

## **Adolescent Girls in Emergencies Syria Crisis – May 2014**

**Goal:** To be able to identify and respond to the needs of adolescent girls effected by the Syria Crisis, both within Syria and in the surrounding countries.

### **Objectives for 2014:**

- Adapt and field-test the rapid assessment tool for adolescent girls in emergencies.
- Identify geographical areas within each country to pilot and record information about the movements of adolescent girls during different stages of the response.
- Develop pilot programs for adolescent girls as a result of the information collected and focus group discussions analyzed.

### **Purpose of this assessment**

Before a program begins, planners must first understand what girls are in their program area and approximately how many girls fall in each category. National and sub-national data can be useful for broadly understanding basic information about girls, but often more local, detailed information is unavailable. The assessment tool will help program planners enumerate and map households in which girls live in their program catchment areas. It is an essential building block to find those girls in communities who will most benefit from interventions as well as those girls who are potential candidates to be their mentors. This tool serves as a complement to, not a substitute for, more extensive research endeavors. The tool provides a minimum set of questions which can be completed in less than 15 minutes per interview. These basic questions avoid sensitive topics and provide a quick snapshot of the community for program planning. The questions are provided as a template; the tool offers enough flexibility to add or adapt questions as appropriate for each community's context.

With this brief set of questions you will be able to see the adolescent girls who are often invisible or hidden within your community. Some of these girls may be particularly in need of services, defined by being off-track on key indicators such as being out of school, married, or not living with parents at young ages. Others may be a surprising resource you hadn't realized was there, such as those girls who even under difficult circumstances are in the appropriate grade for their age. Using the simple tool makes girls who are often overlooked visible so that resources can be allocated to promote their well-being. These girls can then be engaged in critical asset-building activities.

In addition to collecting basic information that can serve as a baseline for any program plan, geographic information (GPS coordinates) is also automatically collected. This can make it possible to map and later locate girls within a community. Such information can be helpful for program recruitment and retention. As with all information-gathering activities, care should be taken not to collect

information that could put girls at risk for harm. In cases in which even information about girls' whereabouts could put them in danger, it is better not to collect GPS coordinates.

### ***Where to use to tool***

In selecting a community in which to use the tool two factors are important: defining the catchment area with some specificity (that is, exactly what your community is, and where you plan to work within it), and selecting an area that is similar to the types of places in which you plan to start programs. It is important to establish the key characteristics of the communities you are working in so that as you expand your program to other areas you will have information that is illustrative of the types of communities in which you plan to work. Size is a good broad factor with which to begin. For example, a recent large-scale program in Nigeria decided that it would work in communities of 2,500 to 3,000 households because in the part of Nigeria in which it was working this was a typical community size. A program that operated in rural Guatemala chose communities that had about 750 people, since that was the typical size for that program. If you plan to work in sub-sections of community (like a neighborhood within an urban area, or only part of a rural community), it is important to define on which part of the community you will focus. Walking the perimeter of your catchment area with a GIS recording tool can establish on a map what geographic area you will cover. For test purposes you may want to begin with a community where you have already worked. We hope you will use this survey as a programmatic step whenever you begin work in a new community. You may choose to do a full census of your community or to sample, for example by interviewing every other household.

### ***How to use the tool***

Basic information about girls, including their geographic location. The tool is optimized for use on mobile phones or tablets. Phones are a cheap and convenient way to collect information, and can save time and prevent errors. Instructions on how the tool is used on a practical implementation level will be shared with the teams the days before the assessments start.

### ***What to do with the information after it's been collected***

Once you collect information using the tool you'll have a sense of all girls 0-24 in your community of interest (keeping in mind that in many places people may not know their exact age). You will be especially interested in girls who are school-going age, who in most places are from age 6-17. Girls under age 18 are considered minors in most legal systems. The basic data you collect will allow you to see girls who are off-track based on objective criteria like being out of school when school-aged, being married or having a child before age 18, and living in a household with no parents present. You can also see those girls who are potential resources and mentors in a community. When you have had more experience you may want to adjust our

assumptions, but we begin with assumptions we expect are applicable in many countries.

***Preparing/accessing the communities:***

Initial meetings with community leaders or camp management will need to take place in the weeks before the assessment takes place. Camp management/Community leaders are welcome to provide feedback on the assessment tool that will be shared with participants.

Follow up with the communities can also be arranged for after the initial use of the tool to ensure that the community leaders can ask for clarification and be debriefed on initial findings.

***Sharing of information across agencies:***

This information will be shared among the key agencies of Mercy Corps, Save the Children and IRC within the countries that are participating but will also be shared wider on agreement from all of the other agencies.

Basic FAQs

***Why the questionnaire is so basic***

The questionnaire is designed to be non-invasive at the beginning and in many cases this is our first access to communities. For example in Iraq we have discussed the fact that this will be the first time an agency has gone in to discuss adolescent girls' services. Of course, in countries where we have previously worked with a country, more in-depth discussion there will be the triangulated.

There is some flexibility in the questions and if there were particular questions that you feel as an organization they would like to collect while we have these discussions, we can certainly have the teams ask them and record it for analysis. We really do hope to have something that is manageable and be field led. There will be time beforehand for organizations to let us know if there additional information is needed and for what purpose.

***Access to services questions***

This is a new set of questions that we've added in that wasn't in the field

testing of the tool in Africa (south Sudan in April 2014), so any changes we can certainly look at and then think about how they can influence programs, as long as they don't put people at risk if there have been problems accessing.

### ***The use of case studies***

There will be approximately 5% - 10% of the participants asked to participate in a more detailed discussion about their situation. The case studies will be of girls who have in their interviews discussed the fact that they have faced either challenges accessing services or a member of their family or friend (possibly another female) has moved or left to take other opportunities.

The case studies will also be able to help us gain the qualitative component of understanding the change in circumstance as we try to follow up with them 6 weeks later as well - this will help us see the possibility for changes of circumstance and comfort levels.

### ***Key informant interviews***

There will certainly be triangulating information from the many assessments that have been done over the past year as well as staff interviews. We would also like to take some time during the Child Protection working groups and the protection sub working groups to be able to discuss some key issues that have been identified. This will certainly give the team the opportunity to triangulate. The focus group discussions will also be with the girls, NGOs on the ground and community leaders/parents/caregivers to allow for different types of questions. The questions for these groups have not been laid out yet as they will happen after the collection of basic information but will be based on discussions of the team.