UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR TOOLKIT FOR PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT

PRACTICAL GUIDE

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COVER PHOTO:
Myanmar. Internally displaced families in Hsipaw share their views in a focus group discussion.
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UNHCR staff member Muhammad Riaz, UNHCR's Associate Livelihood Officer, interacting with partners and community to improve livelihood opportunities at Turkman refugee village, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Pakistan. © UNHCR/Mercury Transformations. 04 August 2022

Part I - Practical Guide to Participatory Assessments

Introduction

Refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees, and stateless people must be at the centre of decision-making in all aspects concerning their protection and well-being. Humanitarian respondents must gain a deep understanding of the overall situation to define strategies of intervention. It is therefore essential to consult individuals directly on their risks, needs, and their capacities to address their situation and to obtain their suggestions on solutions to address their concerns.

The right of displaced and stateless people to directly participate in decisions on matters that affect their lives is enshrined in human rights principles and has been long established in UNHCR's policy and guidelines. In particular, UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity (2018) requires that "women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds are able to engage meaningfully and are consulted on protection, assistance, and solutions."[1] Similarly, UNHCR's Strategic Directions (2022-2026) commit that "our programs and interventions will be based on upholding the rights of the people we serve, and we will seek to involve them in decisions about their own future and the development of their communities."

[1] *AGD Policy Core Action 2: "At a minimum, country operations will employ participatory methodologies at each stage of the operations management cycle, to incorporate the capacities and priorities of women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds into protection, assistance, and solutions programmes."*

The participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people of all ages, genders, and diverse backgrounds, in the framing of problems, capacities and solutions, and the design of UNHCR's programs based on information and feedback from communities gathered through participatory assessments, is part of being an accountable organization and to ensure more effective and sustainable programming.

Purpose of this guide

UNHCR has implemented Participatory Assessments (hereinafter PAs) for many years as a core approach to effectively consult with forcibly displaced and stateless people, and to design programmes that are informed by the expressed priorities of people of different ages, genders and diverse characteristics.

Based on core principles and modalities already included in the UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations (2006), this new PA Toolkit is intended:

i. To revalidate the process of PA as a key programmatic tool and to support a multi-functional team (hereinafter MFT) in UNHCR operations in planning, implementing, systematizing, and visualising information received through PA.

ii. To add an innovative digitalised approach to PAs, with detailed instructions on the use of dedicated digital tools to systemize PA findings more swiftly, to harmonize data analysis, and to store and to visualise the PA results.

iii. To ultimately enhance the effective use of the PA results in strategic planning; in adjusting UNHCR programs in line with the feedback received by the engaged individuals, groups, and communities; in reporting on specific Core Outcome and Core Output indicators;[2] and in facilitating the feedback to communities on the results of the PA and the actions that UNHCR will undertake based on these results.

The new toolkit includes:

i. This Practical Guide.

ii. A PA analytical framework / taxonomy with categories of concepts and issues that aligns with COMPASS Outcome Areas, an accompanying glossary of terms and a platform to visualise both tools.

iii. A Kobo form to systematize and store the information gathered during the consultations.

iv. A Power BI template that can be adapted and used to visualize the findings of the PA.

The Toolkit can be found on a dedicated SharePoint page that has been created to facilitate access.

https://unhcr365.sharepoint.com/sites/DIP-PAT

This Provisional Guide and Toolkit supersede "UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations" issued in 2006. While the new tool has been already tested in some operations, the provisional release of the Toolkit in 2024 will allow for further testing, as well as to bring necessary adjustments to the toolkit based on feedback obtained from operations.

[2] *Notably Core Outcome Indicator 7.1 and Core Output Indicator 7.1.1*

Who is this guide for and what it includes

This guide is addressed to UNHCR staff in any operation and to UNHCR funded partners engaged with UNHCR to prepare and conduct the PAs. This includes planning coordinators, UNHCR MFTs in operations, UNHCR protection, program, and other technical staff.

The Guide is divided in two parts:

- **Part I** is a practical guide to participatory assessments and includes fundamental notions on the nature and the scope of PA; how to prepare and conduct the discussions; the functions and roles in conducting a PA; the new elements introduced for the systematisation of information, specifically the newly introduced digital tool (Systematization Form for PA).
- **Part II** is a technical step-by-step guide on how to use the new digitalised systematisation form.

The Guide is complemented by a series of on-line tools:

- A PA analytical framework, i.e. an overall taxonomy of concepts/issues (and related definitions) pertaining to all major areas of UNHCR's work along COMPASS Results Areas, underpinning the systematisation exercises and included in the structure of the PA systematisation form.
- The digitalised Systematisation Form for PA (Kobo).
- A Power BI template that can be adapted and used to visualize the results of the PA.

What is a participatory assessment

A PA is a process of engaging with displaced and stateless people of all ages, genders and diverse backgrounds and characteristics by organizing a set of structured consultations on one or more UNHCR programmatic and operational areas.

The PA typically involves organizing separate discussions with different groups of the population, ideally with women, men, boys, girls, older persons, persons with disabilities, persons of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expressions and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), as well persons belonging to minority groups and indigenous peoples.

The primary aim of a PA exercise is to collaboratively identify protection risks faced by the various groups within a community, understand their underlying causes, the existing capacities of communities to mitigate these risks and the communities' proposed solutions, with the view to inform UNHCR's decision-making on the design and implementation of programmes and activities.

PA exercises can be conducted in two main ways:

1. **As a stand-alone, community-level assessment** focused on facilitating dialogue through methods such as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). This approach centres on qualitative data gathering through direct engagement with diverse community members, reflecting their different views and experiences.
2. **As a community-level exercise, that can be conducted alongside other household-level methods of assessments**, such as household surveys, to integrate the qualitative insights stemming from the community discussions with the quantitative data of household surveys. This mixed-methods approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the context by combining community-level perspectives with detailed household-level information.

While PA exercises are typically carried out in advance of the situation analysis[3] in the PLAN phase of a programmatic cycle, they can also occur multiple times in the year at different phases of the programme cycle, for different objectives, including to assess the effectiveness of UNHCR's interventions.

How to conduct a participatory assessment

The PA exercise is planned and conducted by a MFT under the overall coordination of the Planning Coordinator or her/his delegate. While it is generally facilitated by the Protection or Community-based Protection team in an operation, it involves the participation of technical focal points, in line with the discussion themes selected for the exercise. It generally involves also UNHCR's funded partners to ensure support in liaising with communities and to ensure a good coverage. Given the comprehensive scope of the exercise, and the themes that may be selected for the discussion with communities, the engagement of the MFT is essential and the exercise should not be solely carried out by UNHCR protection staff. In this new format, the contribution of Information Management expertise is also critical, especially for the technical support that can be provided with the training and use of the newly introduced digital tools.

An effective implementation of a PA requires a series of actions from the MFT to prepare the assessment, including selecting the scope and the thematic areas targeted by the assessment; conduct the consultations; systematize the results; and follow up on them, including by providing feedback on the main findings to the communities that have participated. Ultimately, the analysis of the findings should inform strategic planning exercises that include – beyond UNHCR - forcibly displaced and stateless communities and other key stakeholders to inform the development and implementation of multi-year protection and solution strategies.

1. Set the objectives

As a qualitative assessment methodology engaging communities, a PA, may be used for multiple purposes. The first step in conducting a PA is for the MFT to agree on its purpose. This involves outlining the broader information needs according to operational priorities, and considering how the PA can complement existing data (including aligning with any planned upcoming data collection activities, as applicable).
Whether the PA will focus on few specific themes or more broadly across multiple areas should be guided by these reflections on the scope. See the UNHCR Assessment and Monitoring Resource Centre section on setting assessment objectives.

2. Reviewing existing information

With the purpose and scope of the PA in mind, it is necessary that the MFT review existing information and planned activities and identify information gaps and key issues for focused discussions with the communities. As for all assessments, data should be collected in line with principles of purpose, necessity, and proportionality. We should only collect information that is necessary, in line with a do-no-harm approach. Assessments should be conducted when information about a specific situation or for decision-making is required.[4]

Before a PA is conducted, the MFT should:

[3] *See UNHCR Programme Handbook 2023 for more information on how PAs are incorporated into the Situation Analysis*
[4] *UNHCR Needs Assessment Handbook, page 18, 29 and 30.*

- Focus on the part of the PA analytical framework corresponding to the agreed objectives to facilitate the structuring of the secondary data review according to the key themes and subjects that need to be assessed.
- Compile all the relevant information and existing documentation on the situation of forcibly displaced and stateless people, and host populations, in relation to the priority themes and subjects.
- Discuss previous assessments, analyses, documents, and reports concerning the local socioeconomic, sociopolitical and security environment, as well as all relevant UNHCR reports.
- Map planned upcoming assessment exercises that may cover certain information gaps.
- Identify key information gaps that need exploration through community level dialogue.

For further guidance and tools, see the UNHCR Assessment and Monitoring Resource Centre section on conducting secondary data reviews.

Examples of factors to consider during the review of information:[5]

- Overall demographic of the population (displacement situation, sex and age breakdown, average family size) influence risks, needs, capacities.
- Prevailing gender norms can lead to the exclusion of women and girls from decision-making opportunities.
- Social attitudes related to age may result in the contributions of children, youth and older people being overlooked.
- Disabilities may be a basis for exclusion from decision-making, income-generating opportunities, assistance delivery (e.g. cash, food distributions, etc.)[6]
- Sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) can be a basis for discrimination, stigma, exclusion and criminalisation based on regressive national legislations.[7]
- Marginalization based on ethnicity and religion can put more dominant groups in a situation of advantage compared to minorities.
- Stage in the displacement cycle and type of displacement may impact in different ways the inclusion and barriers experienced by new arrivals, people in protracted situations, and people in urban or rural settlements or based in camps.
- Socio-economic factors can disadvantage some groups with lower income.
- National legal framework can limit the access of displaced and stateless people to services or may discriminate against specific groups such as LGBTIQ+ persons.

[5] *Other factors could include health status, education level, political environment, security levels, etc.*
[6] *For more information see UNHCR Need to Know Guidance: Working with persons with Disabilities in Foced Displacement and https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/safeguarding-individuals/persons-disabilities*
[7] *For more information see UNHCR Need to Know Guidance: Working with LGBTIQ+ people in Forced Displacement and https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/how-we-work/safeguarding-individuals/lgbtiq-persons*

3. Mapping diversity

When planning a PA, the MFT should ensure the coverage of a wide range of diverse population groups from amongst the forcibly displaced and stateless population. This approach helps to gain a more comprehensive picture of the different protection risks faced by individuals based on their characteristics, their different capacities, and the variety of proposed solutions to their situation. Although focus group discussions (FGDs) are not intended to be statistically representative, it is important to use a sampling approach that maps out the various socio-demographic groups and subgroups within the community according to age, gender and other diverse characteristics. Beyond AGD factors, in planning for consultations, teams should also consider factors such as location (e.g. rural, urban areas, settlements) and displacement situation (e.g. newly displaced, protracted) to ensure that a broad spectrum of perspectives are captured through the consultations.

- It is advisable to organise separate PA exercises for diverse population groups that may be present in the country (e.g. refugees and asylum seekers, IDPs, returnees, stateless people, host communities). This will depend on the capacity of the operation. However, at a minimum, separate FGDs will have to be organised with different categories of displaced people (refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees, depending on the context of the operation), host communities, stateless people (if present). For each type of population, at a minimum separate discussion will have to be organised for female and male population.
- However, a PA should make all efforts to separately target a variety of population groups according to age, gender, diversity characteristics. This includes women, men, boys, girls, older persons, youth and adolescents, persons with disabilities, persons of diverse SOGIESC, persons belonging to ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural, or racial minority groups and indigenous peoples, if present.[8]
- Separate consultations with diverse groups according to the length of displacement (newly arrived VS protracted displacement) may also be helpful to gather more granular insights, depending on the situation and the capacity of operations.
- At times, when dedicated consultations with all AGD groups are not feasible, individuals with diverse characteristics can be included in FGDs with different age/sex groups, if agreed by the participants to the discussion (e.g., organize separate discussion groups with persons with disabilities, but also include them in broader discussions targeting women, or minorities, or broader community consultations)[9].
- Where possible, the proGres database and other Information Management (IM) products should be consulted, to visualize the location, and to identify possible concentrations of people with specific characteristics and profiles. Partners and communities can also be an important support in identifying certain socio-demographic aspects to be taken into consideration when mapping diversity to proper planning a PA.
- As with all assessments, PAs should be guided by “do no harm” and ethical considerations. Hence, safety and security should always be observed when organising consultations to avoid exposing people to unnecessary risks (e.g., LGBTIQ+ persons, a religious minority at risk, etc.). This is be facilitated through confidential spaces for consultations and through always respect the informed consent[10] of participating individuals.

[8] Children as young as 6 can participate in PA exercises through child-friendly methodologies that are adapted to different ages. Refer to UNHCR’s guidance on Participatory Assessment with Children for examples of child-friendly methods. https://www.unhcr.org/media/listen-learn-participatory-assessment-children-and-adolescents.

[9] The newly introduced PA Systematization Form helps to capture the distinct groups as well as the presence of some specific profiles within a group consulted in a FGD.

[10] For a definition of consent see UNHCR Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR, page 9.

- Participants to the consultations should be selected based on diverse sources. The selection of the participants should not be indicated solely by community leadership. It should also be proposed by other community-based structures such as women's organisation or committees, youth groups, older persons, educators, etc.).
- Participation of children in PAs requires availability of trained assessors with good command of child friendly communication. It is recommended that UNHCR engages with partners that have expertise in child protection when conducting PAs with children. In general, it will not be appropriate to conduct regular FGDs with children below the age of 10. Where consultations with children is not possible or is limited, the MFT should ensure a desk review of information available from other sources on child risks and needs.

Facilitate the preparation of the PA through a sampling grid

To assist in planning the PA, ensure that key population groups and sub-groups are adequately represented so that the diverse perspectives are included, the MFT can utilize a sampling grid.

- The sampling grid outlines (a) the geographical location to be targeted and where the consultations/ FGDs should be held (columns – urban, rural, sites, etc.), and (b) the different AGD categories of populations that may be considered for the consultations/FGDs, according to the specific context.
- This process can assist in identifying which groups may have been overlooked in planning the PA exercise.
- Multiple tables may be produced for different population groups targeted by the PA, for example for refugees and IDPs.
- When choosing groups and sub-groups to include, consider the participatory assessment objectives, and the themes and topics of enquiry.

FDG Group / AGD Characteristic (examples)	Geographic Location 1 (urban/rural/site)	Geographic Location 2 (urban/rural/site)	Geographic Location 3 (urban/rural/site)
Adult Women (25-59 years)			
Adult Men (25-59 years)			
Youth Women (15-24)			
Youth Men (15-24)			
Girls (10-14 years)			
Boys (10-14 years)			
Older Persons (60+ years)			
Persons with Disabilities			
LGBTIQ+ Persons			
Minorities & indigenous groups			

4. Selecting methods of inquiry for PAs

Using the appropriate method of inquiry in a PA is important to collect reliable information and to triangulate the collected information. The method selected can be determined by different factors such as the profile of the group (e.g. children of small age may require adapted tools for consultations such as theatre, drawing, and games), the environment (e.g. whether a confidential setting cannot be guaranteed), or the topic of the discussions (e.g. some methods may not be effective to discuss certain aspects of GBV individual cases).
The selection of methods of inquiry should also take into consideration any potential risks on participants and the data collection team (e.g. community resistance to participation of women and girls or children, availability of safe, accessible, and confidential location for consultations with LGBTIQ+ individuals etc.).

- The number of consultations will vary depending on the size and profile of the assessed population (e.g., if the PA involves both refugees and IDPs through separate consultations), the method of inquiry used, and the time and number of team members available to be engaged in the PA. Generally, offices should **plan a PA over a two-to-three-week period to ensure a good coverage of various population groups and locations.**[11]
- Using different methods of enquiry at different times may allow teams to obtain various perspectives on the protection risks, to crosscheck and to gather complementary information.
- It is important to adapt to and accommodate the diversity of the consulted groups. This includes the use of child-friendly methodologies, and of other inclusive communication techniques and accessible communication for persons with disabilities[12].

Methods of inquiry in PAs – Examples

- **Focus group discussions (FGD)** are the most traditional methodology used in PAs. FGDs gather groups with common characteristics and interests (e.g., age, sex, population profile, nationality, specific vulnerabilities) and are helpful to explore group responses to a selection of topics of common concern. FGDs involve no more than 10 people per discussion and should be organised as much as possible along the diverse characteristics of the consulted group. Generally, this methodology is not suitable for children below the age of 10, who may require different participatory methodologies.[13] A FGD will require as a minimum a facilitator, a note taker, and where needed, an interpreter (see section 5.8 on Taking Notes). A FGD can last between 60-90 minutes.
- **Key Informant Interviews (KII)** are usually interactions with one individual who serves as an informant identified for her/his/their knowledge to be a reliable source to speak on behalf of the broader community. A key informant (KI) will need to be well-versed in providing information on the overall protection situation, the needs and risks in the community, due to her/his professional background, leadership role and/or personal experience (e.g., community representatives, including

[11] The PA should be seen as a continuous process throughout the year, whereby all interactions with communities are documented and findings analyzed to support program design and adaptation. In such contexts, a PA exercise may be smaller in scale to address information gaps.
[12] See for instance AAP Toolkit – Accessible Communication for Persons with Disabilities
[13] Children below this age require tailored methods that are adapted to their ability to share information and respond to questions. Consult UNHCR tool: Listen and Learn – Participatory Assessment with Children and Adolescents for different methods of consulting with children: https://www.unhcr.org/fr-fr/en/media/listen-learn-participatory-assessment-children-and-adolescents

representatives of women's groups, teachers, midwives, religious leaders, social workers, civil servants, heads of grass-root/refugee/IDPs-led organisations). The KI will be identified by UNHCR or partners within the community based on gender-sensitive considerations. In the context of a PA, while KIIs alone are not sufficient to give an accurate diagnosis of the situation in the community, they can however be useful in complementing information gathered through FGDs.

- **Community-level or unstructured discussions** are more open-ended unstructured conversations with community members, from one to five people, where several topics may be raised, often with limited structure or preparation. While gathered in an unstructured manner, the information collected can be systematized – including using the PA tools - to complement data received through more formal FGDs.
- **Observation** is a way of gathering complementary information to better understand the context and the feedback from participants gathered through one of the other methods. Observations are helpful to confirm or complement specific information or give insights on the context to facilitate the comprehensive analysis of the PA. However, information collected through observation is not in itself representative of the views of people with and for whom UNHCR works and therefore will not be systematise through the tools presented in this Guide.

5. Selecting overarching topics/themes and preparing the PA leading questions

Based on the agreed scope of the PA and on the review of existing secondary information, the PA will typically focus on a few thematic issues. Thoughtful selection of these topics makes the exercise more manageable and provides the MFT with a framework for discussion ensuring that the dialogue with communities remains focused and relevant.

Topics should align with the Outcome Areas reflected in UNHCR's Results Framework, as included in COMPASS. The analytical framework/ taxonomy developed for the PA is organized along UNHCR Results Areas, to facilitate the selection of themes, as well as the connection of the PA findings with the planning process and the overall programming cycle.

- The MFT agrees on the main topic/themes to prioritize in the PA consultations based on the objectives of the PA and the results of the review of existing information.
- Once the topic/themes have been identified from the PA analytical framework, the MFT should further analyze existing data or reports on these topics (i.e., secondary data review), identify information gaps and develop a set of open-ended questions to guide the discussions with participants. When facilitating discussions, the data from secondary sources should be kept in mind, and if appropriate, cross-checked with the participants. (See secondary data review sources here).
- If the PA is to be conducted jointly with household-level data collection (such as a representative household survey), consider which themes and topics of the PA analytical framework may complement the themes and topics covered by the household survey, and vice-versa.
- If the PA is to be conducted jointly with household-level data collection (such as a household survey), consider the timing of FGD's or Key Informant Interviews (KII's). These can be scheduled as follows:

  - Prior to household survey: To inform the design of the survey. These initial consultations can help identify key areas of interest or concern and refine household survey questions to ensure relevance.
  - Following the household survey, to follow up on issues that emerged from the survey data, and include voices not heard. This allows for deeper exploration of specific findings and provides context that may not be captured through a household survey.
- PA guiding questions should be formulated to facilitate information gathering on protection risks, root causes, capacities of the community to respond to those risk/problems/issues and solutions proposed by the community to address them.
- The guiding questions of the PA should be formulated in a way that does not prompt disclosure of individual incidents in the overall discussion (e.g., GBV survivors).
- During the drafting of the guiding questions for the FGDs, the PA analytical framework/ taxonomy should be consulted. The MFT should familiarize themselves with the main categories of concepts, as well as the type and detail of information that will need to be entered during the systematization process. This may help with drafting the PA questions, which will need to be always tailored to the context.
- During the consultations with community groups, other issues, expressed as risks/problems related capacity or proposed solutions, may emerge from the discussions beyond those themes initially selected to be addressed in the PA. For example, discussions with women might initially focus on issues related to education for their children but then bring up issues of women access to livelihood to avoid school dropout, or issues related to child labour to generate income. These additional topics/issues should be captured during the discussions through the notes of the FGDs and should be included in the systematization process as additional problems/issues. The PA systematization form allows to report on associated risks/problems.
- If several additional elements outside the original themes emerge during the discussion, follow-up dedicated FGDs on those themes may be organized, as feasible.

6. Preparing for the PA exercise and the Focus Group Discussions

Effective preparation for FGDs is essential to ensure that the consultations create a conducive environment for meaningful dialogue with participants. This will contribute to achieve the PA objectives to have a good insight of the problems and needs of various groups within the communities as well as of their capacity and proposed solutions.
Aside a careful selection of the discussion topics (see before), adequate preparation involves the identification of the appropriate participants, a proper training for UNHCR and partners' staff who will run the discussions, and the logistical arrangements to facilitate a safe and comfortable space for community engagement.

- UNHCR and partners' staff that will conduct the PA should be adequately selected. The profile of the assessment team will depend on the context and the specific population to be consulted (e.g., women and girls may be more comfortable in discussing issues with their peers; LGBTIQ+ may feel more confident if some members of the team have a lived experience etc.).
- The facilitation team should at a minimum consist of one facilitator and one note-taker, but interpretation and further facilitation support can be agreed as necessary.
- In meetings involving women and girls, the facilitator and note taker should in principle be female staff, to ensure an adequate level of confidence for a easier sharing of information. In meetings involving persons with hearing disabilities, the presence of a facilitator familiar with sign language will be critical.

- Facilitators, note-takers, and interpreters need to be thoroughly trained ahead of time and briefed before the PA, to be familiar with the process and the tools, and to facilitate safe, effective, and respectful communication. Preparation should include the familiarization with the guiding questions prepared for the selected topics of the PA, with the PA analytical framework/taxonomy, and with the systematization form; acquaintance with techniques of respectful and ethical communication, including confidentiality and informed consent; notions of child-friendly methodologies; core principles of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA); as well as knowledge on safe identification and referral of children at risk and safe disclosure and referral of GBV survivors.[14]
- A meeting space in a safe and accessible environment should be identified and prepared to hold the discussions, possibly in a circle-seating arrangement. Facilitators should make every effort to ensure that non-participants (e.g., male leaders during a female FGD, curious bystanders etc.) are not present or within hearing distance, since this can put the participants in an uncomfortable position, hinder a frank discussion and may even trigger subsequent protection risks.
- Local authorities and community leaders need to be informed of the purpose of the meetings, to avoid any misunderstanding, rising concerns, or generating undue expectations on the scope of the PA.
- Depending on the methodology used, the team must ensure that the number of participants is appropriate to facilitate a meaningful conversation. Generally, for FGDs, the recommended number is 10 participants for each discussion with selected AGD profiles.
- Community representatives, other community contacts, UNHCR partners, or individuals with specific roles in the communities (e.g. teachers, social workers etc.) may be instrumental in identifying the participants to the PA. It is however critical to rely on multiple sources and to ensure that the scope of the PA is clearly communicated from the onset, when the individuals to be consulted are identified and groups are formed.
- Whenever feasible, participants should be informed a few days in advance so that they can make themselves available for the discussion. The timing and the location should be agreed, to allow for good attendance of the planned participants.
- Where appropriate, the team can prepare visual materials, such as drawings, maps, charts, pictures, and photos to be used to enhance the discussion.
- If consultations with children above 10 are foreseen, it may be necessary as part of preparatory work for a PA, to carry out activities such as helping children to develop self-confidence or raising their awareness on rights or specific issues before PA can be conducted.
- Where children are under the legal age of consent, permission will be required from their parents or caregiver, as persons responsible for the child.
- Team members that will conduct the discussion should always be well equipped with information on services and referral pathways before the start of the PA exercise. This information will be critical if there is a need for an individual referral during the exercise (see box at the end of section 5.7).
- If utilised, interpreters should be properly coached on how to translate, and advised to keep the translation as literal as possible to make sure that the discussion is properly captured, not

[14] See for instance the learning package *Safe Disclosure Package - Self-study material for all UNHCR and partner frontline workforce on how to safely handle disclosures of gender-based violence (GBV) incidents and refer survivors* available in different languages.

subjectively summarised, and faithfully reporting all relevant information and / or nuances in the dialogue of the group.

7. Facilitating Focus Group Discussions

Effective facilitation of a FGD is critical to encourage equal and meaningful participation, build trust, keeping the conversation focused, managing group dynamics, and contributing to valuable data collection. A skilled facilitator creates an inclusive environment where all participants feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts and opinions, while also fostering an open dialogue and generating insightful contributions.

- The meeting should start with a brief introduction where the facilitator(s) and note taker introduce themselves and explain:
    - The purpose of the meeting, the overall scope of the PA and the way the information collected will be used.
    - Why participation of all attendees is important and the right of every participant to stop their engagement in the discussion at any moment, if so wished.
    - The anonymous nature of the information that will be collected in the PA, as no individual will be directly quoted in any report.
    - The importance of respecting confidentiality also after the FGD.
    - How taking part to the PA will not have any positive or negative influence on the current entitlements or levels of individual assistance of each participant and the participation will not be remunerated.
    - How participants will receive direct or indirect feedback after the PA.
- The note taker should be introduced, explaining her/his role. It should be highlighted how the written notes will be taken for the sole purpose of recording the main discussion points and to be then able to summarize the whole findings of the PA and no information will be attributed to specific individuals.
- The interpreters, if present, should be introduced, and facilitators should recall their duty to respect the anonymous nature of the conversations.
- Participants are be invited to speak freely but are also reminded that they speak on behalf of the group/profile that they represent within the community and not on an individual basis.
- After these explanations, the verbal consent of the participants to continue the conversation should be requested.
- Participants should be invited to introduce themselves and ground rules are established, e.g., respect for different viewpoints, only one person to speak at a time, the right of everyone to speak and to be listened to.
- During the discussion the facilitators and notetakers should behave in a respectful and culturally sensitive way; ensure that everyone has a chance to speak on the topic addressed; encourage participants to expand on certain points, if needed; avoid moving too quickly through the list of questions to provide the participants time for reflection.
- Facilitators should ask the prepared open-ended questions one at a time, checking the proper understanding, leaving adequate time for everyone to reflect and speak, and trying to gather as clear information as possible on any topic addressed,
- Facilitators should be active listeners and avoid being judgemental.

- Facilitators should be adequately prepared to manage discussions in a way that avoids as much as possible accounts of sensitive individual information on incidents/violations.
- Facilitators should steer the group towards highlighting issues and problems related to the theme of the discussion; analysing the causes of those issues and problems; proposing practical solutions; and sharing information on the capacity that the communities represented by the participants have and the role that they can play in developing solutions to the identified issues/ problems.
- Facilitators should remain attentive to the group's attempts to discuss themes/topics that differ from those originally selected for the PA. While addressing the originally planned PA themes is important, facilitators should not dismiss any interest by the participants to expand the conversation or highlight connected issues to the main themes discussed. Facilitators should ensure that the group has also the time to discuss all topics that they consider a priority, while trying to maintain the structure and flow of the conversation.
- Towards the end of the discussion, the facilitators should ask participants to highlight the issues raised in the discussion that participants consider to be the most pressing, trying to build consensus on the top three priorities[15].
- At the end of the discussions, facilitators and notetakers should thank the participants for their time and briefly explain the next steps and follow-up action by UNHCR and its partners.
- It is critical to properly manage expectations and clearly state that UNHCR may not be able to address all issues raised by the group, while making all possible efforts to ensure that the information and the suggestions stemming from the discussion will inform UNHCR’s strategies and activities and UNHCR advocacy with authorities and other stakeholders.
- Participants should also be asked if and how they would like to hear back from UNHCR on the results of the overall PA exercise and the planned actions by UNHCR to address some of the issues raised during the PA[16].

If during the consultations sensitive individual issues emerge as affecting / having affected one of the participants (e.g., on GBV, individual information on case processing, safety and security issues), team members should be able after the consultation to provide information to the concerned individual about available procedures, services, and persons that can provide support. The facilitators should not try to prompt the disclosure of individual incidents and their details.

Facilitators should always have information on available services at hand. Any individual situation should be addressed separately in a confidential setting by specialised service providers. Whilst some form of emotional support can be provided by the facilitators of the consultations/ FGDs, the individual issue/situation/incident should not be investigated by the frontline worker carrying out the PA. Based on the informed consent of the affected individual, any individual situation should be addressed only through a referral of the case to the appropriate staff and/or partner that will take the necessary action.

[15] This is also captured in the PA systematization form.
[16] For this purpose, the PA systematization for allows for the recording of two contacts from the participants of the conversation.

Taking notes during Focus Group Discussions

Taking notes during the discussions is an important process that can determine the successful outcome of the PA, through collecting accurate information that will be later systematised and analysed. In this respect, the role of the note taker is critical.

- The note takers should record as faithfully as possible all information from the discussion, as reported by the participants. While some information will be inevitably summarised, the note of the discussion should be as close as possible to the conversation.
- The use of audio recording devices may support the note taking exercise. However, this may also deter participants to speak freely, cause loss of confidence for fear that the recording will be shared, and individuals identified. Before using recording devices, it is critical to ask for the consent of ALL participants of the group discussion (see below).

The use of audio recording devices to facilitate the note taking and then to transcript the content of the FGD may be considered to accelerate the process and move more quickly to the stage of systematisation of the information collected through the FGDs in the PA Systematisation form. However, some important considerations need to be born in mind, also in relation to aspects of data protection.

- The audio recording of meetings may change the attitude of the participants and the dynamics of the conversation.
- Permission should always be asked to use any recording device and the agreement of ALL participants should be obtained. IN the absence of such agreement, the conversation should not be recorded.
- Facilitators/note takers should explain that the purpose of the audio recording is solely to make note taking easier and to make sure that there is no misinterpretation of the information.
- Facilitators/note takers should clearly explain that the audio recording will not be shared with anyone outside UNHCR.
- Audio recording should not be used in FGDs where sensitive protection content may emerge (e.g. in discussions with LGBTIQ+ individuals or other profiles at heightened risk), where the purpose of using the audio recording may be outweighed by the potential risks of misuse, loss, or unauthorised access.
- UNHCR will delete the recording right after having finalised the transcripts.
- Third party services should not be used and only UNHCR authorised systems – e.g. currently MSWord under UNHCR work account – should be used to transcribe the recording[17].

- It is unlikely that the Kobo PA systematisation form can be already compiled by the note taker during the discussion. Only the general information related to the consultation can possibly be entered during the FGD (location of the consultation, type of consultation, name of facilitator and note taker, number, and profile of participants etc.). Most of the conversation will be recorded by the facilitator though her/his/their notes and then transferred and systematised through the new digital systematization form (see below).

[17] MSWord has a functionality to transcribe audio Transcribe your recordings - Microsoft Support

8. Systematizing information gathered during group discussions through digital solutions – The Kobo Systematisation Form for PA

Systematizing information from consultations with communities is an essential step to allow the proper analysis of the wealth of qualitative data generated during a PA; to identify common trends; to clearly communicate the risks, needs, capacities, and solutions communicated by the consulted population; and to facilitate the communication of the PA results with various stakeholders, including during annual planning sessions or in the annual strategic implementation review.[18]
The systematization of the PA results provides clear insights on the main findings of the PA, which in turn should inform the analysis, prioritization of interventions, programme design/adaptations, and ultimately ensure the effectiveness of the participatory process.

As part of the reformed Toolkit for PAs, a digitalised form using UNHCR Kobo tool (UNHCR Participatory Assessments Systematization Form) has been designed to help the systematisation of the content of each PA discussion. The record of each FGD can be summarised and distilled through the form.

The systematisation form captures various information related to the context and type of discussion; the number and profile (age, sex, population type) of the participants to the discussion; the location where the discussion is held; the themes/topics selected for the consultation.

More importantly, the form allows to systematically capture and store information on the main issues/problems reported by the participants to the discussion; their related causes; the capacity and skills of the community to address them; the solutions proposed by the community to improve the situation; the critical priority needs of the communities as identified by the participants, including beyond the themes initially selected for the discussion.

The systematisation form allows to categorize the issues/concepts reported by the communities during the PA discussions, according to a PA analytical framework/ taxonomy that covers multiple concepts/issues and that was developed with UNHCR sector experts. The main categories of the analytical framework/ taxonomy are organised along UNHCR COMPASS Results Areas, to promote harmonisation and coherence.

The PA systematisation form in kobo is not a tool designed to take notes during the discussion. It is a tool to summarise and systematise the findings from the discussion. It should be filled AFTER the discussion is terminated, based on the notes and records of the discussion.

Teams should meet at the end of each day to review and discuss the information gathered during their discussions with PA participants and to fill out the UNHCR Participatory Assessments Systematization Form. One form should be filled out for each discussion. Detailed instructions on how to fill-in the Form is provided in Part B of this Guide.

The PA systematization form includes the following elements:

- General information on the PA exercise, such as Bureau, Country, Location, Date.
- The method of discussion (FGD, Key Informant Interview, other semi-structured community discussions).

[18] See Program Handbook, PLAN - Section 3: Situation Analysis and SHOW - Section 1: Annual Strategy Implementation Review

- The purpose of the PA, in relation to the phase of the programming cycle (planning, designing specific activities, getting feedback on progress and reporting).
- Details of the facilitator and note taker.
- Profile of the participants (number, population profile, nationality, sex and age, information on groups with diverse characteristics).
- Reference to the main themes originally selected by the MFT for the PA discussion, normally not more than 4-5.
- The main findings/issues reported during the discussions, according to categories and sub-categories of concepts that are included in the analytical framework/taxonomy and that are included in the form:
  - **Problem and cause**: the form allows to summarise, categorize and "tag" the issues identified by the participants as problems to be addressed or risks or needs. A problem can be an actual or potential protection risk or threat to the safety, security, and enjoyment of rights of the consulted group and the community that they represent, deriving from fear or consequences of violence, aggression, abuse, exploitation, discrimination or deprivation. A problem can also be presented as a need, particularly when referring to assistance and services. A cause refers to the reason (or multiple reasons) behind the problem/risk/need.
  - Based on the notes of the discussion, the team must also provide the concise narrative description of the problem, its causes and related concerns or risk in the reserved narrative space on the form.
  - When referring to needed services or assistance, or problems related to those, the systematisation form allows to expand the categorization with references to aspects of **availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality (AAAQ)** of a service or assistance. The form provides the possibility to qualify whether the problem/issue refers to one of those dimensions.

The AAAQ is a conceptual framework introduced by key humanitarian agencies (WHO and UNICEF[19]) to identify potential barriers to accessing services in humanitarian settings. The original version has been slightly adapted to UNHCR PAs. **Please refer to the online PA analytical framework/ taxonomy with the detailed definitions for each AAAQ category.**

Availability	**Accessibility**	**Acceptability**	**Quality**
Existence and sufficiency	- Physical - Financial - Social - Administrative/ Legal - Information/ Awareness	Cultural/social	Standards

  - **Capacity**: the systematisation form allows to capture and summarise the capacities of the communities that may be mentioned by the participants of the discussion. Capacities refer to the existing strengths and abilities of the communities to mitigate, cope or

[19] Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Quality framework: A tool to identify potential barriers to accessing services in humanitarian settings.

overcome issues, risks and/or needs. Capacities are related to people's possessions and skills, their social and organizational structures, networks, abilities, knowledge, and institutions.

  - **Solution:** the systematisation form allows to capture solutions to issues/risks/needs that are proposed by the participants of the discussion to respond to the identified problem within the local context. This can refer to solutions entailing the action by the community; proposals for action by UNHCR, partners and authorities; or recommendations on changes or improvements in services.

- The systematisation form also allows to capture/ "tag" and summarise other problems/risks/issues/needs that are linked to a main problem, and that may affect not only the main group participating in the discussion but also other groups in the community and may not have been as the original discussion themes on which the PA is focussed (e.g., lack of food as the main problem emerging from a discussion on basic needs, generating negative coping strategy such as child labour as a secondary problem/risk).
- The systematisation form at the end also captures the three main priorities identified by the consulted group during the discussion. This may also include priorities expressed by the participants and originally outside the main themes chosen for the PA. This will allow to focus attention on the most critical and pressing concerns from the perspective of participants, and further informing effective planning and resource allocation.

9. Comprehensive analysis

This step requires organizing and analysing the information gathered through all PA consultations to identify common trends in problems/risks, capacities and solutions emerging from the discussions, for all communities or for specific AGD groups. This analysis should be undertaken by the entire MFT.

To facilitate this analysis, the information recorded into the various PA systematization forms can be visualized by using the Power BI template as well as other tools, depending on the capacity of the operation (Microsoft Excel, R etc.).

The Power BI template can help visualise the general data of the PA (demographic, locations, profile of all groups consulted) and will summarise and visualise the information that has been categorised and "tagged" in the systematisation form on main problems/risks/needs and on capacities and solutions. The Power BI dashboard also has the possibility to filter by location, age and type of group of respondents, etc.

Since the systematisation form has not only tagged the categories of issues but has also preserved a summary narrative from the notes of the discussions, the analysis platform also allows a more thorough reading of the contextual information, depending on the quality and details entered in the narrative part of the systematisation form. The MFT should also review the findings related to AAAQ aspects when referring to assistance and services, as identified during the consultations.

By using the PA toolkit, the MFT will be facilitated in swiftly visualising, analysing, discussing, and eventually reporting on the problems/risks/needs, the community capacity, and the proposed solutions. This will allow the MFT to present the key findings of the PA more rapidly, therefore directly informing a planning exercise, or a review of UNHCR interventions.

Problem/cause analysis:

- Review the data aggregated by AGD subgroups, identify people's needs and how people experience protection risks or rights violations based on the intersection of AGD characteristics.

- Analyse information on protection issues/risks, consider the most frequently cited by the different groups to be prioritised in the planned interventions and where community mobilization may also be required to address them.[20]
- Review the causes of protection risks as identified by the participants, including which actors may be responsible, interpersonal behaviour and group dynamics, as well as programme gaps and inadequately designed sectoral activities.
- Identify where causes may lie in discriminatory traditional community practices.
- Identify immediate protection needs that require urgent action.

Capacity analysis:

- Identify the capacities that participants of all AGD backgrounds have identified to see how they could be enhanced to address the protection risks and their causes.
- Consider that in some cases, participants may have the capacity to resolve the problem, but they may need to be mobilised, supported with capacity development, and/or provided with some additional resources.
- Consider how the operation can leverage the capacities of the communities, by systematic engagement of community members (e.g., leaders, women's' groups, outreach volunteers), by flexible support to community-based initiatives and/or grassroot organisations (e.g., through UNHCR Grant Agreements).

Solutions analysis:

- Solutions proposed by the participants should be examined to see how these suggestions could address the problems and causes reported. Efforts should always be made to work with communities and build on their capacities and proposed solutions.
- In some cases, participants may already be mobilized to address unmet needs and protection risk but may need supplementary support from UNHCR, partners or other agencies on the ground.
- In other cases, consulted communities may indicate a problem in accessibility, awareness, quality, or other barriers in relation to assistance and services, for the whole community or for particular groups, which require an adjustment in the intervention by UNHCR, partners or other stakeholders.

Based on the analysis facilitated by the PA systematisation form and visualisation tool, the MFT should summarise the main findings in a Participatory Assessment report. The tools provided can facilitate the extraction of the narrative and streamline this task.

> One possible way to facilitate the analysis of the consolidated data would be to export the narrative part of the collected data included in the systematisation form, and use Generative AI (Copilot in Edge) to further shape a narrative text or to extract main findings and key information that can contribute to the overall PA report.
>
> e.g., using the narrative entries of "Problem/Cause" sections of all systematisation forms for the selected themes:
>
> - What are the main problems faced by women and girls in the communities in relation to livelihood?

[20] See the Manual for Applying a Community-Based Approach in UNHCR Operations

- What are the main issues faced by persons with disabilities in accessing health services?
- What are the causes of lack of documentation for children?

e.g., using the narrative entries on “Solutions” in all systematisation forms:

- What are the solutions suggested by adolescents on the quality of secondary education?
- What are the solutions suggested by women on safety in the settlements?

The extent to which the systematisation forms include a good narrative summary of the consultation for each category of Problems/ Solutions/ Capacities will determine the possibility to generate good analytical texts, including using the support of AI. Hence the importance of an accurate inclusion of narrative texts aside each categorisation/tagging in the systematisation form.

10. Using Results from Participatory Assessment to inform strategies and interventions

PA results, along with data gathered from other needs assessments, are critical elements in the situation analysis that informs multi-year protection and solutions strategies and in designing programmes and activities in UNHCR operations.

Beyond the PLAN phase, PA results can also support and inform other phases in the programming cycle. PA exercises can support the adjustment of activities and interventions or can inform the Strategic Moment of Reflection to assess the effectiveness of UNHCR programs.

Considering the importance of the voice of the communities to inform UNHCR’s action, in line with principles of accountability to affected people, it is imperative that PAs are effectively organised and that the findings are efficiently analysed and used in in a timely manner. An operation should :

- Agree on the key phases in the programming cycle when the operation can embark in a PA exercise and use information from PAs.
- Agree on the themes of the PA based on secondary data analysis, on available information and on the context of the operation.
- Consider how the structure of the PA analytical framework/ taxonomy, the use of the systematization form presented in this guide can facilitate the collection, storing and analysis of information and the direct link with UNHCR’s Results Framework and relevant Outcome Areas.
- Consider how the introduction of the PA Toolkit can facilitate the timely aggregation and visualisation of the PA findings, which can be presented even before a full narrative report is compiled.
- Discuss the information and findings of the PA within the operation, to ensure that they inform the Situational Analysis, as part of the multi-year planning exercise, or the Strategic Moment of Reflection, as part of the SHOW phase.
- Display and share the findings of PAs with partners and other stakeholders, to raise awareness on the risks, needs, issues, capacities and solutions reported by the consulted communities according their AGD characteristics; promote a joint discussion on these findings; and develop recommendations for programme design, adjustment, and implementation.
- Encourage partners to make explicit reference to the findings from PAs in their projects workplan.

- Ensure that relevant elements from the PA are considered in discussions on targeting and prioritizing assistance.
- As required, plan for targeted follow-up action to address barriers experienced by specific groups.
- Identify relevant aspects that could be the basis for further participatory exercises during the implementation of programmes.
- Use PA findings in interagency processes and strategy development (e.g. RRPs) and make explicit reference to the priorities identified during PAs in UNHCR-led components of inter-agency documents.
- Refer to the findings of PAs in proposals for donor funding and donor reports to demonstrate UNHCR’s commitment to being accountable to affected people.

11. Closing the loop with communities

After completing the PA exercise and having compiled the overall findings, the MFT should agree on how to report back to the participants on the overall results of the PA and on how they informed UNHCR’s short and long-term strategies and activities. As part of its accountability to affected people, UNHCR should also communicate with communities any realistic limitations in taking into consideration all the problems and proposed solutions highlighted in the PA.

The MFT may encourage each group participating in the separate consultations to nominate one or two representatives who may attend a local PA restitution meeting, where findings and related actions are presented and discussed. The systematisation form provides the voluntary inclusion of two contact points per each FGDs that can be contacted to this scope.

Ad hoc sessions can be organised by UNHCR and partners in the main locations where consultations have been conducted.

Representatives of diverse age, gender, characteristics from the communities may also be invited in UNHCR’s planning workshop or in the Strategic Moment of Reflection.

Part II – Using Kobo toolbox to systematize data ab streamline visualisation and analysis

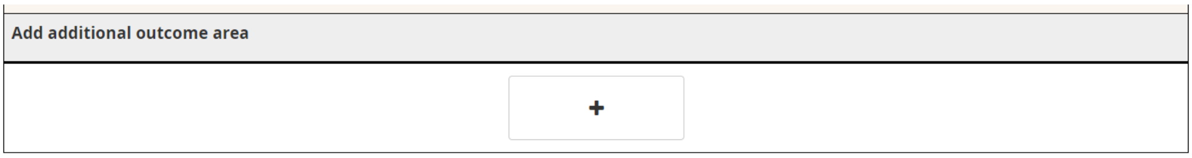
Guide on how to use the PA Systematization Form

This part of the Practical Guide provides detailed instructions on how to use the PA Systematization Form. MFTs should familiarize themselves with the form in advance of discussions and should work in close collaboration with IM officers for the analysis and visualization of data.

How many Kobo forms to submit?

The form should be used to record the main findings from the discussions conducted with the various groups and sub-groups in community.

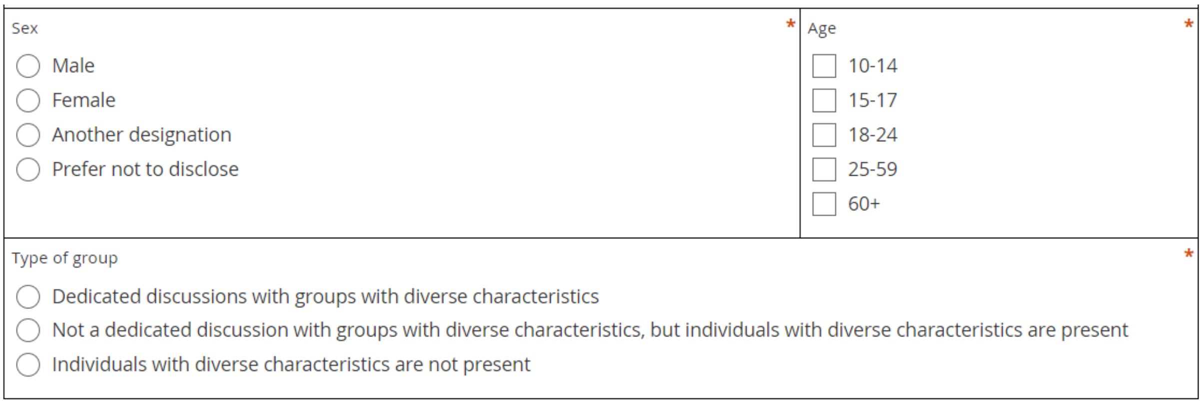
- One form should be submitted per each interview/FGD.
- One interview/FGD normally covers a set of topics/themes agreed in advance of the PA by the MFT. In this case, all these different topics can be included in the same form by adding additional sections under “**Issues Reported,**” by using the “+” button at end of the question block.



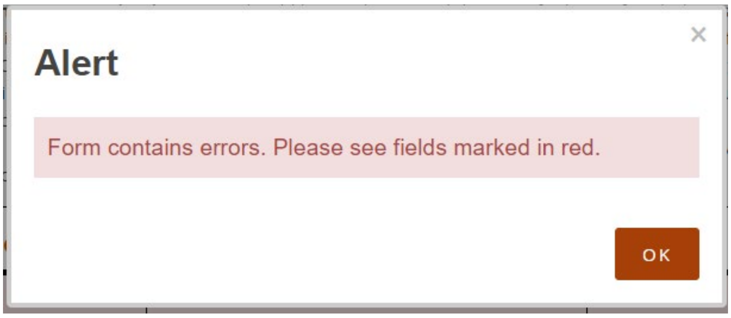
- The Kobo form has a series of mandatory fields that need to be filled in.

What are the Mandatory Fields?

Certain questions in the form are marked with an asterisk (*) in the top right corner of each box. This means that the corresponding field is mandatory.



To **submit** the form, all mandatory questions need to be answered. In case there is an error, the following alert will pop-up when you click submit.



Kobo form structure

Participatory Assessment Discussion – General Information

This section includes general information regarding the FGDs or KI discussion or semi-structured community discussion conducted by the MFT as part of the PA exercise. Some of this information recall the preparatory mapping done through the Sampling grid. The fields are the following:

- **Bureau:** the UNHCR Regional Bureau to which the operation conducting the exercise belongs.
- **Country:** operation conducting the Participatory Assessment exercise.
- **Location (Admin 1):** admin 1 geographical level corresponding to the selected country.
- **Location (Admin 2):** admin 2 geographical level corresponding to the selected admin 1 level.
- **Date:** FGD/Interview date (this is not the form submission date).
- **Method:** type of consultation conducted (KII, FGD, other type of community discussions).
- **Purpose of Participatory Assessment:** multiple-selection field, including various categories that describe the purpose of the exercise.
- **Overarching topics for discussion:** multiple-selection field. Outcome Areas used to identify the specific themes and issues that the operation intended to address and explore during the PA and that are pre-selected before the PA exercise. As stated in Part 1, the overarching topics/themes recall UNHCR COMPASS Result Areas.

Facilitator and Notetaker details

- **Name:** name of facilitator or notetaker engaged in the FGD.
- **Organization:** used to identify if the enumerator works for UNHCR or if the enumerator works for a partner organization.
- **Email:** email address of the enumerator.

Participants details

General Information about the participants in the consultation including the following:

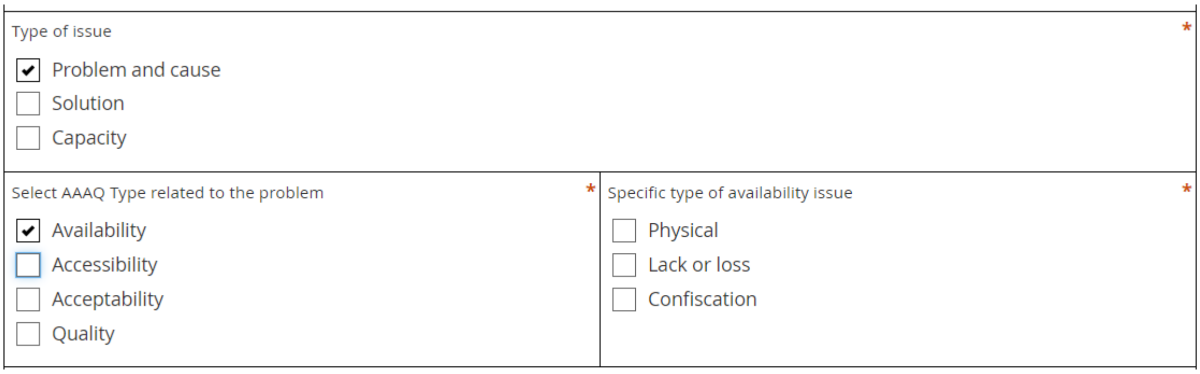
- **Total participants:** the total number of participants in the FGD/consultation.
- **Nationality:** a multiple-selection field, used to identify the nationality of the participants involved in the FGD/consultations (often, the group will be composed of one nationality; in some FGDs with refugees and/or asylum seekers, multiple nationalities are possible).
- **Profile:** a multiple-selection field, used to identify the profile of the participants (generally, the group should be composed of one category/profile, as described in section 5.3).

- **Environment where the population lives:** a multiple-selection field, used to indicate whether the participating population resides (e.g. in urban, rural, site or other settings).
- **Sex:** used to identify the sex of the participants. It is expected that participants are represented by one sex group (see Section 5.3).
- **Age:** a multiple-selection field used to select the age group of the participants.
- **Type of group:** allows the facilitators to choose whether the participant group includes, does not include, or is specifically targeted to people with diverse characteristics (the latter is the preferred option, as highlighted in section 5.3).
- **Diversity:** this can be a select-one or multiple-select field, based on how the "**type of group**" question was answered. Allows enumerators to specify the types of diversity in relation to the characteristics of the participants.

Issues Reported (see also section 5.9)

This section embeds the elements of the analytical framework/taxonomy and includes the detailed information of the topics/issues selected for the PA and emerging from the discussion as following:

- **Outcome Area:** used to identify the theme/topic discussed during the consultation/FGD. Multiple themes/topics (outcome areas) are generally selected for each PA (see section 5.5), and additional sections for each theme can be added by using the '+' button at the end of the section.
- **Category:** a field corresponding to the selected Outcome Area in line with the structure of the analytical framework/taxonomy to be selected/tagged according to the results of the discussion.
- **Sub-category:** a field corresponding to the selected category in line with the structure of the analytical framework/taxonomy to be selected/tagged according to the results of the discussion. You can add additional sub-categories by using the '+' button at the end of the question block.
- **Type of issue:** a multiple-selection field where the enumerators can specify if they are entering information regarding a **Problem/Cause**, **Solution** or **Capacity** as identified by the participants.
- **AAAQ type:** this question is applicable for some (but not all) categories, specifically when referring to information related to assistance or services. It is related specifically to a reported **Problem/Cause**. It is multiple-selection field that includes **Availability**, **Accessibility**, **Acceptability** and **Quality**. (see section 5.9)
- **Specific type of AAAQ issue:** a Multiple-selection field that relates to AAAQ types tagged in the "**Select AAAQ type**" question. Enumerators can use it do provide more details related to the selected AAAQ type.



- **Problem and Cause description:** field used to add the necessary narrative summarizing the discussion if the consulted group has presented the issue as a problem/cause. This narrative field will allow to retain the summary of the discussion with participants that can be used in the overall PA report.

- **Solution description:** field used to add the necessary narrative summarizing the discussion if the consulted group has shared considerations on possible solutions to the identified issue/problem/risk. This narrative field will allow to retain the summary of the discussion with participants that can be used in the overall PA report.
- **Capacity description:** field used to add the necessary narrative summarizing the discussion if the consulted community has shared considerations regarding the community's capacity to address the identified issue/problem/risk. This narrative field will allow to retain the summary of the discussion with participants that can be used in the overall PA report.
- **Potential risk/correlation with other outcome areas/themes**: a multiple-selection field, used in cases where the reported issue/problem/cause is correlated or linked to other issues (under related Outcome Areas of the analytical framework/taxonomy) that were not part of the initial selection of themes/topics included in the PA. Once the enumerators select the correlated issues, they will be able to provide more narrative information in the **risk/correlation description text field.**
- **Is the AGD profile of affected population the same as in the participants section?** In the systematisation form, facilitators/compilers of the systematisation form can specify if the population affected by a problem/risk identified by the participants is the same as the population specified in the **Participants** section. If the answer is no, the facilitator will be able to add additional information related to the affected population (e.g., if the topic of the discussion is civil documentation, and the discussion is with a group of women, and if they link the problem of lack of documentation to the lack of birth certificates for children, then the link can be made).

Prioritization

This section is used to identify the three most pressing concerns identified by the participants of the consultation/FGD. Facilitators are required to inquire with the community about the urgency of the discussed and raised issues. The prioritization operates at the category level of the analytical framework/taxonomy.

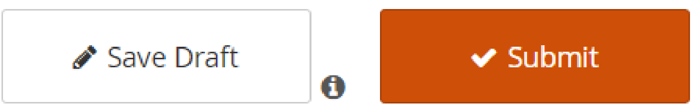
The section includes an additional question: "**is the group interested in follow up?"** If yes, with the consent of one or two participants, facilitators may proceed to gather their **full name** and **contact details.** This will be relevant in providing feedback on the overall exercise to the engaged communities (see section 5.12).

Participation and Satisfaction

This section is used to assess the level of **participation** of the consulted group in the discussion and the **satisfaction** in the overall discussion, based on the observation of facilitators throughout the discussions.

How to submit the form after inputting all the information?

To finalize and submit the form, press the '☑ **Submit'** button at the end of the form. Please note that you will not be able to submit the form until you have filled in all the mandatory fields.



Online PA Analytical framework/taxonomy and Glossary

Before starting the systematisation of the records of the discussions, it is critical that the MFT familiarises itself with the Online PA Analytical Framework/taxonomy and related glossary of terms.

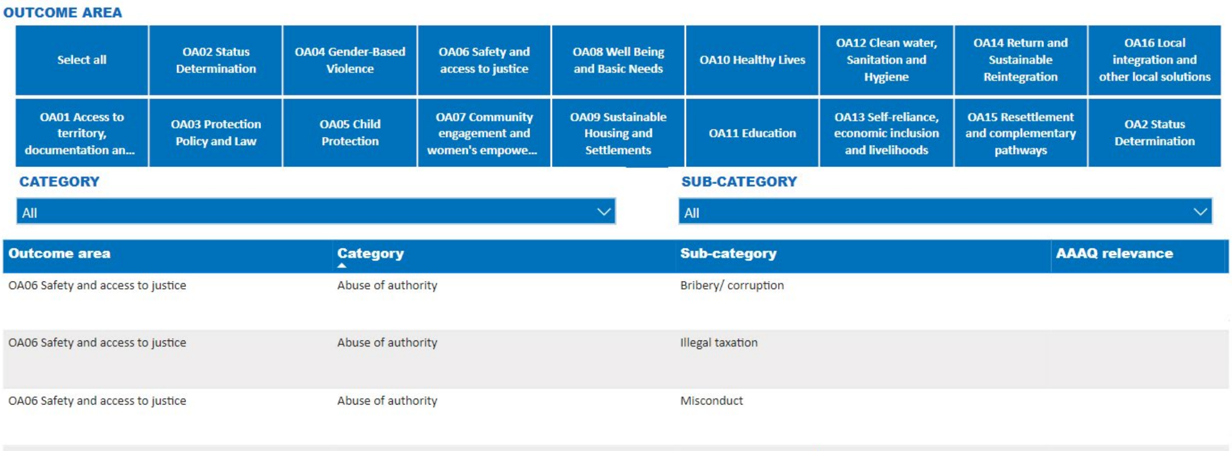
The online version of the analytical framework/ taxonomy has been developed to facilitate the navigation through the concepts used in the “tagging” (Outcome Areas, categories, sub-categories), the glossary of terms related to the analytical framework/taxonomy, as well as other fields in the kobo systematisation form.

The analytical framework/ taxonomy and its Definitions/Glossary can also be downloaded in Excel for the MFT to have it at hand during the systematisation exercise. The Glossary can be extracted and always consulted to make sure that the concepts/issues are properly selected. The Glossary has been developed by directly referring to authoritative sources (also linked), or by consulting sector experts in UNHCR Divisions and Entities.

You can find the online analytical framework/taxonomy link in the note at the beginning of the form.

Analytical framework /taxonomy - Tree

This tab displays the outcome areas along with their corresponding categories and sub-categories linked to each category.



Analytical framework/ taxonomy - Definitions

All definitions of the concepts of the analytical framework /taxonomy (categories, sub-categories) are listed under this tab and can be filtered by outcome areas. Concepts and definitions for specific outcome areas can be selected by clicking on them and using filters to narrow down the selection based on different categories or sub-categories. For each category/sub-category, a complete definition is provided, and the authoritative source of the definitions is also included.

OUTCOME AREA

Select all	OA02 Status Determination	OA04 Gender-Based Violence	OA06 Safety and Access to Justice	OA08 Well-being and Basic Needs	OA10 Healthy lives	OA12 Clean Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	OA14 Return and sustainable reintegration	OA16 Local Integration and other local solutions
OA01 Access to territory, registration and do...	OA03 Protection Policy and Law	OA05 Child Protection	OA07 Community Engagement and Women's Empowe...	OA09 Sustainable Housing and Settlements	OA11 Education	OA13 Self-reliance, economic inclusion and livelihoods	OA15 Resettlement and complementary pathways	

CATEGORY

All

SUB-CATEGORY

All

Outcome Area	Category	Sub-Category	Definition	Source
OA01 Access to territory, registration and documentation	Access to territory/admission		Access to territory to people fleeing war and persecution in their home countries is one of the essential rights laid down in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the relevant European legal instruments. The countries should not impose penalties on refugees for their illegal entry and presence on their territory, provided they present themselves to the authorities and show good cause for such illegal entry or presence. The countries are also to allow unimpeded access to asylum procedures. Under international law, States have the sovereign power to regulate the entry of nonnationals. However, international law also provides that measures to this effect may not prevent them from seeking asylum from persecution. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that '[e]everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution'	UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms and Universal Declaration of Human Rights
OA01 Access to territory, registration and documentation	Civil Status and Travel Documentation		Documentation: Identity and other documentation regularizing the stay of a person of concern to UNHCR i.e. birth certificates, refugee certificates, refugee IDs, asylum seeker certificates, residence permits, work permits, temporary stay permits, passports and travel documents or documents pertaining to the registration of an entity such as a business or organization.	UNHCR Master Glossary of terms

Systematisation Form Glossary

This tab of the online PA analytical framework/taxonomy includes some key definitions of various fields of the PA systematisation form.

SYSTEMATIZATION FORM GLOSSARY

All

Form section	Glossary	Explanation	Source
Heading	Affected groups by a risk (if different from the consulted group)	In case the risk identified affects another age/sex group different from the group consulted, a field will be marked with the age/sex group that is affected by the problem/ issue. Various age categories, sex, and diversity characteristics can be selected. (Multiple selections are possible).	
Heading	Affected population (by the problem/risk)	As soon as the risk is identified, this field needs to be marked (YES/NO) to signal if the affected population the same as in the participants section, i.e. the age/sex group of individuals targeted by the consultation. This may not be always the case (e.g. a discussion with women on education speaking about their children)	
Heading	Capacity	The tag indicates if the category is linked to any consideration on the capacity of the consulted community to address the type of issue/category, and leaves space for narrative	
Heading	Categorization	(1) Select the outcome area and category of the issues reported. These two levels of categorization are single-select. To record issues related to a different outcome area, or to a different category within the same outcome area press the + button at the end of this section. (2) Where available, select the sub-categories pertaining to your issue. This is multi-select i.e. you can choose multiple sub-categories relating to a certain category. Category of issue pertaining to the topic. Once tag/choice is possible. In case of more categories, an additional part of the form will be filled (+) (c) Select the sub-category. Here multiple tags/choices are possible. For selected tags, when they refer to services, the AAAQ tagging will automatically appear to indicate the causes of the problem/issue. (please refer to the definition of AAAQ).	
Heading	Level of engagement	The facilitator/ Note Taker will assess the level of engagement of the participants of the discussion (one option).	
Heading	Level of Satisfaction	The facilitator/ Note Taker will consider the level of satisfaction in the conversation shown by the participants (one option).	

PA Power BI Template

The PA Power BI template is a part of the PA Toolkit and has been created to facilitate the visualisation of the results of the PA after the systematisation of the information gathered in all consultations/ FGDs and systematised through the dedicated Kobo systematisation Form. The template follows the structure and includes the elements of the PA systematisation form.

The PA Power BI template displays the general information on the overall PA exercise, including the number of consultations/FGDs, the locations, the number and profiles of the groups consulted.

It includes the main themes selected for the PA exercise. It visualises and ranks the main issues emerging as problems/risks/needs, capacities, and solutions. It allows also to visualise the associated narratives summarised in the systematisation forms.

The template also visualises other problems/risks/needs, capacities and solutions emerging from the discussions as connected to the main themes selected for the PA (e.g., issues related to documentation emerging during a primary discussion on education; issues related to freedom of movement emerging from a primary discussion on livelihood etc.).

Finally, the template helps visualize the key needs/issues prioritised by the groups during the consultations and the level of engagement and participation by the communities.

The template can help provide a timely snapshot of the main findings of the PA exercise, ahead of a more detailed PA report. In this way, the findings of the PA may be effectively used during planning sessions or other presentations to UNHCR operations as well as other stakeholders.

Annex I - References

This Practical Guide on PA and its associated tools take into consideration several UNHCR Policies and strategic documents.

- UNHCR Age Gender and Diversity Policy (2018)
- UNHCR Policy Paper: Understanding Community Based Protection
- UNHCR Participatory Assessment Tools in Operations (2006) (Guidance superseded by the current provisional Participatory Assessment Toolkit)
- UNHCR's Guidance on Participatory Assessment with Children and Adolescents
- UNHCR Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-Based Violence (2020)
- UNHCR Policy on Child Protection (2024)
- UNHCR Operational Guidance on Accountability to Affected People (2020) (and related toolkit)
- UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms
- UNHCR Need to Know Guidance on Persons with Disabilities (2019)
- UNHCR Need to Know Guidance on LGBTIQ+ in Situations of Displacement (2021)
- UNHCR Need to Know Guidance on Working with Older Persons in Forced Displacement (2021)
- UNHCR COMPASS Result-Based Areas and Core Outcome Indicator Guidance
- UNHCR Program Handbook (2023) (only available to UNHCR colleagues)
- UNHCR Program Handbook for Partners (2024)
- UNHCR Assessment and monitoring Resource Centre (website)
- UNHCR Safe Disclosure Facilitation Package - Self-study material for all UNHCR and partner frontline workforce on how to safely handle disclosures of gender-based violence (GBV) incidents and refer survivors
- UNICEF, WHO Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Quality framework: A tool to identify potential barriers to accessing services in humanitarian settings.

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