

## Guidance on conducting key informant interviews<sup>1,2</sup>

**NOTE:** this guidance focuses on insecticide treated net (ITN) use. The principles in the guidance can, however, be applied more narrowly for household registration and/or ITN distribution.

### What is a key informant interview?

Key informant interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with people who know what is happening in the community. The purpose of key informant interviews is to collect information from a wide range of people—including community leaders, professionals or community members—who have first-hand knowledge about the community and the subject in question. These community experts, with their particular knowledge and understanding, can provide insights on the nature of problems and give recommendations for solutions.

Key information interviews (KII) are usually conducted in order to:

- Get information about a pressing issue or problem in the community from a limited number of informed community experts
- Understand the motivation and beliefs of community members on a particular issue
- Get information from people with diverse backgrounds and opinions and be able to ask in-depth and probing questions
- Get more candid or in-depth answers, which may not be forthcoming in a group discussion

### Gaining consent

How consent will be granted for key informant interviews should be decided at the outset. Ideally, participants will sign a consent form to participate in key informant interviews. One copy of the informed consent form should be given to participants and a second copy should be kept by the interviewer. Participants should be informed if any recording (audio and/or visual) will be used for data collection.

Data collection: the discussions can be recorded if agreed by the interviewee, and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The recordings need to be securely stored until transcribed and then destroyed. The transcription should not contain information that would allow individuals to be linked to specific statements. Confidentiality must be strictly preserved and maintained.

### Guide for implementation of key informant interviews<sup>3</sup>

It is important to identify appropriate key informants in each context: health care workers, community leaders, religious and traditional authorities, etc. The key informants should be selected based on the type of information needed, such as community practice, community opinions, uptake and use of services, etc. Key informants must have first-hand knowledge about the community, its

---

<sup>1</sup> UCLA Center for Health Policy Research

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from *Introduction and guidelines for malaria focus group discussions and key informant interviews to improve understanding of barriers and facilitators of IN use*, Sudan (2019).

<sup>3</sup> <https://managementhelp.org/businessresearch/interviews.htm>

members, and the issues or problems related to malaria prevention uptake and use. It is important that the key informants selected have different backgrounds, be as gender balanced as possible and represent different groups in order to generate information from a broad range of perspectives. The number of people interviewed will largely depend on data needs, available time and resources.

Key informant selection: it is important to ensure that the key informants identified have the experience and knowledge to contribute significantly to the issue being investigated, in this case malaria and uptake and use of ITNs for malaria prevention.

Facilitation: the interviewers should have the following base and communication skills to ensure a successful interview process:

- Knowledgeable – familiar with the topic
- Structured – clearly outline the procedure for the interview
- Clear – provide simple, easy and short questions which are spoken understandably
- Gentle – tolerant, sensitive and patient when receiving provocative and unconventional opinions
- Steering – controlling the course of the interview to avoid digressions from the topic
- Critical – testing the reliability and validity of the information that the interviewee offers
- Remembering – retaining the information provided by the interviewee
- Interpreting – offering interpretation of what the interviewee says

Some suggestions for a successful interview include:

- Get the respondents involved in the interview as soon as possible.
- Before asking about controversial matters (such as feelings and conclusions), first ask about some facts and intersperse fact-based questions throughout the interview.
- Ask questions about the present before questions about the past or future.
- Ask questions one at a time.
- Use open-ended wording.
- Use questions that are as neutral as possible.
- Clearly word questions.
- Be wary of asking “why” questions. This type of question may encourage a participant to answer unnaturally or feel defensive.

Interviewers should listen carefully for recurring and new opinions or beliefs. In order to compare data collected and identify themes it is important to get answers to certain key questions from every person interviewed. At the end of the interview, ask the key informant if they have any questions or final comments.

Time and place for the interview: the time required for the interview should be agreed with the interviewee in advance and the interviewer should respect the time that has been allocated for the interview. Ensure that the location selected for the interview provides a comfortable and private environment to facilitate open discussions.

Starting the interview:

1. **Welcome and thank the interviewee** for taking part in the interview and remind them that they have been asked to participate as their point of view is important.
2. **Introduce the interview and its purpose.** Explain that it is meant to assess thoughts, impressions, information and feelings about ITN distribution in the country, through different channels, as well as the reasons for low uptake and use of the ITNs that are made freely available.

3. **Reinforce that the discussion will be anonymous.** Any tapes will be kept safely in a locked facility until they are transcribed word for word, then they will be destroyed. The transcribed notes of the interview will contain no information that would allow individuals to be linked to specific statements.
4. **Discuss consent form and need for consent and signature** according to national regulations.
5. **Underline the importance of open and honest answers.** Encourage interviewees to try to answer and comment as accurately and truthfully as possible. If there are any questions or points during the discussion that s/he does not wish to answer or participate in, s/he does not have to do so.

### Example questionnaire

1. What is your role in this community?
  - How does the local population think of you?
  - In which situations does the local population ask for your advice? (Men? Women?)
  - What do you think about your influence in this community?
2. In this community, who makes the decisions about health? (Probe: Husbands? Mothers-in-law? Religious or community leaders? Co-wives? Others?)
  - Who makes decisions about when people should be taken for formal medical care?
  - What are the different factors considered in these decisions?
3. According to you, what are the reasons for:
  - Families having cases of malaria?
4. During community gatherings, do you discuss malaria issues? If so:
  - At what types of gatherings are these issues discussed?
  - What prompts the discussion?
  - What sort of topics do you discuss?
  - What are the main reactions of the people present?
  - At which types of gatherings would you not discuss these topics?
  - If you never discuss malaria issues, would you consider doing so?
5. How do you feel about discussing malaria at community gatherings? What other venues would you suggest are ideal for communicating messages about malaria and the use and care of ITNs?
6. What do you think are some of the reasons that:
  - Families do not have ITNs for malaria prevention?
  - Families do not use the ITNs they have to prevent malaria?
7. What would you consider the biggest barriers to uptake and use of ITNs for malaria prevention?
8. What would you recommend needs to be done to improve the access to, use and care of ITNs in your community? What type of messages do you think would work? Which audiences should be targeted?

Summarize the discussion and ask the interviewee if they have anything they would like to add. Ask if they have any questions.

9. Thank the interviewee for participating and taking time to speak with you.

The questionnaire should be modified for different types of key informants selected, as well as their roles and responsibilities in the ITN mass campaign (and/or continuous distribution), as well as to include questions related to new strategies or ITN types introduced during the distribution.

### **Analysis of the data**

If the questionnaire and discussion guide are followed (either fully or partially depending on priorities and time for the interviews), then the responses from individuals will already be somewhat structured according to broad groupings of topics (such as malaria knowledge and barriers to ITN use). The key themes and issues that cross-cut the different interview transcriptions or notes should be pulled out and further information sought and provided around the specific barriers or issues that would need to be addressed in future SBC work and messaging.

### **Providing recommendations**

The objective of the key informant interviews is to generate information about the different facilitators and barriers to uptake and use of ITNs that need to be considered for future SBC approaches. The recommendations may relate to adjustments or modifications to key messages, effective channels and appropriate activities and materials for message dissemination and target groups.