Counting People

SUMMARY

IFRC recently released "Everyone Counts Report". The report analyzed data collected for the Federation-wide Databank Reporting System (FDRS) over the past years leading up to 2018. One of the internal documents guiding this process is the "Technical Note: Counting People Reached". The following is an excerpt checklist. For more details, please see the details on the IFRC website (section on Monitoring and Evaluation) and the FDRS website.

One of the main indicators for humanitarian action is "how many people were reached?" IFRC and National Societies report this annually for all our programs and activities.

HOW CAN WE COUNT PEOPLE REACHED?

Fill out as best you can in the amount of time you have. Please continue to answer all the questions until you feel you can assure 'privacy by design'.

Things to consider

- Counting people reached is one type of measurement at IFRC. We use both quantitative and qualitative data to inform our work. This document pertains to improving quantitative data.
- This is a complex topic, but the excerpt should help inform how we might achieve data quality with a data standard framework.
- The Counting People Technical Note is used by the Monitoring & Evaluation practitioners at IFRC. To obtain this please, see Fednet. (this is a tool for IFRC only.)

THE CHECKLIST

Organizational Considerations for counting people reached

ITEM	OVERALL CONSIDERATIONS AT THE NATIONAL SOCIETY LEVEL FOR COUNTING AND REPORTING ON PEOPLE REACHED INCLUDE:	NOTES
1.	Determine the overall purpose and scope of the people-reached reporting - at the project, program, country, regional or global level?	
2.	At a minimum, ensure that counting and reporting on people reached meets the minimum National Society reporting requirements for FDRS.	
3.	Establish data management systems that support systematic and reliable data collection and management that is responsible and realistic to the organization. There is an increasing assortment of software solutions to support information management, from mobile data collection on handheld devices, (e.g. ODK, Magpi/RAMP, KoBoToolbox) to organization-wide, online management systems. At a minimum, Excel spreadsheets can be used.	

4.	Promote understanding and commitment at all levels of data collection and management to support and sustain systematic and reliable counting of people reached. Tailor capacity and incentive building accordingly; in addition to sharing this technical note, consider learning opportunities ranging from in-person and online training to mentoring and direct technical assistance. [Refer to the IFRC FDRS website and Regional PMER technical advisors for further guidance and resources.] Incentive building also includes sharing and reporting back data to stakeholders to build understanding and an appreciation of its use.	

Reporting on Multiple Projects/Programmes

ITEM	KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR AGGREGATING COUNTS ON PEOPLE REACHED BY MULTIPLE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES INCLUDE:	NOTES
5.	Promote the use of systematic data entry forms/formats in the field that count people reached by service type, provider, delivery point and timeframe. This will support aggregating data at higher levels for reporting.	
6.	Map the service delivery landscape, whether a city or whole country, to help identify and avoid potential double-counting. This typically involves a review of the project/program plans (frameworks) and consulting with managers to identify when certain target populations, services, or providers may overlap in time and place.	
7.	Monitor data quality. Do not wait until preparing an annual report to discover that certain projects or programs did not count people reached properly, but be proactive and conduct field monitoring checks on data quality. Typically, such exercises will vary according to program area, and include quality assurance of processes that encompass more than people reached counts. [Checklists Relating to Quality of Monitoring Information is a useful resource, but ultimately data quality monitoring will need to be tailored according to organization and programme Area.]	

Counting and reporting at the project/programme level

ITEM	KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR COUNTING AND REPORTING ON PEOPLE REACHED BY A SINGLE PROJECT OR PROGRAMME INCLUDE:	NOTES
8.	Follow any specific reporting requirements and formats for people reached counts (i.e. see Box 2, above, on minimum reporting standards for people reached per the FDRS).	
9.	Counting and reporting of people reached should be planned as part of a coherent system to meet other project/program reporting needs. People reached is just one of an assortment of monitoring data needed for management decision-making and accountability. [See the IFRC Project/Programme M&E Guide, Section 2.4 (p. 57) on information reporting and utilization.]	
10.	Use data entry forms/formats that support systematic recording and aggregation of people reached counts by service type, provider, delivery point and timeframe. This will also help identify and avoid double counting.	

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2

11.	Ensure human, material and financial resources are adequate and realistic for people reached reporting.	
12.	Know in advance how people reached counts will be analysed and used and adapt data collection forms accordingly – for instance, vulnerability and capacity assessments (VCAs), baseline studies, emergency plans of action, the FDRS, etc.	
13.	Ensure that data collection should be culturally appropriate, with attention to data collection teams that are representative of the population, linguistically competent, gender-balanced, and aware of cultural norms and taboos.	
14.	Ensure people collecting and managing data are trained and prepared with competencies for data ethics, standards and 'do no harm' principles, such as informed consent, data accuracy, privacy and security.	
15.	Identify and plan for collection of people reached data according to service type, with particular attention to direct and indirect counts accordingly – for instance, vulnerability and capacity assessments (VCAs), baseline studies, emergency plans of action, the FDRS, etc.	

Direct counts of people reached

ITEM	DIRECT COUNTS OF PEOPLE REACHED	NOTES
16.	When possible, use a tracking system to uniquely identify each individual receiving a service so that at the end of the reporting period there are accurate lists of people reached (by name and/or ID number).	
17.	When possible, disaggregate people reached counts by sex, age, disability and any other relevant sociodemographic characteristics to inform analysis for effective service delivery.	
18.	Determine whether using the average household size is necessary and advisable for counting people reached, with special consideration to inherent limitations in accuracy and disaggregated people reached data. If counting individuals in some instances AND households in other instances, be sure the counting does NOT overlap the different counting strategies.	
19.	Determine whether catchment counts are reliable and accurate for counting people reached. Catchment counts can be used when the target population is likely to receive at least one service during the given time within the service delivery area.	

Indirect counts of people reached

ITEM	INDIRECT COUNTS OF PEOPLE REACHED	NOTES
20.	Counting people indirectly reached is inherently limited in accuracy and detail. Therefore…	

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3

21.	• Carefully determine data sources to estimate indirect recipients with attention to reliability and credibility of counts.	
22.	• Do not estimate counts of indirect recipients when they receive services from direct recipients, unless there is a structured mechanism to ensure reliability of this process.	
23.	• Do not estimate counts of indirect recipients when they are indirectly reached by Federation Network messages or learning from another indirect recipient.	
24.	• Do not extrapolate and estimate counts of a national population as people indirectly reached unless there is substantial justification.	
25.	• It is sometimes acceptable to use the average household size or catchment populations to help estimate counts of people indirectly reached.	
26.	• Typically, it is not possible to disaggregate people indirectly reached because the service provider is not present to record demographic differences. However, there are exceptions when it may be justifiable to conclude about overall demographic characteristics for certain service recipients.	