

RHRC CONSORTIUM MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOOLKIT

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Purpose

An in-depth interview is a qualitative data collection method whose purpose is to gain an understanding of reasons underlying people's perceptions, behaviors or conditions of interest. They differ from focus groups because they are one-on-one interviews. They differ from surveys because they permit participants to give detailed responses to each question.

Description

In-depth interviews are open-ended discussions between one interviewer and one respondent on a topic. The discussion is often taped (with the respondent's permission) for later analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Approvals

Before you begin a study, you must obtain certain permissions for ethical, political and logistical reasons. Some groups you may need to obtain permission from include UNHCR, Ministry of Health, civil authorities in your district, community representatives, your own organization and partner organizations. The consent of the individuals interviewed is always required.

Informed Consent

Every respondent has the right to refuse the interview or to refuse to answer specific questions. The interviewers must respect this right.

Privacy

It is important that the interview with each respondent be conducted in a manner that is comfortable for the respondent, and in which she or he is able to speak openly and honestly.

Interviews may take place at home, or in another place where the respondent feels comfortable. No other adult man, woman or older child should be present or able to hear the interview. Small children may be present.

Confidentiality

The interviewers may not discuss the respondents' answers with anyone, except the supervisor when clarification is needed.

During the interview, the interviewer and respondent may call each other by name, but reference to the respondent's name should be deleted in the notes and transcript. There should be no way to link a specific transcript to a specific respondent.

Data Collection Guide

The instrument for the in-depth interview is an interview guide which describes the overall themes to be covered and is used by the trained interviewer. The

interview guide may contain examples of follow-up or probe questions for the interviewers; this is particularly useful for new interviewers.

The interviewer should cover all of the topic areas in the guide, but does not necessarily follow a particular sequence. The discussion should flow as naturally as possible and some topics will arise without being asked directly by the interviewer. The interviewer can introduce a particular topic if it has not arisen during the discussion. She should follow the lead of the respondent, probing relevant topics the respondent raises during the course of the discussion even if they are not part of the discussion guide.

[Click here](#) for an example of an in-depth interview guide.

Sampling Plan

In-depth interviews, like all qualitative data collection methods, are not intended to be representative of your population, so participants do not have to be randomly selected. Respondents for in-depth interviews are selected according to the characteristics you identify as important for your topic.

In-depth interviews are very time-consuming to carry out and to analyze. The number of respondents in each category is usually kept under 50, and often under 25. For example, a study using in-depth interviews might include interviews with 20 women of reproductive age and 20 men of reproductive age.

Data Collection Procedures

Each respondent is approached and asked to participate in the interview. If the respondent agrees, a quiet, private place should be found to conduct the interview. The respondent should be asked for permission to tape record the interview.

Each interviewer will need a small tape recorder with a counter, plenty of blank tapes, spare batteries, a good microphone (if the internal one is not strong enough), the discussion guide (with space for taking notes) and pens.

The interviewer should take written notes during the interview, but should not attempt to note every word since the tape recording will provide details.

In-depth interviews can be expected to last about 2 hours, but they can go longer. Each interviewer can complete 2 or perhaps 3 in a day, as it can be very tiring to listen actively and engage with each respondent.

Interviewer Characteristics

An effective in-depth interviewer has the same characteristics as survey interviewers as well as some additional requirements:

Like a survey interviewer, in-depth interviewers should have:

- at least a primary education, and secondary education if possible,
- sex and age that is comfortable for the individuals to be interviewed (for example, adolescent women might be most comfortable with a female interviewer of 22-25 years, while older women might be uncomfortable with an interviewer that young),

- language and communication skills in the languages spoken by the people to be interviewed,
- familiarity and comfort with reproductive health topics,
- ability to respect the dignity of respondents and confidentiality required by the interview,
- previous experience with surveys or other research activities, if possible.

The interviewers for the in-depth interviews require additional skills. Previous training and experience in sociology, anthropology, psychology or social work may be helpful, as it is important that they have good skills in listening in a non-judgmental and non-biased way. Getting beyond the surface answers to the rich underlying information on motivation, feelings and self-perception is difficult, so care should be taken to identify skilled in-depth interviewers.

Field supervisors should exhibit the same characteristics as the interviewers, preferably have previous in-depth interview and reproductive health experience and be highly organized.

Interviewer Training

Interviewers should receive 3-5 days of training conducted by the field supervisors, who themselves should be trained and/or oriented to the study. The training should emphasize practice with the in-depth interview topics and guide and with probing techniques so that the interviewers are skilled and comfortable discussing reproductive health topics and probing for deeper information. During training, each interviewer should complete at least 3 practice interviews.

It is ideal if the supervisors (and perhaps the interviewers) are involved in pre-testing the instruments. This gives them good experience and increases their confidence level.

Time Frame

It is best to keep the number of interviewers small – perhaps 1-2 male and 1-2 female interviewers – to maintain good standards and to limit the variability introduced by the interviewers. Each interviewer can usually conduct at most 2-3 interviews per day, so the time needed for the overall study can be calculated according to how many interviewers there are and how many interviews are required.

Analysis Plan

The tapes should be transcribed. Notation of where on the tape the comments can be found should be clearly noted on the transcriptions.

Responses are analyzed by arranging them in the general categories identified in the interview guide. After the responses are arranged, the different positions or opinions can be identified. The analysts can summarize the various opinions and synthesize the themes or patterns that emerge. Noting exact quotes is important as they can be powerful elements of the report.

Use of Data

Results from the in-depth interviews should be reported as they reflect the objectives of the study. All of the information collected should be relevant to the creation or modification of current services to meet the needs of the refugees. Keeping this clear goal in mind should assist the data analyst in organizing the final report and ensuring that the findings are used in the program.

Dissemination

A report of the findings of the in-depth interviews should be prepared and shared with project staff and partners. Dissemination to the community should also be done, emphasizing that the results do not reflect any one person or area but are the synthesis of many interviews with many respondents. It is important to highlight how in-depth interview findings are consistent or inconsistent with findings from other sources of information.

Additional Resources