

Terms of reference

Task Force on collecting information on national household survey programmes and plans for ad-hoc surveys

August 2020

Rationale

Household surveys play an important role in meeting national data needs. A mapping exercise recently conducted shows that around one-third of all SDG indicators (80 out of 232 indicators), covering 13 different goals, can be sourced from household surveys.¹ Despite their crucial role in national statistical systems over the past decades, household surveys are still facing challenges in many countries. Among the identified challenges, two were particularly related to coordination - lack of coordination of international support and unpredictable funding of a short-lived and ad-hoc nature.²

To improve the overall coordination of household survey programmes at the national and international level, the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys has made one of its main objectives the fostering of coordination and cooperation in the planning, funding and implementation of household surveys at the national, regional and international level.³

As a first step towards better coordination of household surveys, a stocktaking of national and international surveys that are being carried out, either regularly or of ad-hoc nature would be necessary. It is unclear, however, on the scope of such stocktaking exercise. What surveys to include? What additional information about each survey should be collected? How many years going back should the stocktaking cover? What about surveys planned for the future? How often should the information be updated? And most importantly, how would the information be compiled? Who will be the provider of such information? How can we ensure the exercise is sustainable and feasible with the limited resources within ISWGHS?

It is also important to note that similar exercise has been carried out by the International Household Survey Network (IHSN) through its survey data catalog⁴. The question remains on how the stocktaking exercise under ISWGHS could build on and complement the work of IHSN.

¹ “Out of a total of 232 SDG indicators, 80 indicators were identified as obtainable from household surveys”, even if currently not all of them are collected using this data source. Achieving the Full Potential of Household Surveys in the SDG Era, Background document, Statistical Commission item 4c, 2019

² Report of the World Bank on improving household surveys in the post-2015 development era: issues and recommendations for a shared agenda. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc15/2015-10-HouseholdSurveys-E.pdf>

³ Terms of Reference of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys, available at <https://unstats.un.org/iswghs/documents/ToR-ISWGHS-final-2020-05-14.pdf>

⁴ <https://catalog.ihsn.org/index.php/catalog>

Objective

The Task force is created to define the scope of and make a plan for the survey stocktaking exercise. Once the scope is defined and the plan is tested and approved, the stocktaking exercise will be carried out by ISWGHS as a work stream.

Output

The output of the Task Force is a detailed plan for ISWGHS to collect and compile information on household surveys in countries.

The plan will cover and recommend specific deliverables on the following areas:

- Scope of compilation: international and/or national surveys to be included in the exercise?
- Information to compile: links to metadata including questionnaire, survey tabulations and/or microdata and summary of metadata
- Time frame: retrospective and/or prospective? For how many years of the surveys do we monitor, retrospective and prospective? If information on prospective surveys is being collected, how would such information be updated?
- Frequency of update: every 6 months or continuous?
- Method to collect the information
 - How will the ISWGHS members contribute to the information compilation?

Such collection should also be built upon and complement the existing work, including (but not limited to):

- IHSN
- The UNSD-WB survey with national statistical offices about the surveys planned for 2020
- Inventories of household surveys kept by international agencies

The recommendations made by the Task Force should be based on a “pilot” collection and compilation exercise and should recommend a sustainable system for ISWGHS to take forward.

The plan will be presented to ISWGHS for their input and approval.

Duration/time frame of the Task Force

6 – 9 months

Membership

ILO, UIS, UNICEF, WHO, WB