

Phase 4: On-site assessment

Step 4.1: Conducting consultations

How to conduct an individual interview?

Use a semi-structured interview method to ensure that the same general type of information is collected from each interviewee. This standardization makes it easier to analyse and compare the findings while still allowing a certain degree of freedom and adaptability.

Interviews are usually scheduled in advance at a designated time and location and are organised around a set of predetermined open-ended questions. Apart from the given answers, it is important to capture interviewees' non-verbal behaviour patterns such as body language or emotions. The interviewer should be prepared to depart from the interview plan if other interesting topics arise.¹

The moderator plays a crucial role in obtaining the desired information and should therefore:

- Be non-judgmental and remain as neutral about participants' responses,
- Have adequate knowledge of the context,
- Show patience and flexibility, and be sensitive to the participants' needs.

Preparation of the interview

Clarify the goal of the interview during the preparation phase to help ensure the conversations are focused. Try to structure your questions and group them around the six predefined human rights issues. Note though that you do not have to stick to this structure if it makes more sense to deep-dive in one specific topic. Prepare questions that are flexible and open-ended and come up with one or two follow-up questions, which you might ask depending on the answer to the original question. It is important to ask one question at a time and to ensure that the wording is clear and easy to understand. Do not ask questions that are too broad so that the interviewee doesn't know how to answer them. Prepare transitions between two main topics, for example "We've been talking about this topic and now I'd like to move on to another one".²

Conduct of the interview

In order to obtain the information sought, the moderator should create a warm and friendly atmosphere, for instance by serving refreshments and engaging the interviewee in small talk. Before starting the interview, thank the participant for taking the time to meet you and introduce yourself by explaining who you are and why you are conducting the interview. After your introduction, explain the format of the interview and indicate how long the interview will likely take (usually around one hour). Emphasize the rules of confidentiality and develop a HRIA-specific grievance mechanism by providing the participant with a business card so s/he can get in touch after the consultation without fearing repercussions. Stress that there are no wrong or right answers and, if necessary, use a bilingual translator who speaks the local language to ensure a smooth interview process. If you use a translator agree with him/her prior to the consultation how translations will be done (simultaneously or a summary after each question). Ensure that gender-specific concerns do not get lost in

¹ Di-Cicco Bloom, Barbara & Crabtree, Benjamin (2006): The qualitative research interview, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1365-2929.2006.02418.x>, last view 10.09.2019, p. 315-317.

² Wikihow (2019): How to conduct an in person interview, <https://m.wikihow.com/Conduct-an-In-Person-Interview#Wrap-Up-the-Interview>, last view 9.09.2019; Free Management Library: General Guidelines for Conducting Research Interviews, <https://managementhelp.org/businessresearch/interviews.htm>, last view 09.09.2019.

translation and appoint female interpreters where possible. It is advisable to start with some simple and introductory questions and to raise particularly sensitive issues, e.g. child labour or discrimination, later in the conversation. Ask the participants for their agreement to take written notes if appropriate.

While asking your questions, maintain eye contact and listen intently to the answers to make the participant feel like you're having a natural conversation. Wait out the person's nervousness and canned phrases and keep asking questions until she or he opens up and says something informative. If the person isn't giving you real answers, keep rephrasing the questions. Don't be afraid to ask the person to repeat an answer if you have trouble understanding or following her/him. You may also ask completely new questions that you hadn't planned if appropriate. Do not dominate the conversation. You should not talk for more than 20-25% of the time, however you should always stay in control of the interview situation and remember your list of questions. If the interviewee talks too much, so that you cannot ask your questions, you should politely steer the person in the right direction.

Wrapping-up the interview

Once you have finished the conversation, ask the person you are interviewing whether there are any other issues that you did not cover, but which are important to her or him. This might uncover important and useful information that you were not aware of or had underestimated the importance of. Thank the interviewee for taking the time to speak with you. Hand over your business card and inform the interviewee that it is possible to contact a third person to report a complaint or future human rights issues as part of a HRIA-specific grievance mechanism. Make sure you also provide the relevant contact details.³

Ideally, the [coding](#) and analysis of data should start immediately after the interview. List the most important issues and try to record any observations made during the interview.⁴

Individual interview questionnaire

Each questionnaire is structured around the key human rights issues and follow-up questions. While the key questions are used in every interview, the follow up questions aim to elicit more detailed information about specific issues important to the interviewee.⁵ Use stakeholder-specific questionnaires for consultations with [workers](#), [management](#), [NGOs](#), [international organisations or community members](#). For [consultations with children](#) it is recommended to use a specific questionnaire, such as the one developed by UNICEF and the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR).⁶

³ Kuoni (2014): Assessing Human Rights Impacts. India Project Report, http://cr.kuoni.com/docs/kuoni_hria_india_2014_website_0.pdf, last view 11.09.2019, p. 14-15; Valenzuela, Dapzury & Shrivastava, Pallavi: Interview as a Method for Qualitative Research, <https://www.public.asu.edu/~kroel/www500/Interview%20Fri.pdf>, last view 10.09.2019.

⁴ International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (2011): Human Rights Impact Assessment Guide. Step 15: Concluding interviews, <http://hria.equalit.ie/en/phases/index.html#/phase/d/etape/15/>, last view 11.09.2019; Wikihow (2019): How to conduct an in person interview, <https://m.wikihow.com/Conduct-an-In-Person-Interview>, last view 9.09.2019.

⁵ Kuoni (2012): Assessing Human Rights Impacts. Kenya Pilot Project Report, http://cr.kuoni.com/docs/assessing_human_rights_impacts_0_0.pdf, last view 9.09.2019, p. 6; Kuoni (2014): Assessing Human Rights Impacts. India Project Report, http://cr.kuoni.com/docs/kuoni_hria_india_2014_website_0.pdf, last view 9.09.2019, p. 14.

⁶ UNICEF & Danish Institute for Human Rights (2013): Children's Rights in Impact Assessments. A guide for integrating children's rights into impact assessments and taking action for children, https://www.unicef.org/csr/css/Children_s_Rights_in_Impact_Assessments_Web_161213.pdf, last view 11.09.2019.