



Key Informant Interviews

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Purpose

This session will

- ❖ Introduce a strategically important qualitative information gathering method: key informant interviews (KII)
- ❖ It will explain the method
- ❖ It will assess the pros and cons of KIIs

Definition of direct observation

Key informant interviews are qualitative, in-depth interviews of 15 to 35 people selected for their first-hand knowledge about a topic of interest. The interviews are loosely structured, relying on a list of issues to be discussed. Interviewers frame questions spontaneously, probe for information and take notes, which are elaborated on later.

Their implementation often depend on solid stakeholder analysis.

Why are KIIs useful?

Because:

- They are useful in all phases of development activities— identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation. For example, they can provide information on the setting for a planned activity that might influence project design. Or, they could reveal why intended beneficiaries aren't using services offered by a project.
- They may be sufficient for decision-makers as they can be quickly collected.
- They may help understand motivation, behavior, and perspectives of partners, leaders, and other important stakeholders.
- Some key informants can help formulate recommendations that can improve a program's performance.

Why are KIIs useful? (continued)

Because:

- When other data/information gathering methods are used, they may be able to assess their validity, the circumstances of their production (for example a census), the strengths and weaknesses of their analysis, and any other significant events affecting the sources.
- They can support the planning and implementation of quantitative methods by informing what pitfalls need to be avoided and risks to be mitigated.

Steps in managing KIIs

Step 1: Formulate study questions. Their number (no more than 5) must be limited as "important" people have little time to allocate to interviews.

Step 2: Prepare a short interview guide. It has to be flexible and manageable (at most 12 topics). The guide should list major topics and issues to be covered under each study question.

Step 3: Select the informants. Key informants should be selected for their specialized knowledge and unique perspectives on a topic. Planners should take care to select informants with various points of view (reference to stakeholders analysis).

Step 4: Conduct interviews with care: Begin with an explanation of the purpose of the interview; confirm confidentiality or authorization status; sequence logically questions; use probing techniques with follow-up and detail seeking; adopt neutral position; minimize if possible translation challenges.

Steps in managing KIIs (continued)

Step 5: Take adequate notes. After each interview, write and review notes.

Step 6: Analyze interview data through interview summary sheets; if possible descriptive codes; develop a simple storage and retrieval system, ensuring there are backup copies.

Step 7: Presentation of data. Visual displays such as tables, boxes, and figures can condense information, present it in a clear format, and highlight underlying relationships and trends. This helps communicate findings to decision-makers more clearly, quickly, and easily.

Step 8: Check for reliability and validity by checking representativeness of key informants (any women in the sample?); assessing reliability of key informants; checking interviewer or investigator bias; getting feedback from informants.

The advantages of using KIIs

- Allows for clarification
- High response rate
- Able to gather in-depth information and to pursue hunches
- Can gather topics of discussion from individuals who have had a significant role
- Easier to reach specific individuals (i.e., community leaders, decision-makers)
- More personalized approach
- Easier to ask open-ended questions, use probes and pick up on nonverbal cues

The limitations of using KIIs

- Reactive effect: interviewer's presence and characteristics may bias results (gender reaction)
- Can be expensive when pursuing multiple avenues in different locations
- Requires strong interviewing skills. Need for training (basic or refresher)
- Slowest method of data collection and analysis
- Responses may be less honest and thoughtful
- Interviewer must negotiate timeslot and go to location of respondent
- Respondents who prefer anonymity may be inhibited by personal approach
- Difficult to analyze and quantify results

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