

Guidance for applying and adapting the individual factors questionnaires

Purpose

This questionnaire is intended to be used to assess the ways in which individual-level factors influence an individual's vulnerability. When combined with household/family-level data and interpreted in light of the larger contextual understanding about what factors lead to greater vulnerability or resilience captured in the community and structural level tools, it becomes possible to assess the vulnerability to violence, exploitation and abuse of that particular individual migrant. Further, if such data is gathered over time and linked to data from other geographic locations, it can inform understanding of larger trends regarding migrant vulnerabilities in a particular community, as well as regionally. As such, it can potentially inform programming by governments, as well as national and international organizations and service providers.

The questionnaire has been designed in four versions, and the choice of which version to be used should be based on the stage of migration the individual is in: pre-departure/at origin, in transit, at destination or following return. They are designed to be comprehensive and therefore to be used primarily as a research tool and to inform programming. However, if vulnerable individuals are identified during this process, they should be referred to appropriate protection actors. Protection actors may wish to use the IOM Screening Form for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse to assist them in identifying an individual migrant's protection and assistance needs.

Using the questionnaires

The questionnaires can be used in either paper-based or in electronic format such as Kobotoolbox or Survey Monkey. Even if paper-based questionnaires are used, the data should be transcribed to an electronic platform in order to ensure the durability of the data collected and the ability to use it to understand changes over time. This is also good for comparison purposes with other contexts and locations and therefore to be able to develop an evidence base for national, regional or global analysis.

The vast majority of the questions are close-ended. Where relevant, space is provided to enter additional information or to enter responses to open-ended questions. It is recommended that enumerators/interviewers try to use consistent terminology in those boxes to ensure comparability. Hence, if a person reports the source of income as "working in a shop," the same terminology should be used for a response that indicates the same activity, such as "I work at the florist's." For questions where the expected response is a number, it is recommended to use digits rather than writing the number: that is to say, use "15" rather than "fifteen."

Each of the versions of the questionnaire has similar fields and questions, arranged in the following three sections: Section 1 records information about the interview itself; Section 2 records basic information about the respondent; Section 3 gathers information on vulnerability factors; and Section 4 gathers sociodemographic information. This guidance provides information on completing each of these sections using the language from the pre-departure/at origin questionnaire. However, the guidance applies to all of the versions of the questionnaire.

The estimated time for completion of the questionnaire is approximately 30 minutes for the questionnaire to be used at origin/pre-departure, and approximately 30 to 45 minutes for the questionnaire to be used for migrants in transit, at destination or following return.

Question order

The order of the questions has been designed to group topics together, but also to reflect good practice. For example, questions regarding sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity and other potentially sensitive identity-related characteristics are included in Section 4: Sociodemographic information, at the end of the questionnaire. That is because it is generally good practice to delay such questions until the respondent has been put at ease by answering less-sensitive questions first.

Some questions appear to be repetitive. This is because formulating some questions in more than one way serves to verify the initial question. For example, the questionnaire includes the following two questions: “Is it your own choice to travel/move (not someone else’s)?” and “Is someone else forcing you to travel/move?”. This allows for differentiation between people who feel they are migrating because their current circumstances do not provide other viable choices and have decided for themselves that migration is a practical solution, and on the other hand those who are migrating because someone is forcing them to.

Section 1: Interview information

This section includes identifying information for the questionnaire. It is intended to be completed by the enumerator.

- 1.1. Enumerator code:** It is important to develop and implement a system for tracking which questionnaires were completed by which enumerators. This is important as it allows for identification of any systematic errors that an enumerator may be making. For example, an enumerator might be completing certain sections incorrectly, or skipping sensitive questions.
- 1.2. Date:** The date should always be entered in the same format, such as [dd-mm-yyyy] where, for example, the 22nd of May 2019 would be entered as [22-5-2019].
- 1.3. Language in which interview is conducted:** The language in which the interview is conducted may or may not be the same as the language in which the questionnaire is written. This is important to note in case there are inconsistencies in translation between different enumerators.
- 1.4. Location of interview:** It is important to specify the location in which the interview was conducted, which will facilitate analysis and comparison between different communities. It is important to use a precise system for naming the locations to avoid misinterpretation of the data.
- 1.5. Country of interview:** This serves as a further identifier for the survey and can be helpful when analysing surveys from different countries and for comparison purposes across countries.

Section 2: Basic information

This section includes basic information about the respondent.

- 2.1. Respondent’s country of origin** and **2.2. Respondent’s citizenship** provide a basis for assessment of the person’s migration status. Being in a country of which one is not a citizen usually constitutes a vulnerability factor, as the person may not enjoy the same legal rights as citizens of the country.
- 2.3. Age** can serve to identify children who may be in need of additional specific protection, and also for whom parental or guardian permission may need to be obtained before continuing with the interview.
- 2.4. Language(s) spoken:** An ability to speak more than one language can be a protective factor when migrating to countries where the respondent’s language is not the official language or is not commonly used.

Section 3: Individual vulnerability factors

This section is divided in two parts: one pertaining to migration status, migration history and migration intentions, and awareness/preparedness, and one related to personal circumstances and household/family history. The questions in these two sections help to identify the presence of different factors affecting the migrant's vulnerability to violence, exploitation and abuse.

Section 3A: Migration: Status, history and intentions, awareness and preparedness

Questions in this section relate to the respondent's status and history of migration, as well as to the knowledge and awareness of the conditions under which he/she intends to migrate.

3.1. What is your current migration status in this country?

Commonly understood definition of key terms:

- Asylum seeker/refugee claimant: A person who seeks safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than his/her own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments.
- Asylum seeker (granted)/refugee: A person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail of the protection of that country.
- Asylum seeker/refugee claimant, failed: A person who has made an application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments but whose application has been denied and there are no further pending claims.
- Citizen: A person who is recognized by custom or law as being a legal member of the country.
- Foreign resident: A person who has received authorization to live in the country (residence permit).
- Foreign student: A foreign national who has received authorization to be in the country for the purposes of study (student visa).
- Foreign worker (temporary): A foreign national who has received authorization to be in the country for the purposes of work (work permit).
- Irregular migrant, irregular entry: A person who entered the country without authorization.
- Irregular migrant, overstayed permit/visa: A person who entered the country with authorization but did not leave when he/she was supposed to.
- Regular (free movement): A person who has rights to be in a country under a free movement agreement.
- Stateless: A person who is not considered as a national or a citizen by any State under the operation of its law.

3.2. Have you ever moved to another country/another region of your country before?

This question is intended to understand whether the respondent has a history of past migration, which may be a protective factor (if he/she has knowledge/information about the process and route) or a risk factor (if he/she is determined to migrate in spite of having had negative experiences in the past, including having been subjected to violence, exploitation and/or abuse). The sub-questions serve to create a more detailed summary of a person's migration history.

3.3. Have you ever been detained in the past by government or police services for any reason?

Having been detained in the past would tend to increase vulnerability overall.

3.4. Do you know of anyone who has been the victim of human trafficking?

Knowledge of human trafficking victims can indicate a high prevalence of trafficking in the community and thus greater vulnerability for the individual migrant.

3.5. What country/region of your country is your intended destination?

This question can help identify the extent to which the respondent has clear plans for migration, as well as if he/she is choosing to migrate to locations of higher or lower risk and along migration routes with higher or lower risk.

3.6. Why do you intend to move/leave home?

This question aims to find out more about how and why a migrant intends to leave home. Many of the choices given here are associated with migrant vulnerability (such as leaving home due to a natural disaster) or trafficking (such as being promised a job). However, every context is different, and trends change over time – thus interpretation of the data based on that contextual understanding will indicate if the reason(s) for leaving home should be considered an indicator of migrant vulnerability.

3.7. Is it your own choice to travel/move (not someone else's)?

3.8. Is someone else forcing you to travel/move?

These two questions taken together aim to understand whether a person took the decision to travel of his/her own free will or not. The second question provides information about two possible scenarios: one where another person or group of people forced the person to move, for example by threat, use of force, violence, intimidation or indebtedness. The other is when the migrant felt he/she had no choice but to migrate, for example because of insecurity, poverty or climate change, but no other person or group of people was trying to intimidate, coerce, or otherwise force the individual to migrate.

3.9. Do you think you have been lied to, tricked, manipulated, indebted, given false promises or otherwise deceived in order to get you to travel/move?

An answer of “yes” to this question may be an indicator of trafficking.

3.10. Who will you travel with?

Most of the choices here are associated with potential migrant vulnerability (such as travelling alone) or trafficking (such as travelling with an agent or employer). However, every context is different, and trends change over time – thus interpretation of the data should be based on contextual understanding that will indicate if the persons they intend to travel with should be considered an indicator of trafficking and/or migrant vulnerability.

3.11. How will you get to your intended destination?

The means of transportation can indicate vulnerability (such as walking).

3.12. How do you intend to pay for your journey?

Not having the necessary funds to cover their journey can be an indicator of vulnerability, as they may be planning to borrow money or to work as they go – potentially under exploitative conditions.

3.13. Will you have travel documents with you or have access to them on your journey?

In general, not having, or not having access to, documents, is an indicator of migrant vulnerability, as the migrant may be more likely to be targeted for exploitative or other harmful practices including trafficking. Yet the particularities of the context are also important in understanding whether lack of documentation is likely to lead to greater vulnerability, underlining the importance of contextual interpretation of responses.

3.14. Do you understand the language(s) of your intended destination?

3.15. Do you speak the language(s) of your intended destination?

3.16. Do you read the language(s) of your intended destination?

The inability to understand, speak or read the language is an indicator of migrant vulnerability, as it reduces a migrant's ability to obtain or communicate information.

3.17. Do you understand the language(s) of the countries/regions you will transit through to reach your intended destination?

3.18. Do you speak the language(s) of the countries/regions you will transit through to reach your intended destination?

3.19. Do you read the language(s) of the countries/regions you will transit through to reach your intended destination?

The inability to understand, speak or read the language is an indicator of migrant vulnerability, as it reduces a migrant's ability to obtain or communicate information.

3.20. Do you think you have the skills or education necessary to get a job at your intended destination?

This question aims to understand the preparedness of the person for intended migration. Not knowing what skills or education or required is an indicator of migrant vulnerability, as is belief or knowledge that a migrant is unqualified.

3.21. How dangerous do you think the journey/process of migration will be?

This question also seeks to know how well-prepared the person is for the planned migration.

3.22. Do you anticipate being subjected to any violence, exploitation or abuse on your journey to the country/region you are moving to?

3.23. Do you anticipate witnessing violence, exploitation or abuse to others on your journey to the country/region you are moving to?

Like the previous question, these two questions seek to know how well-prepared the person is for the planned migration. These questions also ascertain how much risk the person is willing to take, and may be an indicator of vulnerability.

3.24. How friendly/unfriendly do you expect people will be towards migrants/foreigners in the country/region you intend to migrate/move to?

This question also seeks to know how well-prepared the person is for the planned migration and how much he/she knows about the intended destination.

3.25. Do you anticipate being discriminated against in your intended destination?

This question also seeks to know how well-prepared the person is for the planned migration, but also how much risk the person is willing to take, and may be an indicator of vulnerability.

Section 3B: Personal circumstances and household/family context

Questions in this section relate to the respondent's personal and household/family circumstances to the extent that the latter may have an impact on the individual's choices, resources and vulnerability

3.26. Are you experiencing any violence, exploitation or abuse?

A person who answers yes to this question may not only be in need of protection assistance, but may be more willing to undertake unsafe migration as a coping strategy to remove himself/herself from the current situation, and this can be an indicator of vulnerability.

3.27. Have you recently (within the last three years) been affected by any of the following situations?

The options provided are all situations of familial instability, which may be indicators of vulnerability.

3.28. Do you have a physical or mental disability?

A yes answer may constitute a risk factor.

3.29. Are you currently sick or injured, or do you have medical needs?

A yes answer may constitute a risk factor.

3.30. Do you feel discriminated against?

This may be on the basis of a group identity (such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, language) or as a result of personal characteristics (such as disability, socioeconomic class). A response of yes to this question may constitute a risk factor, depending on context.

3.31. Do you feel that you are isolated from the rest of the community?

Lacking social connectedness and social networks may be an indicator of vulnerability.

3.32. If you are under 16, are you currently attending school?

Non-attendance for school-age children and adolescents may be an indicator of vulnerability. This is why it is important to understand the reasons for it. Also, schools may not always be safe places for children, so it is important to understand if they feel safe there. If not, they may be in need of protection assistance.

3.33. What is your highest level of education?

No education or less than a primary education is an indicator of migrant vulnerability. Note that the questionnaire offers the option of "partial" completion of each level to avoid imprecise responses.

3.34. Do you currently have a source of income?

3.35. What is your main source of income?

Lack of any source of income is an indicator of vulnerability, as is a source of income that is not stable and secure. Further, the specific sectors asked about – factory work; domestic work; prostitution or sex-related work; forestry, agriculture and fisheries; and mining and construction – are often high-risk sectors.

3.36. Do you have any debts?

Any personal debt is a risk factor. Indebtedness to an agent, smuggler, trafficker, recruiter, or employer is an indicator of vulnerability to trafficking. Being pressured or coerced, regardless of who the debt is owed to, is an indicator of vulnerability to abuse and exploitation.

3.37. Do you have access to health service?

3.38. Do you have access to education services?

3.39 Do you have access to financial services?

Responses of no to any of these questions may be indicators of vulnerability. The term “financial services” means access to banking services such as savings accounts or personal credit, whether or not these are provided by a bank, but not if they are provided by criminal elements.

3.40. Do you feel that you are well informed of your rights regarding work, housing, education, personal safety, legal status, dealing with the police/border authorities/military, identity documents, etc.?

Lack of knowledge and information regarding rights is a risk factor.

3.41. Are you currently homeless?

A yes response is an indicator of migrant vulnerability.

3.42. Who do you live with?

This question seeks information about the respondents’ household unit. Living in a shelter or rooming house may be an indicator of vulnerability.

3.43. How many people do you live with (not counting yourself)?

3.44. Is everyone who lives with you a member of your household/family?

Living in overcrowded accommodation may be an indicator of vulnerability. Similarly, being part of a large household comprised of many family members may indicate increased financial responsibilities. If the person does not know how many people he/she lives with, this may be an indicator of trafficking. NOTE: The term “household/family” may refer to slightly different arrangements depending on the local sociocultural context. It usually refers to a group of individuals who are related by family ties (whether by “blood”, through marriage or adoption) and who ordinarily live in the same dwelling. However, depending on the local customs, a household may include some individuals who are not related but who share close affective bonds (such as close family friends) and who may share in the decision-making for the group and/or in contributing to or accessing the group’s resources. Alternatively, a household may include people with close familial ties who do not ordinarily live in the same dwelling, but who share in the decision-making and/or in contributing to or accessing group resources. Use the meaning that is current in your context.

3.45. Are you the sole or primary/main provider for your household/family?

3.46. Are your income/resources enough to provide sufficient food and clean water as well as shelter for your household/family?

Being the sole or primary/main provider is not in itself an indicator of migrant vulnerability. However, if a person is responsible for a household and cannot fulfil his/her responsibilities, this is a risk factor.

3.47. Are you financially responsible for people outside of your household/family?

3.48. Are your income/resources enough to meet your obligations to those people outside your household/family? Being financially responsible for people outside of the household/family is not in itself an indicator of vulnerability. However, if a person is responsible for people and cannot fulfil his/her responsibilities, this is a risk factor.

Section 4: Sociodemographic information

The questions in this section are intended to identify personal and/or group characteristics related to identity that may be associated with increased vulnerability. The extent to which any of these characteristics is a protective or risk factor depends on the context. In the subsequent interpretation process of this data, draw upon contextual knowledge to assess whether these are indicators of vulnerability. Many of the questions may also be particularly sensitive depending on the context; please refer to the Section “Adapting the questionnaires to different sociocultural contexts” of this toolkit.

4.1. Race/ethnicity: Race/ethnicity may or may not be a socially relevant trait in the context, and respondents may or may not be familiar with those terms. The following are commonly understood definitions of the terms:

- **Race:** This refers most commonly to a person’s appearance based on skin colour, hair texture or shape of nose, but may refer to ancestry as well as to appearance. Examples of terms used in various contexts: white, black, Asian, African, Afro-descendant, Indigenous.
- **Ethnicity:** This term commonly refers to a group identity based on shared social and cultural characteristics, such as language, religion, social practices such as marriage customs. Some examples: Igbo, Zulu, Han, Kikuyu, Hmong, Mapuche, Zapotec and Basque.

Belonging to any race or ethnicity is not in itself an indicator of vulnerability. However, depending on the context, it may be a protective factor if that identity is privileged, or a risk factor if it is marginalized.

4.2. Religion: As with ethnicity, subscribing to any given religion may be a protective or risk factor depending on the context. Note that the list provided in the questionnaire cannot be exhaustive. If the person’s religion is not one of the options provided, please enter it in the “Other” space.

4.3. What is your biological sex?

4.4. What is your gender identity?

While for most people these two notions are interchangeable, being “born” male but identifying as a woman, or vice versa, is usually a strong indicator of vulnerability.

4.5. Do you identify as heterosexual?

If the response is no, then it is likely that the person identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual or queer (LGBTQ), which is an indicator of vulnerability.

Responsible data-gathering

Many of the questions being asked in this questionnaire focus upon topics that are very personal and/or very sensitive. There is thus an onus to ensure that the “do no harm” principle is respected through their participation, including by protecting respondent anonymity. Further, if a vulnerable person in need of assistance is identified during the interview, he/she should be referred to the appropriate protection actor. Enumerators should be appropriately trained as regards how to follow these guidelines.

Adapting the questionnaires to different sociocultural contexts

It may be tempting to avoid asking questions about socially taboo topics. For example, in contexts where homosexuality is illegal or where engaging in sexual activities before or outside of marriage is cause for ostracism, it may feel uncomfortable to ask respondents about their sexual orientation or whether they have children if they have indicated they are not married. In spite of this, these questions must be included. Indeed, failing to obtain this information would mean failure to collect data about the very factors that would place such a person at risk, and therefore failure to inform programming designed to protect the person. In addition, the exclusion of such questions would reduce the comparability of the data across regions and therefore curtail the possibility of developing suitable programming options at the global level.

In order to reduce the likelihood of offending the respondent, the most potentially sensitive questions have been placed towards the end of the questionnaire, so that a rapport will already have been established between the respondent and the interviewer. Nevertheless, since each particular sociocultural context is unique, it is possible that certain topics will be more or less delicate in different locations. In those cases, it will be important to use strategies to minimize the possibility of offending the respondent or of someone else hearing the answer. The following are some possible approaches:

- Begin all interviews by explaining to the respondent that his/her answers will be confidential, and that they can refuse to answer any questions or decide to terminate the interview at any point.
- When reaching a sensitive question, reassure the respondent again by saying something like: “We know that people who don’t conform to social expectations are usually more vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse, so I need to ask you some sensitive questions. Rest assured that your responses will be kept confidential, and I don’t mean to offend you in any way.”
- Preface potentially sensitive questions by saying something like: “I mean no offence in asking, but...”

Whenever feasible, the interview should take place in a private space.

In many cases, specific terms may be difficult to translate in the sense that there may not be a local term that is exactly equivalent to the concept, such as “household/family,” “gender identity” or “heterosexual.” Other expressions, like “risky sexual behaviour” or “informal economy,” will also need to be explained in a socially sensitive yet conceptually accurate way. In other words, while the terms may have exact equivalents linguistically, they may not be commonly used or understood. Wherever possible, we have provided guidance as to the meaning of such expressions within the questionnaire itself. However, it is possible that some terminology will be unfamiliar in particular contexts. In those cases, it will be important to seek a word or phrase that conveys the idea that the questionnaire seeks to address. It is essential, however, that the local terms used should be non-judgemental and non-pejorative.

Questionnaires

The questionnaires can be downloaded from IOM’s website (www.iom.int):

- Individual questionnaire: origin/pre-departure
- Individual questionnaire: in-transit
- Individual questionnaire: destination
- Individual questionnaire: returned