A summary of the Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi) methodology and approach

What is 4Mi?

Started in East Africa in 2014 and since expanded to other regions, the 4Mi is an innovative, cost-effective approach developed by the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS, which is now part of the Mixed Migration Centre as MMC East Africa & Yemen) in Nairobi to collect and analyse data on mixed migration flows[1], including profiles, drivers, means of movement, conditions of movement, the smuggler economy, aspirations and destination choices. 4Mi particularly fills information gaps around protection and vulnerabilities with a view to informing policy and humanitarian programmatic response as well as enhancing sector understanding and knowledge on migration dynamics. It offers a unique, regular, standardized, and potentially globalized, system of collecting primary data on mixed migration flows.

The 4Mi model:

4Mi consists of a network of monitors who conduct structured interviews with people in mixed migration flows - primarily those 'on the move'. Data collection is at relatively small scale (approximately 5 – 15 interviews per monitor per month) but it takes place continuously with monitors paid on the basis of submitted and accepted completed questionnaires. Monitors are individuals living in diverse locations and often of the nationality of the refugees and migrants they interview. They may also be staff members of existing agencies (normally NGO, INGO, CBO etc.), refugees and migrants themselves or local community members who have access to refugees and migrants or may even be part of the network of people that service, assist and provide for people on the move.

Generally monitors are selected and deployed to focus on known migration 'nodes' and 'hotspots'. These hotspots may be in urban centres, border areas and along transit routes – wherever there is a large presence of people on the move.

Before being deployed monitors are trained to use a custom-designed smartphone application to submit data on mixed migration issues in their locations to a central repository / data platform (currently operated by Qualtrics). The data is in the form of an in-depth interview with consenting refugees and migrants. As of early 2018 4Mi collects approximately 1,000-1,200 completed interviews every month.

Monitors can be selected from any sector – their key capacity is their knowledge of their locality and contacts with people on the move or those who have contact with people on the move. As mentioned, often they are migrants themselves. All 4Mi monitors are supervised by 4Mi management as part of the MMC structure in the different regions, hosted and as part of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Part of the supervision consists of dedicated administrators who maintain regular contact with monitors, verify every report that is submitted and who communicate regularly with the monitors including conducting remote training on the survey instrument as and when necessary. They also organize the payment of the monitors. In some cases, and where it is possible, monitors

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[1] The mixed migration will be used throughout this document but must be understood to include all groups on the move including those moving voluntarily and involuntarily: it includes economic migrants, asylum seekers, refugees practicing onward movement and others. See MMC Understanding of Mixed Migration.

are brought together for training and refresher training. Equally in some cases a team leader may be used to directly supervise monitors and ensure quality control in a more detailed manner.

Why is 4Mi important?

Despite the high interest and concern around the rising phenomenon of mixed migration, there are virtually no systems in place nationally or regionally to monitor mixed migration flows and interview migrants on the move. Policy formation, political debate and humanitarian programming are taking place in a context that often lacks concrete data, particularly with regard to protection issues in place of origin and along the migration route. The challenges associated with data collection on mixed migration flows include the clandestine nature of smuggler-dominated movements and the disparate routes and methods of movement.

Furthermore, MMC established 4Mi to act as a credible evidence-based advocate for the rights and responsibilities of all people on the move in mixed migration flows and a provider of best possible interventions to protect lives, uphold rights and to better understand and address causes of dangerous migration.

Objective of 4Mi Data:

The objective of 4Mi data is thus to:

- Inform Policy Debate and Programmatic Response: 4Mi aims to support a wide range of agencies, donors, governments, academic institutions and media by providing more concrete and up-to-date insights on mixed migration and trend changes in flows.
- Identify Protection Gaps: 4Mi intends to facilitate the possibility of improved protection of those in mixed migration flows where increasing levels of abuse, neglect, hardship and death face men, women and children on the move.
- Establish Deeper Knowledge: In a changing dynamic international context, 4Mi keeps track of migration trends providing comprehensive authoritative information in areas that may need improved policies, or tailor-made approaches.

Disclaimer:

4Mi uses a relatively small network of monitors (approximately 100 in early 2018) to better understand protection risks in areas of origin and along migration routes. Due to the nature of the project, purposive sampling is used, as explained below in the detailed methodology. As such, 4Mi is not a representative sample of migration flows. 4Mi is designed to provide insight into protection along migration routes, but not to provide an estimate of the scale of migration flows, or a representative estimate of violations along routes.

4Mi data dissemination and visualisation

Initially, selected 4Mi data was presented in various graphics on the 4Mi website for East Africa and Yemen (EAY). As 4Mi expanded from East Africa to other regions, various 4Mi programmes started to develop reports and infographics, partly disseminated through the website of the RMMS in Nairobi. In 2018, all 4Mi data from various regional 4Mi operations will be presented through the new MMC global website.

4Mi data and analysis has increasingly been used by various agencies including UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, IOM (including the Fatal Journeys reports and IOMs missing migrants database) and various media reports and can also be found in various reports and papers by DRCs mixed migration units that now make up the MMC. It is frequently used in conference and workshop presentations by MMC and DRC staff. Additionally, 4Mi data is a foundation data base for a new joint MMC/DRC-IBM 20-month initiative seeking to offer predictive modelling around migration, MM4Sight (Mixed Migration Foresight).

Detailed methodology

Approach

The approach is based on the following:

- Long-term regular collection and analysis. Mixed migration flows are characterized by the rapid nature of change with regard to profiles and paths of refugees and migrants, as well as protection risks. It can be challenging to identify new trends, in terms of location and in terms of new types of protection violations. 4Mi can provide a mechanism of identifying some changes in movement trends but 4Mi is best able to give an indication of changing protection risks. Due to the small sample size and design it is not able to provide a statistically significant and representative picture of changing trends (e.g. volume, routes) and profiles, but it is able to provide indicative results.
- Hybrid / snapshot data collection. In certain cases, 4Mi may also conduct short term, hybrid and snap shot data gathering exercises in order to develop data sets for specific purposes. 4Mi results, that focus on long-term data gathering, can be supplemented, using existing 4Mi resources (in particular monitors) to conduct more in-depth or contextual data analysis.
- Grassroots data collection. Data collection is done at a grassroots level, using monitors who have some distance from the refugee/asylum system. The aim of this approach is to minimize bias among respondents (who may have an incentive to over emphasis certain characteristics when reporting to UNHCR or a refugee-specific agency such as DRC). The two key elements of this approach are (1) hiring full or part time enumerators from the community directly, paid on a per-questionnaire basis, where possible, and (2) engaging local NGOs to collect data, using the same principle of developing a network of data collectors from within communities that receive, or have contact with, large numbers of refugees and migrants. The model is versatile and the current iteration of 4Mi may change as the project matures and responds to specific needs and contexts.

4Mi supports the following types of data collection:

- Profiles & drivers. Information is collected on profiles including demographic information about those travelling, socio-cultural information including information about ethnicities (where possible and safe to collect), economic information and contextual information including perceptions of the security context and factors driving migration with clear focus on root causes and perceptions and aspirations of refugees and migrants.
- Routes. Information is collected on migration routes, in particular: (1) What routes refugees and migrants take (through which countries, using land or sea, using public transport or walking, etc.), (2) where they stop along the routes and for how long and why, (3) what factors encourage or discourage use of a given route, (4) what sources of information (e.g. diaspora, smugglers, social media) feed into decisions about migration routes and 5) means of communication while in transit
- Protection risks in areas of origin & along routes.
  - Information is collected on protection violations and risks in locations of origin, with the aim of gaining an improved understanding of the degree to which mixed migration flows include those who are fleeing protection risks, and the types of violations and risks that drive people into mixed migration flows.
  - Information is collected about protection risks along migration routes. Information collected includes reports on a range of issues such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, kidnappings, detention and deaths; on where these incidents happened and who, if applicable, committed any violations. The aim of collecting this information is (1) to better understand the risks faced by those in mixed migration flows, (2) to identify 'hotspots' in terms of protection risks to inform future interventions and programming by humanitarian actors, and (3) to understand the losses (financial and other) incurred by those who experience violations and the coping capacities that exist, and are lacking, among those in mixed migration flows.
- The migration economy: information is collected on the use of smugglers, the economics around migration (costs of the journey, including smuggling fees and bribes) and the involvement of various stakeholders (including state officials) in the facilitation of migration flows.

- Destinations: information is collected on intended destinations,]intentions when they arrived at their destination and, in case they have already reached their final destination, their current status, activities and intentions (e.g. employment, education, remittances, family reunification).
- Drivers of smugglers. Information is collected, where possible, safe and relevant, from smugglers themselves in order to better understand (1) the incentives, financial and otherwise, of those establishing and supporting mixed migration routes (and therefore the smuggling economy), (2) the links of smugglers to other actors in both the formal and the informal sectors, with state and non-state actors, and (3) the smugglers modus operandi and the ways in which smugglers interact with potential and actual participants in mixed migration flows.

Sampling

- Purposive sampling. 4Mi uses a relatively small network of monitors to better understand protection risks in areas of origin along migration routes and at destinations. Due to the nature of the project, non-randomised, purposive sampling is used, as follows: (1) only those who are part of the 2 target groups (migrants & smugglers) are included in data collection; (2) data collection is heavily focused toward migrants (the system aims to collect a minimum of 90% of responses from migrants); (3) those with protection concerns, or at protection risk, are included in the sample where possible.
- Targets of data collection. 4Mi data collection targets 2 groups – refugees/migrants and smugglers.
  - Refugees and migrants are those who take part in mixed migration paths. No distinction is made in the sampling process between economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. The 4Mi methodology aims for a minimum of 90% of respondents to be migrants.[2]
  - Smugglers are those who facilitate irregular movements of people. The term 'smuggler' is applied broadly and includes those who develop contact with and recruit potential migrants, those who are involved in the movement process and those who engage in or facilitate financial transactions associated with the movement of people.
  - Selection of geographic areas. 4Mi attempts to place monitors in locations designed to maximize effective data collection, like well-known mixed migration hotspots where it is likely the monitors are able to interview a considerable number of respondents.
- In particular, the following principles are currently used to place monitors and target their work:
  - Migration hubs in urban areas. Monitors are located in migration hubs located in urban areas. Where possible the profiles of these monitors (gender, ethnic, language skills, economic, social) will be diverse in order to target the broadest cross-section possible of the mixed migration flow, (gender, age, ethnicity, religious grouping).
  - Border crossing points. Monitors are ideally located at border crossing points. Monitors are, where possible, a member of the community residing at or near the point, in order to support coverage of those crossing, not only in a formal manner, but also those crossing at informal borders or using informal methods of crossing.
  - Also, possibly, at locations of origin, starting points and refugee camps, and critically in places of destination.

Data Collection Summary

- Data Collection Tools. The primary data collection tool for 4Mi are individual surveys.
  - Individual surveys tailored to target groups. 2 individual questionnaires are used by the monitors, one for each target group (migrant and smuggler). The questionnaires take approximately 1-2 hours to complete for migrants, and 30-40 minutes for smugglers
- Tool Development. A standard survey for each of the target groups has been developed for global use. In addition, regions/countries can decide to add separate elements/modules to the questionnaire specifically

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[2] *Please note that the minimum proportion of migrant respondents is not based on an analysis; it is made simply with the intention of maximizing the number of respondents from the intended target group while simultaneously allowing for triangulation with smugglers.*

relevant and of interest to the context of the region/country/migrant group, but the identical core survey is used throughout to allow for cross-regional comparisons.

- Data Collection Resources. Two approaches to data collection are implemented: (1) Direct data collection takes place through identified monitors supported and managed by MMC (under DRC contracts), where possible (e.g. where DRC is operational), and (2) local NGOs who are trained and organize the deployment of monitors they manage through a contractual agreement with regional 4Mi teams.
- Data collection systems. Data is collected on smartphones, using survey/data collection software provided by external servers in contractual relationship with MMC – currently Qualtrics. All 4Mi programmes use the same software to ensure comparability. The data collection system is regularly reviewed to ensure the best possible fit between the needs of the 4Mi programme and the features of the selected software provider. The MMC 4Mi focal point is the entity in the network of 4Mi projects organizing this, through consultation with all 4Mi ICT staff and 4Mi project managers.
- Data Quality. Data quality is assured in several ways. (1) Monitors will undergo specific training using a training manual. (2) Monthly skype calls are conducted with the monitors to discuss quality and data collection issues. (3) Data from smart phones will be analysed, in particular with regard to (a) The time taken to complete the questionnaire, (b) The GPS location where the questionnaire was recorded, (c) Actual completion of the survey, (d) A critical approach to any repetition and outlier data, using a structured checklist to be used by 4Mi admin officers to review survey submissions as and when they come in, to ensure timely discovery of errors and re-direction and guidance for the monitors (and adjustments of the training manual) and (e) Active appreciation and alertness to the possibility of fraud.
- Data Analysis. Due to the purposive sampling approach of the 4Mi methodology, and the relatively small sample size, only descriptive (non-significant) statistical analysis can be conducted on the data with potential for basis cross-tabulation and correlations. In addition, a small number of open-ended questions allows for qualitative output in the form of quotes from refugees and migrants and smugglers.

Limitations and Mitigating Measures

- Purposive sampling method.
  - o Limitation: The limitations of the purposive sampling method include (1) possibility of monitor bias in selecting the sample, (2) the sample is not necessarily representative of the mixed migration flow.
  - o Mitigation: The risk of monitor bias is mitigated through (1) careful recruitment of monitors to avoid inherent bias through age, status, sex and nationality. (2) specific training following recruitment, (3) follow up skypes conducted with monitors on a monthly basis, (4) periodic ad-hoc spot checks on monitors and (5) triangulation of data from 4Mi against other data sources, where possible. The risk of non-representativeness of the sample and lack of ability to provide statistically representative results and correlations is acknowledged through clear disclaimers and adoption of appropriate analysis techniques. Additionally, it is recognized that most data are self-reported by respondents and is non verifiable (for example when referring to incidents that happened along the route).
- Government regulations and restrictions on data collection.
  - o Limitation. In some countries the government authorities provide only limited access to those in displacement, both to NGOs and to other actors. Data collection and research is challenging in such countries due to interactions with governments, and these challenges are heightened in border areas. In some countries, direct data collection by MMC/DRC contracted 4Mi monitors is not possible.
  - o Mitigation. MMC engages in regular discussions with the governments, where possible in collaboration with other actors, with the aim of negotiating improved access and data collection. As a project of MMC, which is part of DRC, 4Mi always needs to take into account DRC operational interests and potential risks to DRC of caused by the presence of 4Mi in a particular country / regions.
- Lack of reliable data about mixed migration flows
  - o Limitation. There is a significant data gap with regard to mixed migration flows; there is limited or no understanding of the scale of the flows or of people's experiences (protection and otherwise) along these flows. As a result, it is difficult to triangulate 4Mi data or to gain an idea of how representative the 4Mi data sample is.

- o <u>Mitigation</u>. As mentioned MMC adopts clear disclaimers to clarify that data and analysis is not necessarily representative. As more data collection mechanisms (e.g. IOM's DTM and Flow Monitoring and UNHCR's PMT) are established and become effective, MMC may integrate supplementary data into the 4Mi system (for example, if clearer data becomes available on the scale of migration flows, the 4Mi sample size could be adjusted and different analysis techniques can be adopted).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in research and surveys are important. Ethics are the norms or standards for conduct that distinguish between right and wrong. They help to determine the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors on the part of the researchers and monitors. Why are ethical considerations so important here? The integrity, reliability and validity of the research findings rely heavily on adherence to ethical principles. The readers and the public want to be assured that researchers followed the appropriate guidelines for issues such as informed consent, human rights, compliance with the law, conflicts of interest, safety, health standards and so on. The handling of these ethical issues greatly impact the integrity of the research project. The manner in which research is conducted may also shape a community's views, positive or negatively, toward the researcher/monitor, the research project, the topic and the research institution.

In 2017, MMC established a <u>4Mi External Ethical & Methodological Review Team (ExERT)</u> consisting of professionals and academics able to assist 4Mi as an independent, external panel looking at the survey tools, training, recruitment of monitors and other elements of the 4Mi methodology.

In survey research, ethical principles are primarily centered on protecting research participants (the respondents) and the guiding foundation of "do no harm". Following is a list of core ethical principles that are important:

- Non-Identification – All interviews are recorded anonymously as data sets relate to the stated profile of the respondent but not to their name or any identifying characteristics of the respondent.
- Respect for persons – Respect the autonomy, decision-making and dignity of participants.
- Beneficence – Minimizing the risks (physically, psychologically and socially) and maximizing the benefits to research participants.
- Justice – Participants should be selected from groups of people whom the research may benefit.
- Respect for communities – Protect and respect the values and interests of the community as a whole and protect the community from harm.
- Obtain the consent of the respondent (informed consent).
- Providing the right to withdraw and refuse – respondents should always have the **right to withdraw** from the interview process and/or refuse to answer particular questions. When they choose to withdraw from the interview process, they should not be **pressured** or **coerced** in any way to try and stop them from withdrawing.

4Mi deals with potentially sensitive topics and monitors will engage with participants that may have been exposed to physical and sexual abuse or other traumatic experiences. It is therefore vital that monitors are trained properly on how to approach participants and that they understand the importance of informing participants about the purpose of the interview and listen, show empathy and respect the limits of what the participant wish to share. All participants are informed orally by the monitors about the aim of the study as well as research ethics prior to participating, including confidentiality and the right to withdraw. In the end of each interview time is set aside for participants to ask questions making sure that participants are not left with unaddressed concerns.

All interviewees are anonymous and once a monitor has uploaded a questionnaire to the 4Mi server the monitor no longer has access to the data. It is 4Mi's aim that all monitors are trained on research ethnics prior to data collection.