(country/survey, year) Protection protocol

# Introduction

The MICS protection protocol identifies anticipated or actual risks throughout the survey process specially in relation to the following ethical considerations: potential harms and benefits for participants, informed consent process, privacy and confidentiality, and participant complaints and concerns. The protocol also identifies measures and procedures anticipated or adopted to address or mitigate against these risks. Potential ethical risks and mitigation strategies included in this protocol have been considered and reviewed as part of the broader survey quality assurance process by the MICS Steering and Technical Committees.

The focal point for ethics in the steering committee should prepare this document in collaboration with the rest of the members of the committee. The document should be finalized before the questionnaires are pre-tested and should describe the roles and responsibilities of the survey coordination team and the Steering and Technical Committee in dealing with ethical issues that come up during the survey design process and data collection.

Please complete the sections below following the instructions and examples provided in red text as guidance. Please customize these examples with suitable context-specific examples that apply to your survey and country. For example, there may be risks specifics to natural disasters, humanitarian of post-conflict settings. Or the focal points may be different than in the examples provided.

Please note that the mental health and violence against women modules require special ethical procedures, including high-risk emergency referrals to psychosocial and other services. If the MICS includes any of these modules, please refer to their respective complementary packages for specific ethical guidance. Developing a system that includes high-risk emergency referrals often requires significant time to map existing services, engage with relevant stakeholders, agree on and plan the logistics. It may also require budgeting. Please make sure to start preparations for referral systems as soon as possible at the beginning of the survey design process, following the guidance provided in the complementary packages for these modules. Once the referral system has been designed, please describe in detail in this document what specific measures will be adopted.

# protection protocol: Ethical considerations, risks, mitigation strategies

## risks for participants

This section identifies potential risks to participants and formulates appropriate risk management plans or mitigations strategies. Potential risks to participants may be psychological, physical, social, legal, and economic. Special considerations related to highly sensitive topics (e.g., mental health, violence against women form) and direct interactions with younger children and adolescents (e.g., early grade learning) are also reflected in this section.

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| Risks | Strategies to address risks | Focal point |
| Interviewer makes the respondent uncomfortable or distressed | * Ethics module is embedded in training and/or field team code of conduct is clearly noted in training * Interviewers (wherever possible) do not wear anything that denotes allegiance to a political or religious party * Interviewers are trained to respond to distress * Interviewers are trained and made aware of their responsibilities to ensure the confidentiality of the data * Interviewers are trained and agree to not provide opinions or personal experiences on any sensitive issue or issue raised in the questionnaire. | National MICS coordinator / Training facilitators |
| Evidence of obvious, acute health or mental health conditions in respondent or household member | * Provision of a list of health facilities / mental health service providers / psychosocial support services. * (If survey includes mental health or violence against women): Clear referral process in place, including process to establish whether or when to refer respondent to support services. | National MICS coordinator / Interviewers |
| Child or parent report that either is experiencing domestic violence or that the child is being abused | * Refer to national legislation in relation to reporting abuse (insert relevant legislation here) which states (…). * (If legislation requires mandatory reporting of abuse): Informed consent will articulate that, in light of legislation, if disclosure of abuse occurs, or if there is evidence of abuse occurring, it will have to be reported as per the legislation. * (If no mandatory reporting of abuse exists): No measures will be taken unless the respondent asks for help in which case the interviewers will provide information on relevant support services/help lines (determined in advance and provided to interviewers as a list of local or relevant health and social support services that are available and willing to provide support as necessary). * Clear referral process will be in place including decision checklist on whether or when to refer child/person to support services. * Provision of a list of service providers that includes not only domestic violence shelters or women’s support services but also includes other services such as medical and community centres. | National MICS survey coordinator |
| Respondent reports illegal activity in household (e.g., child labour). | * Article IV.8 of the MoU states that “no individuals participating in or administering the household survey should be prosecuted consequent to questions posed and responses given within the survey”. * Interviewers will be trained not to comment or provide opinions on participants’ responses. | National MICS survey coordinator |
| Presence of military or other authority figures (potential intimidation) | * Clear instructions will be provided to military escort and/or authority figures that they are not allowed into homes, and that they should not be visible to respondents at any point before, during or after survey. | National MICS coordinator / Steering committee |
| Respondents request feedback on child’s performance in learning assessment or request results of water quality testing, etc. | * Interviewers will make it clear in the informed consent process that they are not in a position to discuss a child’s performance in the learning assessments or the results of the water quality test. * However, information on water quality test results will be made publicly available at (provide details). | National MICS coordinator / Training facilitators |
| Results of water quality testing show high-risk contamination level | * Clear protocols will be in place to report findings to relevant authorities immediately (provide details). | Interviewers / National MICS coordinator |

## recruitment and consenting processes

This section identifies potential ethical risks and mitigation strategies related to the recruitment of survey respondents and obtention of informed consent. These include, for example, ensuring sufficient information is shared with participants for informed consent, obtaining parental consent for minors’ participation in the survey, or having age-appropriate assent procedures for minors in place.

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| Risks | Strategies to address risks | Focal point |
| Consent script does not provide sufficient details for participants to provide informed consent | Consent script includes information about   * Duration of survey * Voluntariness of participation * Risks and benefits * Confidentiality (and any exceptions related to mandatory reporting of abuse) * Negotiability to answer questions (i.e., that respondents do not have to answer every questions) | National MICS coordinator / training facilitators / Interviewers and field team supervisors |
| Telephone number is recorded without person’s consent | Phone number information must be sought from the subscriber themselves and must be given freely by the individual. |  |
| Parental/caregiver consent and/or child assent not obtained  Consent not sought from child even though legislation requires this | Clear protocols to obtain parental/adult consent and child assent are in place.  Clear protocols to obtain informed consent from minors are in place and in line with national legislation (if applicable).  Parental/adult consent is not required to interview adolescents aged between 15 and 17 years who are considered ‘emancipated’ (i.e., do not live with a caregiver). |  |

## RISKS for INTERVIEWERS

This section identifies potential security or health-related risks for interviewers during fieldwork, and strategies to address these risks. Risks may include for example potential safety hazards during travel to field locations or during household visits.

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| Risks | Strategies to address risks | Focal point |
| Potential unsafe conditions in the field | If interviewers are likely to be at risk, face-to-face data collection activities will be stopped until the situation improves and is deemed safe again.  Clear protocols to protect interviewers and field staff during fieldwork and safety recommendations during household visits (for example, working in pairs or supervisors being within viewing distance or checking on interviewers) will be in place and will be addressed during training. | National MICS coordinator / training facilitators / Interviewers and field team supervisors |

## PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Individuals consent to participate in a survey under the premise that the information they will share during the interview will be kept confidential. Accidental or intentional breaches of confidentiality undermine trust in surveys and the institutions that conduct them and can result in harm to respondents. Privacy and confidentiality are also central to data quality: respondents are likely to speak more comfortably and provide more reliable information if interviews are conducted with privacy. This section identifies potential risks to ensuring information provided by respondents is kept confidential and interviews conducted privately. It also describes potential strategies to mitigate respondent identification in microdata before publication.

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| Risks | Strategies to address risks | Focal point |
| Privacy during interview is not possible  Absolute privacy cannot be ensured during highly sensitive sections of the interview  (Note: Privacy refers to no person aged 13 years or above being in direct proximity / able to overhear the conversation) | * Interviewers will be trained on how to obtain privacy and deal with interruptions during interviews. * Interviewers will clearly explain to respondents that in order to do the survey no other household members can be within hearing distance. * If interviewing children, interviewers will ask to find a place in the home where they can be seen by an adult known to the child but not heard. * Before asking questions about highly sensitive topics like (insert examples of highly sensitive topics covered in the survey, e.g., sexual behaviour, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, or mental health) interviewers will mention the nature of the questions and will ask respondents if they agree to continue with the interview. If absolute privacy cannot be guaranteed during interviews on highly sensitive topics, the interviewer will not proceed with the interview and will ask respondent to reschedule interview. | National MICS coordinator / Training facilitators / Interviewers |
| Breach of confidentiality  Hard copies of questionnaires or data files including individual and household identifiers are misplaced or accessed by people external to the survey team  Microdata is not properly anonymized prior to public dissemination. | * Interviewers will be trained on privacy and confidentiality including not sharing any information shared by respondents during interviews with anyone outside of the survey team (see exception on mandatory reporting of abuse in section 1). * Hard copies of completed questionnaires will be stored in a secure location in a locked cabinet and destroyed after three years. * Data files containing personal identifiers will be kept in password protected computers. * (Reference to Article II of MoU regulating data anonymization and handling and sharing of microdata) | National MICS coordinator / Steering committee / Training facilitators / Interviewers |

## MANAGEMENT OF PARTICIPANT COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS

This section identifies anticipated concerns by respondents and defines protocols for handling them.

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| Risks | Strategies to address risks | Focal point |
| Concerns or complaints by survey respondents or communities | * Interviewers will be trained to address typical concerns and complaints. * A complaints focal point will be designated for field teams to liaise with and determine approach to addressing concern. * (If relevant) Information will be provided to participants and communities regarding contact details of concerns or complaints focal point. | Interviewers / National MICS Coordinator /  Designated complaints focal point |