The purpose of this field guide is to provide field staff with simple direction for the planning, design and conducting of participatory assessment. The document provides basic tips to help teams to better structure the identification of data sources, conducting focus groups, reporting of outcomes and disseminating outcomes.

UNHCR Greece
June 2016

SIMPLIFIED FIELD GUIDE TO PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT

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Why Participatory Assessment?

- ❖ To better understand persons of concern in terms of their challenges, recommendations to overcome their challenges and their perception of their future
- ❖ Understanding the unique experiences of different segments of communities to ensure that programming and humanitarian aid responds to needs specific to specific groups
- ❖ To identify capabilities within the persons of concern to respond to their own needs and identify areas where humanitarian assistance needs to be boosted or removed
- ❖ To better inform programming and advocacy from the perspective of affected population.

Participatory assessment is NOT a replacement for other forms of assessments or data collection methods. It is a process that compliments and provides qualitative data to strengthen or triangulate information collected through other methods. It is also very important that outcomes of participatory assessment are conducted at the backdrop of all contextual and statistical information on the population as well as the socio-political and operational environment.

The participatory assessment is a qualitative process whereby information will be collected mainly through focus group discussions (FGDs) unless there is a clear need to conduct key informant interview. The FGDs are a semi-structured; done through guiding questions on relevant topics and facilitated by a team of 2-3 persons.

What are focus group discussions (FGDs)?
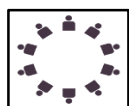
…are platforms for interaction of a group of individuals with some common interest or characteristics, brought together by a moderator, who uses the group and its interaction as a way to gain information about a specific or focused issue. The defining characteristics of each group varies from age to gender to nationality to social identity to specific needs.

Steps in the participatory assessment

1. Identifying Teams and Team Leaders
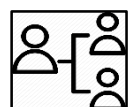
Participatory assessment, although led by UNHCR, is a multi-sectoral/multi-functional team effort – including government, NGOs and civil society organizations and volunteer groups. Each UNHCR Field Office/team will identify a focal person who will lead the process for the location in question. Relevant partner organizations identify focal persons who will (co) lead and facilitate the processes at site levels. Once these individuals are identified, the compositions of teams per location will be decided based on the number of FGDs to be conducted per site/location.

2. Identifying Sites

Considering the high number of sites Greece, it is important to decide whether conducting the FGDs in all sites or taking purposive sampling would be the best option. The general direction from the PWG meeting is to cluster sites together and conduct the selected sites. The criteria for selection of site could be size of population, profile (nationality, ethnicity…) of population in different locations, the availability of site management or lack thereof and/or a combination of factors. However, while selecting sites, it is particularly important to have a room for comparison based on the selection criteria. For example, our sampling should help us answer questions such as 'how is service delivery affected by the availability of site management support?'

3. Identifying Topics for FGD

Ideally, each main sector/topic should be discussed with all segments of a given community. However, given the limited time and human resources, it is recommended to discuss diverse but related topics with each groups. Please see Annex I for sample questions.

4. Composition of Participants for FGDs

The main factor in the decision on the composition of groups is common characteristics the groups share and whether they represent different segments of the community. Therefore, it is important to understand the profile of population before deciding the compositions. The larger the number of FGDs conducted, the more the representativeness. However, if and when time and human resources are factors in identifying the groups, consider the follow as the minimum:

| Group	Age	Gender
Adult men and women	18-55	Separate gender FGD
Adolescents	18-55	Separate gender FGD
Children	6-11	Mixed gender
Children	12-17	Separate gender FGD preferred
Elderly men and women	56+	Mixed group
Persons of minority population groups	18-55	Separate gender FGD preferred
Persons with specific protection concerns	Mixed	Separate FGD preferred
Community leaders	Adults	Mixed gender group
Community workers and volunteers (sector based)	Mixed	Mixed gender group, separate by sector
Members of the host community	Mixed	Separate gender FGD

The ideal size of a group is between 10-15 participants. It is large enough to get information from a relatively diverse angle and small enough to efficiently moderate the discussions.

When identifying certain groups for FGD, pay a special attention in order not to further hurt or stigmatize those groups. Instead, encourage some of them to take part in the 'mainstream' groups but ensure that they speak up. For example, topics pertaining to the LGBTI community are better discussed among the general community than you finding members of the LGBTI community, unless they specifically express their wishes to do so.

5. Collection of Data

As mentioned above, the information for participatory assessment is mainly collected through FGDs. When conducting Focus Group Discussions:
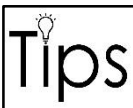
❖ Be prepared. Decide among yourselves who will be in-charge of moderating the discussion and who will be taking notes. Ensure all of you have a copy of the questions. Go through the questions before the FGDs (again!) and ensure that they are appropriate for the group you are facilitating.

❖ Make an appropriate sitting arrangement. The most preferred sitting arrangements are when people (including the team of facilitators) are sat in a circle. This helps you to make eye contact with everyone and to monitor the non-verbal communications. But most importantly, this provides a more level power relationship among the facilitators and participants.

❖ Introduce yourselves (the team). Ask the participants to introduce themselves. If you are conducting FGDs with community leaders, it is important to understand what the role of each person is in the group.

❖ Explain the purpose of the FGDs. Provide context in terms of what the process of PA and what purpose the FGD with the group serves. Clearly state what you intend to get out of the process and what this FGD is does not provide. Inform participants how long the discussion is expected to last. It is also important that you inform the participants that you and your team will be taking notes of the discussions.

❖ Go ahead with the questions and try to get answers from different participants. Encourage everyone to answer the questions but avoid singling out individuals. If someone does not want to speak, do not push. Look out for non-verbal language. Some people want to speak but they need encouragement to do so.

❖ Probe and guide! Sometimes, people prefer to give short answers. It will be up to you to probe by asking follow up questions and requesting for elaboration. Sometimes, people go off track and would like to discuss other things. Kindly remind them that this is not the venue for other topics and redirect the discussion. Setting out the purpose of the FGD at the beginning is important to redirect the discussion without offending anyone.

❖ When you hold FGDs with children, be create! Avoid complicated questions and use more interactive methods.

❖ At the end of the session, summarize key points to ensure that you captured all the important points discussed.

The ideal length of a focus group discussion is between 1:30 -1:45 hours. It is long enough to have a rich discussion and short enough to keep the participants focused. Do not forget to inform the participants (at the beginning) that you expect for the session to last this long.

When is a key informant interview necessary?

You can do a key informant interview when the issue you would like to discuss is sensitive in a group environment or if the topic is of a matter relevant to a very specific person. Key informant interview is also relevant if you are discussing a topic with high profile informants who may not have the time or do not feel comfortable to come to FGDs. You may also choose to use key informant interviews if a specific person is mentioned in the FGDs and you wish to triangulate information.

Note: FGDs are not the venue to discuss individual cases or issues pertaining to individual participants. They are planned to help you understand a bigger group of people represented by the group you are having the FGD with. However, more often than not, some people might want to bring up individual cases during FGDs. Also likely is some members of the community might approach you to inform you about individual cases they would like to be addressed. In this case, make sure that individuals are referred to relevant case management organization and/or organizations that are directly responsible to address such cases. In the absence of such services, ensure that the necessary information is collected and passed on to the UNHCR focal person on site.

6. Systematization of Data

This is the steps in the process where the team systematically categorizes data collected from each FGD. The data is mostly categorized as needs/challenges identified, recommendation for meeting gaps and challenges and resources and capabilities available within the community for meeting these gaps and challenges. This is also where the teams highlight unique (unexpected) points/issues raised during the FGDs and that might need further investigation. Information can be summarized in the table below.

Site	Thematic Area	Main Findings	Proposed Solutions by Community	Recommendations by the PA team

7. Compiling of the Report

Once the teams send the systematized data from their respective FGDs, the information will be compiled according to agreed format for the report (see Annex I for sample reporting format).

8. Feedback

Before the report is finalized, it is important that the draft be shared with respective teams to ensure that the information collected from the community are appropriately reported. It is highly recommended that teams run quick feedback sessions with their respective data groups to ensure that the report highlights the information as provided by the target groups.

9. Finalizing Report

Once the draft report is reviewed, feedback is collected from concerned focal persons and incorporated, the report will be finalized, ready for dissemination.

10. Sharing Findings with Relevant Stakeholders

This is the phase where the outcome of the participatory assessment are shared with relevant state actors, the wide refugee community, humanitarian actors and the host communities. In addition to sharing the report, it is recommended that relevant actors come together in events - such as panel discussions - whereby the highlights of the outcomes are discussed.

UNHCR Greece
Summary of Process: Participatory Assessment
June 2016

Activity	Objective	Outcome	Timeline
Identify PA team leaders/focal persons (UNHCR + Partners)	▪ Establish a clear channel of communication, working arrangement among concerned actors	▪ Focal persons/team leaders identified by location	1st week
Meeting with team leaders to map locations, decide on potential team compositions, determine dates, create 'questions' bank)	▪ Map locations ▪ Agree on team compositions ▪ Agree on dates for the exercise ▪ Create 'questions' bank' ▪ Logistical requirements identified and addressed	▪ Team composition established ▪ Tentative dates agreed up on ▪ Questionnaires created	1st week
Identify PA team members	▪ Ensure all locations are adequately covered	▪ A list of staff members taking part in the exercise finalised	1st week
Conduct PA workshop	▪ Familiarise participants with the concept and process of PA ▪ Determine FGD themes ▪ Establish FGD teams ▪ Create PA work plan ▪ Agree on the format of the PA report	▪ Staff trained, teams established, work plan designed, format of the report agreed up on	1st week
Conduct FGDs	▪ Collect information	▪ FGDs conducted and information collected	2nd week
Systematize information	▪ Clean and categorize information based on the groups and the themes identified, ▪ Identify missing data (if any and collect additional information, if necessary	▪ Information systematized	3rd week
Compiling report	▪ Ensure the report is drafted based on systematized information and according to agreed up on format	▪ Report drafted, reviewed and finalized.	4th week
Dissemination of PA outcomes	▪ Ensure that persons of concern, relevant authorities, partner organizations and donor organization access information and recommendations identified through the exercise	▪ Relevant audience received the snapshot and detailed findings and recommendations of the exercise	5th week

PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT

QUESTIONNAIRE

PROTECTION

Registration/Documentation

1. Are most of you registered and have Asylum Certificates?
2. Are there any unregistered refugees and how many approximately? If yes, why were people not registered?
3. How did you get information about the registration process?
4. Did you face any problems in the process of your registration? What were the problems?
5. Do most registered refugees have residence permits?
6. Do you face any particular problems in the process of obtaining documents? What are these problems?
7. Were you properly guided on how to obtain residence permits? By who?
8. What improvements would you suggest for the registration process?

Access to UNHCR Facilities

Are you aware of UNHCR services such as free legal aid and referral to other service providers? Do you know the location and phone numbers of UNHCR office and its protection partner CDO?

1. How do you know about UNHCR's, Partners', other agencies' services?
2. Has there been any awareness sessions on refugee rights and legal aid organized in your location?
3. Do you know that all UNHCR's services and that of its partners are free of cost?
4. Have you benefitted from UNHCR assistance and protection services? Which ones?
5. Have you ever been asked to pay money for those services?
6. Do you have challenges/difficulties to access UNHCR services? What are the challenges you face?
7. Are there any marginalized groups or individuals that have problems in accessing UNHCR assistance and services?
8. What suggestions would you make to address their problems?
9. Do you have suggestions for improvement in delivery of UNHCR assistance and services?
10. Are you aware of any complaint mechanism for in and off camp refugees? Where do you go to express your concerns, complaints or feedback?

Safety and Security

1. What are the major security challenges experienced by refugees in your current location? What are the security risks?
2. Do you feel confident in approaching local police to have your security issues addressed?
3. Do you feel discriminated and how?
4. Are you aware of your rights as refugees and obligations?
5. Do you know the emergency numbers for police, hospital, and fire department?
6. Do you face any hostilities from the locals? If yes, what type of hostilities?
7. Are there any ethnic or religious minorities faced with specific security risks? What are those ethnic and religious minorities?

8. What do you think can be done to improve the situation?
9. How can you help in improving the situation?
10. In your community before displacement, how did you deal with this issues? How can you implement it here?

Sexual and Gender Based Violence

1. In this community, is there a place where women and girls feel unsafe or try to avoid? (Day? Night?) What is it that makes this place unsafe?
2. From whom can women and girls seek assistance in case of a security problem?
3. According to you, what could be done in this community to create a safe environment for women and girls?
4. Describe what kinds of violence (physical, sexual, etc) in the community?
5. Do women/girls face violence in the family and the community? Describe the kind of violence
6. What happens to the perpetuators of these acts of violence against women and girls? Are they punished? If so, how?
7. Without mentioning names or indicating any one means, according to you which group(s) of women and girls feels the most insecure or the most exposed to risks of violence? Why? Which group(s) of women and girls feels the most secure? Why?
8. How does the family treat a woman or a girl who was the victim of rape or sexual assault? How do they support her?
9. What do women and girls do to protect themselves from violence? What does the community do to protect them?
10. What do women usually do after they have experienced such violence? Do they seek help?
11. When a woman or girl is the victim of violence, where does she feel safe and comfortable going to receive medical treatment?
12. Are there other services or support (counselling, women's groups, legal aid, etc.) available for women and girls that are victims of violence?
13. What do men and women think about this violence (e.g. should there be anything done on part of UNHCR to help refugee families/communities eradicate or lessen the occurrence of violence?)

Child Protection

1. What do children do in their free time?
2. Who looks after children at home?
3. Are there safe places to play in this community?
4. Are there child friendly spaces available for children to access? Do you use them?
5. What are the reasons prevent children from playing or using services?
6. What challenges do you face in accessing CFS activities?
7. What are the things/activities that you like the most?
8. What kind of things makes you happy or comfortable?
9. What are the main problems that you face now?
10. What would help you solve these problems?
11. In which areas do you not feel safe? (this can be done through: direct questioning, drawing, mapping, etc)
12. Who would you go to talk to in the event of feeling threatened or unsafe?
13. Do you know if there are any of the following groups/children in this location?

- Children separated from their parents
- Children living on the street
- Orphans living in the community
- Children who have been associated with fighting forces
- Child-headed households
- Children with disability

14. Are you or any of your siblings working?
15. Why are you or they working?
16. In what conditions are you working?
17. How long do you work per day?
18. When do you start and finish your work?
19. How many other children are working with you?
20. Are you paid per day or month? Do you receive your pay on time? Do your parents/or someone else receive your pay or it is given directly to you?
21. What would you do if you would not have to work? Are they paid proportionately as the locals?

SERVICES

Basic Services

1. Do you face problems regarding housing issues? What are the problems
2. Do you have access to utilities, water, and electricity?
3. What are the main challenges you have regarding those facilities?
4. Do you have access to public services?
5. Do you receive food regularly? If not, why not?

Education

1. What are the reasons/obstacles that prevent parents from sending the children to school?
2. Do you have to pay fee for your children at the primary and secondary level? What is the amount you pay?
3. Is the level of fee charged the same as for the local children?
4. How much distance children have to cover to reach schools?
5. Do you pay for the transportation to school and how much?
6. If children are not attending schools, what do they do?
7. What type of jobs children have to do to contribute to the family's income?
8. Are there special schools for physically and mentally challenged children?
9. What do girls and boys do in their spare time at home?
10. Have children ever complained about physical abuse in schools? What do children complaint about, what are the problems that children face at school?
11. How do you think these problems can be solved?
12. Any suggestions to enable children go to school, who are compelled to work to supplement in the earning of the family?
13. Do you prefer the adults to go to adult literacy programs or to vocational training?
14. What would you need to enable you send your children to schools?

Health

1. Do you and your families face any health issues, conditions or disabilities?

2. Where do you seek help when you have health issues?
3. Do you and your families have access to government health facilities?
4. What health concerns are most widespread in your community?
5. What are the most challenging health problems faced by the community?
6. Who normally takes care of people when they get sick?
7. Are there qualified doctors within the refugee community who can be approached e.g. at night, if there is any emergency attention required?
8. What is health care available for pregnant women? Where? The cost? What is the care available for pregnant women? What is the cost? Is there member in the community provide health care for pregnant women?
9. What is the immunization status of children under 5 years of age?
10. Is the community aware of the importance of hygiene and health e.g. boiling the water properly before drinking it?
11. Is there insecticide spray mechanism?
12. What do you do in case of emergency and where do you seek help?
13. Do you have contact numbers of Ambulance or nearby hospitals where you can get support on immediate basis? If not: What usually happens in times of need?
14. How can the refugee community support the efforts to improve health services and the situation in the site?

PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

1. Are their female or child headed households within your location?
2. What specific risks women and children have experienced in your location of residence?
3. Do you know of persons or organizations that have helped or could help address the specific risks faced by women and children?
4. Are there many physically and mentally challenged persons within the refugee community in your location?
5. What are the available services to persons with mental and physical disabilities?
6. What are the challenges persons with physical/metal disabilities have to access services?
7. Who does offer support to persons with disabilities to meet their social, economic, medical needs in the family and the community?
8. What do you suggest can help improve the situation of physically and mentally challenged persons in the community?

LIVELIHOODS and SELF RELIANCE

1. How do you meet your expenses?
2. What income generation opportunities are available for the refugees?
3. Do physically challenged persons have access to livelihood opportunities?
4. Who normally works within families, men or women or both? What is the age?
5. What are the major obstacles in finding work?
6. Do women face problems of lack of access to markets, supplies, technology, credit, skills training and information, and lack of decision-making powers? Do men face similar problems?
7. What are the work related challenges and risks you face?

8. Do children work? What types of work do children do? What type of jobs children have to do to contribute to the family's income?
9. Who decides how resources available within families and the community are to be used?
10. What is the impact of these problems on girls, boys, adolescents, women, men?
11. What type of skills trainings are available for both men and women?
12. Can the skilled men and women within the community train others?
13. What type of skills are needed for both men and women to enable them fend for themselves?
14. Do you prefer the adults to go to adult literacy programs or to vocational training?
15. Would you suggest a project where both men and women could work together and community owns the project?
16. What can be done to increase employment opportunities so that refugees can become self-reliant
17. Do you have to work under exploitative conditions? For example, working longer hours than locals for the same or less salary and threatened with summary dismissal?
18. How can access to livelihoods and self-reliance be achieved? How can you support these efforts?

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

1. Do you have leadership committees? How were they organized?
2. Are these committees useful? What is the role of the committee?
3. What are the community activities that you have? What time are those activities held?
4. What additional benefits to the wider community could your committees offer?
5. Do you participate in any community activities?
6. Do men and women have the same level of participation in community activities?
7. How do female and child headed households sustain themselves? Is there extended family or community support available?
8. How do the community members support each other?
9. Are there any stigmas or special issues stopping you from joining the committees?
10. Who do you normally go to seek help from within the community?
11. What areas of concern are there in your life that you think can be addressed through the support from your community?
12. What can be done to encourage the skills/participation within the community?
13. Would you be willing to play a role in the community to help improve the situation of refugees? What does motivate you?
14. What can be done to encourage the positive use of the skills the community have?
15. How do you think you are perceive by the host community?
16. What do you think could be done by the community to address this?
17. What skills do you have within the community to change the way people think about you?
18. Of all the issues just discussed, which one do you consider the most important and urgent?

Title of the Document