Collecting data
in the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar

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What works based
on five years of
collective experience

DECEMBER 2022

Contents

OVERVIEW

Data collection in humanitarian response is based on established standards, guidelines, and good practices that have evolved over time. While these practices give a general structure for data collection processes, they need to be adaptable to any specific response context. This learning document highlights the lessons learnt from five years of data collection in the Rohingya camps in the form of assessments, monitoring, and evaluation activities whether rapid or comprehensive, sectoral or multisectoral, joint or standalone, and other types of studies. This document aims to help adapt data collection processes to the Rohingya response in Cox's Bazar based on collated experiences and learning. The methods used to collect data include surveys, group discussions (GDs) including focus group discussions, interviews including key informant interviews (KIIs), and direct observations. The terms 'data collectors' and 'participants' or 'respondents' are used for the main stakeholders involved in data collection exercises.

METHODOLOGY

ACAPS collated the good practices outlined in this document through a review and analysis of written lessons learnt documents and discussions with the key stakeholders involved in data collection for research, assessments, and data analyses in the Rohingya crisis response.

This document has been developed through collaboration from ACAPS, the IOM Needs and Population Monitoring the IOM Communications with Communities, and the IOM Protection units.

LIMITATIONS

The focus of this good practices document is data collection in Rohingya camp settings and not in host communities. This document is based on the experiences of contributing organisations. It presents what has been learnt from the data collection perspective. It is not fully reflective of all the good practices or steps that should be followed during data collection and focuses on what has been learnt in this response. It is not a replacement for established data collection guidance.

Community views were not deliberately sought for this product.

The authorities of Bangladesh establish data collection rules and regulations in the camps, which may change over time.

Establish the purpose of and inform the need for data collection by a secondary data review (SDR)

1.

The first step in any data collection exercise is to confirm the need for data collection. Any data collection exercise should not start without a clearly defined and predetermined purpose.

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A review of primary data collected by others and an SDR are critical exploratory analyses required to help inform the decision of whether data collection for the defined purpose is needed and, if so, what it should entail. The SDR allows for an investigation of whether the required information is already available in any secondary data. Some information may already be available from response affiliates (ACAPS 25/11/2021).

In 2021, ACAPS published an Information and Analysis Ecosystem report that provided an overview of the specific coordination structure in Bangladesh and the stakeholders involved in the response (ACAPS 25/11/2021). Note that this information is subject to change over time. Contact lists may also be consulted for the response through the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) Focal Point Contact list (HR.info accessed 10/10/2022). For sector-specific data, it is always useful to consult sectors directly.

The ISCG Assessment Registry compiles assessments that have been carried out in the Rohingya response since 2015. The most well-known, most frequent, and largest surveys are the Joint Multi-Sector Needs Assessments and the Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA), of which the latest edition is REVA 5 (WFP 30/06/2022). Humanitarianresponse.info also compiles different types of reports, including assessments, as do the country pages ReliefWeb and Humanitarian Data Exchange–Bangladesh (humdata.org) (HR.info accessed 10/10/2022). There are also dedicated digital platforms for response operators in Cox's Bazar available for consulting reports and data:
- IOM Bangladesh
- IOM Needs and Population Monitoring
- UNHCR–Bangladesh.

Information gaps in existing data likely include the spatial coverage of previous data collections, differing data collection time frames, the data disaggregation used, and themes covered.

Spatial coverage: in the Rohingya context, many data collection exercises do not represent camps in the same manner but often a subset of camps and blocks. This representation might make it difficult to find a common spatial reference among secondary data sources.

Time: in many cases, information from various sources do not refer to a comparable data collection period, meaning they cannot be combined and are not relevant for the data collection purpose. An exception may be if a detection in change over time is the declared intent of data collection. Seasonal events (monsoon, dry, and dengue seasons), accessibility issues resulting from natural hazards (landslides and flooding), fires, religious events (such as Ramadan), and government restrictions on times when camps can be accessed can further influence the period of data collection (ACAPS 04/04/2019). The data often reflects the effect of these events, limiting the usefulness of the data collection purpose.

Disaggregation: in the camp context, information is often not disaggregated by gender, age, and disability even though this level of disaggregation is required for many purposes.

Themes: in the Rohingya context, information gaps on different themes might also result from government constraints on study topics. For example, SDR has specifically, but not exclusively, identified gender issues in the Rohingya communities as one information gap (ACAPS 04/03/2022).

There is an ethical responsibility to ensure that data is only collected when it is really needed for the design or implementation of activities or for providing evidence to improve the response. Data collection can also raise hopes by inadvertently creating an expectation that the questions being asked will receive the attention respondents want when the connection between what the data is collected for and the response is far less direct. Often, responders are unable to respond to all of the needs communicated by the community. Explaining this is part of overall accountability to affected populations, as is informing the people involved in the data collection about the plans for and outcomes from their contribution. Authorities also limit and control the movement of the Rohingya in and out of the camps, and organisations should avoid exposing encamped populations to excessive data collection exercises, as doing so results in assessment fatigue, which can affect the collection of accurate, necessary, and useful data when really needed (ACAPS 25/11/2021).

Choosing a data collection method

After confirming the need to collect data, the selection of the most suitable data collection method should be based on the required needs and data. Primary data collection may be qualitative or quantitative.

Qualitative data is mainly descriptive and collected through different means, such as open-ended interviews, GDs, and direct observation. The data collected ranges from structured categories to perceptions, opinions, and intentions (ICRC 11/06/2020).

Quantitative data is numerical and expressed as statistics, rates, proportions, etc. It is used to measure specific variables and usually collected through structured surveys using interviews with households, individuals, or key informants based on sampling that considers the overall size of the target population) (ICRC 11/06/2020).Quantitative and qualitative data provide different kinds of information and answer different questions. Having both quantitative and qualitative data is often desirable as they complement each other and present a comprehensive and in-depth picture of a topic in terms of something both measurable and descriptive. A mixed method would combine the use of qualitative and quantitative information. Overall, other factors, such as cost, logistics, time, and whether the data collection exercise is a joint process with other organisations, a standalone initiative, or an intersectoral one, will also determine the choice of method.

2.1 SURVEY

A survey is a method of collecting specific data from a particular group of people using a questionnaire; in the Rohingya response, surveys usually have a closed answer or short answer response.

A survey is useful:
- for collecting representative data that provides a picture of the population being investigated
- if remote (e.g. phone) data collection is required because face-to-face data collection is not possible
- for identifying correlations between variables from the data.
- A survey does not allow the interviewer to probe and ask detailed follow-up questions.

2.

Understand capacity requirements for using probability sampling methods for surveys. Randomised sampling is the process of selecting units (people, households, organisations, villages, sites, etc.) from a population of interest for surveying in which every individual has an equal chance (probability) of selection. The results of this type of survey are then generalised back to the population from which the sampling units were chosen. Randomised sampling requires adequate capacity to be able to collect data from a large enough sample size. In the Rohingya context, representative surveys are carried out at both the individual (using the total number of people) or household level (based on the total number of households).In the Rohingya camps, camp or block boundaries usually determine the sample area size for randomised sampling. Camp population sizes vary greatly, and the sample size for more than one camp is very different accordingly. Populations vary from about 8,000 to close to 56,000 among camps (GOB/UNHCR 13/10/2022). Population figures for sample size determination can be obtained from UNHCR's population fact sheet, which is updated once a month (UNHCR accessed 21/11/2022). Geographic Information Systems calculate equal distances to select sample households within identified sample areas. Randomised sampling is also carried out at a structural level, for example, among health facility patients.

Sometimes, although a randomised sample is used, to have equal gender representation beyond the representativity of the population, surveying an equal number of men and women should also be considered.

Use non-probability or non-random sampling techniques to provide a good understanding of the situation in relation to specific topics and particular groups of people. Non-probability and non-random sampling techniques do not allow results to be generalised to the entire community. Purposive and snowball sampling are the non-probability techniques commonly used in the Rohingya camps because they allow for the deliberate selection of people with particular characteristics or circumstances of interest – e.g. people with disabilities, families with young children, and people of a particular gender, age, or skill set. Snowball sampling is particularly useful in data collection focused on people with particular life experiences or life conditions. Snowball sampling enables the identification and selection of survey participants, who would otherwise be difficult to find, through referrals of those they trust.

Conduct in-person surveys if possible. In general, in-person surveys are preferred, but phone surveys are possible if there are limitations recognised and mitigated. For example, phone surveys were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic as there were social distancing restrictions in place. Experience shows that when a translation of the answers was needed, data collection over the phone proved difficult as it entailed more verification to ensure quality. When phone surveys were used for data collection in 2020, organisations also required the technical capabilities to create a specific phone database (HA 23/11/2020).

2.2 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

KIIs are used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data in the humanitarian sector and are used for collecting the viewpoints, experiences, and narratives of different stakeholders in the Rohingya response. The interviewer usually asks open-ended questions to an 'informant' speaking for the group to collect qualitative and quantitative information on a specific group or theme. KIIs are also useful to supplement or triangulate data collected at the group level or in other assessments (ICRC 11/06/2020). Key informants (KIs) are people selected for their specific knowledge about certain aspects of the context, the site, the people, or the specific area of investigation, either because of their professional background, leadership responsibilities, particular personal experience, or gender (INEE accessed 18/10/2022).

When to consider using KIIs:
- to get deeper insights on a certain topic from people specialised in a certain area or from representatives of certain communities or groups
- to supplement, confirm, and triangulate data collected at the group level or findings from other assessments or data collection exercises; for example, when quantitative data collected through other methods needs to be interpreted (ICRC 11/06/2020)
- to obtain information that helps explore, describe, explain, and interpret behaviours, opinions, and experiences
- to have a set of insights or findings from other assessments or data collection that need to be confirmed, explored, explained, or followed up in some way
- to identify themes to be investigated by a larger study
- when there is an access barrier to the overall community or when there is limited time and resources.
- KIIs are not the right method:
- if quantitative data is needed
- if interviewing capabilities among a data collection team are limited or not available.

☑ *Good practices:*

Understand the position of Mahjis and Camp in Charge (CiC) in the community when selecting them as KIIs. In the Rohingya response, Mahjis have frequently been interviewed as KIs. In Myanmar, Rohingya people use the term 'Mahji' to refer to someone who leads a group and assists people in every possible way. Bangladeshi government officials have adopted the term to refer to government-appointed leaders of block subsections in camps selected from Rohingya community members (TWB 04/11/2018). In case Mahjis are selected as KIs, it is important to consider that they are appointed, not elected. Because of their involvement as leaders in service delivery at the block level and because of their knowledge about their community's needs, they may be more accountable to the authority that appointed them (the Government's Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner or RRRC) than to the community living in their block (ACAPS 06/06/2018 and 04/04/2019). The CiC is also often interviewed as a KI. The CiC performs site management and administration duties in the Rohingya camps and is also appointed by the RRRC (Cook and Ne 01/07/2018).

   Consider including KIs from a pool of people with specific knowledge in the camps and ensure that both male and female KIs are included. KIs in the Rohingya context with good knowledge of camp life and coordination include members of camp committees, which currently exist in four camps. The communities themselves elect these camp committees; one committee member represents each block in the camp. There are other committees on specific themes or infrastructure, such as learning centres and school management, disaster management and preparedness, and WASH committees, whose members are potential KIs. Members of the Protection Emergency Response Unit in each camp are knowledgeable about protection issues and response. Volunteers, such as the Safety Unit Volunteers and youth volunteers, are another example of a pool for KIIs, as are members of community watch groups.

2.3 GROUP DISCUSSIONS

GDs are another commonly used qualitative data collection method in the humanitarian sector. GDs encompass both community GDs (for general groups) and focus GDs (for specific groups or themes). In GDs, qualitative and quantitative information is collected in consensus with a group (ICRC 11/06/2020). A GD convenes between six and 12 people, and a facilitator leads a discussion to understand different perspectives and experiences about a given topic. A note taker is present also to observe participants' attitudes towards questions (ACAPS 31/12/2014).

When to use GDs:
- to collect rich responses as people brainstorm together and build upon one another's responses, often deepening ideas
- to probe 'why' and 'how' with more people
- to understand the perceptions of a particular group or category of people, not the entire population (e.g. mothers of young children, people with disabilities, adolescent girls)
- to understand commonalities, controversies, and dynamics within groups
- to ask follow-up questions
- to have a diversity of responses
- to supplement or triangulate data collected at the individual or household level.
- When GDs may not be the right method:
- when there is a need for in-depth individual/household information
- when the data collection team's capacity is lacking in terms of time and budget
- to discuss sensitive topics
- if there are topics that may be, or may be perceived to be, risky
- in contexts where participants may feel reluctant to express opinions that are different from the rest of the group
- when data collectors do not have strong facilitation skills, as they need to be able to guide a conversation without influencing it.

☑ *Good practices:*

In the Rohingya response, it is good practice to organise GDs that acknowledge traditional gender norms and consider power relations among different participants. **Doing so entails:**

   Giving equal importance to all voices. In some GDs, strong voices or personalities will dominate the discussion. One should be aware of the power dynamics playing in camp communities and how they influence people's ability to share their thoughts freely (Coyle et al. 12/05/2020). For example, Mahjis should not join a GD if all other group participants are community members without any particular authority in daily camp life. The presence of people with different levels of influence is unavoidable, and strong facilitation skills are needed to mediate discussions and keep all group members engaged in the conversation. Good observation skills are needed too to understand emerging group dynamics.

   Hold separate GDs for men and women. Social norms of the Rohingya limit women's access to public spheres (IOM/UN Women 04/2020). GDs can provide female participants an opportunity to be heard, which would otherwise not be possible.

Rohingya women might not feel comfortable and are not expected to talk freely in front of men, but they are less restrained to express opinions in a group with other women. The division by sex of GD participants in the camps is necessary to reflect social norms within Rohingya communities.

A direct observation is a useful method for capturing information needed without overburdening the population being interviewed by data collectors. Asking people at a site to show features of interest, such as latrines, drains, places they consider unsafe, etc., can also be a way to engage with them. Direct observations are used as a standalone data collection method or in combination with surveys, KIIs, and GDs.

When to use direct observation:
- Dedicating one facilitator to observing the discussion can yield insights into response behaviour and group dynamics. To be effective, observation needs to be conscious, whether structured or unstructured.
- Observation provides immediate information for assessing the status of existing infrastructure. It allows for the recording of both what was expected to be evident in the community and what was not observed.
- Through direct observation, answers obtained from respondents can be cross-checked and contextualised (ACAPS 04/04/2019).

When direct observation may not be the right method:
- If observations cannot be noted down on the spot but have to be remembered. This may result in the loss of details and impressions.
- If walking around and visiting specific sites (such as WASH facilities) would be considered intrusive.
- If movement within an area is limited and sites of interest are not accessible to data collectors.

☑ *Good practices:*

Including volunteers from the community and having them accompany the team is good practice to avoid having people in the area being observed to feel stressed or uncomfortable with the assessment team. Take time to explain to the volunteers why you are there and what you are looking at so that they can in turn explain it to the community. Listen to advice from the volunteers about any places you should not go to, including places that may be different for male and female members of the team.

Obtain authorisation for data collection

3.

Different types of organisations have different data collection approval processes in the Rohingya response. It is important to be aware of the process an assessment is required to follow and to be aware of any changes in this process.

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- In the Rohingya response, any UN organisation has a general annual approval from the Bangladeshi Government's RRRC to carry out data collection, but it is still good practice to let the RRRC know of any planned activity. If an INGO or NGO wants to conduct any research involving data collection, they must gain the approval of the RRRC for each activity. Upon receiving approval, it needs to be shown to the relevant RRRC-appointed CiC. The CiC must give their permission for data collection as well and might request additional documents, such as the budget, the number of data collectors, and the number of days of data collection.

- The Government provides a time in the day by which data collectors must have left the camp. As at November 2022, it was 16:00 in the winter and 17:00 in the summer, but be aware that these times can change. Although the CiC is aware of planned data collections because of the approval-seeking process, they should also be informed on the actual day of data collection, in person or by phone.

Prepare for data collection: establish data protection protocols, select the team and prepare them for their tasks

4.

Prior to collecting any data in the camps, some general operational considerations should be considered and planned for.

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This step is necessary to ensure the security and confidentiality of any personal data collected at any point during data collection and the consecutive processing and analysis of data. The data collection team and anybody with access to personal data needs to adhere to these protocols.

Be aware of language issues. The Rohingya in the camps speak Rakhine and Rohingya. Rakhine is the dominant local language in the Rakhine state in Myanmar where Rohingyas originate from, and Rohingya is another major language in Rakhine state (TWB 09/2019). Some Rohingya also speak Myanmar or Burmese, the official language in Myanmar, which is also taught in Myanmar schools and in the camps' learning centres. Research shows that Rohingya is the language that the Rohingya in the camps understand and prefer for oral communication (TWB 10/12/2018). Some Rohingya men speak English because of their educational background in Myanmar, but in the Rohingya learning centres, English is not taught and should not be used for data collection purposes.

The official and national language in Bangladesh is Bengali. There are also local languages; in Cox's Bazar district, the local language is Chittagonian. It is partly intelligible with Rohingya. The response often uses Chittagonian speakers to communicate with the Rohingya, but research has found that more than one-third of the Rohingya do not understand even basic Chittagonian (TWB 04/11/2018). Because of language issues, Rohingya speakers should be hired as data collectors if possible. Rohingya volunteers in the camps are appointed as data collectors by organisations working with CiC approval (KII IOM 25/10/2022).

When interpreters are involved in data collection, even if only in direct observation walks, concerns include the involvement of an additional person in a conversation, increasing the risk of compromising privacy, mistranslation, and human error.

When Rohingya is used as the language for data collection, it is possible to capture the information in Rohingyalish, a written form of the Rohingya language that uses Latin alphabets only (RLF, accessed 17/11/2022). In general, any writing, whether Rohingyalish, English, or Burmese, should use only one language to minimise inconsistencies (REACH 04/2019).

Enable better understanding and engagement through Rohingya data collectors. Other than speaking the same language, Rohingya data collectors also make Rohingya people feel more comfortable. Who is asking the questions has an impact on the answers, and this has been found to be especially true in the Rohingya response. The Rohingya speak more freely with Rohingya data collection teams than with Bangladeshi ones, especially when discussing topics such as social cohesion, safety and security, and satisfaction with humanitarian assistance. The Rohingya have been shown to be more hesitant to sharing negative experiences with Bangladeshi interviewers. Response biases have affected the understanding of the needs, preferences, and experiences of the Rohingya in Cox's Bazar. The use of Rohingya data collectors also makes an important difference in terms of how questions are understood (GTS 27/05/2021).

When developing a questionnaire in a language other than Rohingya (which should be the language in which the questionnaire is administered), plan for translation in advance. Rohingya data collectors must review and discuss any translated questionnaire to ensure that it accurately conveys the intended meaning of data collection. Rohingya data collectors should have the final say on the appropriate way to translate questions. They should also be asked to comment on the cultural appropriateness of questions, and their feedback should be incorporated into the questionnaire.

Form gender-balanced data collection teams and hire female data collectors for talking to women. Planning for women's participation in data collection in the camps usually involves:

- ensuring community sensitisation
- ensuring that hiring female data collectors is based on the samples and locations so that inter-camp movement is not an issue
- seeking support from male data collectors to spread the word for obtaining curricula vitae from women
- preparing the terms of reference in a way that considers the education level of female data collectors and focuses on basic experiences in data collection and communication.

Be aware that women may face barriers to being a data collector and that it can be more difficult to recruit female team members for a number of reasons, including the following:

- Rohingya society considers putting women and girls in a position where they interact with men who are not family members to be undignified and sometimes a harassment risk (ACAPS 04/03/2022).
- Family members, especially fathers, tend not to allow women to participate as data collection requires them to move around within the camps.
- Rohingya women are generally less educated than Rohingya men and sometimes lack the confidence and specific enumeration skills for data collection despite receiving the same amount of training on the topic (ACAPS 04/03/2022).

Prior to data collection, data collectors should be trained on the specific exercise they are about to begin for them to understand the tools, methodologies, purpose, referral mechanisms, and anything to be careful about. Any data collection team should receive training aimed at building long-term capacities. Practices from different Rohingya research teams in Cox's Bazar show the importance of investing in the training and capacity-building of Rohingya data collectors. For instance, in the past three years, the IOM Communications with Communities unit has invested in the training and capacity-building of a team of 32 Rohingya researchers, who have become capable of independently carrying out data collection (KII with operational expert 17/10/2022).

Before the start of data collection, ensure that all data collectors receive training on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), accountability to affected populations, disability and inclusion, and code of conduct at minimum. For further information on PSEA training, contact the PSEA network. For inquiries about disability and inclusion issues and how to conduct an interview with people with disabilities, contact specialist organisations, such as Humanity & Inclusion and the Age & Disability Working Group.

If possible, data collectors should also receive training in GBV and referral mechanisms, community engagement, and accountability to affected populations.

In the Rohingya response, training is conducted for data collectors and trainers of data collectors. Experts on mandatory topics must carry out the training of trainers on these topics.

Use experienced team members to train data collectors in general on data collection techniques, such as group facilitation and interview skills, so that they can handle sensitive topics and understand the position and reactions of interviewees without words.

Create a conducive respectful atmosphere when collecting data

5.

Community sensitisation at the beginning of the actual data collection is very important, especially when qualitative data is collected and even more so when engaging with women. Any question the Rohingya may have on the purpose of data collection, their own role in the process, and the purpose of their participation must be answered upfront.

5.2 ENSURE SAFE PLACES ARE AVAILABLE

- Data collectors should set up meetings in a place that is physically safe and psychologically comfortable for participants. Ensure that participants are consulted about the venue and agree to it. The venue should be close to the block where respondents live to prevent them from travelling far.
- Find a quiet, well-lit space in the camp for interviews or consultations. Ensure that only the person or group being interviewed is present in the room. Anyone else present should have permission from the respondent to stay. People with disabilities might want to attend with their caregivers. Caregivers should not intervene with the interview unless the person being interviewed has speaking difficulties, in which case the caregiver may answer some questions, or unless there are specific questions posed to the caregiver. Female participants mostly prefer one of the participants' shelters for hosting the group. They feel that a private shelter is a safe space with adequate privacy to conduct GDs. Men also prefer private shelters but also agree to have GDs in places such as mosques or *moktabs* (Muslim elementary schools).
- The locations selected should be adequate for participating mothers bringing their small children with them.

5.3 STICK TO THE SCHEDULE AND TIMING CONVENIENT FOR INTERVIEWEES

- The time of the meeting and duration of the discussion should be scheduled according to participants' preferences. As the Rohingya are Muslims, data collection should avoid prayer times. The Rohingya prefer to do interviews in the morning.
- When interviewing women, it usually takes a little more time to open up the atmosphere than it would with men. This difference needs to be factored in when planning interview slots and keeping time.

Having a comfortable space is important to create a conducive environment for exchanges and helps to build trust and connections.

- At the start of an interview, the Rohingya like to get to know the data collectors and may ask personal questions, such as where they are from, about their family, etc.
- In the Rohingya culture, people like to be addressed respectfully, and data collectors should adhere to that by using titles like *murrobi* (a way to respectfully address older people), *afa* (sister), etc. *Onera* is a formal way of saying 'you' that should be used even with children or someone who it might not normally be expected for, such as a person of the same age.
- Showing respect for Islam and its traditions is important for the Rohingya to feel at ease with the situation, as is using terms that express gratitude, such as *salaam* (greeting), *shukriya* (thank you), etc. Always use a respectful, measured tone of voice.
- Data collectors should not dress in an inappropriate way, do things that forbidden in Islam, or smoke in front of elders.
- Offering food and tea during a GD or KII is very important in Rohingya culture to establish a connection among all participants and to create a friendly atmosphere (KII, IOM protection 17/10/2021).

Ensure that informed consent is received and that data protection and ethical standards, including voluntary participation, are followed

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It is important to analyse and consider the risks for the Rohingya that could result from participating in data collection to prevent harm and to maximise benefits for the concerned population (ICRC 11/06/2020).

RESPECT THE 'DO NO HARM' PRINCIPLE WHEN COLLECTING DATA

This requires considering the protection and dignity of respondents. Not all questions should be asked, and asking direct questions about specific topics can place respondents at risk.
Example of themes in the camps that need to be treated carefully include:
- the relationship between security forces and the Rohingya
- the power structure within the Rohingya community
- deteriorating relationships with the host community
- specific gender and protection issues, such as domestic violence or the protection implications emerging from polygamy and GBV (ACAPS 02/05/2022)
- political beliefs
- issues related to bribery and corruption, particularly when it includes government officials, figures of authority, or security forces in the camps
- violating anonymity/confidentiality
- asking participants to share information that may put them at risk.

Questions of overall safety and observations may be asked – for example, 'How safe do you feel when using public latrines?' – but not questions about personal experiences. Proxy indicators are an alternative option – for example, 'Is there enough lighting in front of the latrines?' and 'Is there a lock on the inside of the latrines?'.

Avoid inappropriate questions and activities, which are those that are not important to the analysis and may place respondents at risk, such as:
- asking about village of origin, which could pose a risk in case of forced repatriation
- asking about certain types of vulnerability that the violence in Myanmar might have caused
- taking pictures, including of unaccompanied children, which could increase the risk of trafficking
- collecting signatures or thumbprints
- noting the exact location of the shelter and the Family Counting Number of a respondent.

Identifiable information should only be collected when it is really needed, for example, for targeting purposes or if a study is longitudinal and needs the same respondents in various data collection rounds, as in the Rohingyar hobor trend reports (IOM accessed 21/12/2022). In these cases, identifiable data (e.g. camp number, block number, name) should be collected and kept separately from the body of collected data. There should be certainty that they are not shared or disseminated.

RESPECT THE NECESSITY TO OBTAIN FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT FROM PARTICIPANTS

Free and informed consent may not always have been taken in the Rohingya camps. Sometimes, people in the camps feel compelled to participate in assessments because the Mahji or other people they respect, such as older people, tell them to do so. Sometimes, participants feel obliged to give their consent, as they fear that they will not receive an identity card or other support if they don't. If data collectors notice that people are not participating voluntarily or seem to prefer not to participate and have just been coerced, they should not insist on their participation (HRW 15/06/2021).

Data collectors need to obtain the consent of participants after informing them of the purpose for which data is collected and how the information will be used. Consent can be taken in writing (preferred) or verbally in the beginning of the survey or interview after the explanation of the study purpose and objectives. The data collectors must inform every participant that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any explanation and without prejudice. Even during a survey, participants can refuse to answer certain questions (ICRC 11/06/2020; IRC 17/02/2018).

Consent is also needed for any type of recording. An explanation of how confidentiality will be maintained when using recordings is also necessary. As a rule, recordings should never be taken on personal devices. Taking photos of people or shelters during or after the data collection is not permissible, even if the Rohingya do not express their disagreement. The Rohingya do not like getting their picture taken but do not like to say 'no' when asked either.

When children are involved in the data collection exercise, make sure to take specific child protection measures. The process for gaining consent for children is different and must include the consent of at least one parent, preferably both (ICRC 11/06/2020). If data collection involves children, the Child Protection group should be consulted. The Child Protection Working Group or UNICEF unit operating in the Rohingya response should be engaged for child-relevant data collection techniques, child protection, and child protection referral mechanisms. Please contact the Child Protection Sub-Sector for further information.

Give special consideration to the needs of participants with disabilities. For

data collections involving people with disabilities, the Washington Group set of questions should be used to establish prevalence and functional disabilities, and no other direct question should be asked regarding the prevalence of the disability (WG accessed 20/11/2022). The data collectors should not label or call any participant disabled. The language should be focused on difficulties, not disability. To enable people with disabilities to give their informed consent, the data collector may need to provide information on the use of the respondents' data in multiple formats. It may also be necessary to allocate more time for explanation and arriving at a decision. Some people with disabilities may wish to ask a trusted person to support them in making an informed decision (IASC 19/11/2019).

6.3 ENSURE THAT PROTECTION REFERRAL MECHANISMS ARE UNDERSTOOD.

Data collection teams must understand and know referral mechanisms within the humanitarian response. They must be able to respond appropriately to protection concerns when made aware of them through the appropriate referral mechanisms.

Good practices when protection concerns are encountered:
- Data collectors do not investigate the situation but instead contact the relevant focal point (Protection, GBV, or Child Protection) in a timely manner or share the contact details of these focal points with the person concerned. Up-to-date referral pathways are available for each camp from the Protection Sector.
- The individual is reassured.
- If the protection concern involves an adult, the data collector gets their informed consent before referring them to the focal points. If consent is not given, the data collector provides the contact details of the Protection focal point and the toll-free protection hotline number (16670), inviting the person to reach out to either of the contacts if and when needed.
- If the issue involves a child, the data collector contacts the Child Protection focal point, seeking the child's informed consent if the child is able to provide it.
- The data collector stays with the individual until help arrives if the person needs and/or wishes.
- If a person discloses personal information of a protection issue in the interview, the data collector asks their consent to refer them to get further help and follows up on this promise if consent is obtained.

6.4 PROTECT PEOPLE FROM PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM AND DISTRESS ARISING FROM QUESTIONS ABOUT THINGS THAT MAY HAVE HAPPENED TO THEM

Violence from Myanmar's security forces, including reported rape, murder, and arson, triggered the influx of the Rohingya in 2017. Make sure that the Rohingya do not feel uncomfortable or disturbed by any question about the violence they experienced (CFR accessed 03/11/2022). Asking people to talk about the violence risks reinvigorating the experiences they went through. If a question is triggering adverse reactions, data collectors should immediately stop and probe no further.

6.5 MAKE SURE THAT THERE IS NO BENEFIT FOR PARTICIPATION IN DATA COLLECTION

The use of financial incentives is generally not recommended for any primary data collection exercise as it sets expectations among members of the community and would be very expensive. Payment may also produce biased responses. Benefits are considered acceptable for participation in longitudinal data collection exercises, for example, when the provision of in-kind incentives, such as food rations, are meant to ensure consistent participation every few months.

Ensure the protection of collected data

All personal information collected must be kept confidential. The 'do no harm' principle entails that sensitive information must be handled with precautionary measures (HI/F3E 2018).

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Findings must be published as aggregated data, and analysis and should never reveal names and other potentially identifying information, such as exact locations of Rohingya households and photos with faces or locations that could lead to the identification of the participants or their shelters.

Individual data must not be disseminated or shared after collection. There have been concerns about data-sharing with the Myanmar Government for the facilitation of repatriation without the free and informed consent of the Rohingya in the camps (HRW 15/06/2021). Such actions can put respondents at risk.

If a participant withdraws from the study, their data must be deleted or destroyed.

7.

Close the feedback loop with data collectors and the participants

At the end of each data collection, data collectors should conduct a lessons learnt and feedback session. This session will reveal good practices and what could be improved next time. It will highlight how the people reacted to the questions. Their observations and qualitative input will help clarify points and make the data analysis and interpretation process much smoother. It also contributes to better including the community voice in the following data analysis phase. It is important to remember that the community and the participants in data collection should not just be seen as a source to extract information from; they own the data. Collectors should always go back to the community to inform them how their voices are being reflected in any publications that involve collected data. Discussing the findings with the community before publishing will also give a chance to correct any mistakes that may have been made.

Generally, results should be disseminated in the same communities as the sample population group, discussion group, or interviewees.

8.

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9.

The QR code redirects to the digital version of this document,
which contains links to the materials listed in the bibliography.