

Preface

Health Information Systems (HIS) lay the foundation for public health decision-making. Strong and reliable health information informs evidence-based policy formulation, leads to better management of health programmes and, ultimately, drives the actions that improve refugee health.

In refugee operations, information systems are often forced to operate in difficult environments. A lack of coordination, rapidly-evolving operational environment, uncertain access and communication, and rapid turnover of staff all contribute to disrupted gathering and flows of health information. Health partners often run parallel information systems according to the internal instructions and reporting requirements of the individual agency. These are often further complicated by competing demands of headquarters, donors, and Ministries of Health.

The result is fragmented, incomplete, and inaccurate reporting; a lack of comparability of health indicators between camps; and a system that no longer functions as a tool to guide appropriate public health action.

UNHCR and its partners need stronger capacity to enhance the quality and consistency of health information and to better protect refugee health.

A standardised HIS is integral to identifying health problems and implementing effective public health solutions. UNHCR has developed a toolkit of indicators, data collection tools and guidelines to monitor primary health care programmes accurately and reliably. This manual provides guidance on how the HIS should be implemented and used by UNHCR and its health partners in refugee operations worldwide.