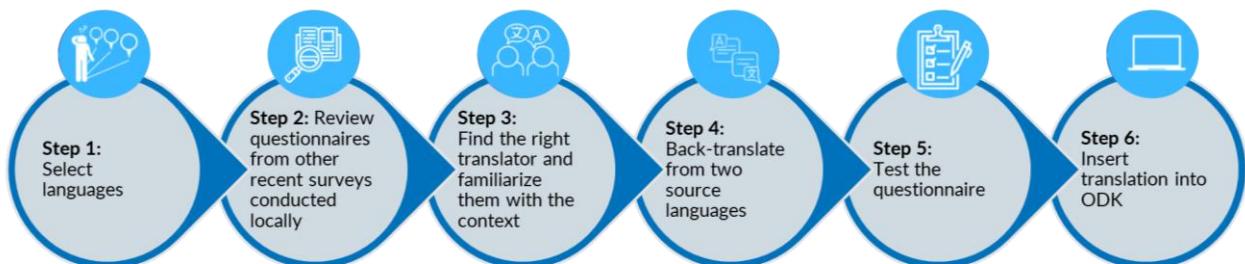# RMS Translation Protocol

The Results Monitoring Surveys (RMS) are household-level surveys with standard questionnaires following context-appropriate methodological approaches. They can be implemented across UNHCR operations to facilitate and harmonise survey-based data collection and monitor changes in the lives of all relevant population groups (impacts) and in UNHCR's key areas of engagement (outcomes). The RMS contribute to streamlined operational reporting and enable us to demonstrate our results to stakeholders.

The RMS standard questionnaire aligns with international standards and best survey practices to the extent possible. Data quality is crucial for all RMS. The design of the questionnaire is a key ingredient to ensure data quality and avoid any potential bias.

The RMS standard questionnaire is available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. To implement the RMS in different countries, the standard survey questions will often need translation into additional languages taking into consideration socio-linguistic and -cultural characteristics of targeted populations to be interviewed.

A good translation will transmit the same meaning of survey questions to respondents from different socio-linguistic and cultural backgrounds, even if it is not a word-by-word translation.

Where translations into different languages are required, it is strongly recommended to follow the step-by-step guidance shown below.

Step 1: Select languages

Step 2: Review questionnaires from other recent surveys conducted locally

Step 3: Find the right translator and familiarize them with the context

Step 4: Back-translate from two source languages

Step 5: Test the questionnaire

Step 6: Insert translation into ODK

Step-by-step Guidelines

Timing of translations

You can start your translations once the questionnaire design is completed. As translation would take some time, it is preferable to start translations once the languages that are spoken by the population are known. The questionnaire needs to be tested in the field before the survey starts, so translations need to be ready in time for field-testing.

Preparations for translations

Step 1: Select languages

- Before starting the translations, RMS focal points and multi-functional teams need to analyse the main languages spoken by the sampled population.
- **For the RMS, it is recommended that the questionnaire be translated into all major local languages that are spoken by 10 percent or more of the sample.**
- The need for on-the-spot translation by the interviewer or someone else often cannot be avoided totally, as there may be no adequate language version of a questionnaire for some respondents who fall within the sample. For the RMS, the need for on-the-spot translation should be minimized to the greatest extent possible to ensure data quality.

Step 2: Review questionnaires from other recent surveys conducted locally

- Check translated questionnaires of recently conducted standard surveys such as DHS, MICS, other UNHCR surveys or surveys carried out by National Statistics Offices in your country. In case there are existing surveys covering the same indicators, assess the quality and consider the translated versions before investing in separate translation work for the RMS.
- It is also expected that, over time, as operations implement RMS, the questionnaire will be translated in further languages

Step 3: Find the right translator and familiarize them with the context

- Translation is not an easy task and requires strong linguistic skills, an understanding of technical terms and expressions that are typical in UNHCR household surveys and a strong familiarity with the local socio-cultural context. It might be rare to find all these qualities only in one person especially if multiple languages are used in the same country, or the language of translation is different from the official language of the country. Collaboration with several translators or a professional firm might be required depending on context. It is therefore important to define clear terms of reference describing all the required skills to find the best match.
- Translator(s) should be briefed on the mode of survey (e.g., phone surveys, face-to-face) and location of the survey (e.g., refugee camp s, urban areas).

- Translator(s) should be provided with specific briefings about socio-cultural and socio-demographic characteristics of PoCs including such aspects as literacy amongst the targeted population to be interviewed to be able to assess the appropriate language style and use of technical vocabulary. Translator(s) will need to understand whether the targeted population to be interviewed are from a particular region or country where specific dialects might be in use.

- Translator(s) should review the original language survey instrument before translation to identify items, terms or concepts they are unfamiliar with or that are difficult to translate and discuss with UNHCR RMS focal points.

- It is preferred to have only one person per language for translating and back translating the RMS questionnaire into the required local language, using the English, French, or Spanish standard version of the core questionnaire.

Things to be considered during translations

Step 4: Back translate from two source languages

- Back translation has long been the most frequently used way to ensure linguistic equivalence of test instruments in international surveys. It requires translating the source version of the survey (English, French, Spanish, Arabic) into the local target languages, then translating these back to the source language and comparing them with the source language to identify possible discrepancies.

- Equivalence of the source and target versions is obtained by using three different people (two translators and a verifier) who all work on both the source and the target versions.

- In a back translation design, the first translator is the only one to simultaneously use the source and target versions.

- Discrepancies are recorded directly in the target language. The below template is a good example of how to record discrepancies during back translation. (See template in Excel)

| First Translation | | | | Adaptation / Verification Template for Back Translation | | | | | | | | |
| Translator to complete | | | | Second Translator to complete | | | CO/ RB / HQ teams to complete | | | Verifier to complete | | |
Question variable name	Original Language (English / French)	Proposed Translation in local language	Justification for proposed changes	Back translation from local language	Proposed Translation in local language	Justification for proposed changes	CO/HQ comments	Suggestions if any	Agreement Status	Verifier intervention	Verifier comments	Verifier target version
									AGREED	OK		

To finalize the translations

Step 5: Test the questionnaire in the field

■ After completing the double translation and once the questionnaire is verified, it is also necessary to test the translations in the field before adopting them for the survey. A pre-test of the translated version is required to make sure that the questions are understood, and the response categories are meaningful.

■ It is not necessary to conduct a large number of interviews in the field. For the RMS, at least three to five interviews with test interviewees conversant in the relevant languages should be carried out in each language, prior to finalizing the translations.

Step 6: Insert translation into ODK

■ ODK will be the main instrument that will be used for any kind of survey collection. All local languages that are translated should be inserted into ODK.

■ Before starting to insert the translated languages, create or continue to use your form in default language.

■ Open the file in Excel. Your spreadsheet will have three sheets: **survey**, **choices**, and **settings**.

■ In the **survey** sheet, find the column called 'label'. This is where your original question labels are stored. Insert another column to the right of the label. In the header (first row) of this new column, *write label::language(code),* for example, *label::Français (fr)* or *label::English (en).*

■ You can find the official 2-character language codes (subtags) here.

■ If you have hints in your form, the same needs to apply to the hint column, for example, *hint::Français (fr)* or *hint::English (en).*

type	name	label:English (en)	label::Français (fr)	relevant
text	full_name	What is your name?	Quel est votre nom?	
select_one yesno	children_yesno	Do you have any children?	Avez-vous des enfants?	
integer	children_count	How many children do you have?	Combien d'enfants avez-vous?	

- In the **choices** sheet you have another column called label. Insert another column to the right of the label as in the previous steps. Make sure that you use the exact same spelling for *label::language (code).* For example, *label::Francais (fr)* and *label::Français (fr)* are not identical.

list_name	name	label::English (en)	label::Français (fr)
yesno	yes	Yes	Oui
yesno	no	No	Non

- Once you added the translations, go to your survey on https://kobo.unhcr.org/ and click on **Replace with XLS**, then upload your updated XLSForm.

- Open the form you just uploaded and click on **Preview Form**. At the top next to **Choose Language** click on the dropdown. It will have a default (your original language) as well as the new languages you just added.

- Variable names should be preserved as possible, to ensure the possibility of running pre-coded scripts in the data analysis stage.

Do you have any questions or need support?

- Please feel free to reach out to the RMS Focal Points in your Regional Bureau.

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