



# WOMEN'S REFUGEE COMMISSION

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## Ethical Guidelines for Working with Displaced Populations

Revised May 2016

## Research. Rethink. Resolve

These guidelines were written by the Women's Refugee Commission's Accountability Working Group.

Please send feedback to [SvatiS@wrcommission.org](mailto:SvatiS@wrcommission.org).



The Women's Refugee Commission advocates for laws, policies and programs to improve the lives and protect the rights of refugee and internally displaced women, children and young people, including those seeking asylum—bringing about lasting, measurable change.

The Women's Refugee Commission is a 501(c)(3) organization.

[womensrefugeecommission.org](http://womensrefugeecommission.org)

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# Overview: Seven Things You Need to Know

- 1 **First, do no harm.** Ensure that the person will not be endangered physically, psychologically, culturally, economically or in any other way by participating. You can unknowingly retraumatize the subject by the types of questions you ask, how you ask them and the answers you seek to elicit. Avoid questions, attitudes or comments that are insensitive to cultural values, place a person in danger or reactivate a person's pain or grief from traumatic events such as gender-based or other violence. Have referral services in place in case of retraumatization.
- 2 **State the purpose of the project.** Interviewers should be clear about the purpose of the project and should not give false hope. Communicate that the Women's Refugee Commission is neither a grant-making organization nor an aid organization, but rather an organization focused on creating long-term change to improve the lives and protect the rights of refugee women, children and young people through research and advocacy.
- 3 **Inform the person of his or her rights,** such as the right not to participate, the right to confidentiality and the right to receive feedback. Inform subjects of the purpose of the project/audio/video/film/photograph. Ensure that he or she has seen an example of the context, such as a report or web page in which his/her interview/photograph will be used.
- 4 **Get verbal and/or written consent** from the person by having him or her sign, mark with an X or agree on camera an authorization and release form (see page 18) with the above full understanding, before taking photos, filming or taping.
- 5 **Get verbal consent** from your focus group after a thorough verbal explanation of the written consent form.
- 6 **Follow the organizational policy on gifts and compensation** (see page 11). Reimbursing expenses for travel or offering refreshments during the focus group meeting is allowable, as is offering a small token of gratitude such as a beverage, tea or pencils for their voluntary participation. The Women's Refugee Commission does not further compensate for voluntary participation.
- 7 **Disguise the subject's identity in your notes** by using pseudonyms and keep information about who is present separate from discussion notes. Notes, if falling into the wrong hands, can have dire consequences. Confidentiality is paramount.

Report violations of the Women's Refugee Commission ethical guidelines to Sarah Costa, Executive Director, [SCosta@wrcommission.org](mailto:SCosta@wrcommission.org) or 212.551.3089, or Svati Shashank, Chief Legal Officer, [SvatiS@wrcommission.org](mailto:SvatiS@wrcommission.org) or 646.693.8124. Or send a message to the confidential email box [ethics@wrcommission.org](mailto:ethics@wrcommission.org) or leave a message at 212.551.3115 saying you wish to discuss an ethics issue. Someone will contact you to follow up.

# Guidelines for Media, Film, Photography and Interviews

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

There are no better advocates for refugee issues than refugees, internally displaced people and asylum seekers themselves. At the same time, it is our duty to do everything we can to ensure their privacy and protection.<sup>1</sup>

Staff of the Women's Refugee Commission and their collaborators undertake information gathering in refugee, internally displaced and other settings, which we use in our advocacy to improve the lives of refugee and internally displaced women, young people and children. The work is complex in terms of human relationships, logistics, partners and advocacy. It is inevitable that misunderstandings, ambiguities and the need to make choices among apparently incompatible values will arise. Staff of the Women's Refugee Commission and their collaborators are responsible for grappling with such difficulties and for resolving them in ways compatible with the principles described below.<sup>2</sup>

The following five principles are gleaned from the codes of ethics of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, National Association of Social Workers, the American Anthropological Association, the American Psychological Association, the Helsinki Accords, the Geneva Conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### Beneficence and Nonmaleficence

"First do no harm." The overall dignity, rights, safety and security, both psychological and physical, of the person being interviewed, photographed or filmed must take priority over all else, including our advocacy and promotion of refugee issues. When dilemmas emerge, Women's Refugee Commission staff and their collaborators will attempt to resolve these dilemmas in the manner that produces the least harm possible to all involved.

### Fidelity and Responsibility

Given that the welfare and rights of the person being interviewed, photographed or filmed take precedence over all else, Women's Refugee Commission staff and their collaborators must be aware of their responsibilities to the communities they serve.

Included in these responsibilities are:

- > upholding professional standards of conduct;
- > clarifying professional roles and obligations;
- > accepting responsibility for appropriate behavior;
- > managing conflicts of interest that could lead to exploitation or harm.

In cooperation with other professionals and institutions, the Women's Refugee Commission is also concerned about the ethical compliance of our partners' professional conduct.

### Integrity

Staff of the Women's Refugee Commission and their collaborators will seek to promote accuracy, honesty and truthfulness in all work, including interviewing, photographing, filming, data analysis and report writing. There should never be fraud, subterfuge or intentional misrepresentation of fact. Staff and collaborators must strive to keep promises made and avoid unwise or unclear commitments. Deception is never justifiable.

### Justice

Women's Refugee Commission staff and their collaborators recognize that fairness and justice entitle all persons to access and benefit from their contributions to work undertaken. Staff and collaborators must exercise reasonable judgment and take precautions to ensure that their potential biases, the boundaries of their competence and the limitations of their expertise do not lead to or condone unjust practices.

### Respect for People's Rights and Dignity

Women's Refugee Commission staff and their collaborators respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality and self-determination. We are aware that special safeguards may be necessary to protect the rights and welfare of persons or communities whose vulnerabilities impair autonomous decision-making. We take into consideration and respect cultural, individual and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language and socioeconomic status. We consider these factors when working with members of such groups. We will not knowingly participate in or

condone activities of others based on prejudices.

No code or set of guidelines can anticipate unique circumstances or direct actions in specific situations. The individual staff person or collaborator must, at times, be willing to make carefully considered ethical choices and be prepared to make clear the assumptions, facts and issues on which those choices are based. These guidelines therefore address general contexts, priorities and relationships that should be considered in ethical decision-making in our work.<sup>3</sup>

## THE GUIDELINES

*(Adapted from International Rescue Committee Guidelines on Privacy and Protection and UNICEF Ethical Guidelines.)*

*Note: When the word “interviewer” is used, this can also mean photographer, cameraperson, researcher—essentially, you. The words “person,” “subject” and “participant” are used interchangeably to indicate the interviewee or person you are photographing or filming.*

### Rights of Subject

The interviewer should respect a subject’s right to:

- > privacy and confidentiality;
- > protection from any harm or retribution, including the potential for harm or retribution;
- > have his or her opinions heard and to participate in decisions affecting him or her;
- > information about the organization, the interviewer, the intent of the visit and the organization’s limitations in what it can provide;
- > receive feedback on how the information is used;
- > decline to participate;
- > participate.

These rights are explained further under Informed Consent on page 9.



Liv Ullmann, Women’s Refugee Commission co-founder and honorary chair, with Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

## WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN

When trying to determine the best interests of a child, the child’s right to have his or her views taken into account are to be given due weight in accordance with his or her age and maturity. Those closest to the child’s situation and best able to assess it are to be consulted about the political, social and cultural ramifications of any reportage.

# Before the Session

## PREPARATION

Determine the “what,” “why” and “how” of collecting information. Before developing any activities, it is important to design a strategy for the inquiry.

Consider the purpose for gathering the information or pursuing the project in the first place. Every project needs an explicit purpose. Consider if the interview or research is absolutely necessary. Is there another way to gather the information without conducting a survey or interviewing human subjects?

There are numerous ways to collect information using qualitative or quantitative methods, or a mix of both. Qualitative methods include observations (ranging from researcher as complete participant to complete observer), interviews (including face-to-face, phone, group) and document reviews. Quantitative methods are represented by the survey (censuses, population-based or among subgroups), which is a systematic and well-defined process of data collection.

In general, qualitative methods are used to identify perceptions, feelings and sensory experiences, while quantitative questions can identify knowledge, attitude and behavior/practice (KAB/P) levels, in addition to socio-demographics. Both have their benefits and limitations; while the former can generate subjective and attitudinal experiences, the latter can provide group-level summary statistics that are generalizable. It is generally best to use a triangulation of methods so that data collection is not reliant on only one method with its inherent biases.<sup>4</sup> See Annex 2 on research methods for more information on research design.

If the purpose is for research, determine the analysis and information dissemination plans in advance so that the data are not manipulated to draw or present false conclusions, which has ethical implications for the integrity of the research.

## Reflection and Research

Preparation for fieldwork should also involve:

- > Carefully considering the potential ethical issues that may be encountered in the project, keeping methodology in mind.
- > Considering whether the type of data collection

methodology requires internal or institutional review board approval.

- > Determining how to reach marginalized people and going beyond working with the “usual suspects.”
- > Obtaining up-to-date and accurate information about the research location, cultural values and the current political situation. Local community leaders, NGO staff members, academics, rights monitors and journalists may all be good sources.
- > Obtaining advice from knowledgeable locals or experts in the culture of the community to be discussed/photographed/filmed regarding the suitability of particular methods and the most appropriate way to raise specific issues.<sup>5</sup>
- > Considering how your own culture may impact the process.
- > Considering the potential advantages and disadvantages of using photography, video and audio equipment. While different media may be helpful, it may also change the results of your research. Individuals interviewed may be more or less willing to reveal information if it is recorded, and it may also be distracting.

## Questions

When formulating questions, make sure you know:

- > the correct ways of beginning, carrying out and ending a conversation between the person you are intending to interview and yourself (taking into account factors such as gender, relative age and other aspects of status) in the social or cultural group concerned;
- > cultural ways of framing questions and answers;
- > if the topic is one that can be discussed in conversation, if it can be discussed within that culture or if it is of interest;
- > the words and phrases normally used to discuss the topic, and what they mean; and
- > that we are only asking questions within the scope of the project/research and not those that are beyond our capacity or intention to address.

## INFORMED CONSENT

The initial step in this process should include discussing the assessment or research with the community through key community leaders to seek their approval and support. It is also important to consult with local organizations on the best ways to approach the community.

Informed consent is a process, not a form. Informed consent is the term that describes the communication process that enables individuals to make an informed choice about participation in the project. Consent is ongoing, starting well before any forms are signed and continuing until the subject's participation is complete.

The process includes the discussion that occurs between the interviewer and the participants as well as the written document that formalizes the agreement to participate and documents the process.

### Discussion and Information

For consent to be informed, the participants must fully understand the project. Therefore, information must be conveyed in a manner that enhances understanding rather than just provides disclosure.<sup>6</sup>

### Purpose and Intention

- > For interviews, make sure that the subject knows he or she is talking to a reporter or researcher.
- > Ensure that the subject knows the purpose of the interview/photo/film and its intended use. If possible show samples of Women's Refugee Commission documents where photos and materials are used.
- > Explain possible misinterpretation some people might have when sharing with a global public audience, e.g., discussing HIV/AIDS means the person in the photo might be construed by some as having HIV/AIDS.
- > Allow the subject to ask questions about the interviewer.
- > Make sure the subject has no false expectations about how the research project or subsequent programs will benefit his or her family.

### Subject's Right to Say "No"

- > Ask the subject if his or her participation will conflict with other engagements or responsibilities.
- > Time should always be allowed for the person to reflect on the consequences of his or her participation and/or to consult guardians, other adults or friends.

- > Ensure that the subject has enough time to understand that he or she has the right to refuse to answer any questions, withdraw from the session at any time or pull the interview/image after completion of the project.
- > Identify and provide real opportunities for the subject to pull out at each distinct stage of the research.

### Permission

- > Permission must be obtained in order to ensure that the subject is not coerced in any way and that he or she understands the implications of being part of a story that might be disseminated locally and globally.
- > Secure permission from the subject for all interviews, surveys, videotaping and, photographs beforehand. Verbal consent following the guidance of the consent form is acceptable, but when possible and appropriate, this permission should be in writing.
- > For focus groups, it is recommended that written or oral permission be obtained from all participants. It is *required* that the facilitator of the focus group convey the contents of the consent form *before* the session. The facilitator must indicate on the consent form that this has been done, and the form filed in the Women's Refugee Commission office.
- > As photographs and video material make identification much easier, consent in the use of cameras must be negotiated with particular care, ensuring that participants have fully considered the possible ramifications.
- > Understand that even if one participant in a group interview objects, photography, video and audio may not be used.
- > If any form of payment or compensation is involved, the terms of payment and conditions under which partial or no payment will be received must be described in the consent form and discussed before participation.

### Written Consent Form

Consent forms generally have the following information: purpose of study; procedures involved; withdrawal procedures; subject termination; risks/discomforts; benefits; cost/compensation; and alternatives. Language used in consent forms and/or information sheets must be understandable to the research participant.

- > It should be written at no higher than an 8th grade reading level.

- > Use short sentences and non-technical terms.
- > Do not use qualifying phrases such as “You understand that.” Substitute wording such as “You have been told” or “It has been explained to you.”
- > Avoid language that may appear to waive any rights to which the participant is entitled.
- > All scientific, medical and technical terms should be defined or explained.
- > If persons are involved who are unable to give informed consent, provide for consent from a legally authorized individual and provide a consent form to be read by or read to the research participant.
- > For non-English-speaking people, provide both English-language and translated versions.
- > Clearly state the names and contact details of the interviewer, organization and other stakeholders in the project so that children and parents can contact them.
- > Check your spelling and grammar.

There is a template Women’s Refugee Commission authorization and release form attached at the end of this document.

## REFERRALS

Staff should understand their obligation to protect and support women, children and young people who are abused or who are at risk of being abused. This includes being trained to talk to and behave sensitively and appropriately with these women, children and young people, being aware of any legal obligations to act, and of what support services, if any, may be available. Always make a concerted effort to know what services are available for referrals and/or develop a response protocol when/if a subject reveals that he or she is in danger or in need of services. This is especially important if the topic is sensitive, for example, gender-based violence.

**Research should only be conducted in locations where referral systems are available or where they can be established to prevent women and girls from being abused simply for their participation in a study.**

Where participants reveal they are at risk of abuse or harm, the interviewers must take into account the person’s view and wishes in deciding how to act. Where the project is with people who are by definition abused, such as sexually exploited children, it may be necessary to draw up special procedures, ensuring that those involved are clear about the limits of confidentiality.<sup>8</sup> Sometimes the most staff can do is give an explanation that they cannot do anything to help the subjects, but

## WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN<sup>7</sup>

If children under 18 are involved, request parental permission and consent of the child. The text should state that the project has been discussed with the parent and/or child and they agree to participate.

## WHEN WORKING WITH THOSE WHO ARE UNABLE TO READ

It is possible, even likely, among the populations with whom the Women’s Refugee Commission works, that individuals and focus group participants will be unable to read. In these situations, it will be necessary to read the consent form out loud. The consent form should be read slowly and clearly followed by translation in the local language.

- > If a non-literate respondent will be interviewed individually, the Women’s Refugee Commission should decide in advance whether it is better to have the person put an “X” to note his/her signature, or whether it is better to obtain his/her fingerprint. The cultural context, in addition to the use of collected information, should be considered.
- > For group interviews or focus group discussions, the moderator should inform the participants that they are free to leave at any time during the meeting, free to stay and remain silent and to answer only when they want to. Then ask the participants to acknowledge they understand what you have said and agree. The group can decide if it would like to choose one person to sign the consent form on behalf of the group or for each person to sign the consent form to reflect this. It is important to remind participants that their responses should reflect their general views on the situation and not necessarily their own personal experiences. In addition, all information shared within the group is confidential to the group and should not be shared with others.

there should be a response strategy planned before every trip.

## CHOOSING PARTICIPANTS AND COLLABORATORS

### Discrimination

When choosing refugees to interview/photograph/film, do not discriminate based on sex, race, age, religion, status, educational background or physical abilities.

### Gender<sup>9</sup>

The gender dimensions of the intended research should be considered in advance; consider especially the ways in which the interview should be best conducted to ensure that they women and girls able to speak comfortably about their experiences. These guidelines also apply to translators.

- > If the interviewer is male and intends to work with females, he should consider recruiting a female research assistant, especially when planning to work in a conservative culture where social interaction between the sexes may be highly constrained.
- > Adolescent girls and boys may feel more comfortable talking about personal issues with someone of the same sex.
- > In some societies access to girls and young women may be difficult to gain. Particular care is needed to ensure that girls are able to contribute their experiences, views and aspirations in a manner that best suits their circumstances. A similar point can be made for people with disabilities and for those whose lives do not fit with local ideals, e.g., children who have dropped out of school, those living on the street and those who are of especially low socioeconomic standing.
- > Conduct sex- and age- disaggregated focus groups with men, women, boys and girls. It may also be appropriate to further separate groups of young people 10-24 years of age. See Annex 2 on research methods for more information on sampling techniques.

It is crucial to understand how consequences of conflict rarely affect males and females in the same manner. For example, in many settings girls are especially likely to be subject to sexual abuse. This should be considered when formulating questions and collecting resources for the subjects.

## Finding a Translator

- > Work with a translator or local person to develop or review the questions before proceeding with the interview. It could also be useful to have individual and focus group questions reviewed by people in the field in advance of the mission to make any adjustments. If time allows, it would also be good to pre-test translated research tools and translate them back to English to determine appropriateness and enhance validity<sup>10</sup> and reliability.<sup>11</sup> Also review protocols and ethical guidelines with the translator so he/she is familiar with how to maintain research/media integrity.
- > With interviews and focus group discussions, there is a choice between translator facilitation and translated facilitation. The former would require more time for training the translator to ensure that she/he is appropriately trained to facilitate, although it would cut down on translation time during the actual session. A longer debriefing session with the researchers is also needed, which may not always be feasible. Translated facilitation is more feasible in assessments with limited time, although each session would require time for translation, with interruptions to discussion. It is important to note that the quality of data may be affected with either translation method.  
For more information on translated focus group discussions, see Gisele Maynard-Tucker, "Conducting Focus Groups in Developing Countries: Skill Training for Local Bilingual Facilitators" *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol. 10 No. 3, May 2000, 396-410.
- > Try to find an objective translator. Nationality, ideology, ethnicity and sex should be considered.
- > Translators should undergo background checks.

## PAYMENT/GIFTS/COMPENSATION

The form of compensation for interview participants should be discussed with the host organization in advance of the meeting or interview.

Reimbursing expenses for travel or offering refreshments during the focus group meeting is allowable, as is offering a small token of gratitude such as a beverage, tea or pencils for their voluntary participation. The Women's Refugee Commission does not further compensate for voluntary participation.

## Avoid Possible Group Tension

- > Keep in mind that in situations where there is expectation or a clear responsibility to reward certain individuals, this should be done in a manner that avoids fueling tension within the community. Attempts to offer rewards secretly may backfire, fueling resentment. It may be safer to make transparent the criteria for participation and the reasons for payment/ reimbursement of particular individuals.

## Other Potential Costs to Participants

Even if there is no expectation of material reward, attention must be paid to the possible loss of income and other costs involved for participants.

- > Transportation and other incidental costs should be reimbursed and refreshments or meals provided to participants.
- > Rewards do not have to be clearly economic. In some settings the provision of symbolic rewards—such as a certificate to acknowledge participation—may be appreciated and may avoid tension, especially when the criteria for participant selection have been made clear in advance.<sup>12</sup>
- > It is imperative that raising expectations of any lifestyle changes as an outcome of participating in the project be avoided.<sup>13</sup>

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST/FINANCIAL INTEREST

The Women's Refugee Commission staff will faithfully discharge their duties and will refrain from knowingly engaging in any outside matters of financial interest incompatible with the impartial, objective and effective performance of their duties. They will not realize personal gain in any form that would influence improperly the conduct of their duties. They will not knowingly use Women's Refugee Commission property, funds, position or power for personal or political gain. They will inform their supervisor in writing of reasonable foreseen potential conflicts.<sup>14</sup>

## During the Session

### PHYSICAL SAFETY

Pay attention to where and how the person is interviewed.

### WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN

If the researcher is successful in developing a good relationship with children, the children may also feel encouraged to participate as an act of friendship even when they have doubts and concerns. To help ensure that this does not happen, researchers need to pay close attention to the participants' body language, silences and other ways of communicating unease or dissent.

- > Ensure that the subject is in a safe place and is comfortable so that he or she is able to tell his or her story or be photographed/filmed without outside interference.
- > Ask the subject whether he or she would like anyone else to be present during an interview, such as a friend, family member or teacher.
- > Limit the number of interviewers and photographers in the room.
- > Try to make certain that the subject is comfortable and able to tell his or her story without outside pressure, including from the interviewer.
- > In film, video and radio interviews, consider what the choice of visual or audio background might imply about the person and his or her life and story.
- > Ensure that the person would not be endangered or adversely affected by showing his or her home, community or general whereabouts. In many places the prospect of people speaking up and voicing their issues may represent a threat. This could result in a backlash against them. Work carefully to assuage local concerns and fears as these arise. Transparency about your methods and aims is essential. Subjects should be fully consulted on how best to participate in a way that will minimize risks to themselves.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Do no harm to any person.

### Staff and Interviewer Responsibility

Interviewers can inflict retraumatization by the questions they ask or the answers they seek to elicit. It is paramount to abide by the following:

- > Staff and collaborators should avoid questions, attitudes or comments that:
  - are insensitive to cultural values
  - place a person in danger or expose a person to humiliation
  - reactivate a person's pain and grief from traumatic events
  
- > Staff and collaborators must avoid giving false hopes and should be clear about the purpose of the research. Interviewers have a responsibility to interact with their subjects in a sensitive and supportive manner. It is important to allow them the chance to:
  - pause or to change the subject
  - express grief in the manner that best suits them
  - withdraw from the activity altogether

Affirm the positives that are said and offer sympathy and encouragement.

Not just anyone should partake in one-to-one interviews or interviews with beneficiaries of this nature. If you are not trained and/or experienced, avoid sensitive questions around gender-based violence or other culturally sensitive issues. If beneficiaries volunteer this information in the course of more general conversation, seek assistance of more experienced staff members to follow up.

### Understanding Secondary Traumatization

Secondary trauma is defined as indirect exposure to trauma through a firsthand account or narrative of a traumatic event. Secondary traumatization is also referred to as “compassion fatigue” and “vicarious traumatization.”<sup>15</sup>

The vivid recounting of trauma by the survivor and the interviewer's subsequent cognitive or emotional representation of that event may result in a set of symptoms and reactions that parallel post-traumatic stress disorder (e.g., re-experiencing, avoidance and hyperarousal).

Where there is likelihood of such a situation arising, it is vital that the interviewer establish in advance a

system for support and backup. Appropriately trained staff in a local NGO or community-based organization may be able to fulfill this role. However, in making such arrangements, the researcher must bear in mind the concern for confidentiality. When experiences of ongoing abuse are revealed there is still a need to carefully assess the situation before attempting to involve outsiders.

## POWER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE INTERVIEWER AND THE SUBJECT

The particular relations of power between the interviewer (as an adult and probably an outsider) and local subjects may lead some to feel that they have no choice but to participate.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the following measures should be taken to mitigate the power imbalance:

### Minimizing the Power Imbalance

Consider your own feelings about the potential sharing of power with participants. To what extent will your questions be open to negotiation? How can you ensure that you do not impose a fixed agenda, timetable and way of working?

- > Sitting at the same level as subjects (on the floor if necessary, with children) can help achieve a less hierarchical relationship. Never sit them behind desks or sit behind a desk or table yourself during an interview.
- > Consider the consequences of people's participation in relation to their position within the family and community.
- > Don't use a patronizing voice for participants or act and speak in an authoritarian manner.
- > Be sensitive to the person's level of literacy and use of language, but don't talk down to them.

## POWER RELATIONS AMONG PARTICIPANTS

Consider the matter of access. Which people are involved in interviews/photo shoots/filming and on what basis? Who is excluded from such activities and is exclusion systematic (e.g., on basis of geography, gender or class)? Such questions are vital from an ethical point of view.

Especially with children, it is critical to understand how power relations<sup>17</sup> are shaped by:

- > age
- > gender

- > birth order
- > education
- > caste/class
- > ethnicity
- > ability (skills)
- > disability
- > individual personality
- > physical stature

Be cautious that your work does not contribute to the creation or strengthening of hierarchies among people. Having the participants engage in icebreakers before the interviews, for example, may help reduce power imbalances within the group.

- > Allow for participants in focus group discussions to ask questions to each other as well.
- > Maximize youth participation as much as possible, particularly by setting up and carrying out interviews with young people.
- > Involve adult community leaders in organizing interviews, unless this will discourage youth participation.

## NOTE TAKING AND AUDIO RECORDING

- > Be sure to fill out forms properly or label tapes during sessions in order to prevent confusion later.
- > Divide questioning and note taking responsibilities. Try to have two researchers conduct focus group discussions so these responsibilities can be shared. One can take questions, one can take notes.
- > Try to take notes word for word when possible. Your notes are evidence, so try to keep them as authentic as possible.
- > No staging. Do not ask participants to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own history.<sup>18</sup>
- > Note the context and your interpretation of meaning.
- > Have materials working and ready. Make sure you have enough pens, paper, charged batteries, etc.
- > Disguise the subject's identity. Keep information about who is present separate from discussion notes. Do not note the names of those interviewed. Alternatively, number the people in the group by where they sit, and take notes noting their numbers. That way, patterns can be identified when analyzing data, but no names will appear.
- > Summarize and analyze findings as much as possible as you go along.
- > Be sure to not make note taking the central attraction of the conversation.
- > Destroy original notes of interviewers/discussions after data analysis to ensure confidentiality.

## After the Session

### ATTACHMENT

The expression of interest in the lives, experiences and well-being of refugees is often very welcome. This is especially likely in situations where children have been deprived of the warm concern and affection of adults—for example, those living in institutions such as orphanages or in child-headed households. As a result, some children can rapidly develop attachments to the researcher and, not having grasped that the interaction is likely to be short-lived, may feel let down or even abandoned once the research is complete. There is no simple means to avoid such a situation.

Clarity about the extent and nature of the interviewer's role is vital. This clarity is necessary not only for adults and children but also for the interviewer herself or himself. Efforts to “rescue” children or to act as a surrogate parent—albeit well-intentioned—are liable to create false hopes and increase the likelihood of sorrow upon parting.

### MANAGING INFORMATION

#### Obscuring Identity

- > Unless evidently unnecessary, all identities—individual and communal—should be concealed through the use of pseudonyms. No individuals should be named unless they have given clear permission.
- > In the case of children, such permission should also be secured from their adult caregivers.
- > Take down contact information, with this in mind: If sensitive material is to be shared, the researcher must make sure that its source cannot be traced.
- > All notes and records are to be stored securely where they cannot be accessed by unauthorized individuals.
- > Notes are encrypted to conceal identities where such security is not possible.
- > Careful consideration is given to the implications of sharing more widely any information that may have been offered privately or in specific circumstances (for example, among a small group where small bonds of trust already exist).<sup>19</sup>

Change the name and obscure the visual identity of the person if he or she is:

- > a current or former child combatant, whether or not

- > he or she is accused of violence or atrocities
- > a survivor of sexual assault, unless it is an adult who wants to tell his or her story publicly and has given permission
- > a perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse
- > HIV positive or living with AIDS, and any other person with a socially stigmatized condition, unless the adult subject or a guardian of a child subject gives fully informed consent
- > charged or convicted of a crime
- > asks not to be identified for personal reasons

Do not publish a story, image or film that might put the person and/or his or her family or peers at risk—even when identities are changed, obscured or not used.

### Revealing Identity

In certain cases, using the identity of a subject is in his or her best interest. Some examples are:

- > When a subject initiates contact with a staff person or collaborator, wanting to exercise his or her right to freedom of expression.
- > When a subject is part of a sustained program of activism or social mobilization and wants to be so identified.
- > When a subject is engaged in a psychosocial program and claiming a true identity is part of healthy development.

### Accuracy

- > Data should be analyzed with rigor and integrity.
- > Prior to wider dissemination, the researcher should make every effort to review key findings with research participants and the community.
- > Take care when publishing images that may identify individuals. Make sure captions are accurate. If in doubt about the use of images, talk to the people being portrayed, or do not use them.

### Contact Information

- > Identify a contact person (leader of the beneficiary community) and obtain his or her contact information so research findings and beneficiary reports can be sent back to the participatory community.
- > Offer them your information so they can contact you.
- > If it is a possibility to share photos or findings at a later date, offer to do so and follow through.

## REPORTING INFORMATION

### Stigmatization

Do not further stigmatize any subject in reports. Avoid categorizations or descriptions in your work that expose the person to negative reprisals, such as:

- > additional physical or psychological harm
- > lifelong abuse
- > discrimination
- > rejection by his or her local communities

### Stereotypes

Avoid reinforcing stereotypes. Material that relies upon stereotypes for its impact (for example, using images of masked or hooded young men to imply threat and illegality) can mislead and distort perceptions, especially where they do not relate to the facts of a story. Each person's story is different.<sup>20</sup>

### Context

As explained in *Managing Information* (page 14), always provide accurate context for the subject's story or image. Do not inflate numbers, exaggerate the gravity of a situation, or over-dramatize. You should be able to back up your statements with accurately analyzed findings.

If the data collected is for research purposes (versus a media interview), the methodology of the research and its specific limitations should be included in reports to inform the reader to potential biases. This will enhance credibility.

Confirm the accuracy of what the person has to say, either with the subject or with others.<sup>21</sup>

### Considerations and Consequences of Information

- > People fleeing persecution leave families behind who may face retribution from repressive regimes if relatives are identified.
- > Exiled political activists from other countries may risk death threats or attacks by agents of the regime they opposed, or by regime loyalists in the country where the work will be published.
- > Women and girls might be abused by their husbands if they find out they participated in a survey about gender-based violence.
- > Normal considerations of respect for personal privacy apply to asylum seekers and refugees,

- particularly when identifying children.
- > Giving prominence simply because of their asylum or refugee status could lead to unwarranted discrimination and hostility.<sup>22</sup>
  - > When in doubt about whether a person is at risk, report on the general situation for a group rather than on an individual person, no matter how newsworthy the story.

If someone reports a violation of these guidelines to you, please report this privately to Sarah Costa, Executive Director, who will take appropriate next steps in accordance with the WRC Code of Conduct.

Contact:  
Sarah Costa  
Executive Director  
Direct Line: 212.551.3089  
E-mail: [SCosta@wrcommission.org](mailto:SCosta@wrcommission.org)

OR

Svati Shashank, Chief Legal Officer,  
[SvatiS@wrcommission.org](mailto:SvatiS@wrcommission.org) or 646.693.8124.

OR

Send a message to the confidential email box [ethics@wrcommission.org](mailto:ethics@wrcommission.org) or leave a message at 212.551.3115 saying you wish to discuss an ethics issue. Someone will contact you to follow up.

## ENDNOTES

This document has been compiled from information contained in the guidelines of several organizations.

1 International Rescue Committee.

2 American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics.

3 Ibid.

4 For more information on the benefits and limitations of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, see Duncan Pedersen, "Qualitative and Quantitative: Two Styles of Viewing the World or Two Categories of Reality?" (IDRC: 1992). For information on focus group discussions, see David Morgan, *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1997); for quantitative methods, Luanne Aday, *Designing and Conducting Health Surveys* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996). For both methods, see Joseph Wholey, Harry Hatry, Kathryn Newcomer, eds., *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, 2nd Edition. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

5 Jason Hart and Bex Tyrer, "Research with Children Living in Situations of Armed Conflict: Concepts, Ethics and Methods," Refugee Studies Center, University of Oxford (May 2006): p. 18.

6 University of Missouri-Kansas City Social Sciences Institutional Review Board, "The Consent Process," September 15, 2004: p. 1.

7 Casper Edmonds, "Ethical Considerations When Conducting Research on Children in the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Nepal," International Labour Organization (Geneva, October 2003): p. 11

8 "Research and Children and Young People," <http://www.chronicpoverty.org/CPToolbox/Children.htm>

9 Jason Hart and Bex Tyrer, "Research with Children Living in Situations of Armed Conflict: Concepts, Ethics and Methods," Refugee Studies Center, University of Oxford (May 2006): p. 23.

10 Validity measures whether the item actually measures the intended concept.

11 Reliability measures the extent to which a test yields the same results when repeated.

12 Jason Hart and Bex Tyrer, "Research with Children Living in Situations of Armed Conflict: Concepts, Ethics and Methods," Refugee Studies Center, University of Oxford (May 2006): p. 22.

13 Casper Edmonds, "Ethical Considerations When Conducting Research on Children in the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Nepal," International Labour Organization (Geneva, October 2003): p. 10.

14 University of Missouri-Kansas City Social Sciences Institutional Review Board, "The Consent Process," September 15, 2004, p. 1.

15 Rose Zimering, James Munroe and Suzy Bird Gulliver, "Secondary Traumatization in Mental Health Care Providers," *Psychiatric Times*, April 2003, <http://psychiatrictimes.com/p030443.html>.

16 Jason Hart and Bex Tyrer, "Research with Children Living in Situations of Armed Conflict: Concepts, Ethics and Methods," Refugee Studies Center, University of Oxford (May 2006): pp. 20, 22.

17 Jason Hart and Bex Tyrer, "Research with Children Living in Situations of Armed Conflict: Concepts, Ethics and Methods," Refugee Studies Center, University of Oxford (May 2006): p. 21.

18 MediaWise, Reporting Asylum and Refugee Issues, [http://www.mediawise.org.uk/display\\_page.php?id=657](http://www.mediawise.org.uk/display_page.php?id=657)

19 Jason Hart and Bex Tyrer, "Research with Children Living in Situations of Armed Conflict: Concepts, Ethics and Methods," Refugee Studies Center, University of Oxford (May 2006): p. 23-24.

20 MediaWise, Reporting Asylum and Refugee Issues, [http://www.mediawise.org.uk/display\\_page.php?id=657](http://www.mediawise.org.uk/display_page.php?id=657)

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.



WOMEN'S  
REFUGEE  
COMMISSION

By signing here, I certify that I have read and understood the Women's Refugee Commission's *Ethical Guidelines for Working with Displaced Populations*:

---

Signature

---

Print Name

---

Date

*Please complete form and return to director of communications.*



## Annex 1

### WOMEN'S REFUGEE COMMISSION AUTHORIZATION AND RELEASE FORM

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I grant the Women's Refugee Commission permission to publish the information I provided in an interview/focus group at:

\_\_\_\_ Yes, my name may be used.

\_\_\_\_ I grant the Women's Refugee Commission permission to publish the photographs taken of me at:

\_\_\_\_ I grant the Women's Refugee Commission permission to broadcast the audio or video recorded of me at:

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that, by signing this release, the Women's Refugee Commission may use part or all of my interview/photographs/audio/video in its advocacy materials and I have seen examples of such materials.

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent or guardian, if applicable

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*This form should be completed and filed at the Women's Refugee Commission's New York office.*

## Annex 2

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The steps to designing any research study include:

- 1) conceptualizing the problem
- 2) writing the research question
- 3) determining the variables and dimensions to be sought (including role of the researcher)
- 4) developing the methodology (sampling, data collection, question guides)
- 5) devising an analysis plan, and once the data have been collected
- 6) analyzing the data, and
- 7) documenting and disseminating the findings (report writing).

All of these should be determined in advance so that the data are not manipulated to draw or present false conclusions, which has ethical implications for the integrity of the research. Consult resources on research design and data collection, such as those by Earl R. Babbie for more information on how to go about each step.

The sections below briefly explain the qualitative methods most often employed by the Women's Refugee Commission and potential sampling plans to select participants. They have been adapted from the 2004 Reproductive Health Response in Conflict (RHRC) Consortium's Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit ([rhrc.org/resources/general%5Ffieldtools/toolkit/index.htm](http://rhrc.org/resources/general%5Ffieldtools/toolkit/index.htm)); 2007 Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Reproductive Health Assessment Toolkit for Conflict-affected Women ([www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Refugee/ToolkitDownload.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Refugee/ToolkitDownload.htm)); David Morgan's Focus Groups as Qualitative Research (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1997); Luanne Aday's Designing and Conducting Health Surveys (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996); StatPac's tutorial on Designing Surveys and Questionnaires ([www.statpac.com/surveys/index.htm#toc](http://www.statpac.com/surveys/index.htm#toc)).

#### OBSERVATION

Observing interactions and situations can generate useful and informative data. The techniques vary depending on the level of engagement of the researcher:

- > **Direct Observation** is a technique where the researcher observes the setting in an unobtrusive manner and does not try to become a participant in the context.
- > **Participant observation** requires the researcher to become a participant in the context being ob-

served. For the least amount of bias, the technique often requires months or years since the researcher must become accepted as a natural part of the culture or setting.

For more information, consult Trochim, W. (2000). *The Research Methods Knowledge Base*, 2nd Edition. Atomic Dog Publishing, Cincinnati, OH.

#### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

An in-depth interview is a qualitative data collection method whose purpose is to gain an understanding of reasons underlying people's perceptions, behaviors or conditions of interest. It differs from focus groups in that it is a one-on-one interview, and from surveys in that it permits participants to give detailed responses to each question. In-depth interviews are open-ended discussions between one interviewer and one respondent on a topic. The discussion can be taped (with the respondent's permission) for later analysis.

In-depth interviews, like other qualitative data collection methods, are not intended to be representative of the population, so participants do not have to be randomly selected. Respondents are generally selected according to the characteristics that have been identified as important for the research.

For more information on in-depth interviews and their data collection procedures, interviewer characteristics/training and analysis plan, see "Qualitative Methods—In-depth Interview Protocol" ([www.rhrc.org/resources/general%5Ffieldtools/toolkit/43a%20In-depth%20Interview%20Protocol.doc](http://www.rhrc.org/resources/general%5Ffieldtools/toolkit/43a%20In-depth%20Interview%20Protocol.doc)) from the 2004 Reproductive Health Response in Conflict (RHRC) Consortium's Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit ([rhrc.org/resources/general%5Ffieldtools/toolkit/index.htm](http://rhrc.org/resources/general%5Ffieldtools/toolkit/index.htm))

#### FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Focus group discussions as a method of research address a research question generated by the researcher. A key characteristic of this method is that respondent interaction is an essential feature of the data generated. Advantages of focus groups include the benefits of open-ended questions, the possibility of interaction with participants and flexibility, although these can also serve as limitations if the method is not well executed.

Like other qualitative data collection methods, focus groups are not intended to be representative of the population, so participants do not have to be randomly

selected. Participants are chosen according to the characteristics that are identified as important for the topic, although for Women's Refugee Commission assessments, it is good to aim for coverage from the entire camp (through selecting participants from each camp section, for example) and periphery, and not choosing only those closest to the service provision point or meeting location. Each group should ideally be limited to 12 participants, although this can be unrealistic in the field. Smaller groups are recommended for experts, when personal stories are shared, or if the topic is controversial. With larger groups, it is often best to have a more experienced moderator.

In deciding what characteristics are important, it is good to consider the factors that influence attitudes about the topic in question, as well as the characteristics that will make people feel comfortable enough to talk openly with each other. This can include sex and age, other times, ethnicity or religion. The more characteristics/variables that are determined however, the more focus group discussions will be required; it is better to select only the characteristics that are believed to strongly influence the topic.

Unless participants are selected using probability sampling techniques, the data cannot be generalized to represent the experiences of an entire population. It is still important, however, to reach "saturation" whereby no new information can be yielded from additional focus group discussions. The common recommendation is to conduct at least three focus group discussions with people of the same characteristics; a focus group discussion on reproductive health issues among displaced persons would mean that ideally, three groups with women, men, adolescent girls and adolescent boys would need to be held in each site visited. This is often difficult and unrealistic to conduct in assessments given time constraints, but it is important to note this as a limitation of the research methodology.

For more information on data collection procedures, moderator characteristics/training and analysis plan, consult David Morgan's *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1997) and the "Focus Group Discussion Protocol" (<http://www.rhrc.org/resources/general%5Ffieldtools/toolkit/42a%20Focus%20Group%20Discussion%20Protocol.doc>) from the 2004 Reproductive Health Response in Conflict (RHRC) Consortium's Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit (<http://rhrc.org/resources/general%5Ffieldtools/toolkit/index.htm>). For translated focus group discussions, see Gisele Maynard-Tucker. "Conducting Focus

Groups in Developing Countries: Skill Training for Local Bilingual Facilitators" *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol. 10 No. 3, May 2000, 396-410.

## OTHER PARTICIPATORY METHODS

Participatory methods can better ensure validity of qualitative research while at the same time generating a sense of ownership of the data by the community. Many of the methods can be carried out using local materials (sticks, beads, pots, beans) arranged on the ground in front of the participants, although they can also be conducted with flipcharts and markers in literate communities. Some examples include:

- > Maps created by community members to show a variety of different features in a community, including community structures and resources.
- > Body mapping, or drawings of the body or bodily processes to explore people's perceptions of health issues.
- > Flow diagrams that indicate connections among events, people, institutions, causes, effects, and problems.
- > Ranking and scoring on matrices or grids, using seeds, pebbles, or other items to draw comparisons.
- > Seasonal calendars that show how illnesses, income, food production, and so on, vary through the year.
- > Group walk along a transect of the village or market to observe and note community features, conditions, and activities.

Such techniques offer options for further triangulation of data.

For more information on participatory research methods, see Peter J. Winch, et al. *Qualitative Research for Improved Health Programs: A Guide to Manuals for Qualitative and Participatory Research on Child Health, Nutrition, and Reproductive Health*, Johns Hopkins University, January 2000.

## SAMPLING PLAN

There are many considerations that come into play when designing a research study, especially for quantitative research where more precision is required. Compromises are always made on decisions such as the size of the sample (the number of people interviewed or surveyed), acceptable levels of error<sup>1</sup> and sources of bias, based on the amount of human and monetary resources available. There are different types of sampling methods

depending on the characteristics of the population, the data that need to be collected, and the ease in accessing the persons of interest. It is important to be aware of the benefits, limitations and appropriateness of a particular method before employing it in a study.

### **Non-probability Sampling Techniques for Focus Group Discussions and Interview Respondent Selection (Qualitative Research)**

There are many types of methods with varying names that are categorized under “purposeful” sampling techniques. These techniques are often used in qualitative research to select participants of interest to the research question.

- > **Convenience sampling** is used in exploratory research where the researcher is interested in obtaining an inexpensive approximation of reality without incurring the cost or time to select participants at random. As the name implies, participant selection through this method is based on convenience, such as proximity to meeting location (logistics), language, availability for participation, and so on. Although not very credible, this technique is often employed in focus group discussions, given time constraints and the fact that it is often easier to rely on local NGOs and partner organizations to locate and select participants.
- > **Snowball/Referral/Chain sampling** relies on referrals from initial persons to generate additional people to participate in a study. The method can be useful when identifying human networks and communication patterns. While this technique can lower search costs, it can introduce bias because the technique itself reduces the possibility that the sample will represent a good cross-section from the population. However, if the goal is to meet with women engaged in a certain occupation or youth accessing a particular youth center, it might be worth asking the contact to bring his/her friends to participate in a focus group discussion or interview.
- > There are other, narrower terms such as “**maximum variation sampling**”<sup>2</sup> (purposefully choosing a wide range of characteristics), “**deviant case sampling**” (selecting highly unusual characteristics, such as extreme vulnerabilities), “**homogenous sampling**” (selecting on a common characteristic), and so on, although the names of similar concepts vary per author/researcher. More examples and their explanations can be found in

David Morgan, *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1997); Joseph Wholey, Harry Hatry, Kathryn Newcomer, eds., *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, 2nd Edition. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004); or David Walonick, *The Research Process* ([www.statpac.com/research-papers/research-process.htm](http://www.statpac.com/research-papers/research-process.htm)) (StatPac, 1993).

### **Probability Sampling for More Rigorous Focus Group Discussions and Quantitative Research**

There is increasing interest within the scientific community to employ more rigorous and representative sampling methods used in small sub-group/population-based surveys (quantitative research) to gather qualitative information. The difference between non-probability and probability sampling is that with the latter, the sample will be representative of the population from which it was chosen (to the degree the method allows). Hence, with advanced planning and commitment, some of the sampling methods below can even be used to select focus group discussion participants in assessments.

- > **Simple random sampling** is the purest of probability sampling as each subject (household/person) has an equal and known chance of being selected. When the populations are very large however, it is often difficult or impossible to identify every subject, so the pool of available subjects becomes biased. There is also a tendency to over-represent those from less populated areas, and under-represent those from more populated areas. If the area of interest also covers a large geographic region, then the research team will be required to travel longer distances to reach the selected household/person. This would require additional resources and may prolong the data collection period. For surveys and even focus group discussions, random sampling can be used in combination with stratified sampling or cluster sampling techniques in two- or three-step processes. Obtaining a list of households or persons in the camp, community or school is always helpful. Choosing focus group discussion participants at random can be done by generating random numbers on Excel or other statistical software and selecting those on the list that correspond.
- > **Systematic sampling** is a method where households or persons are selected on an “Nth” term. After the required sample size has been calculated,<sup>3</sup> an “N” number can be determined. The household/person selected will correspond to

every Nth record on a particular list. For example, every third person can be selected from a class attendance record or camp roster, provided that the total number of people selected meets the sample size requirement for the particular list. As long as the list does not contain any hidden order, this sampling method is as good as random sampling.

- > **Stratified sampling** is a structured method more superior to random sampling because it reduces sampling error. To ensure that a sample is more representative, households/persons can be stratified by dividing them into groups along characteristics such as ethnicity or zones (camps or villages). For example, if there are two major ethnic populations in the camp, it may be good to stratify by ethnicity, provided that the household lists include information on ethnicity. This will ensure that there are enough participants from each ethnic group in the sample to make valid comparisons. After stratifying and determining the number of households that need to be selected from each group, the household, and then the individual can be selected using simple random or systematic sampling techniques. For more information, see the chapter on “Sampling Instructions” ([www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Refugee/PDF/Chapter3.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Refugee/PDF/Chapter3.pdf)) from CDC’s Reproductive Health Assessment Toolkit for Conflict-Affected Women ([www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Refugee/ToolkitDownload.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Refugee/ToolkitDownload.htm)).
- > **Probability proportional to size (PPS)** is a sampling technique used for surveys in which the probability of selecting a sampling unit (e.g., village, zone, district or health center) is proportional to the size of its population. It is most useful when the sampling units vary considerably in size because it assures that those in larger sites have the same probability of being selected into the sample as those in smaller sites, and vice versa. This method also facilitates planning for field work because a predetermined number of respondents are interviewed in each unit selected. To determine how to select households using probability proportional to size sampling techniques, see the RHRC Consortium Toolkit’s Instructions for Probability Proportional to Size Sampling Technique ([www.rhrc.org/resources/general%5Ffieldtools/toolkit/55b%20PPS%20sampling%20technique.doc](http://www.rhrc.org/resources/general%5Ffieldtools/toolkit/55b%20PPS%20sampling%20technique.doc))
- > **Cluster sampling** selects clusters, or groupings, of populations, such as camps, villages, neighborhoods, districts, city blocks or other communities, from which households and individuals are further

selected. This method has been widely used in crisis situations where insecurity and other access issues hamper the execution of other more statistically precise and representative random sampling methods. Cluster sampling is often selected when the geographic area is large, and it will be too difficult, costly and/or lengthy to cover the entire area with other sampling techniques, or when household lists are not available. One disadvantage of cluster sampling is that households in clusters (e.g., neighborhoods, blocks) may share similar characteristics such as income, education and ethnicity. For this reason, the information collected from clusters can be more homogenous and less representative as a sample selected at random. To compensate for reduced precision, a larger sample size is needed; hence, more people will need to be surveyed. Cluster sampling is often employed as one stage of multistage sampling. To see the exact steps of using this method, see the RHRC Consortium Toolkit’s Quantitative Methods–Community-Based Survey Protocol or the chapter on sampling methods ([www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Refugee/PDF/Chapter3.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Refugee/PDF/Chapter3.pdf)) from CDC’s Reproductive Health Assessment Toolkit for Conflict-Affected Women ([www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Refugee/ToolkitDownload.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Refugee/ToolkitDownload.htm))

- > **Multistage sampling** is any sampling where the subjects are chosen in more than one stage. Multistage sampling can involve more than one method of sampling, such as simple random, cluster or stratified sampling.

For more information on sampling methods, see Luanne Aday’s *Designing and Conducting Health Surveys* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996); Joseph Wholey, Harry Hatry, Kathryn Newcomer, eds., *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, 2nd Edition. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004); or StatPac’s “Sampling Methods” (<http://www.statpac.com/surveys/sampling.htm>) tutorial in *Designing Surveys and Questionnaires* (<http://www.statpac.com/surveys/index.htm#toc>).

## ENDNOTES

1 Random error includes errors due to “chance” and those that are not systematic, while non-random error is systematic and often has a biasing effect.

2 Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (London: Sage Publications, 1990).

3 A general formula to calculate sample size is:  $N = [Z^2(p)(q)]/d^2$  where Z refers to the confidence limits of the survey results; p refers to the proportion of the population with the certain attribute/characteristic;  $q = (1 - p)$ ; and d refers to the desired precision of the estimate (accuracy within a range of plus or minus x%). For more information, see the RHRC Consortium Toolkit’s Quantitative Methods–Community-Based Survey Protocol or the relevant section (<http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/>

[Refugee/PDF/Chapter3.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Refugee/PDF/Chapter3.pdf)) from CDC’s Reproductive Health Assessment Toolkit for Conflict-Affected Women (<http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Refugee/ToolkitDownload.htm>). Note that for stratified sampling, the total number of respondents from one particular list may not equal the total sample size of the study.

## Annex 3

### “REPORT TO CONTRIBUTORS” TIPS

When the Women’s Refugee Commission carries out an assessment that includes interviews with refugees, we make a commitment to share the findings with them. This is the “report to contributors.”

#### BEFORE THE MISSION

- > Budget accordingly for report. Include expenses such as editing, layout, translation, printing and distribution.
- > Translate as needed, and bring Women’s Refugee Commission fact sheet (see page 24) to distribute in the field.
- > Bring an example of a “report to contributors” to the field.

#### DURING THE MISSION

- > Show an example of previous “report to contributors” to interviewees.
- > Identify a translator, if necessary.
- > Identify people in the field who will help with report distribution and feedback.
- > Take a photo of the author(s) on mission to include in report.
- > Identify a local contact person to help with review and dissemination of the report (i.e., someone who can serve as a focal point to ensure key individuals are able to receive hard copies).

#### WRITE THE REPORT

- > Make language as simple as possible. Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- > Include photo of author(s) to remind contributors who wrote the report.
- > Include a box on the aim of the report to inform contributors of findings and how the information was used/will be used and any action taken as a result. A sample box is in the Uganda Youth field

report:

womenscommission.org/pdf/uganda%20cap%208-pager%202007.pdf

- > Include visuals: photos, maps and boxes.
- > Include contact information where people can write to share feedback/recommendations. In this way, the report is not seen as an end but part of learning cycle.
- > Possible outline of “report to contributors”:
  - Who are we?
  - Why did we come to [Country X]?
  - What did we do during our visit?
  - What did people tell us about X? (your findings)
  - What did people recommend?
  - What are our recommendations
  - What will the Women’s Refugee Commission do now?
  - What can you do if you want to learn more, or be involved with our work?
- > Translate the report into the local language if budget allows.

#### DISTRIBUTE THE REPORT TO PARTICIPANTS OR TO THE PERSON/PEOPLE IDENTIFIED WHO WILL DISTRIBUTE IT IN THE FIELD.

## SAMPLE FACT SHEET FOR BENEFICIARIES



### WHAT IS THE WOMEN'S REFUGEE COMMISSION?

The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) was founded in 1989. We work to ensure that refugee women, children and young people are safe, healthy and self-reliant.

There are more than 60 million refugees and internally displaced people in the world. Four out of five of them are women, children and young people. On average, refugee situations last 17 years. Every year, between 10 and 40 million people are displaced by natural disasters.

### WHAT WE DO

The WRC makes sure that:

- refugee women and girls receive family planning and help during pregnancy and childbirth;
- displaced women and girls are protected from rape (defilement) and other violence;
- refugee women can make money to support themselves and their families;
- young people receive education and skills training;
- women and children who seek safety (asylum) in the United States are treated well and are not put in prison.

### HOW WE WORK

**We gather information:**

- We travel to refugee settings to meet and talk with refugees, UN agencies and international and local organizations.
- We find out what refugees need.
- We learn which programs (including education, skills building, livelihoods, reproductive health) work and which don't work.

**We then use the information we've collected:**

- We meet with staff from international organizations and tell them what should be done to improve the lives of refugee women, children and young people.
- We write manuals and guidelines to help humanitarian workers work better with refugees.
- We arrange meetings with government, non-governmental organization (NGO) and UN staff, at which refugees themselves tell staff what they need.

### FACTS AND FIGURES

- We are an NGO. We are not a governmental, political or religious organization.
- We have 40 staff members and a board of directors. Some are former refugees.
- The WRC does not generally provide grants or funding to organizations or individuals. If you contact us at [info@wrcommission.org](mailto:info@wrcommission.org), we will send you information on organizations that give grants to local organizations.
- The WRC cannot help individuals get asylum in the United States. If your life is in danger and you need to find safety in another country, contact the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([unhcr.org/contact.html](http://unhcr.org/contact.html)) or an international organization working in your country.
- If you have a complaint about the conduct of a WRC staff member or about the work of the organization, email [ethics@wrcommission.org](mailto:ethics@wrcommission.org) or call +1.12.551.3115 and leave a message that you wish to discuss an ethics issue. Someone will get in touch with you to follow up.

The Women's Refugee Commission is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

Photo: UNHCR/S. Errington  
2016



REFUGEE FACT SHEET

Women's Refugee Commission  
122 East 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10168-1289  
212.551.3115 | [info@wrcommission.org](mailto:info@wrcommission.org)  
[womensrefugeecommission.org](http://womensrefugeecommission.org)







**Women's Refugee Commission** | 122 East 42nd Street | New York, NY 10168-1289  
212.551.3115 | Fax: 212.551.3180 | [info@wrccommission.org](mailto:info@wrccommission.org) | [womensrefugeecommission.org](http://womensrefugeecommission.org)