



to Presented by: Ms. Jackie Sims,  
WHO

## Oral presentation of data paper

This paper is a response to the PF's discussions on data issues during its first meeting. It's a collective Inter-Agency Support Group effort, and I'd like to thank all the agencies that contributed to the paper. Special thanks go to ILO for support in drafting and putting it together.

I'd like to stress right at the outset that the paper is **not** an in-depth review of the subject. Indeed it can't be as none of us in the ISG are experts in the area of statistics. Its purpose is really to stimulate our thoughts in this discussion, to help us decide how to move forward in this technical and complex area.

The first part of the paper gives an overview of how statistical information is collected at both national and UN level, what the most common sources of data are, some issues around disaggregation, and what type of information is around on indigenous issues.

The second part of the paper gives information from a number of UN bodies on their own practices regarding data production and use. I won't present these individual contributions, for time reasons, but during our discussion, agencies that contributed may want to draw out key points from their work, particularly from the perspective of *informing the discussion on how to move forward*.

I'm going to use this time to both **summarize** and also to **draw out** a bit further the **implications** of the paper, to guide considerations for further work. I'm going to talk briefly about where data comes from and what it's used for, about quality and reliability, about analysis and disaggregation. Then I'll highlight some of the most important points made in the paper, the main constraints we identified, and make a few suggestions for ways forward. Some points address data issues in general, as it's important to understand these before looking at specific situations.

**So, Where does data come from and what's it used for?**

Statistics come from national censuses, national surveys, national administrative records, from surveys carried out by bodies like international organizations, national or international NGOs, and from large-and small-scale research activities.

We reported that some parts of the UN system, notably the Office of the HC for HR, and ILO, have statistical information on indigenous issues. This comes from sources such as reporting on treaty bodies, from Special Rapporteurs' work, or from the two ILO Conventions on ITP. However, this information isn't systematic or comparable, and nor is it routinely organized and publicized. (p.2 of paper)

**(What's data used for?)**

The main uses of data are to support decision-making on policy, strategy, and programme activities at both national and international level.

**A key question is, How complete and reliable is the data we habitually use?**

It's clear that the quality and reliability of statistical information varies widely, and that this variation is one reason for conflict over different findings.

To get comparable and reliable results, the methods applied have to be standardized.

*LOW* data are only as good as the **methods** used to produce and analyse them.

EG: Data produced by Nat Stats Offices, sometimes conflict with data produced by individual ministries. Equally, data produced by independent sources can conflict with "official" reporting. This happens quite often in indigenous issues.

Ongoing multi-country exercises like the MDGs and the PRSPs have already provided a great service in generating a huge increase in attention to the **need for better, more accurate, reliable and comparable data**, and better methods to produce them. We need to capitalize on this awareness to promote attention to questions of ethnicity

**The next points are around Analysis of data (very important) and disagg.**

- In developing countries, some problems are due to data gaps, but more crucially, to **weak** national capacity to **analyse** existing data. (no help if no ev)
- A number of international bodies, including some members of the UN system, are now working with developing countries to enhance national capacity to analyse data, and to transform data into meaningful policy and programmes. Again, this need has become apparent in the context of meeting the MDGs.

### **Disaggregation of data (4 main points)**

- The most common variables by which data tend to be disaggregated in the UN system are age, sex, socio-economic class, and sometimes rural/urban residence. Not all data are disaggregated by all these variables – and some is not disagg by any of them!
- Large-scale data reporting exercises the UN undertakes, such as annual reports, are usually not disaggregated by ethnicity
- questions of non-standardized terminology and definitions will affect issues of data disaggregation, comparability and generalizability.
- Quite a lot of countries already disaggregate at least census data by ethnicity, and some are starting to use more sensitive categories for doing so. However it's not clear whether this necessarily leads to policy and programme activities in favour of concerned populations.\*

So, from this information, I'll highlight five key points the paper makes:

- we need to capitalize on the current global trend towards expanding and refining statistical methods, to get indigenous issues more on the map
- we need to get ethnicity taken into account in the MDG and PRS processes
- we need both qualitative and quantitative information

- we need indicators which take into account indigenous perspectives  
(presumably needs a debate on reconciling these w. conventional methods?)
- the PF needs to clarify the purposes for which it wants statistical information, \*\*  
taking into account the **next point**, - the constraints noted by the ISG:
  - Constraints** (these fell into 3 main categories)
    - **Technical** difficulties in relation to issues of quality, comparison, and disaggregation of data on indigenous issues, to which definitional differences add more complexity;
    - **Weak human and financial resource capacity** within the UN in relation to the size and complexity of the task (welcome the good news on a IP-dedicated statistician joining UN StatsCom)!
    - **Political difficulties** in relation to Member States willingness or ability to address the issue (so need to attach it to accepted existing platforms such as MDG etc)

### What to do? Recommendations

- As suggested by D-F-S-A, we might hold an **expert consultation** on data issues, with a view to defining a feasible agenda for future work.
  - Some issues this consultation could consider might include:
    - defining the goals and purposes for which disaggregation of data by ethnicity is required (including the question of focusing on national vs international level data)
    - identifying ways in which the UN, MS, and the PF can work together in inserting ethnicity into the MDG process
    - analyse country situations where it seems disagg. of national data could be feasible for PF, and situations where it is not. And possibly