



Step 4: Selecting themes

On the basis of the documentation review undertaken in Step 1 and of the protection issues identified, teams can determine which themes to discuss with refugees. Such themes might include livelihoods, education, community participation, health, security, violence¹⁹ or other issues that may have emerged as priorities in a particular operation²⁰. Each of these themes is impacted by power relations and can lead to exclusion of certain groups.

Themes provide a framework for discussions; the themes listed are overarching and relate to many aspects of people's lives. When raised, they open up many other closely linked issues. For example, discussions with grandmother heads of household might initially focus on education for their grandchildren but then turn to their access to food, firewood and a livelihood and their need to generate an income to avoid exposing their grandchildren to child labour and exploitation. Follow-up participatory assessment exercises may focus on only one or two themes in particular, depending on the protection risks and incidents that emerge during the annual participatory assessment exercise.

Participatory assessment provides an important opportunity to obtain the views of persons of concern on the data being gathered through the Standards and Indicators Reports. Once themes have been selected, multifunctional teams should gather related data from the Standards and Indicators Reports, which will have been reviewed during Step 1. When facilitating

discussions and undertaking observation, the data should be kept in mind and, if appropriate, cross-checked with the people of concern. In addition, many protection risks are related to the need of people of concern to generate a livelihood in a context where resources are scarce; gathering information about the economic context, sources of livelihood, and survival strategies enhances understanding of their protection risks.

Teams may use the questions provided in Annex 3 to guide them in their discussions with refugees. Asking these questions will help to elicit information on protection risks, the refugees' capacities to cope with them, and their proposed solutions. Understanding what coping mechanisms people already have will enable teams to ensure that these mechanisms do not lead to additional risks and to develop solutions together with people of concern.

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