

**VILLAGE SAVINGS AND
LOANS ASSOCIATIONS
EMPOWERMENT PROJECT
BURUNDI**

INTERVIEWER TRAINING MANUAL

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Guide for Note Taking During Focus Group Discussions

The goal of these interviews is to further investigate the way in which participants have interpreted some of the questions and topics included in the quantitative evaluation. Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences because interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic.

General Note Taking Information

The raw data of interviews are the actual words spoken by the interviewees. Nothing can substitute for this data: what was actually said by real people. Data interpretation and analysis involve making sense of what people have said, looking for patterns, putting together what is said in one place with what is said in another place, and integrating what different people have said. To enable data analysis and interpretation, during the data collection phase, the purpose of each interview is to record as fully and as fairly as possible that particular interviewee's perspective. In general these notes should include:

- Behaviors -what a person has done or is doing.
- Opinions/values -what a person thinks about the topic.
- Feelings -what a person feels rather than what a person thinks.
- Knowledge -to get facts about the topic.
- Sensory -what people have seen or heard.
- Background/demographics -standard background questions, such as age, education, etc.

What kinds of notes are taken during a tape-recorded interview

The use of a tape recorder does not eliminate the need for taking notes, but does allow you to concentrate on taking strategic and focused notes, rather than taking verbatim notes.

- Notes taken during the interview can help to formulate new questions as the interview progresses, particularly where it may be necessary to check out what was said earlier.
- Taking notes about what is said will facilitate later analysis, including locating important quotations from the tape itself.
- Notes are a back-up in the event a tape recorder has malfunctioned or where a tape is erased inadvertently during transcription.

Notes During an Interview

When a tape recorder is being used during an interview, notes will consist of:

- primarily key phrases
- lists of major points made by the respondent, and key terms or words shown in quotation marks that capture the respondent's own language. [Use quotation marks only to indicate direct quotations]
- non-verbal behavior, including posture (e.g. leaning forward), tone (e.g. angry), and displays of emotion. This is especially important when their behaviour contradicts their words and attitudes.

It is useful to develop some system of abbreviation and informal shorthand to facilitate note taking e.g. the letter L to indicate leadership, if that is the main focus of the research.

Develop some mechanisms for indicating your own thoughts, interpretations, or ideas that may come to mind during the conduct of the interview.

Notes After an Interview

The period immediately after the interview is a critical time of reflection and elaboration. It is a time of quality control, to ensure that the data obtained is useful, reliable, and authentic.

Immediately after the interview check the tape to make sure it was functioning properly. If for some reason there was a malfunction, you should immediately make extensive notes of everything that can be remembered. Even if the tape has functioned properly, the interviewer should go over the interview notes to make certain that they make sense, and to uncover areas of uncertainty and ambiguity.

As soon as possible, you should then go back and check with the respondent. People generally appreciate this kind of follow-up because they interpret it as genuine interest in, and serious consideration of, what they have said. Guessing the meaning of data is difficult at best and misleading in many cases. If there is no way of following up comments that are uncertain and ambiguous, then this becomes missing data.

Immediately after the interview it is also important to record observations about the interview – where it took place, under what conditions, how the respondent reacted to questions, how well the interviewer asked the questions, what the rapport was like. This will provide a context for interpreting the interview later.