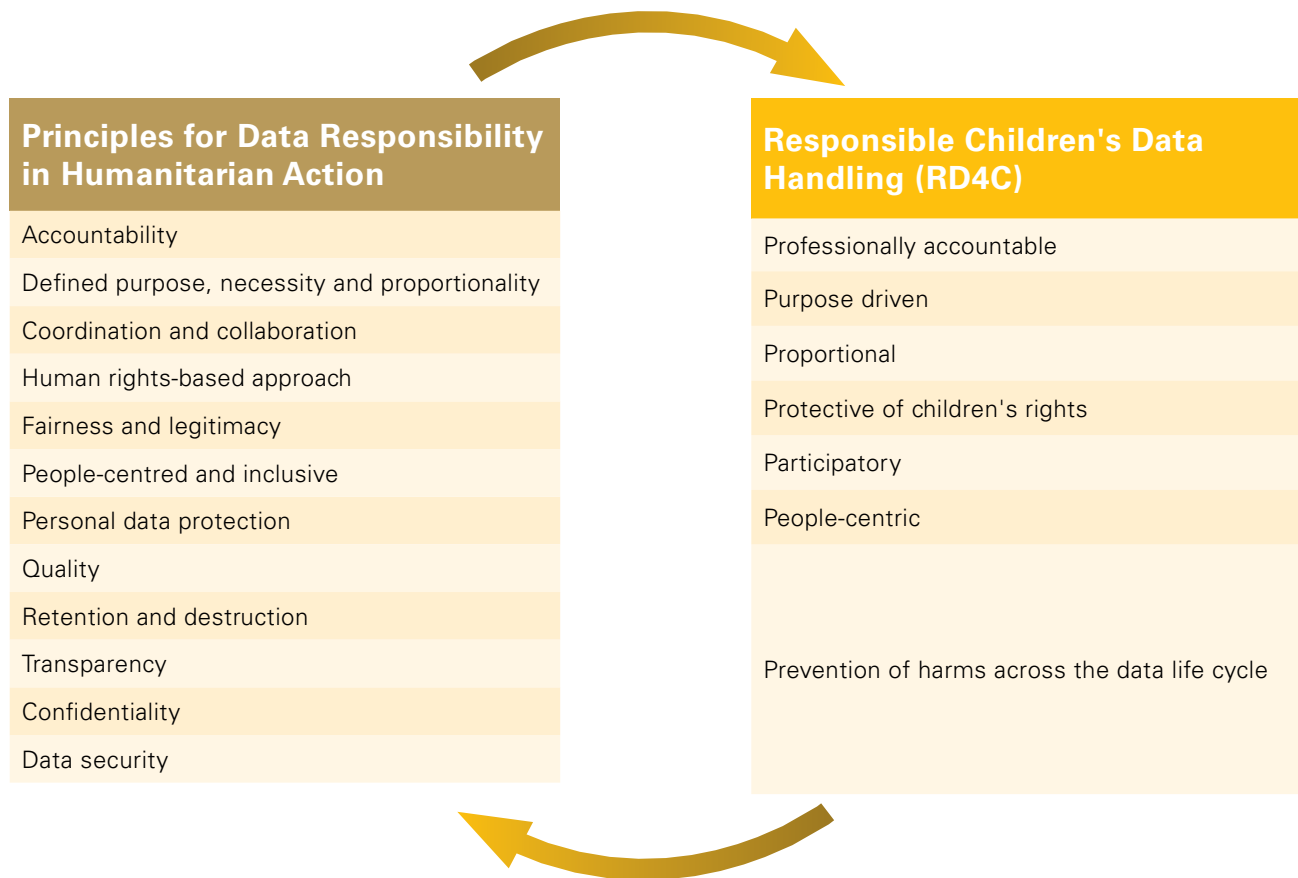
disability disaggregation, as well as by other diversity characteristics as relevant to the defined purpose(s) of an activity."

The IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility complements and is informed by existing guidance on data responsibility, both from development actors and within the broader humanitarian community. This includes the Responsible Data for Children (RD4C) initiative,⁴⁰ a joint effort between UNICEF and the Governance Lab at New York University, which includes a list of seven principles for data management to guide responsible data handling towards saving children and youth's lives, defending their rights across the humanitarian and development sectors, and helping them fulfil their potential from early childhood through adolescence. RD4C's People-Centric principle makes reference to the "[...] consideration of opportunities and risks of data initiatives – prioritizing the consideration of data practices' effects on people over potential efficiency gains or other process-oriented objectives. [...]" Thus, data users should consider how to responsibly segment the population (e.g., age- or sex-disaggregated data) while handling data in a way that prevents harm.

The IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility and the RD4C initiative aim to reinforce humanitarians' overarching commitment to 'do no harm' while maximizing the benefits of data in humanitarian action, in particular data for and about refugee children. The IASC's principles also reaffirm the centrality of affected people, including refugee and other forcibly displaced children, and their rights and well-being in humanitarian action.

³⁹ IASC, 2023.

⁴⁰ See <<https://rd4c.org/>>.

FIGURE 1 Guiding principles for responsible data management for refugees and other FDPs, and for children

The IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility and the RD4C initiative have equivalent common principles, as presented in Figure 1, notably those regarding:

- **Accountability:** includes establishing institutional processes, roles and responsibilities, and ensuring the availability of sufficient competencies and capacities;
- **Purpose, necessity and proportionality:** includes identifying and specifying one or more legitimate purpose; ensuring data management is relevant, necessary and proportionate to specified purpose(s) and does not exceed it;
- **Respect, protection and promotion of human rights:** in this case, ensuring the human rights of refugee and other forcibly displaced children are upheld.

The fairness and legitimacy principle and the people-centred and inclusive principle in the IASC guidance relate to RD4C's participatory and people-centric principle. These principles emphasize the active and meaningful engagement of children, their

families, caregivers and other relevant stakeholders throughout all stages of the data life cycle, whenever feasible, appropriate and relevant. This approach involves building the capacities and working collaboratively with refugee and other forcibly displaced children and their families to understand their needs, capacities, protection risks and priorities. By doing so, their best interests can be prioritized and safeguarded.

The people-centred principle places the needs, interests and expectations of children and their caregivers at the forefront. It is also a guide to deciding if the expected benefits and risks of a data activity are likely to lead to actions that make a positive change in the children's lives.

Lastly, the IASC data responsibility principles of personal data protection, data quality, retention and destruction, transparency, confidentiality and data security relate to RD4C's prevention of harm across the data life cycle principles. These principles are essential to ensure trust and prevent harm to refugee children across the steps in the data management process – notably during collection, storage, cleaning, sharing, analysis and dissemination.

3.3 APPROACH AND TOOLS FOR RESPONSIBLE DISAGGREGATION

Statisticians, data specialists, economists, policymakers or anyone dealing with data on refugee children in different contexts can follow specific actions to adhere to globally recognized principles on data protection and uphold the right to privacy for vulnerable populations. Diverse disaggregation-related risks related to the collection, analysis and dissemination of refugee and other forcibly displaced children's data can be identified and mitigated at any step of the data management process. Figure 2 shows a sequence of actions for responsible data disaggregation on refugee children and other forcibly displaced children consistent with those presented in the IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility,⁴¹ adapted to the context of this guidance note. The proposed actions can be implemented as needed and in any order. The following subsections expand on each action and present available tools to minimize the risks while maximizing benefits.



3.3.1 Data responsibility diagnostic and data impact assessment

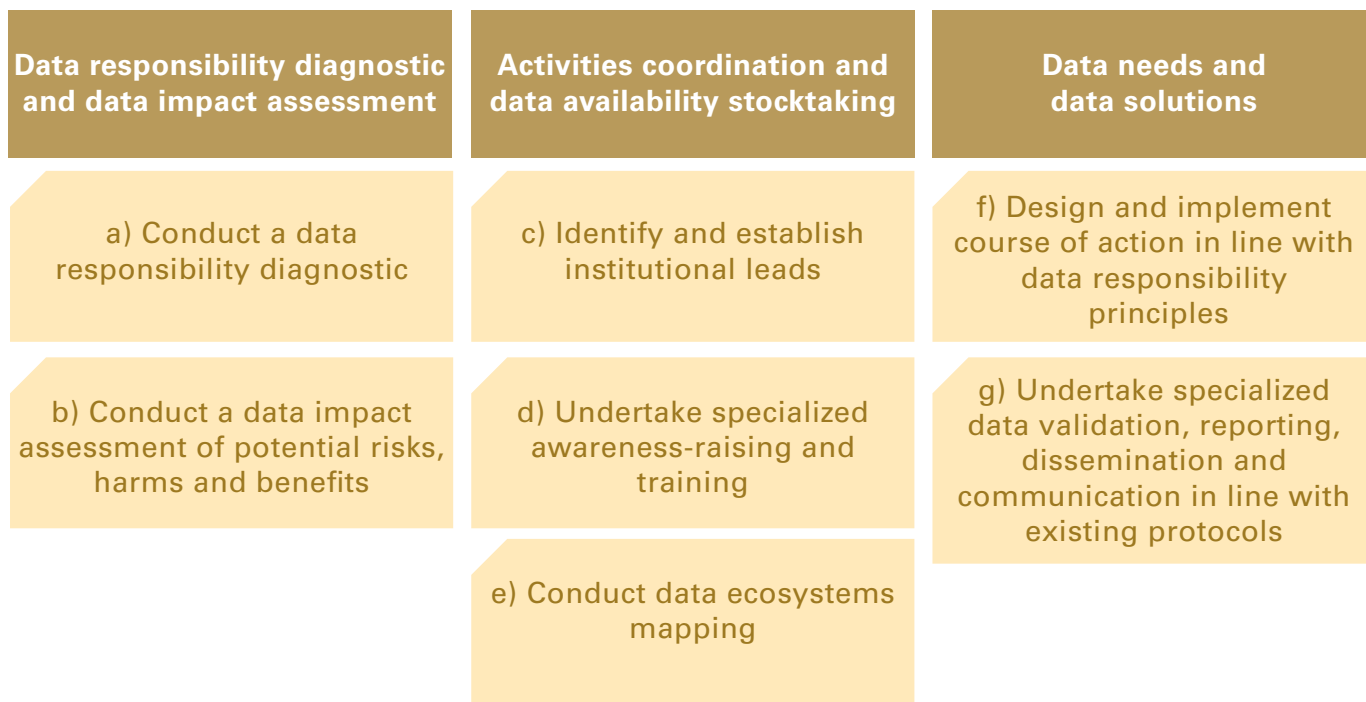
(a) Conduct a data responsibility diagnostic

Managing disaggregated data for vulnerable populations requires careful management of sensitive information in line with national, regional and/or global policies and guidance related to data protection and data management. Identification and review of existing applicable laws, norms, policies and standards related to data disaggregation, including the guiding principles for responsible data management for refugees and other FDPs, and for children, as presented in the previous section, form an integral part of this assessment. This also includes processes, procedures and technical tools for disaggregated data management. If formal documents are non-existent or not implemented, this diagnostic process could involve examining and evaluating best practices.

(b) Conduct a data impact assessment of potential risks, harms and benefits


Being careful when managing data in humanitarian contexts is especially important in contexts where the urgency of humanitarian needs requires fast, sometimes untested, data solutions and the politicization of data can have more extreme consequences for people. Ensuring the ‘do no harm’ principle while maximizing the benefits of data requires collective action that extends across all levels of the humanitarian system. The expected benefits of data disaggregation should outweigh the anticipated risks for given groups and/or subgroups, by location at a specific time. If that is not the case, this should be a flag to identify feasible and appropriate prevention and mitigation strategies, and to redesign the activity until the level of risk is acceptable. If neither are possible, it may be preferable to not proceed with the collection of disaggregated data or their associated dimensions. Conducting a data impact assessment helps determine expected risks, harms and benefits, as well as privacy, data protection and/or human rights impacts of data disaggregation. This should be jointly documented and maintained at the local level with triggers for review.


FIGURE 2 Proposed sequence of actions for a responsible disaggregation of data on refugee and other forcibly displaced children





41 The proposed sequence of actions has also been informed by those in Mosler Vidal, 2021.


Further Resources

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Data Responsibility Diagnostic Tool: Helps identify common opportunities and challenges vis-à-vis data management and informs the prioritization of the recommended actions for data responsibility at different levels (available at [IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action, 2023](#)).
- 

[Needs Assessment Handbook](#) (UNHCR, 2017): Provides detailed practical guidance on how to conduct needs assessments in the field.
- 

[How Can We Do No Harm when Collecting, Storing, Sharing and Analysing Data?](#) (IOM, 2022): Offers practical guidance from the Displacement Tracking Matrix concerning displacement for overall risk assessment across the data life cycle.
- 

[RD4C Opportunity and Risk Diagnostic Tool](#) (GovLab and UNICEF, 2020): Presents a practical methodology for organizations to review a data project or system against the core RD4C principles.
- 

Data protection impact assessment (DPIA): A DPIA is required when the collection and processing or transfer of personal data is likely to be large, repeated or structural. It assesses the impact of the envisaged arrangement (system, project, policy or data sharing) on the protection of personal data and on the rights of the data subjects. A DPIA aims to identify risks in a way that they can be minimized while maximizing benefits. Some examples of DPIA templates include:

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 - [Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) (ICRC and VUB Brussels Privacy Hub, 2020): Provides specific guidance on the interpretation of data protection principles in humanitarian action contexts. Offers a template for DPIA reports in appendix I.
 - 
 - [EU General Data Protection Regulation – DPIA Template](#) (GDPR, 2020): Helps organizations to comply with the requirement of ‘data protection by design’ by providing a structured way of thinking about the risks to data subjects and how to mitigate them.
 - 
 - Data Impact Assessment Template: Serves as a useful reference for organizations that do not have specific policies, requirements and guidelines for how a data impact assessment should be conducted (available at [IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action, 2023](#)).

3.3.2 Activities coordination and data availability stocktaking

(c) Identify and establish institutional leads

The data disaggregation exercise can require high levels of coordination and collaboration between humanitarian partners, national and local authorities, and other stakeholders in data management activities, such as inter-ministerial coordination between national statistical offices and line ministries, or inter-agency cooperation between UNICEF and UNHCR. The disaggregation process should leave room for consultation with all necessary

stakeholders throughout, including identification or establishment of who will take the disaggregation exercise forward or how it may be coordinated with others. The process can be led by a single agency or stakeholder or jointly led by two or more. Alternatively, it could also be led by a multi-stakeholder working group or other coordination mechanism. The definition of clear responsibilities among partners helps ensure accountability and collaboration paths. One approach could be to select disaggregation focal point(s) in each relevant agency or authority to increase support and engagement. This should ideally be built on existing relevant agreements, draft terms of reference, a workplan and a resourcing plan as relevant.

(d) Undertake specialized awareness-raising and training

Building awareness of the importance of disaggregated data among stakeholders who need to be involved is important (e.g., data producers and users), particularly if they are not usually involved in programming, monitoring or reporting activities for refugee and other forcibly displaced children. The idea is that stakeholders can understand the purpose of the selected disaggregated data and key opportunities and challenges related to the data management process in this area. Specialized awareness campaigns, consultations or focus group discussions, communications, events and training workshops can also be helpful.

(e) Conduct data ecosystems mapping

To understand what relevant data have already been collected and to identify data gaps and/or duplicates, a review of existing data available through different systems in a given operational

context should be conducted. This process will typically include a review of data sources, scale, scope and type, as well as methodologies used, available disaggregation dimensions and categories, and additional aspects. The data mapping exercise involves assessing which existing data relate to disaggregated information in a sector and/or for a chosen indicator, in a given location, over a certain period, etc. Creating and maintaining a list of government institutions and organizations that may hold or generate relevant data of interest will prove useful in this regard. This may be focused on the extent of disaggregation by key dimensions (e.g., forcibly displaced status, age, sex) of data collected in a particular sector (e.g., child protection; education; water, sanitation and hygiene - or WASH - services). A questionnaire can be created and circulated to focal points that includes all relevant data sources and information on data availability by indicator of interest, whether and how the data are disaggregated, frequency of collection, data storage information, data sharing policies in place, etc.

Further resources



[Integrated Data Ecosystem Assessment and Strengthening \(IDEAS\) Tool](#) (UNICEF, 2020): Offers an assessment toolkit to map existing data and identify data and knowledge gaps regarding migrant and displaced children. Includes several area-specific modules on themes particularly relevant to migrant and forcibly displaced children, including access to services, detention, child protection and education. Recommends concrete actions such as trainings and technical support to improve the availability of these data and helps countries map current state of data collection activities, national data strategy, data needs, potential data sources and the state of data exchange.



[Administrative Data Maturity Model \(ADaMM\)](#) (UNICEF, 2022): Offers UNICEF country offices, governments, agency partners, NGOs, communities and donors support when assessing administrative data and the national data landscape of children across multiple sectors (e.g., education, health, child protection).



[RD4C Data Ecosystem Mapping Tool](#) (GovLab and UNICEF, 2020): Helps actors seeking to ensure responsible data for children to identify the systems generating data and the breadth of data they generate and have about children. Allows for data gaps and redundancies to be identified and for plans to improve the data ecosystem for children to be designed.



Data Management Registry: Provides a summary list of the key data management activities led by different stakeholders. Supports complementarity and convergence, facilitates collaboration, and enables prioritization and strategic decision-making on responsible data management. Promotes a common understanding of the data ecosystem (available at [IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action, 2023](#)).

3.3.3 Data needs and data solutions

(f) Design and implement course of action in line with data responsibility principles

After gaining an overview of relevant existing data, identifying and diagnosing risks, harms and benefits; and mapping the data ecosystem, a plan of action can be designed to introduce or improve the disaggregation of chosen indicators. This includes assessing data availability against indicator metadata. Disaggregation needs of indicators, including by dimensions such as forced displacement status, age or sex, should be confirmed at this stage and the course of action for disaggregation be determined. Data responsibility considerations are a prerequisite in the design and the entire process to help minimize risks and maximize benefits. This entails accounting for the guiding principles for responsible data management for refugees and other FDPs, and for children, as described in the previous section.

(g) Undertake specialized data validation, reporting, dissemination and communication in line with existing protocols

The ways in which disaggregated data are disseminated and communicated can shape if and how data are used for various purposes. Disaggregated data require specific strategies to reach response actors and policymakers and effectively convey complex messages to the public. They should ideally be accompanied by metadata (with details from the review or mapping exercise) and be disseminated via relevant local, national, regional and/or international platforms. Establishing an information sharing protocol (ISP) as a foundation for a collective approach to responsible data and information exchange is crucial, including a context-specific data and information sensitivity classification. If applicable, a data sharing agreement with the terms and conditions (purposes, roles, responsibilities, safeguards, etc.) that govern the sharing of personal data or sensitive non-personal data should be established.

BOX 2. Improving the data life cycle of mental health and psychosocial services for refugee children in Uganda

In September 2022, the RD4C initiative – a partnership between UNICEF and the Governance Lab at New York University and supported by UNHCR – hosted three workshops in Uganda to promote better management of refugee children’s data related to the provision of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services. RD4C aimed to responsibly harmonize and connect the various MHPSS data sources available to improve access and effectiveness of available services through the lens of responsible data for children.

With the participation of multiple key stakeholders that included government officials, the workshops identified critical steps needed across various phases of the data life cycle. For

instance, during the planning phase, participants pointed out the need for coordination and cohesion in policymaking at national and district levels, and the importance of developing a data catalogue and directory. During the data collection phase, stakeholders recognized the importance of unique identifiers and the need to go beyond individual consent and obtain a social license. During the data processing phase, participants in the workshops identified the importance of having an MHPSS taxonomy and common tools to highlight the value of streamlining case management and system design. Key stakeholders also expressed their desire for a common platform, system and points of contact to share data effectively.

More details at: <https://files.rd4c.org/RD4C_Uganda.pdf>.

Tools/resources



An ISP serves as the foundation for a collective approach to responsible information and data exchange. It should include classifications of sensible data and information specific to the context, common actions for data responsibility and specifics on how a breach to the protocol would be handled (available at [IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action, 2023](#)).



Data Sharing Agreement Builder: Guides users in the development of data sharing agreements. Defines several factors that should determine the contents (available at [IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action, 2023](#)).



[JIPS Essential Toolkit \(JET\)](#) (JIPS, 2020): Provides tools to guide the displacement profiling exercise, which is a collaborative process for understanding a displacement situation. Offers a range of tools available for all phases of the exercise, from [initiating the process](#) to [establishing collaboration](#) to [data validation, reporting and dissemination](#).







4

Disaggregation dimensions for data on refugee and other forcibly displaced children

A number of dimensions and categories are commonly used when disaggregating statistical data. This section presents those which are recommended for the disaggregation of statistics related to refugee and other forcibly displaced children.

Dimensions presented in sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 are those considered to be the set of minimum required data disaggregation dimensions for purposes of analysis and programming, within the context and scope of this document, i.e., forced displacement status, age or sex.⁴² Those in 4.4 are other dimensions for disaggregation necessary to identify the needs and capacities of refugee and other forcibly displaced children.⁴³ Of note is that two or more of the dimensions such as forced displacement status, age or sex may interact to exacerbate the effects of forced displacement. That is, knowing that a child has been forced to flee their home is not enough: gender, disability status, geographic location and other diversity dimensions are needed to characterize the experience of children and the effects of their uprooting in their wellness, their needs and objectives, both as an individual and in comparison to other children with different profiles. For example, a worldwide poll found out that girls and young women on the move⁴⁴ are more likely to look for education regarding communication and entrepreneurship while boys and young men gave higher importance to vocational and ICT skills.⁴⁵ Disaggregated data are key to understanding the intersectionality of multiple dimensions.

42 Age, sex and diversity considerations are also part of Action 1, AGD-inclusive programming, in UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity (UNHCR, 2018b).

43 For some of the dimensions hereby described – e.g., age, sex or geographical location – data collection is already standardized in each organization. Please refer to Activity 3 of the UNICEF-UNHCR Blueprint on refugee children for more information on aligning taxonomies used to classify data and indicators between the two agencies.

44 According to the [International Data Alliance for Children on the Move](#), ‘children on the move’ is a term that describes children who have been directly or indirectly affected by migration or displacement, either across international borders or within the same country. The term includes child migrants; children in need of international protection, such as refugees and asylum-seekers; internally displaced children; children indirectly affected by migration, such as children who stay behind while parents/caregivers migrate; stateless children; and child victims of cross-border trafficking.

45 U-Report, 2022.

4.1 DISAGGREGATION BY FORCED DISPLACEMENT STATUS: REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Endorsed and published by the UNSC, [IRRS](#) consolidates comprehensive aspects of the international legal and policy framework for refugees and asylum-seekers while [IRIS](#) addresses internally displaced persons (IDPs). Both present statistical frameworks for standardization of relevant terminology, concepts, definitions and classifications of the population of interest; recommendations on the collection and measurement of statistics; and descriptions of the main types of national and international data sources that countries and international organizations can use.

Both statistical frameworks introduced in IRRS and IRIS are based on international legal instruments on forced displacement: (i) for refugees and refugee-related populations, on the legal definitions in the [1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#) and the [1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees](#); (ii) for IDPs, the statistical framework builds upon the definition contained in the [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#). According to IRRS,⁴⁶ refugees and refugee-related populations can be characterized by three categories:

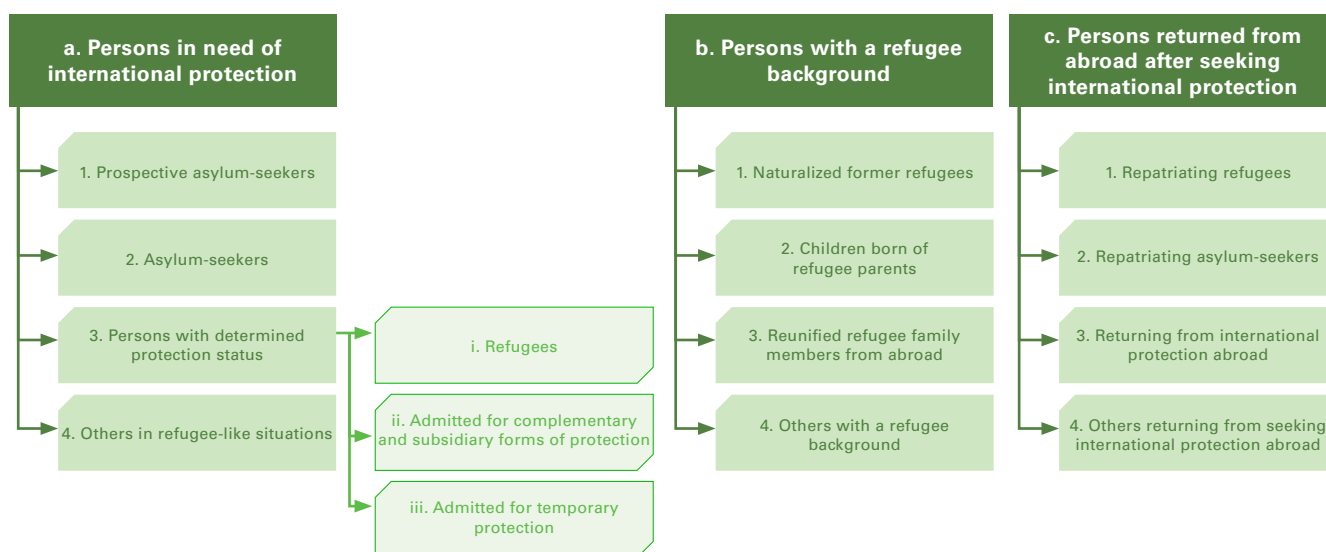
a. Persons in need of international protection: “This category includes individuals in a country other than their own who are seeking or who have received international protection [...].

This category includes children of refugees or asylum-seekers who may have been born in the country of asylum, but who have not themselves acquired the citizenship of their host country and are therefore in need of international protection [...]. This category excludes persons who have a refugee background and any others who no longer need international protection.”

b. Persons with a refugee background: “This category comprises persons who are not currently in need of international protection but who have a refugee background including: persons who have been naturalized and acquired citizen status; those born in the host country of refugee parents or grandparents with the citizenship of the family’s host country [...]. Some, but not all these persons, may be capable of being identified by their own citizenship or that of their parents.”

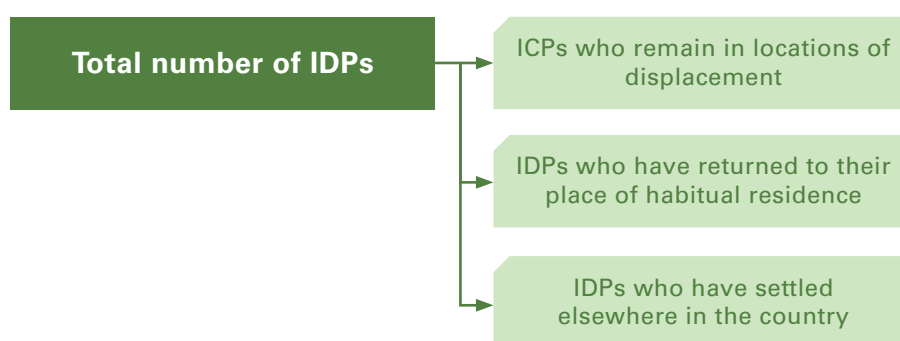
c. Persons returned from abroad after seeking international protection: “These are persons who have returned to their home country after seeking international protection⁴⁷ abroad. [...] In addition, this category includes those who have sought asylum abroad, have failed to gain refugee status, and have returned to their home country.”

FIGURE 3 IRRS – Composition of the population of refugee and refugee-related populations (statistical framework)



⁴⁶ IRRS, pp. 31–33, paras. 90–97.

⁴⁷ Para. 95 in IRRS refers to “[...] after seeking international assistance abroad [...]”. The term “assistance” has been replaced by “protection” for the sake of accuracy and consistency.

FIGURE 4 IRIS – Population categories in the statistical framework for internal displacement

Each of these three categories is further comprised of four groups or subcategories, as shown in Figure 3. Definitions and details on the population included in each of these subgroups are available in IRRS Chapter 3 and expanded upon in the annex of this document.

Similarly, IRIS⁴⁸ defines IDPs or persons who have displacement-related protection needs and vulnerabilities within their country of usual residence as: “A person who was forced or obliged to leave his or her place of habitual residence (e.g., usual residence at the time of a displacement event) and who is found within the internationally recognized borders of the country. All causes of displacement, as outlined in the Guiding Principles should be included and distinguished from each other appropriately. An IDP who went abroad following the displacement for a temporary period of less than 12 months and/or who did not establish a new country

of usual residence remains an IDP.” Details on the definition of an IDP are available in IRIS Chapter 3 and expanded upon in the annex of this document.

The total number of IDPs is divided into three subcategories, as shown in Figure 4. They correspond to the different locations where they may reside at the time of data collection and reflect the contents of the [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#)⁴⁹ and [IASC Framework for Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons](#)⁵⁰.

Recommendations on core questions for identifying and measuring refugees and refugee-related populations using different national and international data sources, as well as variables for collecting and compiling statistics on IDPs and IDP-related populations, can be found in Chapter 4 (on IRRS) and Chapter 5 (on IRIS), respectively.⁵¹

Further information



[International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics \(IRRS\)](#) (EU and EGRISS, 2018): Provides detailed definitions of refugees and refugee-related populations categories and subcategories (paras. 90–97, pp. 31–33).



[International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics \(IRIS\)](#) (EU and EGRISS, 2020a): Provides detailed definitions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) categories (paras. 74–81, pp. 28–32).



[Compilers’ Manual on Displacement Statistics](#) (EU and EGRISS, 2020b): Uses contributions and examples provided by EGRISS to support those using IRRS and IRIS when compiling statistics on displaced persons.

48 IRIS, pp. 28–32, paras. 74–81.

49 OCHA, 2004.

50 IASC, 2010.

51 Refer to Activity 9 of the UNICEF-UNHCR Blueprint on refugee children for more detailed information on core questions for identification and measurement of IDPs in national sample surveys.

4.2 DISAGGREGATION BY AGE

The collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by age, sex and other diversity dimensions is necessary to understand the demographic and socio-economic situation of any population. It enables detailed assessments and analyses for shaping an inclusive response in humanitarian contexts. Age, sex and gender matter in terms of how people experience armed conflict and disasters with respect to access to essential, life-saving services and protection based on a person's age, sex and gender.⁵² For instance, for education indicators, age-disaggregated data are required in order to ascertain enrolment at the right age.⁵³ According to the UNHCR AGD Policy,⁵⁴ one of the core actions that need to be taken to implement the AGD framework is: "to collect all⁵⁵ data disaggregated by age and sex and by other diversity considerations, as contextually appropriate and possible, for purposes of analysis and programming". When applying the AGD policy to children,⁵⁶ data collection and disaggregation should be guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.⁵⁷

The collection of data to support age disaggregation is now well established (if not always implemented) as an accepted analytical dimension across statistical systems and in operational data management. The modality suggested to capture data on age is by single years (completed years). One-year age increment data allow for slicing, grouping and analysing the data in different ways, according to analytic needs. Collecting data by age in months is necessary in certain cases, such as for monitoring immunization programmes for children under 2 years old.

In addition, the date of birth is also used to complement information by single years, to verify it, or even to determine the actual age of the respondent. This information can be collected by direct question(s) or by reference to the birth certificate. It is important to note that, in some cases, birth certificates may not exist – particularly in areas where there may be limited access to health care facilities or registration systems – or the dates of birth on them may not accurately reflect the actual birth event. This is particularly the case for

some refugee and other forcibly displaced children who are at a higher risk of being left out in the birth certification process. Additionally, collecting data on the date of birth is highly sensitive to the way questions are formulated. Individuals may not know their exact birthdate or age or prefer not to present certificates or ID documents to verify exact dates, as this may create additional risks such as services being eliminated or new age-based obligations becoming applicable.⁵⁸ 'Age heaping' is also common as people have the tendency to report their age as ending in 0 or 5.⁵⁹

In cases where it is not possible to collect data by single years, it is suggested to disaggregate data by age classifications or groupings. This is often done with the purpose of protecting individuals' personal data (i.e., the data are aggregated), ensuring statistical data reliability for analysis and dissemination, and enabling data analysis by groups of homogeneous people (as defined by a set of characteristics). Although less detailed than single ages, information by age groups also allows data comparability from different sources and across time, as long as the age brackets for the groups are the same. Survey designers, data compilers and researchers employ groupings that depend on the purpose of data collection and/or analysis, as well as the specific subject area.⁶⁰ For instance, children, adolescents and older people are often of great interest in the development of programmes, given that their needs and protection risks are different to those of other population groups. Using age classifications that facilitate the identification of these groups, and even more detailed subgroups within them, is highly recommended as different age groups face different needs in terms of protection, health care, education and livelihoods.

According to IRRS recommendations, if age groups are not used, it is important to at least distinguish children – persons under the age of 18 – from adults – persons aged 18 years and older. As stated in the UNHCR AGD Policy: "[...] Age influences, and can enhance or diminish, people's capacity to exercise their rights, and must be considered in all protection, assistance, and solution programmes".

52 See Mazurana et al., 2011.

53 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics and UNHCR, 2021.

54 UNHCR, 2018b.

55 Whenever contextually appropriate and possible.

56 UNHCR, 2021.

57 See Section 1.2 for more information.

58 UNICEF, 2019.

59 See <<https://archive.unescwa.org/age-heaping#:~:text=Definition%20English%3A,and%20can%20be%20easily%20measured>>.

60 See for instance Task Force 5 brief available at <www.youthcompact.org/action-5-data> for further details on sectoral considerations.

BOX 3. Example case: Age groups for data disaggregation for young people in humanitarian action

The IASC guidelines, *With Us & For us: Working with and for young people in humanitarian and protracted crises*,⁶¹ provide a framework for working with and for young people throughout the humanitarian programme cycle, including tips, examples and case studies. Additionally, the guidelines aim to be used by humanitarian actors as a reference to design programmes that are context-responsive.

The guidelines suggest collecting data using one-year age increments to support optimal age disaggregation. Where this is not possible, the guidelines suggest the following age groups/brackets as minimum disaggregation at the time of data collection, so as to capture the various experiences faced by **adolescents and youths**: 10–11, 12–14, 15–17, 18–19 and 20–24. This level of disaggregation allows for the use

of recommended age brackets and categories for analysing and reporting results for comparability and streamlining of children (ages 0–17), adolescents (ages 10–19), young adults (18–24 years) and young people (10–24 years), as defined in Section A of the document. The guidelines also support more detailed analysis, which is necessary to reflect developmental stages and to recognize different needs within the broader age categories.

As stated in the guidelines, it is particularly important to differentiate between the different stages of adolescence for programming purposes related to sexual and reproductive health and to education (including alignment with preschool, primary and secondary school ages).

Further information



[Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), 1989. Treaty no. 27531. United Nations Treaty Series, 1577, pp. 3–178.



[UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity](#) (UNHCR, 2018).



[Applying the UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Policy to Children](#) (UNHCR, 2021).



[With Us & For Us: Working with and for young people in humanitarian and protracted crises](#) (IASC, 2020): Serves as the 'go-to' guide for working with and for young people in humanitarian settings and protracted crises.



[Collecting and Reporting of Sex- and Age-disaggregated Data on Adolescents at the Sub-national Level](#) (UNICEF, 2016): Guides countries through the process of collecting and reporting subnational data on adolescents to inform programme planning and implementation efforts.



[Sex and Age Matter: Improving humanitarian response in emergencies](#) (Feinstein International Center and Tufts University, 2011): Provides information on the collection and use of age- and sex-disaggregated data and gender and generational analyses. Intended to inform humanitarian actors' assessment processes when responding to natural disasters and situations of armed conflict.

4.3 DISAGGREGATION BY SEX AND GENDER IDENTITY

As mentioned above, sex, along with age, is one of the minimum required disaggregation dimensions necessary for the compilation of forced displacement statistics to inform research, programming and monitoring. Information by sex is crucial for assessing how women, men, girls and boys are affected differently by forced displacement and how gender inequality interacts with and compounds crisis situations.⁶²

While the terms sex and gender are often used interchangeably, sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics of being male, female or other designations, while gender is a relational concept that refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours and norms ascribed to individuals based on their sex. Sex-disaggregated data are typically collected and reported based on the binary classification of male and female. Some data collections also include the categories of “other designation” and/or “prefer not to say,” but the appropriateness and feasibility of doing this should be assessed in each operational context, bearing in mind the purpose of the data collection (i.e., whether or not it is needed).

Both sex and gender differ from gender identity, which refers to a person’s internal perceptions of their gender – which may differ from the sex they were assigned at birth or fall outside of the male-female binary. It is important to allow for recording any gender identity that individuals may express that does not fit into pre-identified categories. While there are no international classifications and standards for collecting data on gender identity, rendering it more difficult to collect and analyse, disaggregating data by gender identity could provide important insights into identifying vulnerability and exclusion. For example, experiences of bullying or access to health services may be worse for people with gender-diverse identities.⁶³ Although a better understanding of those who may be more vulnerable or excluded is critical, given the sensitivity of collecting information on gender identity and the risk in countries where expressions of gender diversity are criminalized, the appropriateness, feasibility and need for these data must be assessed in context, with a view to









how they will be protected and used. In particular, given that the proportion of the population reporting non-binary gender identities tends to be very small, consideration needs to be given to how these data will be presented and disseminated in statistical tables and other products while ensuring privacy.

⁶² See Mazurana et al., 2011.

⁶³ UNICEF Guidance on Concepts and Processes in Data Disaggregation (Forthcoming).

Further information

- 
[UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity](#) (UNHCR, 2018).
- 
[Applying the UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Policy to Children](#) (UNHCR, 2021).
- 
[Sex and Age Matter: Improving Humanitarian Response in Emergencies](#) (Feinstein International Center and Tufts University, 2011): Provides information on the collection and use of age- and sex-disaggregated data and gender and generational analyses. Intended to inform humanitarian actors' assessment processes when responding to natural disasters and situations of armed conflict.
- 
[Standards for Collecting Sex-disaggregated Data for Gender Analysis: A guide for CGIAR researchers](#) (CGIAR, Gender and Agriculture Research Network, 2014): Spells out some simple and achievable steps for collecting relevant sex-disaggregated data for five broad research areas.
- 
[In-Depth Review of Measuring Gender Identity](#) (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2019): Analyses various methods for measuring gender identity, along with their respective contexts and justifications. Highlights the difficulties and obstacles associated with these methods.
- 
[A Global Call to Action for Gender-Inclusive Data Collection and Use](#) (RTI, 2021): Highlights the need for global action to ensure that all individuals, including transgender and gender-nonconforming populations, are represented in data collection efforts.



4.4 OTHER RECOMMENDED DISAGGREGATION DIMENSIONS

4.4.1 Disaggregation by disability status

Persons with disabilities may face heightened protection risks and more difficulties accessing humanitarian assistance, e.g., for education, health care and livelihoods. They have diverse needs and capacities that need to be identified for timely and adequate provision of assistance. It is often perceived that the identification of persons with disabilities, and the systematic disaggregation of data by disability status, could represent a great challenge to humanitarian organizations due to its technical nature. However, pursuant to Article 31 of the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), Member States have the obligation to collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the Convention.

Children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to not being registered at birth,⁶⁴ which exposes them to further protection risks, such as being stateless,⁶⁵ and may also make it more challenging for them to access essential services. Furthermore, children with less visible disabilities, such as those with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, are more likely to be



overlooked by data collection instruments. This may be due to the fact that some tools for data collection may not include questions that specifically identify these types of disabilities, or the instruments used may not be representative of their experiences as individuals with disabilities. The inability to accurately account for these children hinders their inclusion in the creation and execution of humanitarian responses, as well as the political and social agenda for development.

The underlying conceptual framework for understanding disability is reflected in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which recognizes that “disability is an evolving concept and disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”⁶⁶. The Convention includes also children with disabilities as subjects of rights. In 2016, UNICEF and the [Washington Group on Disability Statistics](#) launched the Child Functioning Module⁶⁷, which was designed to estimate the percentage of children with functional difficulties in various domains at the population level, including hearing, vision, communication/comprehension, learning, mobility and emotions. In March 2017, a [joint statement issued by multiple United Nations agencies and Member States](#), organizations of persons with disabilities and other stakeholders recommended the module as the appropriate tool for SDG data disaggregation for children. The development of the Child Functioning Module and its roll out as part of the [Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys \(MICS\)](#) has led to the release, for the first time, of cross-nationally comparable data on children with disabilities. In addition, many countries have also included the module as part of their nationally representative surveys. Estimates from around 50 countries have been released as of November 2021, and [data from 20 more surveys](#) are expected to become available over the next couple of years. In 2021, UNHCR integrated selected questions from the Child Functioning Module in proGres to facilitate the identification of children with disabilities in registration and other data collection efforts.⁶⁸

64 UNICEF, 2021.

65 UNHCR, 2019.

66 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Preamble.

67 See [Child functioning - UNICEF DATA](#)

68 See [UNHCR Specific Needs Codes – Disability Guidance](#).

BOX 4. Key actions to improve data on refugee children with disabilities

The 2023 UNICEF report, *Included, Every Step of the Way: Upholding the rights of migrant and displaced children with disabilities*, addresses the significant challenges and deprivations faced by migrant and displaced children with disabilities, including refugee and internally displaced children. These children are disproportionately affected by malnutrition, have limited access to WASH services, and experience lower school attendance rates and reduced access to quality education. In addition, they miss important immunizations and lack access to public and mental health support, further compromising their well-being.

The report conducted an extensive literature review in the first half of 2022 to highlight these issues. However, it emphasizes that there are limited data available on the intersection of child migration and disability, with scarce larger-scale studies and intersectional analyses

specifically focused on this population. The lack of data makes it challenging to fully understand the situation faced by these children, develop appropriate policy responses and track improvements to their well-being.

To address this gap in data and understanding, the report calls for a more definitive analysis of the experiences of migrant and displaced children with disabilities. This can only be possible by increasing the investment in data available on this group. The report recommends learning from existing practices that have successfully addressed these gaps; for instance, by training research teams to understand disabilities, designing research to be inclusive of persons with disabilities, and prioritizing high-quality, larger scale, quantitative and qualitative studies that identify and consider the needs and capacities of displaced children with disabilities.

More details at: <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/included-every-step-of-the-way-upholding-the-rights-of-migrant-and-displaced-children-with-disabilities/>>

4.4.2 Disaggregation by location

Indicators disaggregated by location support a better understanding of the situation, such as needs or access to services, of refugee and other forcibly displaced children. In the context of urbanization, disaggregation by geographic location – distinguishing between rural and urban areas – addresses the particular challenges of sustainable urbanization in order to improve protection and planning for inclusion to basic services, health care and education. Similarly, data disaggregated by in- and out-of-camp locations can help identify children more likely to be exposed to poverty – or extreme poverty – and assess their integration and participation in local economic activities.

Location data can be enriched by attributes that allow, depending on the level of detail, comparison between different areas, for example, between urban and rural areas, in-camps/settlements and out-of-camp locations, or administrative levels. This spatial analysis enables the tailoring of strategies for these environments and improves social service delivery.

Geographic data of refugees are also closely related to SDG 11.1.1 – Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing – by providing data on the housing conditions of refugees, who are highly likely to live in segregated areas with poor access to services.

One of the first steps when planning disaggregation by location is to determine the appropriate scale and level of granularity needed to inform a range of analyses, and thus determine the complexity of efforts and skills needed for data collection and analysis. Location data ranges from large areas, such as high-level administrative units (e.g., admin level 1), to lower-level administrative units (e.g., county), to the more specific latitude/longitude coordinates. Detailed location data such as coordinates require high effort for their collection, knowledge of geographic information systems (GIS), and knowledge of spatial anonymization to mitigate data protection and data security issues like identifying individuals or specific locations.

BOX 5. Lack of access to soap and toilets in the household

Among vulnerable populations, displaced households are consistently less likely to have basic sanitation services than non-displaced households.⁶⁹ A recent multi-sector needs assessment survey that collected data on hygiene, including accessibility to and availability of drinking water, revealed these differences in Afghanistan, where IDPs, returnees and refugees were significantly less likely to have drinking water accessible on premises (within the dwelling, yard or plot).

Furthermore, people living in refugee camps are among the most vulnerable of all. [UNHCR's](#)

[global database on WASH Monitoring Systems for Refugee Settings](#) collects data on WASH services and compliance with agreed targets and service standards for refugee settings, containing information for 160 sites in 25 countries. An analysis of 2020 data in this portal reveals that while most people living in refugee camps collect drinking water from protected/treated sources, camps in many countries are unable to meet the post-emergency target of at least 85 per cent of households with a household toilet/latrine and at least 95 per cent of households with access to soap.

More details at: https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/jmp-2021-wash-households_3.pdf.

4.4.3 Disaggregation by education level

Disaggregation by level of education often provides insights into the social and economic integration of the forcibly displaced population and the differences when compared to the host population. For instance, the recognized qualifications of those forced to flee often affect their participation in the local labour market and occupations. In addition, the household head's education attainment or completion (or that of others within the household) influences children's well-being across multiple dimensions, including their learning experiences. Further, data on refugee education enrolment⁷⁰ and attendance in national schools⁷¹ is necessary to determine their inclusion in national systems and programmes, to monitor their learning paths, and provide support and assistance when needed.

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)⁷² is the reference classification for organizing education programmes and related qualifications by education levels and fields. It is recommended to use the latest version of the ISCED classification, i.e.,

2011, to disaggregate data by levels of education, noting that the adaptation of national educational systems to the international classification ISCED may represent a challenge.

To ensure a higher level of cross-national comparability, UNESCO's Institute for Statistics provides tools to facilitate mappings between national educational systems and different ISCED versions by country.⁷³ In cases where it is not possible to collect data by detailed categories of ISCED-2011, it is suggested to use more aggregated categories such as pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Special attention should be paid to the question(s) used to establish the field and level of education of each member of the household, which should be determined based on the highest level completed. In addition, data on school enrolment should be collected and analysed, i.e., whether a child is registered as a participant in an educational programme or activity, and complemented with data on school attendance, i.e., whether the child is attending school at any time during the reference academic period.

69 World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, 2021.

70 From UNESCO's Glossary: "[...] individuals registered as participants in a programme or activity", available at <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/glossary/enrolment>.

71 From UNESCO's Glossary: "School attendance is attendance at any regular accredited educational institution or programme, public or private, for organized learning at any level of education [...]", available at <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/glossary/school-attendance>.

72 Available at <http://uis.unesco.org/en/files/international-standard-classification-education-isced-2011-en-pdf>.

73 See <http://uis.unesco.org/en/isced-mappings>.

BOX 6. Influence of education in child marriage among refugees

A 2021 study published in the *Journal of Refugee Studies* estimated the prevalence of child marriage among Somali and Yemeni refugees and their host communities living in Djibouti. The survey collected information from 1,276 refugee and host households on demographic dimensions, such as age and sex, education level of the household head and other household members, size of the household, and data on the existence of underage marriages within the household to calculate the prevalence of child marriage, among other variables.

The study found that among female refugees aged 20 to 24 years old, the prevalence of first marriages before 18 was 10.5 per cent for Yemeni refugees, 0 per cent for hosts-near-Yemeni refugees, 4 per cent for Somali refugees, and 7.1 per cent for hosts-near-Somali

refugees. It also showed that, among female refugees aged 10 to 19 years old, marriage prevalence was 7.8 and 6.6 per cent for Yemeni and Somali refugees respectively, and 11.8 and 14.5 per cent for hosts-near-Yemeni and Somali refugees, respectively. The study also points to the existence of an inverse association between women and girls' education and child marriage. Although results did not reach statistical significance, they show that girls who had access to any education had 44 per cent lower odds of marriage than girls who did not have any education. The underlying association between child marriage and the lack of education highlights the importance of programme planning that considers girls' access to education as a protection mechanism, and as a critical component of a multi-layered intervention against child marriage among refugees and host communities.

More details at: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaa139>>.



4.4.4 Disaggregation by monetary poverty lines and/or income quintiles

Monetary poverty, as defined in economic terms, refers to insufficient household income – or expenditure – needed to secure the minimum necessities of life. It uses household income or expenditure threshold levels, or “monetary poverty lines” (the cost of those minimum necessities), as benchmarks for classification. A household is classified as poor if the household income or expenditure falls below the poverty line. Thus, the monetary poor households (or individuals therein) are identified as those whose income/expenditure is below the poverty line. Also, the persons in monetary poor households can be used to estimate the proportion of individuals in monetary poverty. Monetary poverty is used among the set of indicators of SDG 1 to “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”.

There is no single standard for monetary poverty measure. It can be measured in absolute terms (the poverty line is established as the cost of a minimum bundle of goods and services every person should be able to afford) or in relative terms (the poverty line is established as a proportion of per capita income or other average value). Outcomes or access to services can be estimated for poor and non-poor persons (a gradient is also possible in terms of depth of poverty, i.e., how far below the poverty line the household income is). Different poverty measures may result in different policy approaches to eradicate poverty because they would identify different groups of people as being poor.

If targeting refugee and other forcibly displaced children, the poverty measure should accurately

reflect the children’s needs, which may not be achieved with household-level measures of monetary poverty. In the case of children, the [UNICEF Multidimensional Child Poverty Framework](#) measures multiple domains such as nutrition, sanitation, education, water, shelter and health. Children can be grouped as in poverty or not or can be classified along a gradient of depth of poverty. It is important to measure deprivations of children and not merely disaggregate household-level multidimensional poverty by age because the situation of children may be invisible in a household measure. As children are invisible (i.e., suffering deprivations but not counted as poor if other household members are doing well), incorrect information to design interventions would be used and it would not be possible to properly assess if child poverty is improving or worsening.

Income inequality is an additional measurement of household welfare that informs how unevenly income is distributed among a population. Measures of inequality, such as the Gini coefficient, Palma ratio and Vast Majority Income measure, rely on percentiles and can be used to create income quintiles for assessment. Inequalities in access or outcomes can be assessed by comparing results along the distribution or comparing results for lower and upper percentiles, with comparisons made in absolute or relative terms.

An alternative to income/expenditure data collection is building a wealth index based on physical assets to rank households. However, rankings based on income/expenditure and the wealth asset index are usually inconsistent. Thus, a wealth index could provide information about access to services along a socio-economic gradient but cannot proxy income distribution issues.



Further information



[Measuring Child Functioning and Disability: The Washington Group/UNICEF Child Functioning Module](#) (UNICEF and Washington Group on Disability, 2016): Covers children aged 2 to 17 years and assesses functional difficulties in different domains, including hearing, vision, communication/comprehension, learning, mobility and emotions.



[UNHCR Specific Needs Codes – Disability Guidance](#) (UNHCR): Presents an approach to registration interviews using revised specific needs codes to be rolled out progressively. Can be used as a basis for developing standard operating procedures for registration at country level and may also inform other individual or household-level data collection processes, in order to ensure that processes for identification of persons with disabilities are consistent across UNHCR's various data collection processes.



[Statistics and Data Collection under Article 31 on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (HRC, 2022): Contains guidance on a human-rights based approach to data, specifically for persons with disabilities, highlighting aspects connected to data collection and the rights to privacy and access to information.



[Data Disaggregation by Geographic location](#) (USAID, 2021): Provides guidance on concepts and methods for geographically disaggregated indicators in the context of monitoring, learning and adapting exercises.



[Spatial Anonymization](#) (World Bank, 2021): Offers guidance on spatial anonymization for the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys.



[Enhancing UNHCR Socioeconomic Assessments: Developing a standardized education module](#) (UNHCR, 2021): Provides UNHCR operations with a series of questionnaires based on international good practices to efficiently meet their education data needs, with an emphasis on comparability with national educational systems. Accompanied by a Kobo version of the questionnaire.



[Poverty Measurement: Guide to data disaggregation](#) (UNECE, 2020): Describes guidance on international standards on poverty data disaggregation aimed at national statistical offices, policymakers, researchers and other key stakeholders.



[International Human Rights Standards and Recommendations Relevant to the Disaggregation of SDG Indicators](#) (OHCHR, 2018): Lists the different population groups or characteristics based on relevant legal standards and recommendations, providing legal and practical guidance on the variables that should be used in data disaggregation and in the identification of groups left behind at national, regional and level.



[Compilation of Tools and Resources for Data Disaggregation](#) (IAEG-SDGs and UNSD, 2021): Offers tools compiled by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), including guidance material for data disaggregation on children, women and girls, migratory status, refugees and IDPs. Also includes guidance on using different data sources, data integration methods and tools for the dissemination of disaggregated data.



5

Sources of disaggregated data: Strengths and limitations

UNHCR and UNICEF country offices, along with national statistical offices, obtain disaggregated data about refugee children's education, safety and WASH conditions from different sources. Censuses, surveys and administrative data have been the usual methods for obtaining statistics. Big data sources, such as communication technologies, geospatial tools and social media, have proven to be effective methods to obtain information on displaced populations. The choice of data source depends on factors such as the type of data, required level of accuracy, resources, operational context, timelines and decisions to inform, and targeted population group(s). Each source has advantages and limitations that stakeholders need to evaluate before selecting one or many to ensure that their expected benefits outweigh any foreseeable risks.

5.1 CENSUSES

A census is a complete enumeration of all members of a population that records data of every person in a country or territory at a point in time. Censuses can generate the most precise estimates of a population's age, sex and geographic structure, returning statistics on the number of children and their socio-economic characteristics and living conditions at the time of implementation. Given their nature of complete enumeration, census data can be available at a very detailed geographical level, rendering censuses a good source for population benchmarks at local levels and for characteristics such as access to education, health, housing, water and sanitation.

Censuses provide a good opportunity to identify the forcibly displaced population, estimate the number of refugee children, children in refugee-like situations or internally displaced children, and generate comparable statistics with those in host communities. Thus, censuses are a tool of great help to assist policymakers, government institutions and NGOs in planning for development and inclusion of refugee and other forcibly displaced children into national systems.

Steep financial and technical burdens challenge the high benefits of identifying refugee and other forcibly displaced children in a census. These burdens cause countries to carry out censuses usually every 10 years – or at even longer intervals – making them unsuitable to collect information for certain humanitarian contexts, e.g., to track

refugee population flows and to assess needs and conditions during emergencies. The time between measurements also prohibits following up on the conditions of a child, providing only a snapshot of the situation at a specific moment in time. As such, data from censuses about refugee children can rapidly become outdated.

Depending on the design, a census also risks underestimating the forcibly displaced population by counting only the resident (*de jure*) population. For instance, a census may miss current asylum-seekers without a clear legal status in the country; miss counting refugees if they have been living in the country for less than the resident period (usually one year); or miss counting forcibly displaced populations that are still mobile or living in temporary shelters. On the assumption that a census aims to cover the country's total population (*de facto*), it should also include the forcibly displaced, irrespective of whether they live in or out of camps or in urban or rural areas. Censuses with a good population coverage are of great value as sampling frames for sample surveys.

Countries are shifting towards more innovative ways of collecting census data and adapting recent rounds to online systems, especially after the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This will have repercussions for data accuracy and availability, particularly for forcibly displaced populations or those who do not have access to the necessary technological resources to comply with it.

Further information



[Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses](#) (United Nations, 2017): UNSD's comprehensive international recommendations provide technical assistance to countries when planning and conducting census operations.



[International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics \(IRRS\)](#) (EU and EGRIS, 2018): Provides detailed descriptions of population and household censuses, relevant international recommendations, quality considerations, advantages, limitations and recommendations to improve census data on refugees (paras. 135–155, pp. 45–51).

5.2 SAMPLE SURVEYS

Surveys use statistical design to collect quantitative and qualitative information on a population sample, with the objective of returning representative and robust estimates of the population under study. They have the advantage of requiring fewer financial resources than censuses, allowing further details and more frequent measurements to be collected, and targeting specific subpopulations of interest. Surveys can be conducted more frequently than censuses to provide timely information on sudden changes in circumstances. They can be planned for a longitudinal study, portraying the conditions of refugee children and their families over time. Humanitarian actors design specialized surveys to build the evidence base needed to inform strategic planning, programming, response monitoring and advocacy, and to mobilize resources.

In the context of this document, an appropriate methodology and analysis plan should focus on proper identification of the population of interest (i.e., refugee and other forcibly displaced children) and

their demographic characteristics, living conditions and socio-economic situation, including education level and health status.

Surveys also present challenges and limitations to be surpassed or controlled for. Sample surveys need adequate and comprehensive sampling frames with updated information on refugee and other forcibly displaced children (e.g., national cartographic systems, lists of households or individuals) to accurately reflect their realities. In some contexts, drawing a good sample could require high financial and technical resources as the refugee or other forcibly displaced population could be hard to reach, highly mobile or geographically dispersed. Surveys in forced displacement contexts also face issues related to the very nature of the factors causing displacement – that is, situations of ongoing or volatile conflict or violence – such as population mobility, safety and security concerns for enumerators and assessed population, or impediment from authorities. In recent years, given



the higher availability of mobile phones, smaller surveys conducted remotely tried to partially address these challenges; however, they come with limitations and persistent coverage concerns.

Adapting existing survey plans and sampling designs (by, for instance, oversampling sampling units within existing designs to cover displaced populations) or designing dedicated or specialized surveys to reflect displacement effectively and efficiently (e.g., targeting sampling to specific geographical locations) could help overcome these challenges. Good collaboration and coordination with entities managing administrative data or registration systems on refugees and others forcibly displaced populations (e.g., relevant government agencies, UNHCR, NGOs) is important to access lists of the population of interest or area-based frames that could serve as possible sampling frames.

Because of their statistical nature, survey results come with accuracy measures that should be properly controlled through well-planned sampling designs. It is recommended that when reporting survey findings, organizations should be transparent about sampling errors.



Data protection and privacy is also a consideration when dealing with surveys or registration data needed for sampling design. Transfer of personal data collected at registration is subject to specific conditions defined by the applicable frameworks.⁷⁴ Due consideration is needed so that surveys that involve children and youth factor in the time necessary to inform respondents, hear the views of children in relation to processing their personal data and obtain consent if applicable.

Further information



[International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics \(IRRS\)](#) (EU and EGRIS, 2018): Provides international recommendations, quality considerations and detailed descriptions of advantages and limitations when collecting data using surveys (paras. 156–195, pp. 52–61).



Implementation examples of IRRS and IRIS in different countries: Central African Republic, [2021 Harmonized Household Living Conditions Survey](#); Kenya, [Economic Survey 2021](#); Morocco, [2021 Forced Migration Survey](#) – technical guidance on refugees and IDP identification and on data disaggregation.



UNICEF, Global MICS7 Tools: Includes [Survey design](#), [Data collection](#), [Data processing](#), [Analysis](#) and [Reporting](#) – full documentation of tools and templates to support implementation of MICS including data collection, interpretation and dissemination.



[Identifying Internally Displaced Persons in Surveys: Approaches and recommended questionnaire modules](#) (JIPS, 2021): Analyses different questionnaire approaches when identifying IDPs and discusses key considerations to consider when designing the questionnaire.



[Sampling for Representative Surveys of Displaced Populations](#) (Aguilera et al., 2020): Describes sampling strategy and survey design of three World Bank surveys of Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.

⁷⁴ UNHCR and UNICEF are working on a global-level data sharing framework that will facilitate a principled, transparent and predictable data flow between the two agencies.

5.3 ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Administrative data refer to information collected by regulatory authorities of a government and its line ministries. They refer to general or national population registers, civil registration systems and other administrative records systems such as those used to compile vital statistics or for preparation of electoral rolls. National and local administrative data systems can provide information on forcibly displaced children if they can properly identify or were designed to collect information about this population.⁷⁵

Administrative data have the advantage of frequent updates and, if centralized through personal identification numbers (PINs), records under different systems (e.g., education, health or social security) can be connected and provide comprehensive data on refugees.⁷⁶ Depending on a government's capacity and registration rules, administrative data are often up to date and have wide coverage.

However, access to administrative databases may have more stringent privacy and protection regulations than information from censuses and surveys. Data systems' quality between countries is variable, and data quality and coverage in different regions of a country may also vary. Even with good coverage, administrative systems may not include the refugee population by design, especially if they are linked to rights (e.g., voting rights or access to the social

protection system). Administrative systems may also encounter difficulties collecting data from forcibly displaced populations for fear of repercussions if the data reach governmental authorities. This might happen where data are linked across sectors – for instance, with an ID or PIN – potentially discouraging refugee families from accessing services such as education and health.

In addition, national databases, registries and information systems do not always adhere to standard or internationally agreed definitions and recommendations on refugees and other FDPs. The result is interoperability issues and challenges when producing disaggregated data. This same issue causes difficulty when comparing data between countries and over time. Accompanying detailed documentation with underlying standards, data dictionaries and more, should help evaluate the use of administrative data.

Government registration rules and procedures that created the data could be biased towards a subpopulation of refugees – for example, focusing on a particular ethnicity, a specific geographical area or people with a specific type of resident permit. To identify the potential uses and limitations of administrative data, users must be clear about the registration rules and the government procedures that created the data.

Further information



[International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics \(IRRS\)](#) (EU and EGRISS, 2018): Provides international recommendations, quality considerations and detailed descriptions of advantages and limitations when collecting data using administrative data sources (paras. 196–216, pp. 62–68).



[Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1](#) (United Nations, 1998): Offers useful guidance for utilizing administrative data sources for migration statistics in general, and refugee statistics in particular.



[Improving Data for Women and Children: Guidance on strengthening administrative data systems for gender statistics](#) (UNICEF, 2022): Builds on UNICEF's Administrative Data Maturity Model (ADaMM) and describes good practices, challenges and pathways to obtain better data for women and children. Includes country case studies of current uses of data systems to produce gender statistics.

⁷⁵ Including sources related to “the issuance of residence permits”, “the issuance of work permits” or “applications for asylum”.

⁷⁶ This should only be done where there are comprehensive legal/regulatory frameworks in place to protect children when sharing and linking data and these are both enacted and enforced. See tools for identifying data needs and ecosystems mapping, i.e., ADaMM in Section 4.3.2, for more information.

5.4 OPERATIONAL DATA

Operational data refer to population registries generated and collected mainly by humanitarian organizations with the purpose of registering persons under the organization's mandate. These data are an essential resource in the protection and/or assistance of individuals, for the management of operations, and for the achievement of durable solutions. Humanitarian actors such as UNHCR and UNICEF have generated operational data for strategic planning, situation analysis, programming and targeting, response monitoring and other diverse programmatic activities. Data sources include humanitarian actors present in the country of operation, governments, affected populations, international and local NGOs and research institutions. While operational data are collected to inform and report on the humanitarian response, they can be used to produce disaggregated statistics for refugee and other forcibly displaced children.

For instance, if records are of good quality – e.g., good coverage – and are regularly updated, operational data could be used as a sampling frame for example – lists of households or individuals – for surveys that aim to generate disaggregated statistics and/or estimated data on forcibly displaced children.



BOX 7. UNHCR's Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem (PRIMES)

PRIMES encompasses all interoperable UNHCR registration, identity management and case management tools and applications, namely: (i) proGres v4 – UNHCR's main repository for storing individuals' data that serves as a common source of information to facilitate providing protection, assistance and access to services for persons of concern to the organization; (ii) Rapid Application (RApp) – offline version of the Registration and Assistance Modules of proGres v4 for data collection of FDPs in disconnected

environments; (iii) Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS); (iv) CashAssist – enables registered refugees to receive cash assistance; and (v) Global Distribution Tool (GDT) – facilitates the management of distribution of in-kind assistance. Individual core data for UNHCR includes sex, date of birth, date of arrival and country of origin. Depending on the situation, data may include specific needs, places of origin, nationality, educational levels and other details.

More details at: <<https://www.unhcr.org/blogs/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2018/03/2018-03-16-PRIMES-Flyer.pdf>>

Quality of operational data may vary depending on the local conditions, emergency and country or regional data collection capacity. Records might not be updated given the high mobility patterns of the population and demographic/household composition changes. Data exclude unregistered individuals, who can amount to a significant proportion of forcibly displaced populations in certain contexts.

It is essential that operational data have clear documentation of the methodology and frequency used to collect or update them, notably to

understand their relevance for the disaggregation exercise and statistical representativeness of the child population. Because these data can be collected at various intervals, attention should be paid to understanding their temporal accuracy.

Operational data are generated by various humanitarian actors and may not always be interoperable and comparable due to differences in definitions, typologies (e.g., types of sites and settlements), and other technical specifications (e.g., age brackets).

Further information



[International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics \(IRRS\)](#) (EU and EGRIS, 2018): Features descriptions of household and individual registrations in UNHCR and UNRWA systems (paras. 217–228, pp. 69–71).



5.5 NON-TRADITIONAL DATA SOURCES

Countries and organizations can collect disaggregated data for refugee children using innovative sources such as communication technologies (e.g., social media, mobile phone data), earth observation data (i.e., satellite imagery), ‘internet of things’ technologies (e.g., smart-home devices and appliances) or citizen-generated data. These sources, part of so-called big data, may cover hard-to-reach populations, collect timely information during disasters and be rich in information. Applications of innovative sources include estimating migrant populations,⁷⁷ geographically tracking migrant populations movements⁷⁸ and mapping services in refugee communities.⁷⁹

While there are clear benefits of using innovative sources to improve data on forcibly displaced children, these come with non-trivial risks and challenges throughout the data life cycle and may even become of increasing concern over time due to the higher accessibility and decreasing cost of technology.⁸⁰ Some of the main risks and challenges concerning the use of innovative sources to collect disaggregated data for refugee and other forcibly displaced children are:

- a. Children, especially the youngest cohorts, are not the most common users of mobile phones and social media, nor the likely recipients of requests for participation on surveys via SMS. Therefore, data about forcibly displaced children would need to be indirectly gathered from the data collected from primary users, more likely to be adults and young adults.
- b. Data from these sources could come from a biased sample of the population, leaning towards people with internet access and mobile phone coverage. These could over-represent urban areas and populations with higher resources to access these technologies, and may not be possible in conflict-affected locations where internet connections tend to be disrupted.

- c. Data from communication technologies are susceptible to be used for identifying children. Information such as names, locations and other biographical information could be made public or be susceptible to harmful uses such as tracking and surveillance,⁸¹ identification of location of minorities and unaccompanied or separated children, trafficking and exploitation, and other threats to rights, safety and privacy online and offline.

There are future potential risks to and challenges of data collected from refugee and other forcibly displaced children and their families. Accumulated collected data on children can be persistent and follow them for the rest of their lives. Given the fast-changing advancements of data processing techniques, the collected data could have unforeseen uses in the future that are undesired and even harmful for children. This highlights the importance of anonymization, filling legal voids for data protection and enacting ‘right to be forgotten’ laws.

Impacts of non-traditional technologies when collecting and processing data on children should be assessed at the onset – when these processes are being designed – in order to identify and minimize data protection risks. This would allow the streamlining of data protection principles into the data life cycle. Moreover, when it comes to protecting children online, there should be a balance between their right to information and free expression, and their right to safety and privacy. Measures to protect them should be targeted and not unduly restrictive, neither for the child nor other users. The best way to ensure such due diligence is to conduct a DPIA. For processes that are likely to result in a high risk for children and other data subjects involved, conducting a DPIA is a requirement set out by the data protection frameworks of both UNHCR and UNICEF.

77 Spyrtos et al., 2019.

78 Bengtsson et al., 2011.

79 See, for instance, <www.hotosm.org/projects/bridging-data-gaps-mapping-refugee-contexts-in-east-africa/>.

80 In line with UNICEF’s Ethics in Evidence Generation Procedure, the risks to safety and rights posed by these data sources mean that their use for forcibly displaced children should undergo an independent ethics review prior to commencement.

81 Feldstein, 2020.

BOX 8. Using online surveys to estimate proportion of population displaced in Ukraine








To provide more insight into IDPs' needs and living conditions in Ukraine, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), in partnership with Real-Time Interactive Worldwide Intelligence (RIWI), received over 8,000 online survey responses between April and early July 2022 using web-intercept technologies and survey tools. This alternative methodology, called Random Domain Intercept Technology, can reach populations in conflict states, including first-time participants, elusive populations and those in hard-to-reach locations.

It can collect data in a couple of weeks and can be used for real-time monitoring.

The results show that around 35 per cent of respondents aged 16–24 years have experienced displacement due to the current conflict in Ukraine. Results also show that respondents were mostly staying with host families, more than 30 per cent had difficulties in accessing money and more than 60 per cent had difficulties in accessing basic goods and services.

More details at: <<https://www.internal-displacement.org/expert-opinion/displacement-in-ukraine-insights-from-survey-data>>.

Further information

-  [Big \(Crisis\) Data for Predictive Models](#) (UNHCR Global Data Service, 2021): Summarizes literature on the use of big data sources for prediction of forcibly displaced populations.
-  [Social Media and Forced Displacement: Big data analytics & machine learning](#) (United Nations Global Pulse and UNHCR Innovation Service, 2017): Describes lessons learned about processes, questions and methodologies when using social media to inform programmatic responses in the context of FDPs.
-  [Policy Guidance on AI for Children](#) (UNICEF, 2021): Offers policy recommendations to uphold children's rights in the context of artificial intelligence systems, including on the protection of their data and privacy. Includes a set of practical guides to support the implementation of the guidelines.
-  [Using Social Media in Community-Based Protection](#) (UNHCR, January 2021): Targets UNHCR staff and partners implementing a community-based approach using social media. Considers how to analyse a situation to understand if social media are right for project goals and how they can be used to enhance protection outcomes, including improving participation, engagement, transparency, outreach and advocacy.
-  [Big Data for Migration Alliance \(BD4M\)](#): Led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the European Commission and the GovLab, this network of stakeholders provides resources that facilitate the use of big data sources to improve information on migration and human mobility and their use for policymaking.
-  [Children and the Data Cycle: Rights and ethics in a big data world](#) (Berman, G., Albright, K. 2017, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti): Discusses ethics for the protection of child rights that various actors within the (big) data chain – e.g., data generators, collectors, analysts and end users – should keep in consideration.
-  [Towards an Understanding of Refugee Segregation, Isolation, Homophily and Ultimately Integration in Turkey Using Call Detail Records](#) (Boy, J., et al., 2019, *Guide to Mobile Data Analytics in Refugee Scenarios*, pp. 141–164): Provides an example of the measurement of standardized integration indicators using call data records that can be replicated across countries and regions.

5.6 INTEGRATED DATA SOURCES

Given the challenges of collecting accurate and reliable data on forcibly displaced children, the integration of different data sources that contain complementary statistical information represents a cost-effective solution to producing statistics on this population. For instance, many countries hold data on FDPs from administrative registries that comprehensively identify this population, while survey socio-demographic information on children is held separately. This limits analysis to the information available in each data set. Integrating two or more sources of information with different topics or geographical coverage can increase the quantity and quality of the data that are available for analysis by adding extra variables – or dimensions for disaggregation – to existing data.

Methods for data integration vary by the type of data available:

- **Record linkage**, in cases where data sources contain the same individuals or an overlap of them, which matches information on identical units (deterministic and probabilistic matching)
- **Statistical matching**, which imputes information in one data set based on similar units from a donor source (parametric or hot deck imputation)

Determining which method is most feasible for integration depends on whether the information

comes from censuses, geospatial data, administrative records or different types of big data sources such as earth observations, call detail records or social media platforms. Selecting the integration method also depends on a good understanding of the data needs along with assessments of data availability, accessibility, quality and interoperability,⁸² as well as the ethical and data protection considerations including risks created by linking data and making them visible to different users within a given data system.⁸³

Advantages of data integration include the production of statistics in a timely manner, production of new variables of interest (e.g., socio-economic variables related to FDPs), improvement of statistical classification (profiling), and reduction of coverage problems, among others. Data integration can also mitigate common criticism of household surveys regarding respondent burden and enable their reuse for ground-truthing and calibration purposes.

In addition to ethical considerations, some limitations may be: (i) data set availability and accessibility (e.g., some surveys may be privately owned); (ii) data set merging processes (e.g., information of a common unique PIN may differ across sources or be unavailable for legal reasons); and (iii) reliability of disaggregated data estimates cannot be always guaranteed.

Further information



[International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics \(IRRS\)](#) (EU and EGRIS, 2018): Provides an overview of data integration methods, quality considerations and detailed descriptions of advantages and limitations when collecting data using these methods (paras. 242–279, pp. 74–80).



[Guidance on Data Integration for Measuring Migration](#) (UNECE, 2019): Provides data integration best practices and lessons learned from case studies and a survey of migration data providers in over 50 countries.



[Toolkit on Using Small Area Estimation for SDGs](#) (Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys, 2023): Compiles materials for practitioners interested in using small area estimation methods in official statistics; produced by UNSD and IAEG-SDGs.

82 Carletto et al., 2022.

83 Risks to data protection, including to the principles of: specific purpose, legal/legitimate basis, data minimization and confidentiality.





6

Concluding remarks

This guidance note offers an overview of the most frequent risks and limitations faced by data producers, users and other stakeholders during key steps when generating disaggregated information for and about refugee and other forcibly displaced children. It presents pertinent principles, legal agreements and an overview of potential tools for responsible data disaggregation. It then discusses the internationally agreed standards for data disaggregation on a minimum set of dimensions relevant in this context: forced displacement status, age and sex, as well as further dimensions for disaggregation (e.g., disability status, education level). The discussion includes descriptions of why and how to implement these standards while guaranteeing fair control and mitigation of related risks. Further, the note examines strengths and limitations of different sources of data for disaggregation.

Different data disaggregation-related risks present in the collection, analysis, sharing and dissemination of data for and about refugee and other forcibly displaced children can be identified and mitigated at any step. Considering these risks and possible harms to the population must be a priority when designing a data disaggregation activity. This guidance note shows that the core recommended actions for responsible data disaggregation for and about refugee children is a building block process to comply with both the international principles on data protection and the right to privacy for vulnerable populations.

Reliable disaggregated data for and about refugee and other forcibly displaced children are essential to better understand their needs, capacities and experiences, as well as their differences with respect to populations in host communities. Disaggregated data provide valuable insights for policymaking and programming to protect children's rights, identify excluded or discriminated groups, and highlight the reasons for exclusion or discrimination. Data disaggregation is key to addressing existing data gaps; identifying population groups lacking protection, assistance or support for policy development; and identifying those in need of immediate humanitarian assistance. It is the cornerstone of an evidence-based approach to upholding the rights of refugee and other forcibly displaced children in every situation.

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Annex



A. Definition of categories and subcategories of refugees and refugee-related population (IRRS, 2018):

1. Persons in need of international protection:

“This category includes individuals in a country other than their own who are seeking or who have received international protection—in both cases they would have expressed a need for international protection. While most of the individuals in this category will be foreign citizens who have immigrated to seek protection, others may have been born in the host country to refugees or asylum-seekers. Children born to refugees or asylum-seekers in a host country have their entitlement to citizenship determined by the law of the country of asylum, and many are not entitled to citizenship of that country. Therefore, this category includes children of refugees or asylum-seekers who may have been born in the country of asylum, but who have not themselves acquired the citizenship of their host country and are therefore in need of international protection. This category also includes Palestine Refugees recognized under UNRWA’s mandate who may have been born in the host country and who may have acquired citizenship of the host country.”

This category is subdivided into four groups:

- i. **Prospective asylum-seekers:** “Persons with the intention of filing an application for asylum, but who have not yet done so for reasons which include being unable to file an application because of practical or administrative obstacles including capacity constraints in the receiving country authorities. Asylum-seekers in transit to another country are excluded from the scope of these recommendations.”
- ii. **Asylum-seekers:** “Persons who have filed an application for asylum in a country other than their own and whose claims have not yet been determined. These include those filing primary applications or subsequent applications following an appeal. The date on which the application for asylum is filed marks their entry into the status of asylum-seeker. They remain in the status of asylum-seeker until their application is considered and adjudicated.”
- iii. **Persons with determined protection status:** “Persons who have had their protection status

determined by their host country.” To reflect the different legal basis of the determination, three sub-categories are available:

- a. **Refugees:** “Persons who have current refugee status, granted either before arrival or upon arrival in the receiving country. Those with status granted before arrival in the receiving country include resettled refugees, and those who were living abroad at the time of application and whose application for permanent residence was considered concurrently with that of the protected person already living in the country. Refugee status can be granted on the basis of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol or pertinent regional instruments (see Chapter 2 for a full description). The group may also include persons who qualify as refugees under national legal systems. Refugees under the UNHCR mandate, Palestine Refugees registered with UNRWA and other persons eligible to receive UNRWA services without being registered are also covered under this category. It may be important, however, to distinguish refugees recognized under different conventions and covered by different entities for data compilation. This will depend on the needs of national statistical users.”
- b. **Admitted for complementary and subsidiary forms of protection:** “Persons with one of a number of designations granted by host countries, including Subsidiary Protection in the EU. This category includes individuals who have been granted leave to stay and may be in need of international protection.”
- c. **Admitted for temporary protection:** “Persons who are granted temporary legal status in the host country because their lives would be in danger if they were to return to their home countries. This status may continue for as long as the threat persists. Temporary protection is often a stepping-stone to refugee status.”
- iv. **Others in refugee-like situations:** “Persons who are not admitted to the host country

as asylum-seekers, but have nonetheless fled persecution, disturbed public order, war, violence, etc. in their country of origin or habitual residence. This group may include people who enter the country: (i) on tourist, student or work visas; (ii) pursuant to humanitarian stay programs; or (iii) in accordance with treaties guaranteeing free movements within a defined area, provided that the underlying reason for their presence in the host country is tied to their need for international protection. This category also covers any international protection admissions that cannot be accommodated in previous categories."

2. Persons with a refugee background: "This category comprises persons who are not currently in need of international protection but who have a refugee background including: persons who previously held refugee status but have been naturalized and acquired citizen status; those born in the host country of refugee parents or grandparents with the citizenship of the family's host country; those permitted to join refugee family members and be in the country under family reunification schemes and others with a refugee background. Those who now have citizenship of the host country could be considered to no longer need international protection, and can be termed those with a refugee background. There may also be persons who would be eligible for citizenship of the host country, but who have decided not to avail themselves of it. These persons are no longer in need of international protection and are classified here. Some, but not all of these persons may be capable of being identified by their own citizenship or that of their parents."

Persons with a refugee background include:

- i. Naturalized former refugees:** "These persons were once refugees in the host country, but who no longer have refugee status because they are now naturalized citizens of the host country having gone through a process of taking on citizenship of the host country."
- ii. Children and descendants of refugees:** "These persons are born of one or more refugee parents, and who are not themselves in need of international protection, usually because they have citizenship of the host country. Children born of refugee parents who have not acquired the citizenship of the host country should be included in category (a) (persons in need of international protection). Their exact group under this category will

depend on their current legal status, which may be that of their parents, but will depend on the national law of the host country."

iii. Family member reunification: "Those people who have joined refugee families or former refugee families from abroad through a process of family reunification are included here. The category does not include locally born or citizen family members who have joined households by marriage or by household formation."

iv. Others with a refugee background: "These include any others who have a refugee background who are not currently refugees. It may include those whose protection has ceased but who remain in the country of concern."

3. Persons returned from abroad after seeking international protection (returnees): "These are persons who have returned to their home country after seeking international assistance abroad. The home country is defined legally as the country of former habitual residence, and is usually their country of citizenship, but it may be that of their parents or grandparents who fled many years ago, as many crises span several generations. For stateless persons, the previous country of residence could be considered as the home country [...].

In addition, this category includes those who have sought asylum abroad, have failed to gain refugee status, and have returned to their home country."

Persons returned from abroad after having sought international protection include:

- i. Repatriating refugees:** "Persons, likely to be citizens, who have returned to their home country after having enjoyed asylum abroad. Both refugees returning under internationally assisted repatriation programmes and those returning spontaneously should be included in this category."
- ii. Repatriating asylum-seekers:** "Persons returning after having attempted to seek asylum abroad. To the extent possible, this category should include persons who return after their asylum applications have been decided negatively as well as persons who may not have been able to apply for asylum but who stayed abroad under temporary protection for some time. While these persons were deemed not to have been in need of international protection, they were previously

included in the stocks and flows of asylum-seekers and reflected in asylum application recognition rates, and may be of interest to policymakers after their return home.”

iii. Returning after having received international protection other than refugee status abroad:

“This category covers persons who received temporary protection or were granted stay for other international protection reasons abroad and who have since returned to their home country. These persons have been previously granted international

protection although not full refugee status.”

iv. Others returning from seeking international protection abroad:

“This category covers persons who left the country to seek international protection abroad but were not covered by the other three categories above. The category might include those who intended to seek international protection abroad but were admitted by another country for other purposes, such as tourism, study or labour.”

B. Definition of IDPs (or persons who have displacement-related protection needs and vulnerabilities) (Box 3.1 in IRIS, 2020)

“A person must meet the following criteria to be included in this category:

- 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;
 - generalized violence;
 - violations of human rights;
 - natural or human-made disasters;
 - other forced displacements or evictions;
- following this, has been physically living away from the dwelling in which he or she was living at the time of the causing event;
- is found within the internationally recognised borders of the country where he or she was displaced (even if he or she temporarily went abroad for a period of less than 12 months after the causing event); and
- 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.”

“This total stock is divided into three sub-stocks that

correspond to the different locations where IDPs may reside:

- IDPs who remain in locations of displacement (IDPs in locations of displacement);
- IDPs who have returned to their place of habitual residence (IDPs in locations of return);
- IDPs who have settled elsewhere in the country (IDPs in other settlement locations).”

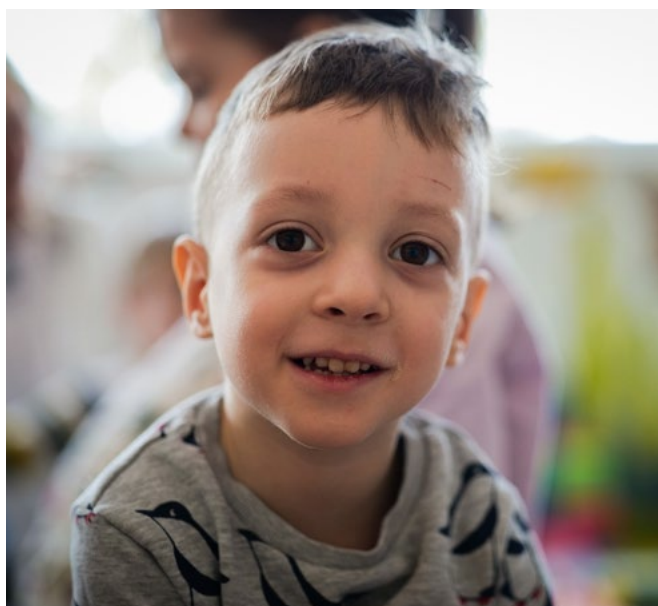




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