

4.4: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

“Guided interviews in which only the topics are predetermined and specific questions arise during the interview”

Semi-structured interviews

Interviewing key individuals is one of the main techniques used in development studies. Participatory methods have contributed to adjusting the interview to make it more conversational, while still controlled and structured, resulting in a semi-structured interview (SSI). In this technique, some of the questions and topics are predetermined, whilst the majority of questions will be formulated during the interview. Questions are asked according to a flexible checklist and not from a formal questionnaire. SSIs tend to be conducted alongside other exploratory and participatory techniques, and are used to complement the participatory survey methods with in-depth information. They often take time to prepare, and to conduct on a one to one basis, and therefore should be used in addition to the group survey methods, but are useful in extracting information from particular members of the community. A summary of four key interview methods is given in Table 4.9 (Davis, 2001).

Table 4.9: Different interview techniques

Type of interview	Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Informal conversational interview	Questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of things: there is no predetermination of question topics or wording	Increases the salience and relevance of questions; interviews are built on and emerge from observations: the interview can be matched to individuals and circumstances	Different information collected from different people with different questions. Less systematic and comprehensive if certain questions don't arise 'naturally'. Data organisation and analysis can be quite difficult. Requires maximum attention by interviewer
2. Interview guide approach	Topics and issues to be covered are specified in advance, in outline form; interviewer decides sequence and working of questions in the course of the interview	The outline increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection systematic for each respondent. Interviews remain fairly conversational and situational	Important and salient topics may be inadvertently omitted. Interviewer flexibility in wording questions can result in incomparability of responses
3. Standardised open-ended interview	The exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order	Respondents answer the same questions, thus increasing comparability of responses. Reduces interviewer bias when several interviewers are used. Facilitates organisation and analysis of the data	Little flexibility in relating the interview to particular individuals and circumstances.

<p>4. Closed quantitative interviews</p>	<p>Questions and response categories are determined in advance. Responses are fixed; respondent chooses from among these fixed responses</p>	<p>Data analysis is simple; responses can be directly compared and easily aggregated; many questions can be asked in a short time.</p>	<p>Respondents must fit their experience and feelings into the researcher's categories; may be perceived as impersonal, irrelevant and mechanistic. Can distort what respondents really mean or experienced</p>
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A checklist for obtaining information for CRSE programmes might include the following (note that this information is similar to that obtained by the focus group discussion):

- Where are the accident hotspots in the community?
- Who is usually involved in the accidents and why? (i.e. pedestrians, drivers, youths, elderly, school-going children, unemployed etc)
- Why do accidents take place? (i.e. dangerous road, poor safety engineering, bad driver/pedestrian behaviour, driver impairment - drink/drugs/fatigue etc)
- How can accidents be prevented in the future? (i.e. engineering and enforcement strategies, and education strategies - formal, classroom based; informal, community based)
- Remember! Use open-ended questions (Why? Where? How? When? What?) to generate discussion around the key issues in the checklist



Key Informants

Key informants comprise stakeholders and beneficiaries that are directly or indirectly affected by the risk of road traffic accidents and their consequences. They can be mobilised from individuals or groups at the macro level (expert knowledge), meso level (interest groups) or micro level (household information). A sample of potential key informants is listed below:

Macro level stakeholders	Meso level stakeholders	Micro level stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Road safety officer ▪ Local police department ▪ Hospital administration ▪ National bureau of statistics (road traffic accident statistics) ▪ Government officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary/secondary school teachers ▪ Youth group co-ordinators ▪ Community associations/women's groups ▪ Road safety awareness campaigners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Homeless ▪ Unemployed ▪ Women, children, elderly ▪ Infirm ▪ Non-school attending children/adults ▪ Village leaders

References

Davis, A. (ed.) (2001). Participatory rural appraisal. The Rural Transport Knowledge Base. Crowthorne: TRL Limited. www.transport-links.org/knowledgebase.htm