Guidance for applying and adapting the community factors assessment tool

Purpose

This assessment tool is intended to be used to assess the ways in which community-level factors influence migrant vulnerability to violence, exploitation and abuse. It should be used together with the structural factors assesment tool (see Part 5) to provide information on the context within which migrants are vulnerable or resilient to violence, exploitation and abuse, thereby complementing information gathered through the individual and household/family questionnaires (see Parts 2 and 3). Further, if such data is gathered over time and linked to data from other geographic locations, it can inform understanding of larger trends regarding migrant vulnerabilities in a particular community, as well as regionally. As such, it can potentially inform programming by governments as well as national and international organizations and service providers.

Using the assessment tool to gather data

The assessment tool is meant to guide and structure the data collection process and to present it in a standardized format. It can be used in either paper-based or electronic format. The data gathered should be transcribed into an electronic version in order to ensure the durability of the data collected and the ability to use it to understand changes over time, as well as for comparison purposes with other contexts and locations and therefore to be able to devel an evidence base for national, regional or global analysis.

Unlike the individual and household/family questionnaires, which focus on data collection from the individual migrant or potential migrant and his or her family themselves, this assessment tool can be used to gather and structure data from a variety of data sources and through a variety of data collection processes.

Group interviews

The assessment tool can be used to conduct group interviews with key informants who are knowledgeable about the target community and who can analyse the situation generally and assess trends, rather than focusing on anecdotal information.

Participants for the group interviews should be selected on the basis of their knowledge about sociological, economic, political and environmental concepts, as well as of the actual practices and belief systems in the specific community. Suitable interviewees could include a combination of: community leaders (both men and women); academic experts; and representatives of civil society organizations, NGOs (both national and international), international organizations and/or United Nations agencies, and local or national governments. The key criterion is that there should be a diverse group of interviewees.

Group interviews are preferred to individual interview in order to combine different perspectives and create a more complete and more nuanced portrait of the community, leading participants to come to a collective consensus on the responses to the questions. Each group interview should include three to five interviewees, as any fewer and there will not be enough diversity of perspectives, and any more and it will be extremely difficult to arrive at a consensus and to allow all interviewees to participate equally. At least two group interviews should be conducted, as this will serve as a triangulation mechanism to reduce the impact of potential bias when conducting the analysis.

Groups can be convened to discuss all of the seven topics covered in the assessment form, or they can be convened to focus only on topics on which the participants are especially knowledgeable. In either case, each topic should be discussed by at least two groups.

Each topic requires between 30 and 90 minutes for a full group discussion. If a group is convened to discuss all seven topics, this is a significant demand on their time. Discussion sessions should be scheduled to take this into account – for example, by holding a series of shorter sessions or two longer sessions. For groups that are convened to discuss only two or three topics, the discussion session should take between two and three hours.

Individual interviews

It is also possible to conduct a series of individual interviews, if group interviews are not feasible. However, this will require more time and more interviews, as each respondent will not be confronted with differing opinions or perspectives that could spark deeper reflection. The length of each individual interview will depend on if all topics or only a subset of topics are covered. In general, it is anticipated that each topic will take between 15 and 45 minutes to complete. As individual interviews should generally not last much more than 90 minutes, it may be necessary to schedule two interviews with a respondent. At least three respondents should be consulted for each of the topics.

Desk review

Information gathered through interviews should be complemented by a desk review of key documents and data related to the social, political, economic, environmental and other characteristics of the community. This again serves as a triangulation mechanism and can help to complement, validate or revise the information obtained through group and individual interviews. Examples of such data sources include research reports, newspaper and magazine articles, analytical papers, academic commentaries, human rights reports, United Nations reports and national statistics that are disaggregated to the community level.

Filling out the assessment tool

Most of the questions include both closed and open fields. Many of these require a description, while others require a description followed by a ranking. In the latter case, a discussion of the description should be undertaken first, and only then should the interviewees be asked for a ranking, which should be based on the previous discussion. For example, interviewees may be asked to describe the availability and accessibility of educational services. They may say that there are good educational services, but that these are only accessible to the wealthy, or that public (State-provided) schools are accessible to all socioeconomic groups but are of low quality. The response to the follow-up question ("to what extent does the level of access to educational services increase vulnerability") should reflect this inequality of access.

Once data collection is complete, the information gathered should be synthesized, summarized and assessed in order to arrive at a combined set of responses that has been verified through the various sources. For each of the questions, the source of the data used to devise the combined response should be noted. If the data source is an interview respondent (either individual or group) indicate the names and positions of each of the interviewees. If the data source is a document, include a full citation for the document.

Adapting and explaining the assessment tool

Unlike the individual and household/family-level questionnaires, it is not expected that this assessment form will require sociocultural adaptation, as interviewees will be key informants with expert knowledge and should be open to discussing sensitive topics. However, they may or may not be familiar with all the terms. It is recommended that the interviewer provide some concrete examples of hypothetical situations to guide the discussions. For example, when discussing the accessibility of services, the interviewer could ask, as a clarification or if the discussion does not cover the issue, whether children with disabilities have equal access to schools, or access to specialized services, and whether these are affordable for all the population.