LISTENING FOR PROGRAM DESIGN

LOCAL SYSTEMS PRACTICE (LSP) ACTIVITY

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About Local Systems Practice: *Local Systems Practice* is a USAID-funded activity that directly assists multiple USAID missions, partners, and constituents to design and adaptively manage systems-based programs in complex environments. The concept has been designed to aid Missions and partners to overcome four specific challenges to effective Local Systems Practice through: a) Listening; b) Engagement; c) Discovery; and d) Adaptation. The Theory of Change underpinning the activity asserts that the application of systems tools to complex local challenges at multiple intervals throughout the program cycle will enhance the sustainability of programming, resulting in better-informed, measurable interventions that complement and reinforce the systems they seek to strengthen. The LSP team is composed of both development practitioners and research institutions to most effectively explore and implement systems thinking approaches with Missions, local partners and other local stakeholders. The activity is led by LINC LLC with five sub-implementers: ANSER, the University of Notre Dame, AVSI, the University of Missouri, and Practical Action.

For more information on LSP and additional resources, please visit:
www.localsystemspractice.org

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Listening for Program Design

"Listening is challenging. It takes time and energy, it demands attention and receptiveness, and it requires choices. Listening at both the interpersonal level and the broader, societal level is a discipline that involves setting aside expectations of what someone will say and opening up, instead, to the multiple levels at which humans communicate with each other."
-Anderson, Brown, and Jean-*Time to Listen*[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

Local participation is fundamental to maximizing foreign assistance effectiveness. Recent assessments of efforts to expand local ownership demonstrate that local actors must influence and exert control over development interventions especially during strategy development and implementation.[2] Development practitioners recognize increasingly the vital importance of including local voices and contributions as a cornerstone of the design of development projects. Project leadership should consult, and ideally partner, with diverse local actors in setting priorities, identifying problems, and designing objectives and activities.[3] This cannot happen without careful and equitable inclusion throughout all stages, but especially early on in program or activity design.

An important first step is taking the time to listen and appreciate the ideas and opinions of local people in development assisted countries. Foreign development practitioners cannot expect buy-in, local ownership, and long-term autonomous sustainability if their projects are not informed and designed based on the input of those in the best position to determine success. Listening to local development actors and potential recipients requires methods and tools to increase the likelihood that the process is valuable for all parties, produces useful information, and, most importantly, is grounded in mutual understanding, respect, and relationship building.

Supporting meaningful inclusive communication requires a certain skill set. The goal of this guide is to provide development leaders the tools and methods, as well as a framework and plan, for engaging local people early in the project design process. There are a variety of methods and tools available to project leadership to assist with data collection and facilitation. In order for true change to occur, listening must become a fundamental part of practitioners' work and development project design.[4]

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[1] Mary B. Anderson, Dayna Brown, Isabella Jean, *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of Aid* (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2012), 7.

[2] OxFam and Save the Children, "The Power of Ownership: Transforming US Foreign Assistance," (Oxfam and Save the Children, 2016), 18-19.

[3] OxFam, "The Power of Ownership," 26-27.

[4] Thomas Carothers and Saskia Brechenmacher, "Accountability, Transparency, Participation, and Inclusion: A New Development Consensus," (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014), 1; See also Bill Cooke, "Rules of Thumb for Participatory Change Agents," in Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, eds., *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?* (London: Zed Books, 2004).

What is Listening?

"Listening" is an intentional, deliberative, and considerate process in which development practitioners and local people come together to discuss a common theme or question. It prioritizes the voices of participants and allows for unexpected responses and open-ended conversation. The activity requires limited resources and can be conducted over a short time period. Though it is open-ended and draws on the methods and tools of qualitative research, it has more structure than an informal conversation, and does not require the strict boundaries or rigor of a qualitative study or needs assessment. Listening is less a formal data gathering or research activity, but rather is a mutual scoping and sense-making exercise to help development organizations and programs[5] hear from diverse voices and determine a path to explore for their investments.

The intent is to engage people in conversations on a particular theme and to learn and reflect together. The activity allows participants to be open to the world of possibilities and situations surrounding an issue and to work together to form mutual understandings of program context, facets of a problem, potential feasible and culturally acceptable solutions, existing constraints, available resources, and potential unintended consequences.

Listening is a fundamental first step in building relationships and trust with community actors before any sort of formal assessment or program begins. It requires participants to be keenly aware of their biases, how they communicate with others, and strives for mutual trust and respect. The purpose is to draw on local knowledge and experience to better understand problems and inform improved solutions that can be locally owned and sustained.

Listening Best Practices
While specific techniques can vary, abiding by several core best practices helps assure that data is collected with every reasonable effort made to advance local participation and inclusive engagement based on mutual respect and trust.

Do Your Research: Know what you are getting yourself into. Before talking to local people learn as much about local context as possible. Read or talk to local experts about the issues at stake, but most importantly any cultural concerns or pitfalls. Investigate prior development interventions; from both your organization and external actors. Use this basic knowledge to inform conversations with local counterparts, shape initial lines of inquiry, and determine the most appropriate approaches and methods.

Be Honest: Your presence in a community is likely to raise expectations. As such, it's important to be clear about why you are in the community, and what the community can realistically expect from you and your organization in the future. Be honest about your limitations. Understand your own biases and how those might influence your reception of information. Be clear about the rationale behind your decisions and decision-making process. Be prepared to share these understandings honestly with those you meet.

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[5] Dayna Brown (2018). *Reflections on Working with USAID Missions on Listening.* Unpublished Manuscript.

Meet People Where They Are: Local counterparts should set the agenda and context for engagements. Interactions with local people should be as unobtrusive and convenient for participants as possible. Data collection should happen on terms set by the participants in a fashion and environment most accessible and comfortable for them. Activities should be in the language most comfortable for the local participants.

Be Present: Listening is a skill that requires focused attention. It requires the listener to be quiet long enough to let the participant talk. It also requires the listener to drop his or her expectations of what will be said.[6] Technology including cell phones and laptops can create barriers as they may be perceived as distracting the user's attention away from the conversation.

Treat Data with Respect: Information from local participants is their valuable property. It should be collected ethically with informed consent. It should be protected, and privacy or anonymity should be guaranteed. Communities have a right to know how their contributions are used and have the right to refuse to participate.

Listening Ethically

Listening session organizers and facilitators should abide by the principles set out in the Belmont Report on respect of persons, beneficence, and justice.[7] All efforts should be made to protect participants and their information. Pay special attention to any sensitive information that could place the speaker at personal, profession, or legal risk. Avoid questions that could expose such information.

At the start of all listening sessions you should explicitly:
- Explain the purpose and procedures of the listening session and how you plan on using the information.
- Allow all participants the opportunity to refuse to participate in the conversation. No one should be coerced (by you, or an interlocutor) to participate in a conversation.
- Inform participants that they are free to end the conversation at any time, without an explanation.
- Ask for permission to take notes or record proceedings. Honor requests not to record specific statements and destroy your notes if asked.
- Ask participants to keep what is said in the discussion among the members of the group, and not to share contents of the discussion with others. This includes no posting any content (photos, quotes, etc.) on social media.

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[6] Mary B. Anderson, Dayna Brown, Isabella Jean, *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of Aid* (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2012), 7.

[7] Office for Human Research Protections, & Ohrp. (2018, January 15). Read the Belmont Report. Retrieved from https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/read-the-belmont-report/index.html#xbasic

Vulnerable Populations

There are specific groups designated as "vulnerable" who should be treated with extra care. If you require input from a "vulnerable" population (e.g. you are developing a program for them), it is best to look at protocols that exist both within your organization, and within the specific country you are working for guidance.

Illegal or Harmful Behaviors

If you are made aware of, or observe an illegal or harmful behavior, you MUST:

- Inform the participant that there are limits to confidentiality. You are ethically and legally obligated to disclose the identity of the participant to forestall imminent harm to self or others.
- Emphasize the right of the participant to withdraw from the conversation or to refuse to answer any question.
- Contact your organization's legal representative immediately to discuss the protocol for disclosing information related to imminent harm or an imminent illegal act.

> **Types of Vulnerable Populations**
> - Pregnant women
> - Prisoners
> - Children (under age 18)
> - Cognitively impaired persons
> - HIV/AIDS positive individuals
>
> There are other "special" classes of people, with whom extra care must be taken, such as:
> - Employees (recommended to not have conversations where employees are with their boss)
> - Cultural or social minorities
> - Economically and/or educationally disadvantaged

Who Should Be Listened to (and Who Should Listen)?

It is important to listen to a broad, yet relevant population. Consider carefully who will be present during the listening sessions, both as listeners and as participants. Who attends can influence the dynamics of the conversation, the topics discussed, and the reliability of the information shared. Recognize that everyone has bias that is hard to eliminate, but necessary to identify and mitigate.

Who Should be Listened To?

When choosing whom to listen to, consider the following:

- What groups of people are most connected to project's central problem?
- Whose perspectives are important to capture?
- Do you have enough diversity of people and perspectives on the issue;
- Have you considered gender and cultural equity?
- Provide opportunities for participants to nominate others to be included, and then follow up.
- If relying on intermediaries, consider the potential bias of these individuals in picking participants.

Who Should Listen?

When choosing who should join the field listening team, consider the following:

- How will the community perceive the listeners?
  - Impact of socio-economic differences
  - Pros/Cons of using external foreign researchers vs. "locals"
- How experienced is the listening team?

- If the listening team includes individuals who are not experienced researchers, they must receive training prior to participating, including ethics and bias awareness
- Do the project leaders/designers need to hear from people directly, or can they rely on records of the meeting?

It is a best practice to communicate first with local officials so they know who will be in their community and why. As a result, you may find that it makes sense to pay a courtesy visit to a mayor's or other local politician's office. However, be aware of the dynamics that are created when speaking to community members in a municipal building.
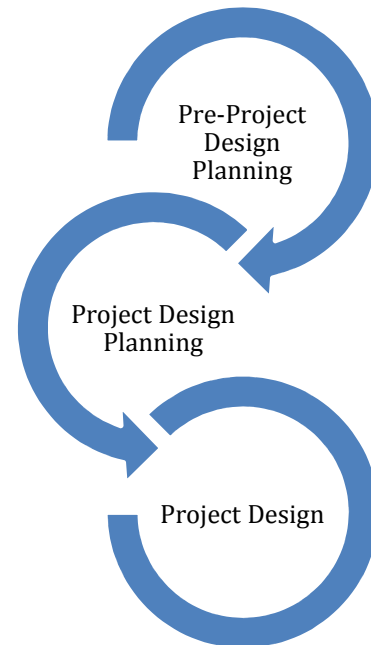
When to Listen?

Although listening can be helpful in the early stage of all development programs it is especially well suited for situations when development practitioners are:
- Delving into a new subject or program area with which they are less familiar.
- Interested in working in a new geographic area or with a new population.
- Facing an intractable problem that prior interventions were unable to address.

Local voices should be engaged throughout the project design process. The following list presents listening opportunities throughout a typical project design cycle:

PRE-PROJECT DESIGN PLANNING
- Meet with local subject matter experts and community members about broad development issue or objective
- Conduct listening sessions around social/cultural context

PROJECT DESIGN PLANNING
- Engage local communities around project purpose
- Conduct listening activities as part of analyses
- Include local representatives on project design team

PROJECT DESIGN
- Engage local voices in defining a Theory of Change:
  - Assessing Problems
  - Defining Solutions
- Use listening exercise to explore project context and potential local resources
- Hold conference to review analysis findings
- Engage with local voices during activity design
- Reference findings from previous listening activities to inform design
- Include local representatives on project design team

Pre-Project Design Planning

Project Design Planning

Project Design

II. HOW TO LISTEN: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

While every situation is different and the process should be kept flexible, there are several important steps to keep in mind before, during, and after a listening exercise to assure the listening sessions go smoothly and that all participants gain the most value for their time.

Before: Planning	**During: Listening**	**After: Analyzing and Sharing**
• Clarify Your Purpose • Assemble Your Team • Pick Your Geography • Identify Participants • Develop Tools • Organize, Schedule, and Budget • Conduct a Pre-Departure Orientation	• Finalize Plan with Local Contact • Address Ethics and Informed Consent • Set Ground Rules • Lead Discussions • Reflect and Debrief	• Reflect and Analyze • Follow-Up • Disseminate Findings • Share Lessons Learned

Before: Planning → During: Listening → After: Analyzing and Sharing

Before: Planning

Prior to visiting the field, listening session organizers should take the time to carefully plan the exercise.

The steps below should all be undertaken during the planning stage. They are presented in a sequential order for ease of navigation. However, some of the steps are dependent upon others and the process is more iterative than linear.

Clarify Your Purpose

The purpose of the listening exercise should be well understood by the entire team and it is important to have a clear objective. To begin, the listening team should develop an overarching question or theme that guides the exercise. This could be derived from a program strategy or development objective. It is important to keep the initial topic focused on your objective, but broad enough to solicit diverse feedback from diverse participants.

Before beginning the listening process, you should have a clear idea of how your findings from listening will be used, and by whom. Think about what materials will be useful for different audiences and decision-makers. You may need to create a combination of materials, ranging from detailed reports to a summary document with high-level descriptive statistics and representative quotes. However, given that listening is inherently a qualitative exercise, the focus should be on qualitative data analysis.

Before you embark on a listening exercise you should be able to answer the following questions:
• What am I trying to learn?
• What will the insights from this activity inform? (E.g. strategic, program, or budget decisions).
• With whom will I need to share the results of this activity? (E.g. decision-makers, program teams, etc.)
• What kinds of information will be most useful for these stakeholders?
• How do I envision sharing the information I gather? (I.e. What will the outputs or deliverables be?)

Assemble Your Team

Identify a Listening Lead: The listening lead oversees the entire listening process. They may be an organization employee or an external hire/consultant. This person should have the knowledge and experience necessary to define the teams, choose the most appropriate methods and tools, and

supervise the final data analysis and validation. The listening lead is also responsible for any necessary training and orientation of field team members.

Identify a Logistics Coordinator: The logistics coordinator serves as a bridge between the internal team and external contacts. The coordinator should work with local partner organizations, community leaders, and other local representatives to plan the listening process. Areas of support that the coordinators may provide include, but are not limited to:
- Coordinating logistic arrangements (transportation, accommodations, schedules, selection of communities, etc.)
- Providing security briefings for listening teams when needed
- Booking facilities for listening sessions
- Coordinating the provision of materials for the group sessions (paper, pens, flipcharts, meals, etc.)
- Coordinating submission of individuals' and teams' notes and/or feedback on reports
- Supporting the dissemination of findings to participants, communities, and others

Identify Members of Listening Teams: Listening teams should include at least 2 and no more than 4 members, including:
- **Conversation Lead** (required), a relevant programmatic sector expert; responsible for introducing the meeting and leading the discussion.
- **Notetaker** (required), responsible for capturing the information through notes and other media such as photographs and recordings.
- **Other Listeners** (optional), other relevant team members who listen, but defer to the conversation lead to lead the discussion. Ask questions as appropriate and verify understanding of what was said with the notetaker and conversation lead.
- **Translator** (optional), responsible for providing real-time interpretation if necessary. Must be fluent and experienced in translating all relevant languages.
- **Driver (**required), responsible for transportation to and from listening session site and additional logistics if necessary. The driver should not sit in on listening sessions.

The team may also be joined by a local contact who acts as an intermediary with local groups. Listening teams should not rely on the local contact, however, for translation or other formal service during the listening session. Additional observers, not directly participating in the session, are not recommended as they can be distracting to participants and may negatively impact the quality of discussion.

Other Considerations: When organizing your listening teams, there are several important things to consider:
- Language - When possible, the conversation lead and notetaker should be fluent in the local language/dialect. If this is not possible, a translator is required to conduct the session. The translator must be fluent in the relevant language and experienced in real-time word for word rather than summary translation. When using a translator, prepare in advance to understand expectations. Avoid common pitfalls such as speaking directly to the translator rather than the participant or engaging in side conversations during translation.

- Gender - All listening session teams must uphold gender equity in discussions. If necessary, you may have to organize single gender teams. In some contexts, this may be more culturally appropriate and important to ensure that women are able to participate. Single gender teams can help to create an environment for persons to air gender-specific concerns or be more comfortable speaking honestly.
- Local Context and Dynamics - When assembling listening teams and hiring translators, it is important to understand what groups may have tensions with others and why. These could be rooted in ethnic, religious, or political differences, or in government or corporate interests that are in conflict with the communities being visited. It may be necessary to match the listening team, as much as possible, to the social profile of the community being visited.

If this is not possible, it may be advantageous to use staff from a totally different context to listen in these areas as they may be seen as more impartial. This can be one area where expatriates may have the advantage of being seen as less influenced by local politics or tensions. Discuss with local staff, partners or community members how to ensure that listening teams do not endanger or otherwise negatively impact the people whom they are engaging and if special measures need to be taken to mitigate potential negative consequences.

Assign Debriefing Lead: When working with multiple teams in a region, one team member should be tasked with coordination and facilitation of debriefs and analysis of conversations. When geography and budgets allow, it is ideal for all teams to meet at the end of each day to discuss and compare what they heard. This way, participants from each team can share, analyze, reflect, and learn as they go. They can also engage community members in the analysis and identify special issues to follow up on in subsequent conversations based on what was learned from the teams' conversations. The debriefing lead should help guide this process and should ensure that there is a record of what each team heard and the analysis. If each team does not have access to a computer to write up notes, this person may need to verbally debrief with each team, typing up the notes as they share what they heard.

Pick Your Geography

The listening lead, in consultation with local and project experts, should work to determine the regions and communities to be visited and key people in these communities to engage in conversations. It is important not just to go to easy-to-reach areas and to communities that are visited frequently. The learning process will be enriched by the inclusion of a broad range of locations and people in communities who have different perspectives, while also remaining relevant to the central research question. Planning sessions should include organizers who are knowledgeable about the local context and who can inform decisions about where to go and who to include.

Identify Participants (Who to Listen To)

Keeping the research purpose in mind, teams should listen to a diverse representation of community members and leaders, local authorities, and members of community-based organizations. They may also seek out the views of people in other aid agencies, civil society organizations, government, religious institutions, businesses, academia, media, and others. There

should also be some intentional selection of other community members or stakeholders to ensure that teams are not hearing from the "usual suspects." This can be accomplished by asking participants to nominate others with whom the group should speak. Since many aid efforts target the most vulnerable or marginalized, it is helpful to discuss how to identify these persons with local partners and staff.

Develop Tools

Design Your Questionnaire/Discussion Guide: One of the most important and necessary parts of planning for a listening excursion is the careful design of the topics to cover and general questions to ask during a session. While the questions should be broad enough to allow for independent thought and varied opinions of the participants, you will want to fit questions around a common theme related to the proposed project goals or problem to solve. Refer back to your stated purpose as you develop your discussion guide.

You should develop a few guiding questions to serve as prompts. Developing a discussion guide is a good starting point as it provides enough direction to keep the conversation focused on relevant topics and leaves enough space for respondents to introduce unexpected related concepts or information. A sample discussion guide can be found in Appendix 2.

> **Creating a Discussion Guide**
> Prior to a listening activity, prepare a written guide for conversation leads.
> - Keep it simple; ask short and easy to answer questions in words that participants understand
> - Focus on topics participants are familiar with
> - Maintain a logical flow and structure
> - Limit to one to two pages.
> - Cover no more than 5 sub-topics.
>
> Source: Source: Skovdal and Cornish, *Qualitative Research for Development*, 66.

Consider how different audiences will react to and understand questions. Make sure your questions are simple and easy to understand. You might consider vetting your questions and practicing with "in house" local participants in your organization. This is also a good opportunity to practice facilitation and note-taking skills.

Once you have completed your questionnaire, you should consider if IRB approval is necessary and submit it to any relevant offices for review. See Appendix 3 for additional information on IRB approval.

Develop a Notetaking Template: You will also need to develop a template and specific guidance for the notetaker in each conversation to ensure consistency across conversations, and a record that is rich enough to analyze. Be sure to update the template to capture specific pieces of information that will be important to have recorded for any analysis you plan to do. For example, if you need to ensure gender balance in your listening activity, ensure that your notetaker is capturing the number of men and women in the room. Or, if you envision a report with exemplary quotations for each main finding, ensure you are requiring notetakers to capture direct quotes. An example note-taking template is provided in Appendix 4. Note that this is not a universal design, but rather a helpful starting point for developing your own template.

Organize, Schedule, and Budget

Consider Details of Logistics: Once you have defined the scope and geography for your listening exercise, it is time to plan logistics. The more logistics planning you do beforehand, the less likely you are to run into problems with meals or accommodation once in the field. Begin by answering the following questions:

- How will you travel to each site?
- Where will you stay?
- Where will you take your meals?
- Will you provide refreshments for participants during the day?
- Will you be expected to provide allowances and/or travel costs for participants?

Once you have answered these questions, check your budget to confirm you can cover your costs plus some extra for any unexpected expenses.

> **Refreshments and Compensation for Participants**
> - It is appropriate and welcomed to provide simple refreshments for listening session participants (tea, soft drinks, water, small snacks, etc.)
> - You may be asked to provide some financial compensation or reimbursement of travel costs. In this case, consider how compensation may influence the motivations of participants and distort responses. Also check with your organization for relevant policies.

Create a Flexible Schedule: Listening requires a flexible schedule. A listening exercise can take anywhere from one day to one week or longer, depending on the objectives, resources, available staff time, and schedule of potential participants. Conversations could occur in several regions/locations concurrently, or teams could visit different locations consecutively.

Participating staff could also facilitate listening sessions on previously scheduled visits to communities spread across a set timeframe (i.e. quarterly) as part of another ongoing development activity. Regardless of the model, for the listening process to be most effective, organizations need to commit dedicated and uninterrupted time to listen and engage with local community members.

Pre-Departure Orientation

Prior to departure, make sure everyone involved in the listening exercise understands the objectives, as well as defined policies and protocols. You should hold preparatory trainings and/or orientations to make sure all team members have the necessary knowledge and skills to participate meaningfully. In addition to covering logistics, you should review the questionnaire, and notetaking template and guidance with team members. Last-minute participants who wish to "just observe" the process should be advised not to participate.

All attempts should be made to be generally consistent during the sessions, with space allowed for flexibility as the conversations evolve. Everyone should have a field guide with the itinerary, list of participants, local contact information, and facilitation materials.

If community-based members, local staff or volunteers are joining the listening effort but cannot attend the pre-departure orientation, plan to provide a brief orientation and include any translators as well once you arrive.

Planning Toolkit: Included in the appendices are sample tools and resources including:

- Appendix 2: Sample Questionnaire
- Appendix 3: IRB Approval
- Appendix 4: Sample Note-Taking Template

| Before: Planning | During: Listening | After: Analyzing and Sharing |

During: Listening

Listening is about more than the conversations you have. Ensure success of your listening endeavor by coordinating with a local contact, and carefully capturing and reflecting on what you hear.

Finalize Plan with Local Contact

Meeting with Local Contact upon Arrival: You should take time to meet with the local contact representative from the listening group. This person may be a local leader or one of the participants. Reiterate the purpose of your visit and ask if there are any issues the team should be aware of such as impactful recent events, cultural concerns, etc. You may also ask the contact to review your questions to make sure they are acceptable.

Introduce your team members and their roles to the local contact. In addition to your role within the organization, let your contact know who will be leading each discussion, who will be the primary notetaker, and any other roles that team members will be taking on during the discussions. This will relieve the local contact of the pressure of trying to induce all of your team members to speak or offering to take notes on your behalf (which should be gently declined if offered).

Courtesy Meetings: Work with your local contact to ensure any appropriate courtesy meetings are arranged. It is always a good idea to contact a local government representative in advance of the activity to obtain buy-in for the activity. Aim to have a brief courtesy visit prior to beginning listening activities in his/her community. Time permitting, you may also offer an outbrief meeting at the conclusion of your visit to share anonymous findings. However, hosting conversations at municipal offices should be avoided. Also, bringing representatives from local government along on the listening tour will have an impact on your conversations. Determine in advance how to best respond to offers to host meetings at government sites, or to have government officials participate as part of the listening team.

Address Ethics and Informed Consent

Introductions: When you arrive, allow time for the local contact to speak and introduce the listening team. Thank all participants for their time. Introduce yourselves and give all participants the opportunity to do so. Introduce your organization and explain its main mission. Explain the purpose of the listening activity and your objectives. Be as general as possible to manage expectations, while also addressing the core questions. **Do not make any promises of remedies or future programming.**

Informed Consent: Take the time to address privacy and informed consent issues. Give the participants an opportunity to refuse to participate. Explain that they are free to leave and end the conversation at any point or refuse to answer any question. Ask for permission to take notes or record the discussion.

It is a best practice to have all participants sign a photo release and/or an informed consent document (See Appendix 5).

Set Ground Rules

Prior to beginning the discussion, explain the format and establish ground rules for the conversation. This might include any instructions about engagement activities and statements about decorum. Assure participants that all ideas and opinions are welcome. Encourage thoughtful and respectful disagreement. If possible, encourage participants to eschew adherence to systemic hierarchies in order to ensure free space and honest answers.

> **Things to Keep in Mind During Discussion**
> - Avoid raising expectations and discussing potential projects.
> - Be in the moment; avoid multi-tasking or distraction (e.g. using phone).
> - Do not refer to your activity as an "interview" or refer to participants as 'subjects' or 'respondents.'
> - Be aware of certain people dominating the conversation and encourage everyone to speak.
> - Ask questions one at a time and give the group time to discuss.

> **Technology and Note Taking**
> - Live notetaking and immediate reflection are best practices as a recording device can be distracting and encourage facilitators to pay less attention during the session.
> - Consider cultural mores, any privacy concerns, or topic sensitivity.
> - If you must use a recording device, make sure it is tested and suitable for the environment.

Your team must be mindful that you cannot control whether or not members of a group discussion share information they have learned with others after the discussion. Do not directly ask questions that may put participants at risk.

Appendix 7 contains a listening checklist that can be used by teams to ensure that they are prepared for useful, ethical discussion.

Lead the Discussion

Rather than diving into your questions, begin with a warm-up or ice breaker questions. Sometimes sharing information about yourself first can encourage others to do so. Appendix 8 contains an illustrative field guide that can be used as a reference by the facilitator.

There are multiple methods and tools available to facilitators. Links to some of these tools and methods are included in the list of additional resources in Appendix 1. Regardless of your facilitation strategy, begin with an open-ended, and strength-based question. Questions such as, "What has been your biggest success in the last year?" can help get the conversation started in a positive direction. Avoid initial questions that focus on what you perceive to be weaknesses about the community, organization, or social intervention, etc. of interest.

Press participants on their answers to understand why they said what they did. When possible, push participants to respond to one another. Be attentive to conversational equity and make sure that everyone has a chance to speak. Pay special attention to the participation of women and any marginalized participants and make sure their voices are heard and validated. Give the participants the opportunity to ask you questions.

Types of Things to Say:

- Introductory: "Can you tell me about…(be concrete)
- Follow-up: "mmm…; nod; repeat key words; build of a specific interesting statement."
- Probing: "Can you say a little more?; Why do you think…?"
- Specifying: "Can you give me an example?"
- Direct (best for later in session): "When you mention…are you thinking about…or…?"
- Indirect: "How do you think other people view…?"
- Structuring: "Thank you for that. Let's move on to another topic…"
- Interpreting: "So what I have gathered is…"
- Silence: [Leave time for participants to break silence or elaborate]

Source: Skovdal and Cornish, *Qualitative Research for Development*, 70.

Provide Contact and Follow Up Information: At the conclusion of the conversation, thank all participants and if appropriate, commend their role in the community (e.g. important role as parents and teachers). Explain your next steps and how you plan on using the information the participants have shared with you. Provide all participants with contact information (telephone and email) so they may follow up with you if they like. If your organization allows, you might consider setting up a separate phone number or email account for such communication.

Reflect and Debrief

Reflect Individually: As soon after the conclusion of the listening session as possible, the conversation lead should independently document the experience and his/her reflections. This may be done using a free-writing journal exercise or a template (see Appendix 9). It is important that the most significant moments, statements, or reflections are captured.

Debrief Together: Once reflections are captured independently, debrief together and add any additional details about the session. These reflections along with your notes will form the basis of your analysis

Listening Toolkit: Included in the appendices are sample tools and templates including:

- Appendix 5: Information Sheet Template
- Appendix 6: Informed Consent Template
- Appendix 7: Sample Introduction
- Appendix 8: Listening Checklist
- Appendix 9: Field Listening Guide Template
- Appendix 10: Reflection Template

Before: Planning	During: Listening	After: Analyzing and Sharing

After: Analyzing and Sharing

In order to be useful, your findings must be analyzed, summarized, and shared.

Reflect and Analyze

Organize Joint Analysis and Reflection Sessions: Once back at the home office, all listening team members should participate in a final group analysis and reflection session involving all listening teams. Drawing from each notetakers' official notes, individual notes, and immediate post-listening reflections, this is an opportunity to discuss and analyze what people said, compare notes, identify key issues and trends, and reflect on what is important to share with colleagues, partners, other stakeholders, and also with those they engaged in conversations.

Further Analyze Data: Task someone with qualitative analytical capabilities on the team to read and analyze all of the notes, or reflection templates as well as the notes from the joint analysis and reflection sessions. Ensure that all materials are captured in one place for future reference. Someone with analytical capabilities should at a minimum review all of the notes or templates to ensure that key themes are captured systematically. In the majority of cases this analysis can be done simply with a spreadsheet and simple coding. This analyst should highlight any discrepancies between his/her analysis of source documents and the takeaways from the joint analysis and reflection sessions. If there are discrepancies, an additional joint reflection session should be held to resolve any conflicting findings or takeaways.

Follow Up

Follow Up with Session Participants: It is crucial that the findings from the sessions be presented to the participants themselves for feedback and validation. If possible, you may want to reconvene all participants of the listening sessions in a central location. This allows the listening team to share a high-level summary of what they heard, and for community members to provide additional feedback and validation of conclusions. It also continues the significant trust, transparency, and relationship building. If this cannot be done in-person, consider a webinar or conference call if contextually feasible and appropriate.

If a formal central meeting is not feasible, ensure that you have a plan for sharing summary information back with the community. This may be done via return visits to particular communities. Alternatively, your local contacts may share a summary document with community members and allow for participants to follow up with feedback or express concerns.

Disseminate Findings

The Listening Lead should oversee written documentation of the listening exercises that summarize the issues and the analysis, including stories, examples and quotes (using pseudonyms). If the Listening Lead is unable, another person should be designated to draft the documentation, get feedback from other listeners and finalize materials. If possible, the documentation (report, presentation, etc.) should be translated and shared broadly with people engaged in the conversations as well as with those working in similar areas or focusing on similar issues. This might include government agencies, UN agencies, international and local organizations and networks, other donors, researchers, academics, and other interested parties. The most important thing is that the data and findings are made as public as possible considering local privacy and security issues.

Share Lessons Learned

Participating staff and organizations should reflect on the lessons learned from the listening process and share with other groups who are interested in or planning to engage in their own listening activities. If possible, reflections should include not only the staff who organized and led the sessions, but also a sample of people who were participants in the conversations.

III. APPENDICES

General

1. Additional Resources

Before: Planning

2. Sample Questionnaire

3. IRB Approval

4. Sample Note-Taking Template

During: Listening

5. Information Sheet Template

6. Informed Consent Template

7. Sample Introduction

8. Listening Checklist

9. Field Listening Guide Template

10. Reflection Template

Appendix 1: Additional Resources

General Listening and Development
- USAID**,** *Suggested Approaches for Integrating Inclusive Development Across the Program Cycle and in Mission Operations: Additional Help for ADS 201* (July 2018).
- Mary B. Anderson, Dayna Brown, Isabella Jean, *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of Aid* (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2012)
- Morten Skoval and Flora Cornish, *Qualitative Research for Development: A Guide for Practitioners* (2015)

Engagement Tools
While engaging with local participants, it is sometimes helpful to use certain tools or methods to encourage participation and critical thinking. You will need to carefully assess your situation and local feedback to determine which technique may be right for you. There are many to choose from, but here are some favorites:

Method	Description	Reference
World Café	The world café method is a way to manage dialogue among a large group of people.	http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/
Drawing and Discussion	This method is especially effective with groups with a strong visual culture or social hierarchy that may limit verbal participation. It can be used to assess how individuals perceive a situation or as tool for group analysis.	VSO, *Participatory Approaches: A Facilitator's Guide*, 80.
Echo/Cascade Workshops	This method requires a full day but is effective for empowering and including local people in the listening process.	VSO, *Participatory Approaches: A Facilitator's Guide*, 82-83

Facilitation and Engagement Strategies
General Strategies and Guides
- Natasha Mack, Cynthia Woodsong, Kathleen M. Macqueen, Greg Guest, and Emily Namey, *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collectors Field Guide* (FHI360, 2011)
- *Book 3: The Engagement Toolkit,* (Melbourne: Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2005).
- USAID, *Best Practices for Stakeholder Engagement in Biodiversity Programming*, (Sept. 2018).
- VSO, *Participatory Approaches: A Facilitator's Guide*
- Morten Skovdal and Flora Cornish, *Qualitative Research for Development: A Guide for Practitioners* (Rugby, UK: Practical Action Publishing, 2015)
Focus Groups
- "Focus Groups," (BetterEvaluation.org)

- "Technical Note: Focus Group Interviews," (USAID, 2013).

Interviews

- "Interviews," BetterEvaluation.org:
- Bronwen McDonald and Patricia Rogers, "Interviewing," Methodological Briefs Impact Evaluation No. 12 (UNICEF, 2014).

Developing Questionnaires

- Bradburn, Norman M., et al. *Asking Questions: the Definitive Guide to Questionnaire Design-- for Market Research, Political Polls, and Social and Health Questionnaires*. Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Appendix 2: Sample Questionnaire

*Adapted from: USAID/Philippines Local Works Listening Tour

Areas of Inquiry and Potential Framing Questions for Conversations

These illustrative questions are by no means exhaustive, and the Listening Teams are encouraged to try them and to identify other effective questions and approaches to enable meaningful dialogue and discussions.

Potential Icebreaker Questions
- "Tell me about yourself"
- What do you like to do for fun [or in your free time or what is your hobby]?
- What is your city/community known or famous for?
- What is the best thing about your community? Why?
- What are you most proud of? (personally and/or based on their role in the community)

What is happening in this community? What is life like here (for the participant)?
- How do you feel about the services and access to services in your community?
- What is the main source of income for most people here? Why?
- What is your job (or how do you earn a living)?
- I know many families in this area survived [recent event]—were you one of the affected families? What did you do to get through it and recover?
- What cultural/community practices influence your life?

What is working well in the community?
- What are the strengths of your community?
- What positive changes have you seen in your life or in the community over the last few years?
- What brings people together here?
- What is happening here now that is helpful or beneficial for you?
- What are the best projects or activities in your community? What makes them so good?
- What has helped you achieve your goals? (for the individual, family and/or community)?

What are the assets and resources in the community?
- What have you done to help your neighbor and the community?
- What do the youth contribute in the community?
- What do the elderly contribute in the community?
- What do the women contribute in the community?
- What activities or events bring people in your community together?
- What motivates you to participate in community activities?
- What institutions, organizations or groups provide support to people here?
- What institutions or organizations provide the services you need most?
- Who are the real heroes in your community? Why?
- Who in your community do you trust most? Why?

- What institution or organization has contributed the most to improving the situation for your family or the community over the last 5 years?
- Who is helping you achieve your dreams?
- What resources are available to you?
- Who is helping the vulnerable people in your community? What help are they providing? In what ways? Why do they help?
- What sort of funding or support is available for community-based projects?
- How are the local government and/or community leaders addressing issues in your community?
- Who do you turn to when faced with problems?

What are the main issues and challenges here? (household and community levels)?
- What challenges do you face personally and in your community? Why do these challenges exist?
- What is the biggest challenge your family faces in your daily life? What caused it?
- What are the challenges that may prevent you from achieving your dreams?
- What is your biggest hope?
- What issues matter most to you? What are the top 3 issues that you think need to be resolved soon?
- What changes or trends are affecting the community (positively or negatively)?
- What worries you most about the future?

How are challenges and issues addressed in the community?
- Who is creating positive changes in the community?
- When you have a personal problem, who do you usually go to? What about community problems--who do you go to for help?
- How are you [or would you like to be] involved in addressing community issues and challenges?
- How are you engaged with local government and what do you get out of it?"
- How are you coping with the situation?
- Who is successfully dealing with the issues in the community? How are they helping you? How can they help you or others better?
- How do people help each other in times of need?
- What has made a lasting, positive difference in your community?

What are your aspirations, visions and priorities?
- If you could change 3 things in your community, what would they be?
- How do you see yourself five years from now?
- What changes do you want to see happen in your community?
- Thinking of the next 5 years – what are your aspirations and priorities for your family and your community?

What recommendations do you have for addressing the challenges, issues and priorities?
- What do you think needs to be done to address these challenges or issues?

- If you were [or are] the leader of a local organization, how would you solve the problems here?
- What do you think is needed to improve the economic life of the residents here?
- What can be done to fulfill people's priorities here?
- How will things change here? How would you like to be involved?
- If you had ten minutes to speak with the President, what would you tell him?

Other probing questions:
- Can you tell me a story to illustrate your point? Do you have an example you can share?
- What would others who are different from you say?
- What would you like us to ask you about?

Appendix 3: IRB Approval

Do I Need an IRB Review?

Listening usually will not require an IRB review.

However, you may require an IRB review if:

- Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that the identity of the participants can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects
- Any disclosure of the responses outside the activity would reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation

Every situation is different, and it is recommended you seek more information and review your listening plan with your organization's IRB office and be aware of any local human subject research policies.

For more guidance see: "Protection of Human Subjects in Research Supported by USAID" (2006); Common Federal Policy for Protection of Human Subjects (the "Common Rule")

Below please find resources related to IRB approval. Please check with your individual organization.

- USAID IRB: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/200mbe.pdf

- World Health Organization: https://www.who.int/ethics/research/en/

Appendix 4: Sample Note-Taking Template

This template is intended to provide a guide and simplify the note-taking process. It is important to record details about the activity, the setting, time, etc. It is important to describe the participants and map the conversation and participation. This will help the listening team reflect on room layout and equity among speakers. Use the questions from the listening guide as a broad framework to organize notes but allow room for the discussion to evolve. Allow yourself at least a page per question.

Name of Organization:
Name of Listening Activity:
Listening Team Members' Names:
Date
Time:
Location:

Notes about location of activity, setting, etc.:

(Example: Activity was held in an elementary school. It was a hot afternoon and the room had little air circulation. All the participants sat on the floor except for 3 older men who sat on chairs. Participants sat in a circle.)

You may want to ask note-takers to draw a diagram of where people were sitting and how the room was arranged.

Listening Activity:

[You may want to divide this section into topic areas prior to the start of the discussion, or records notes in the order that they arise in the conversation.]

- Discussion on Topic 1
- Discussion on Topic 2
- Discussion on Topic 3

Concluding thoughts and reflections:

[Record your final thoughts on the activity, major takeaways, impressions, improvements for next time.]

Example: Active participants, especially when talking about the government. Despite facilitator's best efforts, men tended to dominate the conversation.

Appendix 5: Information Sheet Template

Below is a template for the information sheet and informed consent form. The information sheet describes the listening activity and explains the rights of participants. The form verifies that the participants agree to the terms set out in the information sheet.

The information sheet should be read at the beginning of the listening activity and all participants should sign the consent form prior to the start of the discussion. A copy of the information sheet with contact information should be left with a group representative.

Collecting informed consent may seem like a tedious process, but it is vital to help assure that the rights of participants and the information they provide are protected. This template is comprehensive, and you should adapt the content to fit your listening activity.

[Name of Your Organization]
[Listening Activity Name]
[Team Members' Names]

Give vital information about the group with whom you are holding the listening activity. Include the location of the activity (house, church, outside under a tree, etc.), the geographic location, and the time of the activity.

Example: This informed consent form is for a listening activity with [Name of Group] held in [Meeting Space] in [Geographic Location] at [Time] on [Date]

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction: Briefly state who you are and that you are inviting attendees to participate in a listening activity. Introduce the rest of the listing team. Assure them that if they do not understand some of the words or concepts, that you will take time to explain them as you go along and that they can ask questions at any time.

Example: Hello, my name is [Name]. I am working with [Organization]. We have come here from [Place]. We are holding listening activities throughout [Country] to learn more about climate change. I will act as the facilitator of today's discussion. [Name] will act as note taker and will record the proceedings. [Name] will act as translator between [Language 1] and [Language 2] if necessary. If there are words or ideas that you do not understand, please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me or of another team member.

Purpose of the Exercise: Explain the listening session purpose using local and simplified words. In your explanation, consider local beliefs and knowledge when deciding how best to provide the information. Make sure to include all possible topics and do not address issues not stated here. Be careful not to mislead participants, by suggesting material outcomes or future development

projects. For example, if the listening activity is discussing climate change, do not allude to potential future irrigation activities in the area.

Example: Climate change is a significant issue in (country). We want to learn more about its effects on your lives and how you and/or your community has responded. We want to listen to your thoughts and discuss together ideas about the causes of climate change and the different ways that people in your community try lesson its impact. We are not planning any projects or activities now, but this information will help inform (organization)'s thinking regarding our approach and therefore your opinions and insights will be highly appreciated.

Type of Activity: Briefly describe the listening activity.

Example: This activity will involve your participation in a facilitated group discussion that will take about one and a half hours.

Participant Selection: Indicate why you have chosen this group to participate in the listening activity. Participants may wonder why they have been chosen and may be fearful, confused, or concerned.

Example: You have been invited to take part in this listening activity because we feel that your experience as a farmer can contribute much to our understanding and knowledge of local community response to climate change.

Voluntary Participation: Indicate clearly that they can choose to participate or not. The participant may also request that the information provided by them not be used in the activity report.

Example: Your participation in this activity is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. You may leave now or change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

Procedures: Provide a brief introduction to the format of the listening activity. Explain the type of questions that the participants are likely to be asked during the exercise. If the activity involves questions or discussion which may be sensitive or potentially cause embarrassment, inform the participant of this. Introduce the role of other listening team members (note taker, translator, etc.)

Example: This discussion will be guided by [name facilitator]. The group discussion will start with simple open-ended questions about climate change and give you time to share your knowledge. The questions will be about climate change in your community, how is it recognized, and how people are responding to it. Please feel free to bring up any related issues or take the conversation in a direction of your choice. ***You do not have to share any knowledge that you are not comfortable sharing.***

My colleague [name] will take notes on our session. My colleague [name] will provide translation. Please pause after speaking to provide time for translation and do not hesitate to ask questions or clarify statements.

The entire discussion will be recorded, but no one will be identified by name on the tape. The report will only say a [woman/man] from [location] said this or that. The recording will be kept [explain how the tape will be stored]. The information recorded is confidential and will be for internal use only. No one else except [name of person(s)] will have access to the recordings. The recordings will be destroyed after [number] of days/weeks.

We may also take photos for our internal records and recall. Any photos taken are purely for internal use only. If you would not like your photo taken, please tell us now.

Risks: Explain and describe any risks that you anticipate or that are possible. The risks depend upon the nature and type issue and situation.

Example: There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. However, we do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

Benefits: Explain any benefits the participants may gain or not gain from their involvement. Benefits may be benefits to the individual, benefits to the community, and/or benefits to society as a whole as a result of learning more about an issue.

Example: There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more about how to respond to climate change in your community.

Reimbursements: State clearly what you will provide the participants with as a result of their participation. These may include, for example, travel costs, food allowances, etc. The amount should be determined within the host country context and abide by organization or government policies. You should also mention if you are providing refreshments.

Example: We will not provide any reimbursement or allowance for your time, or travel expense. We will provide light refreshments during the activity.

Confidentiality: Explain how the listening team will maintain the confidentiality with respect to both information about the participant and information that the participant shares. Outline any limits to confidentiality. If the research is sensitive and/or involves participants who are highly vulnerable (for example, violence against women) explain to the participants any extra precautions you will take to ensure safety and anonymity.

Listening sessions provide a particular challenge to confidentiality because once something is said in the group it becomes common knowledge. Explain to the participant that you will encourage group participants to respect confidentiality, but that you cannot guarantee it.

Example: This activity may draw attention and if you participate you may be asked questions by other people in the community. We will not be sharing information about you to anyone outside of the listening team. The information that we collect from this activity will be kept private. Nothing that you tell us today will be shared with anybody outside the listening team, and nothing will be attributed to you by name.

We ask each of you to keep what was said in the group confidential. We ask you and others in the group not to talk to people outside the group about what was said in the group. You should know, however, that we cannot stop or prevent participants who were in the group from sharing things that should be confidential.

Sharing the Results: Explain your plan for sharing the findings with the participants. If you have a plan and a timeline for the sharing of information, include the details. You may also inform the participants that the listening activity findings will be shared more broadly, for example, through publications and conferences.

Example: The knowledge that we get from this activity will be shared with you and your community once we have analyzed it. Each participant will receive a summary of the results. There will also be small meetings in the community, and these will be announced. Following the meetings, we may publish the results so that other interested people may learn from the activity.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw: This is a reconfirmation that participation is voluntary and includes the right to withdraw.

Example: You do not have to take part in this activity if you do not wish to do so. You may stop participating in the discussion at any time.

Who to Contact: Provide the name and contact information of someone who is involved, informed and accessible.

Example: If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact any of the following: [name, address/telephone number/e-mail]

Ground Rules for Listening Activity: Explain briefly ground rules and expectations for the activity, including behavior and decorum.

Example: Before we begin it is important that we all agree on some central rules. These will help assure that everyone is treated respectfully and has the chance to speak. Please allow others to finish speaking before speaking; There are no right or wrong answers; Everyone's opinion is equally important; We want everyone to speak; If you disagree with someone, that is okay; Please speak loudly so the recorder can pick up your voice. Does anyone have any questions or disagree with these rules?

You may ask me questions about any part of the listening activity now, if you wish to, or at any time throughout the discussion. Do you have any questions?

Thank you. Now let us begin.

Appendix 6: Informed Consent Template

The statement of consent in the first person and includes a few brief statements about the listening activity and is followed by a statement similar the one in bold below. If the participant is illiterate but gives oral consent, a witness must sign. For convenience, you may have all the participants sign on a single sheet. The facilitator or the person reviewing the informed consent must sign each consent document and a copy of the information sheet should be left with a community representative.

Example: I have been invited to participate in a listening activity about climate change and local farming practices hosted by (organization) in (place) on (date). I have read the information sheet, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this listening activity and have my voice and image recorded.

Date	*Print Name of Participant*	*Signature of Participant*

If illiterate: I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

*Print name of witness*_____   *Thumb print of participant*
Signature of witness   _____
Date _____

      Day/month/year

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent
I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant/s, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the purpose and content of the listening activity, as well as his/her right to refuse participation. I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the listening activity, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily. A copy of the informed consent information sheet has been provided to the participants.

*Print Name of person taking the consent*_____
*Signature of person taking the consent*_____
Date _____

Source: Adapted from "Informed Consent for Qualitative Studies," World Health Organization, Informed Consent for Qualitative Studies

Appendix 7: Sample Introduction

*Adapted from: USAID/Malawi Local Works Listening Tour

Date:

Central Topics:

-Community & Social Network Mapping
-Major Problems/Issues
-Barriers or benefits for development in Malawi
-Citizenship: rights and responsibilities (especially engagement)
-Malawian History and Culture

Introduction:

Hello, my name is _____. I am working with USAID based in Lilongwe. We are trying to learn how we can best support locally-led community development and citizen empowerment in Malawi. As part of this, we're interested in understanding what motivates Malawians, like yourselves, to respond to challenges and what prevents Malawians from achieving greater development. We would like to better understand what motivates Malawians to seek change, how change happens, and what factors we may be missing when developing our programs. This information will help inform USAID/Malawi's thinking regarding our approach and therefore your opinions and insights will be highly appreciated.

I am neutral and am NOT working for the government or any political party. I am only the facilitator for today's discussion.

• There are no right or wrong answers.
• Everyone's opinion is equally important. We want everyone to speak.
• If you disagree with someone, that is okay.
• This discussion is only between those of us here.
• I have this recorder to help me when I write the report. Your name will not be used in the report. The report will only say a [woman/man] from [location] said this or that.
• The person here is taking notes to help with the report.
• Any photos taken are purely for internal use. If you would not like your photo take please tell us now.
• Please speak loudly so the recorder can pick up your voice.

Thank you. Any questions before I begin? Now let us begin.

Appendix 8: Listening Checklist

*Adapted from: USAID/Philippines Local Works Listening Tour

Before the Conversation:

1. Am I allowed to speak with this person?
    a. Is anyone under age 18?
    b. Are there pregnant women?
    c. Am I speaking with a prisoner?
    d. Is this person cognitively impaired?
    e. Is there a power dynamic that makes someone vulnerable
2. Am I going to make this conversation confidential?
    a. If YES, I will not write down the person's name or identifying information
    b. If NO, I will not ask any questions of a sensitive nature

During the Conversation:

1. Thank them for their time
2. Start off with the warm-up / ice breaker questions (e.g. What do you do? How long have you been doing this? How many kids do you have? How's the community like? What is this area known for (food, festivals)? etc.).
3. Thank participant/s and introduce selves and explain the purpose right off the bat. Be broad as possible to manage expectations. (e.g. we at USAID (explain what we do if the person is not familiar) are visiting the various regions of the country to better learn the different priorities, issues, challenges, and contexts from a range of stakeholders. Part of this also is because we don't get to interact with people in the various regions that much anymore as we have delegate meetings with partners, etc.); **No promises, no mention of future programming**
4. If confidential, inform the participant of confidentiality
5. Give the participant an opportunity to refuse to participate. "It is important that you know that you do not have to speak with us. Also, you are free to end this conversation at any time without an explanation. You are also free to not answer any question."
6. Ask for permission to take notes.
7. Ask questions:
    a. Ask the broad questions.
        i. What are some of the issues and challenges faced (household and community)?
        ii. What is working well in your community? Why? What approaches do you think work? What is being done to resolve issues (by you, by others)? Who are the different actors that provide support (if they know)?
        iii. Any other recommendations that you think should be done in your area?
    b. Ask them if they have questions.

      c.   Thank them and if you think it's good and appropriate, commend their role in the community (e.g. important role as teachers).

**Remember, if you hear about, or witness an illegal or harmful behavior:

- Inform the participant that there are limits to confidentiality and that you have an ethical and legal duty to report such behaviors.
- Remind the participant that they can end the conversation, or not answer any question.
- Report any information regarding an imminent harmful act or imminent illegal behavior to [LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE] immediately.

<u>Some creative ways to ask some of the questions:</u>
- If you won an elected position, what would you do differently? Why?
- If the President were here, what would you tell him?
- What would others who are different from you say?
- How are you engaged with and what do you get out of it?
- Can you cite an example? If you or someone you know has experienced it
- What would you like us to ask you about?
- What are you most proud of?

<u>Some things to avoid</u>
- Referring to project design (may raise expectations)
- Asking aspirations directly
- Multi-tasking/ being distracted (e.g. using phone)
- Referring to activities as "interviews"
- Refer to people as 'subjects' or 'respondents'
- Making certain people dominant in an FGD
- Asking a series of questions at the same time/ in one go

Appendix 9: Field Listening Guide Template

This template provides an example of a format that the conversation lead may wish to use during a listening exercise. It should contain vital information about the activity, as well as a timeline. You may also include simple questions and prompts that the facilitator will read to the participants and use to drive the discussion. You may want to include prompts for follow-ups to yourself. Provide time for the discussion to grow on its own and limit yourself to no more than 5-7 central topics/questions for a one and one-half hour discussion.

Name of Organization:
Name of Listening Activity:
Team Members' Names:
Date
Time:
Location:

I. **Introduction**
    a. Welcome and Introductions by Local Contact
    b. Introduction of Listening Team
    c. Explanation of Activity and Informed Consent
    d. Participants Sign Informed Consent Form

II. **Listening Activity**
[Break the listening activity itself into three major sections: 1)Introductory, where participants get to know each other and you build rapport; 2) Body, where you discuss the central topics of the activity; and 3) Closing, where you summarize and participants have the final word.]

  a. **Introductory:** Open with introductory questions to build rapport, get to know each other, and start to establish trust. You may want to answer the questions yourself first.

    Example: Could you tell us a little about yourself? We are going to talk about climate change today, could you tell us a little about what interests you in this topic?

  b. **Body:** In this section, you will begin to discuss more deeply the topics for the listening activity. There should be logic to the topic order, and they should flow from one to the other. For example, flow from discussions of understandings, to experiences, to responses. You may also include prompts to follow up questions

    Example:

      A. *Understandings of Climate Change*
          a. *What are things that come to mind when someone says, "climate change?"*
              i. *Ask for different definitions from group; Probe for examples*
          b. *How would you define a "normal climate?"; Why do you define it this way?*

B. *Personal and Community Experience with Climate Change*
   a. *When did you first notice the climate was changing? How did you know?*
   b. *How has climate change affected your daily life?*
      i. *Probe for example, especially of livelihoods, farming, etc.*
   c. *Besides your personal experience, how has climate change affected your community?*
      i. *Probe for example*

C. *Responses*
   a. *It seems like we generally agree that the climate is changing, how have you responded to this change?*
      i. *Probe for examples; Why did you respond this way?*
   b. *How has the community worked together to respond?*
      i. *Probe for examples; How was the experience of working together?*
   c. *How do you think the government should respond to this challenge; Donors?*
      i. *Why do you think these are the best responses?*

c. **Closing:** Once you have concluded the body of the discussion. Briefly summarize your impressions of the discussion and ask the group to validate. Allow time for participants to ask any final questions or make a last statement. Your goal should be to let participants have the last word.

   Example: Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today, it has been really helpful. Based on our discussion, my impression is that…..Does this sounds accurate?; Is there anything else you would like to add?

III. **Conclusion**
   a. Thank You to Participants
   b. Next Steps
   c. Contact Information

Source: Adapted from Skovdal and Cornish, *Qualitative Research for Development*, 67-68.

Appendix 10: Reflection Template

*Adapted from: USAID/Philippines Local Works Listening Tour

• Complete this form individually (without discussing with your travel mates) at the end of each week in the field.
• You can complete one form for the entire week, or multiple forms if you visited multiple sites and feel that the sites are substantially different from one another. This is a personal decision and is completely up to your own judgment.
• There are no right or wrong answers. We ask that you answer the questions below based on what you heard, your notes, as well as your intuition.
• This form should take 15-30 minutes to complete

Questions

Your Information
1. Email Address or Contact Information:
2. Your Name:
3. Please enter today's date (day you are filling out this form)- *Example: December 15, 2012*:
4. Who did you travel with? Please enter the names of your travel companions:
5. Please list the location(s) you visited:
6. Please provide an overview of your trip. [Provide 2-3 sentences about the people with whom you spoke]:

Your Impressions
The questions below ask about the top 3 issues that came up during your discussions. (These do NOT need to be in rank-order).

7. Issue 1: Please enter a short description of this issue:
   a) Key Quotes: Please provide any key quotes you captured during your discussions related to Issue 1:
   b) Resources: Please provide names of any organizations, institutions, or individuals (especially local actors) who are working to address Issue 1 in this region.
   c) Obstacles: What are the main obstacles that are hindering progress on Issue 1?
8. Issue 2: Please enter a short description of this issue:
   a) Key Quotes: Please provide any key quotes you captured during your discussions related to Issue 2:
   b) Resources: Please provide names of any organizations, institutions, or individuals (especially local actors) who are working to address Issue 2 in this region.
   c) Obstacles: What are the main obstacles that are hindering progress on Issue 2?
9. Issue 3: Please enter a short description of this issue:
   a) Key Quotes: Please provide any key quotes you captured during your discussions related to Issue 3:
   b) Resources: Please provide names of any organizations, institutions, or individuals (especially local actors) who are working to address Issue 3 in this region.
   c) Obstacles: What are the main obstacles that are hindering progress on Issue 3?

Your Recommendation
>   10. From the 3 issues you described above, which issues do you think [YOUR
>   ORGANIZATION/PROGRAM] is best suited to address? Specifically, where is there the
>   biggest opportunity for [YOUR ORGANIZATION/PROGRAM] to strengthen the current
>   work of local actors? Why?

Other Reflections
The following questions and prompts provide space for you to share other reflections about
things you heard, saw, and experienced. All of the questions below are optional.

>   11. Please provide any other reflections (other issues, notes about the listening process) that
>   you would like to share that are not captured above:
>   12. Is there anything that you saw during your trip (outside of your conversations) that you
>   would like to share?
>   13. What challenges did your team face during the course of the week?
>   14. Please leave any other comments or feedback below: