

# Improving Accurate Reporting of Food Consumption for Displaced Populations

---

Utz Johann Pape

## Abstract

Misreporting is a well-known challenge for researchers in social sciences and even more so for policymakers who rely on accurate data to design effective relief strategies. This issue is especially prevalent if incentives for misreporting exist, for example, if there are perceived social or material implications to the answer reported. Due to the vulnerabilities that internally displaced people face and their dependency on aid support, this challenge is particularly acute when trying to measure economic welfare. In contexts of emergency, the need for accurate information is acute, but many approaches to improve data are intrusive or impractical. To address this challenge, this paper proposes a light touch method to improve the accuracy of consumption data: the inclusion of checks and primes to emphasize the importance of accurate reporting. The study assesses the effectiveness of this method, by randomly distributing the bundle of primes across a survey of internally displaced persons in South Sudan. In line with the main hypothesis, positive and significant effects arise for low consumption quantiles, especially consumption quantities that are more susceptible to manipulation. The findings suggest that light touch approaches to improving survey design can act as a cost-effective tool to induce more accurate reporting. Further research is needed to validate the measure against a gold standard approach and to understand what mechanisms are at play.

Keywords: Consumption Measurement, Poverty, Questionnaire Design, Behavioral Intervention

JEL: C83, D63, D90, I32Utz