

## Protection Monitoring during the COVID-19 Pandemic

April 1, 2020

This guidance note aims to support protection staff in adapting protection monitoring during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is characterized by restrictions to regular face-to-face activities, including data collection and identification of and support to people at risk of human rights violations or protection risks. This guidance note is an annex to and should be read in conjunction with [DRC's Global Protection Monitoring Guidance](#). This note does not provide guidance on how to communicate with communities and individuals impacted by COVID-19 or examine safety considerations related to programme implementation. For guidance on these please refer to the [Key Messages For Communicating with Communities \(CwC\) Guidance](#) annexed to [Guidance on DRC's programmatic approach to the COVID-19 emergency](#) and the upcoming guidance on DRC staff & workforce engagement with affected communities in COVID-19 pandemic.

The main challenges envisioned for protection monitoring during the COVID-19 pandemic include 1) reduced face-to-face interactions with people of concern and 2) ensuring information needs are adapted to meet the information requirements during COVID-19 pandemic. The former will impact DRC's ability to identify protection monitoring respondents and collect data and information through group and individual data collection methods. The later will require DRC, in a collaborative manner, to adapt existing information needs and data that we collect and use.

This protection monitoring guidance note during the COVID-19 pandemic covers:

- Assessing information needs and information landscape during COVID-19 pandemic and adapting information needs
- Protection monitoring data collection methods
- Sampling methodologies for hard to reach populations
- Adapting questions to match changes in methodology
- Use of secondary data, including media monitoring

The UN [Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#) COVID-19 identified protection as a strategic priority, including ensuring that “protection monitoring, and reporting networks are established to mitigate potential protection risks for people of concern and migrants, including restriction on access to territory and the right of refugees to seek asylum.” It is important that DRC's protection monitoring efforts at the country level are fit for purpose and contributing to DRC's and the international community's efforts to protect, assist and advocate for people affected by conflict and displacement who are vulnerable to the pandemic.

### **Assessing information needs and information landscape during COVID-19 pandemic and adapting information needs**

Due to likely increased demand for information, combined with access constraints and reduced methodology options, protection monitoring information needs may need to be re-prioritized and adapted. Changes to protection monitoring information needs should be undertaken in a collaborative manner, with input from protection & interagency coordination structures, forums and actors.

It is recommended that DRC advocates with protection & interagency coordination structures for stakeholders to collectively assess the information landscape, identify and prioritize information needs in light of COVID-19. A secondary data review of existing data and information must be undertaken to understand the information landscape - what data and information already exists / is already being collected, who is collecting what etc. This will help avoid duplication. Information needs and indicators for information needs should be harmonized between actors to support triangulation, aggregation and comparison and eventually shared analysis and understanding of the protection risks and needs.

Protection information that will likely be needed during COVID-19 pandemic include:

Information category	Information need
Access to health and other essential services	Access to, availability of, quality of
	Constraints in accessing health and other services, including discriminatory practices
Freedom of Movement (FoM)	FoM constraints
	Impact of FoM constraints on individuals, families or communities
	Access to territory and the right to seek asylum
Violence, coercion, and abuse	Types of violence, coercion, abuse (to be defined by the country)
	Perceptions of fear, stigma, and safety
Knowledge of prevention practices and other information on Corona Virus & COVID-19	Levels of knowledge
	Current practices
	Where people get their information
Coping Strategies & social cohesion	Positive and negative coping strategies
	Social cohesion among between people & communities

### Protection Monitoring Data Collection Methods

Protection monitoring activities generally include one or several of the following data collection methodologies: direct observation, household Interview, key informant interview and focus group discussion.<sup>1</sup> The table below details recommendations on modifying protection monitoring methods in situations where COVID-19 pandemic is present in operational areas.

Recommended modifications during COVID-19 pandemic	
Method	Recommendations
Direct observation	In contexts where staff are able to move around and in compliance with social distancing advice from health authorities, direct observation activities can be undertaken, taking into consideration DRC's COVID-19 Response " <a href="#">Key messages for Communicating with Communities</a> " and upcoming guidance on DRC's staff & workforce engagement with communities during COVID-19 pandemic.
Household interview	<p><b>Recommend suspending</b> face-to-face household interviews when COVID-19 is present in communities.</p> <p>It is acceptable to continue household interviews telephonically. If community-based protection committees (CBPC) or protection focal points are present in the community, they can play a role in identifying (telephonically or through in person) people to participate in telephonic protection monitoring interviews. If CBPC or focal points identify people in person for interviews then they should be trained and made aware of precautions to take in relation to COVID-19.</p> <p>CBPC members or protection focal points can also take a larger role in data collection and conduct interviews. If this is undertaken, CBPC and protection focal points must be trained on data collection techniques and data protection considerations noted in your protection monitoring Standard Operating Procedure.</p> <p>CBPC or protection focal points can also be key informants for DRC protection monitoring. Please refer to KII section below for this point.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Definitions and details of these methodologies are elaborated within DRC's Protection Monitoring Guidance.

	Snowball sampling or convenience sampling can be used as an approach to guide DRC’s protection monitoring identification of interviewees. Please reference details provided on snowball and convenience sampling below.
<b>Key informant interview</b>	<p><b>Recommend</b> undertaking key informant interviews telephonically, ensuring diversity among KIIs, taking into consideration AGD.</p> <p>Key informants can be health workers, community leaders, teachers, community-based protection committee members / protection focal points, or others who have knowledge of the community.</p> <p><b>Recommend</b> having key informants from a variety of perspectives that provide age, gender, and diversity perceptions.</p>
<b>Focus group discussion</b>	<b>Recommended suspending</b> FGDs when COVID-19 is present in communities.

### Sampling methodologies<sup>2</sup> for hard to reach populations

Understanding that DRC’s data collection methodology and ability to identify and interview people of concern will be impacted by COVID-19, a list of sampling methods are detailed below. The purpose of this list is to provide examples that can be used to identify household interviews in situations where populations are hard to reach – including times when people are social distancing themselves or when DRC’s access to people of concern is restricted due to health and safety concerns. For more information on sampling methods please refer to [UNHCR Needs Assessment Handbook](#).

Sampling methodologies for hard to reach populations			
Type	What	Advantages	Disadvantages / Limitations
Convenience Sampling <sup>3</sup>	Strategy uses existing relationships to identify participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits from existing relationships to identify participants.</li> <li>• Can focus on recruitment from specific locations, settings or activities.</li> <li>• Efficient and inexpensive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May result in homogeneous sampling frame.</li> <li>• Limited generalizability to broader population.</li> <li>• Less rigorous if organizations or partners do not follow a process to identify participants.</li> </ul>
Snowball Sampling <sup>4</sup>	Based on a referral approach where a small number of individuals with specific characteristics recruit others with these characteristics from their networks or community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach to participants with same characteristics.</li> <li>• Often used in community engagement research, studies and mixed methods approaches.</li> <li>• Based on networks and relationships which may lend credibility to research.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referral contact may not be effective in identifying diverse individuals.</li> <li>• Referral contact may only identify participants meeting specific characteristics.</li> <li>• Participants may not share information freely for fear of privacy or confidentiality – especially in qualitative study.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> A ‘sample’ is the subset of a population that is studied. ‘Sampling’ is the process of selecting a sample. Sampling methodologies therefore assist DRC in determining how the organisation will engage in primary data collection. The data collection methodology refers to the tools DRC uses in primary data collection. For example, household interviews.

<sup>3</sup> Households and individuals are selected for the sample based on their accessibility and proximity to the researcher (UNHCR, Needs Assessment Handbook)

<sup>4</sup> Households and individuals are selected according to recommendations from other informants, with each informant recommending the next set of informants (UNHCR, Needs Assessment Handbook)

Respondent Driven Sampling	Used to reach hidden or most-vulnerable populations basing participation and reach on trust of respondents recruiting frame.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeds (respondents) recruit a fixed number of participants.</li> <li>• Systematic information collected to identify potential biases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires training and time to capture and identify respondent relationships.</li> <li>• Reach may not be diverse.</li> <li>• Bias if great percentage of participants share characteristics.</li> </ul>
----------------------------	--	---	--

### Adapting questions & answers based on changes to methodology

When adapting protection monitoring methodologies, colleagues should go through their data analysis plan and adapt / reformulate questions and answers to match the interviewee’s perspective. For example, if you plan to change your data collection methodology from household interviews to key informant interviews, then the formulation of the question and possibly the measurement of the answer will require adaptation to take into consideration the key informant response, representing his / her perspective. One example is noted below with changes highlighted in yellow.

Information need	HHI question prior to change	Answer
Reason for return	Why did <b>you</b> decide to return to your area of origin	Multiple choice – no-prompt: 1) Assistance stopped in the area of displacement; 2) no assistance provided in the area of displacement; 3) harvest time; 4) insecurity/violence in the area of displacement; etc.
<b>Information need</b>	Adapted KII question	Answer
Reason for return	<b>In your opinion</b> , why did <b>people</b> return to <b>their</b> area of origin?	Multiple choice – no-prompt: 1) Assistance stopped in the area of displacement; 2) no assistance provided in the area of displacement; 3) harvest time; 4) insecurity/violence in the area of displacement; etc.

### Use of secondary data – including media monitoring

In situations where methods for protection monitoring are restricted, more and further use can be made of secondary data<sup>5</sup>, including media monitoring and/or social media monitoring, to complement and/or replace previous primary protection monitoring data collection efforts. The use of secondary data, including media monitoring and/or social media monitoring should adhere to the established analysis plan and defined information needs.

Starting media monitoring will require re-calibrating human resource and information technology capacities within your existing protection monitoring approach to support qualitative analysis.

<sup>5</sup> Secondary data: is data that has been collected, collated and analysed by other agencies, institution or bodies. PIM common terminology, April 2018. Accessible here: [http://pim.guide/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Protection-Information-Management-Terminology\\_Revised-Edition-April-2018.pdf](http://pim.guide/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Protection-Information-Management-Terminology_Revised-Edition-April-2018.pdf)