Inter-Agency Learning Initiative
on Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms and Child Protection Systems

Child Protection in Crisis
Network for Research, Learning & Action

LESSONS LEARNED:
CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON COMMUNITY BASED CHILD PROTECTION MECHANISMS

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LESSONS LEARNED: CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD PROTECTION MECHANISMS

Introduction

An inter-agency desk review of 160 community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) conducted in 2009 found that they not only lacked effectiveness and sustainability but that some had caused unintended harm to children and communities.[1] The review indicated that the reasons for their ineffectiveness included: 1) weak or non-existent links between CBCPMs and government child protection systems, 2) low to moderate levels of community ownership of CBCPMs and 3) the inadequate understanding or knowledge about local and existing practices of child protection on the part of external agencies hoping to support CBCPMs.[2]

What Are CBCPMs?

The desk review broadly defined CBCPMs as groups or networks that respond to and prevent issues of children protection at the grassroots level. They range from family and peer group supports to women's groups, religious groups, and youth groups. They also include traditional community based processes and formal mechanisms initiated by government and national and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Examples of CBCPMs are Child Welfare Committees, religious groups that support orphans and other vulnerable children, family responses to problems such as teenage pregnancy, and traditional processes where a chief and/or elders use by-laws to respond to violations against children.

In response to the latter gap and as a first step in building on existing child protection practices and mechanisms, the Inter-Agency Learning Initiative launched a learning program in West Africa and East Africa, in Sierra Leone and Kenya, respectively.[3] The initiative used rapid ethnography, an empirically oriented, bottom-up approach to learn about community based child protection mechanisms, with the goal of strengthening the links between government and community-based systems of child protection. Building upon this work, the Child Protection in Crisis Learning Network adapted and used the ethnographic approach and tools through work by

[1] Wessells, M.(2009). What are we learning about protecting children? An inter-agency review of the evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms in humanitarian and development settings. London: Save the Children.
[2] Ibid.
[3] The list of organizations participating in the Inter-Agency Learning Initiative can be found here: http://childprotectionforum.org/about/

the Program Learning Groups (PLGs) in Uganda and Liberia.[4] Both these initiatives conducted their work not as stand-alone research projects but as part of a collaborative effort to use the learning to strengthen and improve child protection practice.

To facilitate learning and collaboration across the two initiatives, a three-day workshop was convened in Monrovia, Liberia from November 7 – 9, 2012, hosted by Child Fund, Liberia. The participants were members of the PLGs and national research teams from Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Uganda; the technical experts on the action research, and monitors from the inter-agency group overseeing both initiatives. During the workshop, each team shared its methodology, approach, key findings and challenges encountered. Group discussion aimed to identify ways of strengthening the research approach of each team. One third of the workshop was devoted to developing some guiding lessons from the ethnographic research conducted in the three countries.

This guidance is a product of those discussions on lessons learned from the research conducted so far. It compiles insights from the three days of reflection, dialogue and consensus building. It is intended as an aid for other groups and initiatives in the planning and execution of ethnographic research on community-based child protection mechanisms, and to assist the learning of other groups and initiatives that study community-based child protection mechanisms.

It is structured by the three themes that guided the group discussions at the Monrovia workshop: 1) Preparation and Planning, 2) Data Collection, and 3) Data Analysis and Reporting

Target Audience for this Guidance

The target audience for this guide is diverse stakeholders considering, or in the process of undertaking, ethnographic research on community-based child protection mechanisms, including policymakers at the national and international level, programmers, NGO workers, and individual researchers and research teams in various countries around the world.

Workshop participants

1) Johnson Can Abic – PLG member, Uganda
2) Falie Baldeh – Country Director, Child Fund, Liberia
3) Apota John Bosco – PLG member, Uganda
4) Mark Canavera – Associate Director of the CPC Network, Columbia University
5) Ina Christensen – PLG member, Liberia

[4] Reports, including full attribution of the many individuals and organizations who contributed to the research processes, available on the Child Protection in Crisis Learning Network website: www.cpcnetwork.org

6) Dora King – Consultant on Ethnographic Research and Lead National Researcher, Inter-Agency Action Research for Strengthening CBCPMs, Sierra Leone
7) Sarah Lilley – Deputy Head of Child Protection, Save the Children UK, and Reference Group Coordinator for the Inter-Agency Learning Initiative on Strengthening Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms and Child Protection Systems
8) Timothey Opobo – PLG coordinator, Uganda
9) Henrietta Tolbert – PLG coordinator, Liberia
10) Mike Wessells – Principal Investigator, Inter-Agency Action Research for Strengthening CBCPMs, Columbia Group for Children in Adversity

CONDUCTING ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

The goal of ethnography is to study and document the culture of any small or large group in its natural setting, including its practices, beliefs, worldviews and priorities. These goals must be achieved in a condensed timeframe for the sake of feasibility in the focused and issued based research often conducted in humanitarian and development settings. Good ethnography begins with building good relations with the community. But it is undergirded by some of the uniquely people-centered approaches of the anthropological tradition, which include:

- *The suspension of preconceived ideas or concepts to work from the ground up*
- *Building rapport with the community before the research begins*
- *Residing in the community for the course of the study*
- *Showing respect for customs you may disagree with*
- *Privileging methods such as participant observation and unstructured interviews that follow the participant's line of thought. This means foregoing questionnaires in favor of richer and thicker descriptions and transcripts*
- *Taking the posture of a student: Listening and learning and not imposing one's views*

I. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

A. Making the Decision to Conduct Research

A.1 ENGAGE GOVERNMENT AND OTHER AGENCIES

From the onset, engage government and other key actors at the planning stage, including UNICEF, other UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, national academies, academic partners and Program Learning Groups (PLGs). Government should be given an opportunity for buy-in. Ideally, the demand for the research should come from in-country stakeholders who share a commitment to using the research to strengthen practice. Gauging in-country demand for such research can be done through relevant networks or learning events, which highlight gaps in learning and practice and outline the research needed to fill in those gaps, including discussion of the role that ethnographic research might play in filling key knowledge gaps.

A.2 CHOOSE A STRATEGIC TIME TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH

Schedule the research for a time when it will have the greatest impact. The work can be attached to a strategic planning process. It could be done at a time when stakeholders are positioned to take its findings and lessons on board. For example, at the start of the ethnographic research in Sierra Leone, significant effort was already underway by the government to strengthen both CBCPMs and the links between the formal and informal systems of child protection. An MOU was signed in 2010 between the paramount chiefs, the Family Support Units and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs to establish Child Welfare Committees in each village, and where that was unfeasible, to appoint focal persons as child protection monitors.

A.3 BE AWARE OF YOUR AUDIENCE

Take into account the target audience in choosing the research design and methodology. Will the data be used by program managers, analysts, policy makers or community workers. Having a clear idea of your target audiences from the beginning can help you think through important decisions about research design and dissemination. Will your target audience be open to results obtained through qualitative inquiry? Do you need to consider a mixed methods approach? Will your target audience find a short policy brief more useful or a detailed document on findings that may provide deeper insights for programming? The reality may be that you have multiple stakeholders with a variety of needs, but thinking about how your findings will be received and taken forward from the beginning may have important implications for what you decide to do.

B. Methodology

B.1 CHOOSE A RESEARCH METHOD THAT MEETS YOUR LEARNING GOALS

The choice of methodology should be informed by the aims of the research and who your target population is. If the goal is to better understand child protection at the community level or CBCPMs, then an ethnographic method can yield reliable and empirical knowledge. *The goal of ethnography is to learn about the practices, beliefs, worldviews and priorities of small and large communities. It begins without preconceived ideas or answers. It strives to listen and learn, and not to teach or to change the community*.

B.2 LINK THE RESEARCH DESIGN WITH THE PLAN FOR ANALYZING THE DATA

For example, if you want to learn about child protection from different sub-groups (e.g. teenage, girls, adult women, young adult males) this should be reflected in your methods of data collection.

B.3 WORK WITH YOUR CONTEXT

Develop or adapt the tools, questionnaires, and ethical protocols to suit the national and local context. Be flexible. Tools are guides to be used with sensitivity and awareness of local cultural practices, social roles and religious beliefs. For example, how do gender roles and age impact the appropriateness of questions about sex or reproductive health? How can you adapt the tools to demonstrate sensitivity and respect?

B.4 ALIGN YOUR RESEARCH SITE(S) WITH YOUR RESEARCH METHOD

Choose a research site or sites appropriate to the methodology and the questions to be addressed by the research. Collaborate with all relevant stakeholders to develop the criteria for the research site(s). The criteria will be based on your research design and goals.

For example, in Sierra Leone, the two districts chosen for the study illuminated differences important for the comparative analysis built into the quasi experimental action research design. The two districts, Bombali and Moyamba differed in ethnic make-up and in the availability of child protection resources. Yet they were similar enough to represent typical communities in Sierra Leone.

B.5 PILOT THE TOOLS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

It is advisable to pilot the tools before the full research is conducted. Choose a community similar to your research site to do a test run of the questions. How long does the interview take? Is the questionnaire too long or are the questions not easily understood by respondents? Use the lessons from the pilot to generate the final tool. Ideally, have the same team review, pilot, and revise the tool and conduct the fieldwork or data collection.

C. Work-plan

C.1 Create a work-plan

Create a work-plan with input from all stakeholders at the outset. Allow for flexibility to deal with unseen issues. For example, you might need to do extra days of training or add more days for fieldwork. Quality ethnography takes time and patience and can be affected by unforeseen circumstances like the farming season, initiation rituals, funerals and migration patterns.

In some locations, accessibility is an issue. Roads may not be passable in the rainy season, and so the dry season would make your site more accessible. Schedule the research for this time. In some locations, like in Uganda, the rainy season is cooler. Informants may be more responsive when they can concentrate better.

C.2 Build in time for in-country data analysis and community feedback

Data analysis can be time consuming and is best done by multiple analysts who can trade and challenge ideas and compare notes. In-country data analysis can provide opportunities for the national research team to contribute to the analysis. Feeding back the findings to the community is good ethical practice. It validates the data, ensures community participation, and avoids the pitfalls of an extractive approach.

Often, communities are not asked "what does this mean to you?" or "what is the cause of X?" Create opportunities for communities to make an input into the analysis. Ask them to clarify what particular things mean, what the problems are, and the causes of the problems.

When communities have an input in the analysis, they will also begin to identify options to address the problems. This will foster 'ownership' of the solutions.

D. Ethical Review, Training, and Monitoring

D.1 A strong ethics review Process

At the initial stages of the research, develop a set of ethical principles that will undergird the research process.

If a review board does not exist in-country, set up an informal review process with a diverse group of stakeholders and ensure representation from government.

If a review board does exist, create a work-plan that builds in adequate time to complete the requirements for ethical research.

During the training workshop for researcher, include detailed and systematic training on ethical issues in the field.

The team leader overseeing the data collection can play a crucial role in monitoring and ensuring ethical practice through collective reflection and problem solving.

D.2 Go above the minimum requirements for ethical review

Ethnographic research often raises complex ethical questions. This complexity arises in part from the fact that individuals and communities who may be participating in research are vulnerable to outsider demands, influence and exploitation. Also, research of any kind may raise participants' expectations, and research processes themselves can create situations in which some community members are put at risk simply by participating in the study. Therefore, mechanisms are needed to protect them from harm. An ethical board can provide oversight and guidance.

D.3 Child Safeguarding Policy

During the training period, distribute copies of a child safeguarding policy that aligns with international standards of child protection, for example, Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Policy, which was used in the Sierra Leone research.[5] Review it with the team and require all those involved in the research to sign the code of conduct to protect all children, including drivers, data enterers, and logisticians) . Put a plan in place to handle cases that need to be reported.

The reporting of child rights violations can pose problems for researchers whose ethical obligations require them to protect confidentiality, maintain neutrality and show respect for the cultural values of community members. This ethical requirement can require creative and principled application of a child safeguarding policy that includes a response strategy sensitive to the wellbeing of children without compromising the professional conduct of researchers. For example, in Sierra Leone, researchers could report any observed violations to the team leader who was tasked to make appropriate referrals to appropriate agents of response during and after the research. Urgent and egregious cases of abuse were to be dealt with immediately.

E. Community Relations and Research

E.1 Build Relationships with Communities in the Research Sites

Give adequate time to meet with and orient the community to the research. It is not enough to send a letter. Conduct multiple in-person visits to build relationship and trust. The ideal person to visit the community is someone already known by the community, who has good relations with the community, and who has the skills to describe the work in clear terms.

If the research is being led by someone unfamiliar, he or she can be introduced by a community member or child protection worker who is known to the community. In the event that a chosen

[5] (Can Sarah add the link here to the policy? I cannot find it online.)

community is not used to the demands and protocols of formal researchers or NGO workers in the location, have a skilled community facilitator introduce the research. It shortens the time needed to build trust and rapport.

F. Research Assistants

F.1 Researcher Recruitment

Develop a workforce that is appropriately skilled and adequate to the task. Ethnographic or community-based research is intensive and demanding. Make sure you have a large enough team to manage the workload. Have a contingency plan or Plan B in case researchers get sick in the field. Possible Plan B's are: 1) train more researchers than are needed. Extra researchers can be asked to be on call if needed; 2) hire a trained team member who can play several roles: backstop, logistics manager, or data enterer.

Hire researchers with good people skills. Ethnographic or community based research requires more than academic qualification or research experience. Look for softer skills, like: openness, flexibility, curiosity, good listening skills, and respect of others. The job description should list these skills as requirements and should be included in the interview process. For example, ask how the job applicant would respond to particular scenarios.

F.2 Training of researchers

Schedule a training workshop to adequately prepare researchers for fieldwork. A good training workshop can take two to three weeks. Use a highly participatory methodology that includes role plays, skills building exercises, and team observation and feedback.

Review and pilot the tools with the research team. The process will identify and correct potential mistakes in the tool and illuminate culturally sensitive issues. It can also help to refine language for accuracy and communicability.

The training continues through learning in the field. A good Team Leader can play a key role. She or he can observe, support, mentor and backstop the researchers. The team leader can check the data frequently for accuracy and good ethical practice.

The training should emphasize the ethnographic or community-centered orientation. Focus on the following approaches and skills:

- How to ask good probing questions: this skill is crucial for collecting good qualitative data, particularly when conducting issue-focused ethnography.
- How to capture local idioms used to express beliefs, values and perceptions. Do not use the language of NGOs or development workers.
- How to take good notes. Note-taking strategies will help researchers prepare verbatim transcripts and avoid other common errors like summarizing respondents' statements,

using the researcher's own words, changing the meaning of sentences, editorializing, or reporting in the third person as a journalist would do.
- Ethnographic research requires a mind-shift from programmatic work: the goal is not to change or to educate respondents, but to learn from and document the knowledge and practices of a community. Do exercises that test and foster listening skills and respectful communication.

The training of researchers should also include orientation to living in rural settings: what to expect, how to manage and negotiate difficulties.

F.3 Payment of Researchers

Have a common approach for payment of daily fees and DSA across agencies and the PLG or a similar coordinating group. Avoid the challenges caused by uneven payment rates or by a lack of transparency about the budget.

G. The Budget

G.1 Be Realistic

The budget should reflect the real costs of conducting ethnographic research in communities. Quality ethnography takes time and patience and can be affected by unforeseen circumstances like the farming season, initiation rituals, funerals and migration patterns. Fieldwork requires flexibility. Be prepared to extend the time needed to collect quality data.

H. Other Recommendations

H.1 Foster and Maintain relevant Interest in the Research

Provide regular updates by email to government, other agencies, and all stakeholders about progress of the research during the course of the project to maintain engagement and a high level of interest.

II. DATA COLLECTION

J. General Considerations When Doing Fieldwork

J.1 PREPARING FOR THE FIELD

Do some preparatory research about the community before the team arrives. What resources will impact the capacity of the team to work and live in the community, for example, water wells, health clinics, food resources? Be prepared with first aid and other supplies to minimize and respond to illness and work interruptions.

J.2 LEARN ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY

What are the cultural practices and social structures of the community you will be working with? What are the power dynamics of the village? Are there political factions within the village or chiefdom or district? How can you avoid playing into the conflict?

Take time to learn who the natural helpers are. These are the people who community members go to for help or when crises arise. They can help with difficult situations during research, including cases of child protection by providing care for the psychosocial needs of respondents and ensuring the safety of researchers who might find themselves in sensitive situations.

Avoid replicating practices that marginalize weaker voices and those on the margins of society. Make an effort to be inclusive of all persons from your first contact with the community, Demonstrate awareness of local customs. Explain in gentle and respectful terms, the ethics of ethnographic and participatory action research that seeks to empower the disempowered. For example, when convening meetings, request representatives from all sectors of the community, like the physically challenged, children in and out of school, and others who may be ethnic minorities or voiceless, like women and children.

J.3 SHOW RESPECT FOR CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

When you enter a community, avoid clothing or behavior that will offend. For example, in modest or religious cultures, use appropriate coverings for the head or legs; do not wander into areas considered sacred or forbidden to outsiders; observe gendered norms that separate males and females or age norms that privilege elders.

If and when these norms violate the code of research ethics or child safeguarding policies, consult with members of the ethics review board, lead researchers, and NGO partners to devise an appropriate strategy of response.

K. Time Considerations

K.1 LONGER FIELDWORK IS IDEAL, IF THE BUDGET ALLOWS

Good ethnography depends on good rapport. Communities may not open up and be transparent until you establish trust. Take time to build rapport. A longer time for fieldwork is therefore recommended for quality data. This will depend on the resources available and the amount of data required for the research design and analysis.

K.2 APPLY THE TOOLS APPROPRIATELY

It is helpful to begin the research with participant observation and informal interactions with community members. Use other tools that are unstructured or informal, for example, play activities with children or adult games with parents and adults.

Tools that would benefit from greater trust and openness, like in-depth interviews, can be done later during the fieldwork. Be flexible with the work-plan and schedule. Take into account unforeseen circumstances and community work schedules, like school hours, farm work, and cultural activities.

Focused group discussions (FGDs) can be done at times when adults and children are more likely to be available.

K.3 INTERVIEW COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHERE THEY LIVE AND WORK

Do not wait for your respondents to come to you. You will use your time more efficiently and conduct higher quality ethnography if you go where the community members spend their day working and living. During farming season, ask your informants if you can come to the farm or the garden where they work or to the river where they fish. This is ideal for doing participant observation and conducting interviews.

K.4 CONSIDER THE SEASONS OR THE WEATHER

In some locations, accessibility is an issue. Roads may not be passable in the rainy season, and so the dry season would make your site more accessible. Schedule the research for this time. In some locations, like in Uganda, the rainy season is cooler. Informants may be more responsive when they can concentrate better.

L. Participant Observation: Researchers as Community Members

L.1 LIVE IN THE COMMUNITY FOR THE COURSE OF THE RESEARCH

Ethnographic research is best done when researchers live with members of the community The practice can yield significant and meaningful data.

It requires appropriate preparation. Before you enter the field with the research team, visit the leaders and other community members to introduce the research. Communicate the background and goals of the project in clear language and how it will benefit the community. Give detailed information about the project’s methodology and why it is important for researchers to live with members of the village or town. Request permission from the leaders and elders to work in the community. Emphasize the need to listen to and learn from them and to hear from all sectors.

Efforts should be made not to live with the chiefs or other authority figures to avoid repeating power dynamics.

Encourage researchers to stay with the communities for the length of time of the research.

L.2 PREPARE RESEARCHERS ADEQUATELY FOR LIVING IN RURAL SETTINGS

The training of researchers should include orientation to living in rural settings: what to expect, how to manage and negotiate difficulties.

Inform researchers about the challenges and the possible arduousness of living in rural settings. They must accept the conditions before arriving in the community.

M. Size and Makeup of the Research Team

M.1 HIRE RESEARCHERS WITH APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE SKILLS FOR THE COMMUNITY

Researchers should be able to understand and communicate fluently in the local language. Transcripts should reflect local understandings and the language used to express it.

M.2 USE TEAM LEADERS TO PROVIDE ETHICAL OVERSIGHT

The team leader's role is to be a mentor, backstop and supervisor. This is very important for the quality of the data. She or he should review transcripts daily to catch errors, correct ethical oversights, and follow up on incomplete questionnaires.

M.3 LAYER THE TEAM

Have different levels of research expertise. Use the differences in skill level for purposes of mentoring and fostering the capacity of national researchers to conduct qualitative research.

M.4 HAVE A GENDER-BALANCED TEAM

It is necessary to have male and female researchers represented on the team. You may need to match genders during interviews and FGDs to facilitate openness and communication about sensitive issues.

M.5 HIRE ENOUGH RESEARCHERS

The data set should determine the size of the team. A larger data set will require more researchers. A larger team will also absorb the effects of emergencies and unforeseen circumstances, e.g. illness or incapacity.

A single researcher can reasonably produce 9-12 transcripts of in-depth interviews in a six-day workweek. . Two FGDs can be done in one week. At this pace, researchers can prepare transcripts daily and will avoid a backlog of work This workload assumes your researchers are skilled and experienced in fieldwork. Design the workload appropriately, making room for increasing capacity over the course of the research.

The team can be layered with more and less experienced researchers to build national capacity.

Assign one researcher to one village or community to produce the best quality data. This ratio establishes good rapport, simplifies relations with the community and builds trust. It is less intrusive and the researcher can more easily blend into the community. A second researcher, particularly of another gender, can participate in FGDs and assist with sensitive cases where same gender interviews may be more appropriate. For example, where gender norms make it difficult for male non-kin to interview females.

A team approach can also be useful and can produce good quality data. Team members can support each other, problem solve, address methodological questions with the tool and work through ethical challenges.

Consider including a data entry person or people in the team to type up hand written manuscripts and other narrative data at the end of the day. This can relieve researchers and enable them to spend more time on observations.

Have a team of two researchers lead FGDs. One can facilitate whilst the other takes notes.

Design a daily work schedule that ensures adequate time at the end of the day to review notes, fill in gaps, and create transcripts from jottings and notes.

N. Applying the Tools

N.1 AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH IS LESS STRUCTURED AND LESS FORMAL

Fully structured survey questionnaires are not appropriate or consistent with an ethnographic approach. Use tools that are open-ended, less formal or structured and more interactive, like open-ended interviews, participant observation, and in-depth interviews. Avoid taking a questionnaire approach when using ethnographic tools such as those of the inter-agency learning initiative. In ethnography, one holds in the back of one's mind the questions that need to be answered, and one 'follows the participants' in conducting interviews. Thus, interviews in ethnography do not follow a script but explore in a flexible manner the ideas of the participant.

N.2 Balance the Need for Data with Respect for your Informants

Rural communities are often busy with farm work or housework or child care. Respect their time. Go where they live and work. Schedule appointments that are convenient for the respondents.

Questionnaires or instruments should be of reasonable length. Avoid lengthy questionnaires to prevent fatigue and unresponsiveness.

N.3 Use a Variety of research methods or Tools

Use a variety of tools to give opportunities for a range of responses to sensitive questions. This can also deepen your data. For e.g. conduct in-depth interviews with young adults; engage in more playful activities with young children; or construct timelines on parchment paper with elderly non-literate adults. A range of tools can make possible contrast analysis and broaden the picture of the subject under study.

N.4 Capture local values and beliefs in local people's own words

Transcripts must capture local beliefs, values and perceptions in local idioms and not in the language of NGOs or development workers.

Avoid condensing transcripts—use the respondent's own words exactly as they say it. Transcripts should be very rich and detailed in order for analysis to be accurate and illuminating. Transcripts should not be interpretations but the exact words of the participant.

Researchers should have sufficient time to produce rich transcripts to avoid summary and excessive condensation.

The team leader can devote significant time in mentoring and supervising note taking and language use through the daily reviews of transcripts to ensure researchers are recording their interviews verbatim. Researchers should NOT summarize interviews, change the meaning of sentences, comment on the interviews, or report them in the third person as a journalist would do.

N.5 Provide a glossary of local terms

The researchers and team leaders should provide a glossary of terms so that the analysts will be more likely to understand and interpret accurately. For e.g. 'touch' may have sexual connotations the analyst is not aware of.

N.6 USE RECORDERS AND GOOD NOTE TAKING SKILLS TO CAPTURE THE EXACT WORDS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

When conducting interviews, supplement good notes with tape recorded sessions. Write up the transcripts as soon after the data collection as possible.

When filling out the notes, use the recorded session to fill in gaps or insert illuminating quotes that the researcher may have missed.

Be flexible with the combination of using recorders and taking notes. Try different methods in different contexts. Which one strikes the most appropriate balance between the needs of the researcher and the comfort of the respondent?

Budget enough time in the work plan and daily schedule for transcribing notes and typing up transcripts.

N.7 USE TRIANGULATION OR DIFFERENT METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES TO CONFIRM FINDINGS

For example, is there a difference between what respondents say in interviews and what researchers learn while doing participant observation? Note these discrepancies.

Make an attempt to confirm what is most accurate.. Elders or other figures of authority can confirm information, for example, the age of a child or their school enrolment status.

O. Logistical Issues

O.1 USE COMPUTERS TO PRODUCE TRANSCRIPTS IN THE FIELD

If the resources are available, buy generators, voltage stabilizers and computers to deal with the challenges of producing transcripts in a timely manner in the field. Rentals might also provide a useful model.

O.2 OTHER USEFUL EQUIPMENT

Provide reliable lamps and plenty of batteries for researchers.

P. Ethical Considerations

P.1 DO NO HARM

Follow the principles of ethical research: impartiality, neutrality, beneficence, non-maleficence, humanity, and child safeguarding.

Make specials efforts to reach and include marginalized people or populations in the community.

III. DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORT PREPARATION

Q. Building capacity for qualitative data analysis

Q.1 INCREASE THE SKILL AND CAPACITY OF RESEARCHERS

Qualitative analysis is a complex skill that requires significant training and experience, which are lacking in many settings. This gap requires a capacity building approach that increases the skills and capacities of national researchers.

At every stage of data collection, cleaning and analysis, there are opportunities to build capacity. For example, during data collection, stronger researchers can be paired with weaker researchers to model skills such as probing. During data cleaning, a team leader might suggest where an interviewer could have solicited a deeper understanding of an issue or highlight an important part of a discussion captured through digital recorders that may not have been transcribed in the notes. During the analysis phase, communities, researchers and analysts can have clarifying dialogues about terms and practices and thereby refine and sharpen each other's understanding.

Capacity can be built by using a stable roster of researchers whose skills can accumulate over time.

Q.2 BUILD INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

Partner with established researchers who specialize in qualitative research on children's issues in local universities. Where they exist, forge links to research centers that specialize in childhood or child protection. Such partnerships will help to institutionalize national capacities for qualitative data analysis. Future generations will be taught how to analyze qualitative data.

Capacity building can occur through courses, mentoring, practice, and having rising researchers serve as apprentices on particular projects. Linking with local academic institutions should be a means of developing relevant national curricula and building capacities in different departments for qualitative data analysis.

R. Link Data Analysis with the Research Design

R.1 DESIGN THE RESEARCH THE WAY YOU PLAN TO ANALYZE THE DATA

The analysis of the data follows from the design, structure, values and orientation of the research. For example, if you want to analyze the different views of girls, boys, men, women, etc., then the data must be collected in a manner that will provide those different views.

S. Data Analysis works from the ground up

S.1 EMPHASIZE LOCAL VIEWS, LANGUAGE AND CATEGORIES

It is important to probe into the local meanings or understanding of particular terms during the research and the analysis. Train researchers how to probe for local knowledge.

In ethnographic research, it is not appropriate to use international terms for local practices, for example, 'child labor.' For example, in Sierra Leone, local people do not use that term but speak of 'heavy work.' It is important to define the local meaning of terms used and map the local boundaries of concepts such as 'heavy work.'

S.2 ANALYSTS AND LOCAL RESEARCHERS SHOULD COLLABORATE TO CLARIFY TERMS

There needs to be an ongoing conversation between local researchers and the analysts to avoid misinterpretations and to increase the accuracy of the analysis. For example, if local people distinguish between 'rape' and 'defilement,' the analysis should capture that difference rather than using a single generalized term such as 'sexual abuse.' Transcripts from a particular area should be accompanied with a glossary of the local meanings of particular terms.

S.3 ENGAGE COMMUNITIES IN THE PROCESS OF ANALYSIS

Often, communities are not asked "what does this mean to you?" or "what is the cause of X?" Create opportunities for communities to make an input into the analysis. Ask them to clarify what particular things mean, what the problems are, and the causes of the problems.

When communities have an input in the analysis, they will also begin to identify options to address the problems. This will foster 'ownership' of the solutions.

S.4 MAKE ROOM IN THE BUDGET FOR A CIRCULAR PROCESS DURING THE ANALYSIS

When important gaps in local understandings are spotted during the analysis, create opportunities to engage researchers and the community for clarification. Build this into the budget.

S.5 Analysis should Happen as close to the Location as Possible

Doing the data analysis close to the research location will facilitate a circular process, involving researchers and communities in the analysis.

S.6 Minimize Bias

Use different approaches to minimize bias, such as cross checks by different people and the use of different analytical methods.

Conclusion

After successful data collection and efforts made towards conducting circular analyses between communities, researchers and analysts, the writing of the report is a transitory step to the most important task.

Ethnographic research done in humanitarian and development settings is applied research. Reports produced from the findings should be widely disseminated to all relevant and appropriate stakeholders to facilitate reflection, action and application by local communities, policy makers, programmers, and field workers.

Research that is not shared or acted on does not fulfill the ethical obligations of beneficence and non-maleficence. When reports are shared with key stakeholders who are positioned to take it on board, the principle of beneficence is followed. The finding will be of use to the communities who participated in the research. The dissemination and application of the findings also means that the research has not been merely extractive, done for the sake of doing research. This fulfills our obligation to not cause harm to the communities we work with.