

Survey on socio-cultural background issues

Gain knowledge towards action:

5 steps

2009



Photo : Stéphane Lehr

Document drafted during the training session in Bogota, as part of the project 'socio-cultural background and access to care'



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> Preliminary Step

It is essential to ask questions about the populations' ideas, norms, knowledge and practice relevant to the project.

A list of questions will have to be prepared which will allow us:

- ✓ To examine the socio-cultural background
- ✓ To prepare questionnaires
- ✓ To set up focus groups

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> List of questions

On the disease xx:

- > What is the name of the disease?
- > What is the perception of symptoms?
Severity?
- > What is the social status of this disease? Is it a shameful disease?
- > What is the treatment of the disease: self-prescription; traditional treatment?
- > Do people have recourse to the modern health system?
- > To what extent are relatives involved in the treatment?

...

On social and family organisation

- > Describe the family (monogamy / polygamy; enlarged family).
- > Describe a typical day of a woman, a man or a child.
- > Who takes important decisions on health issues in the family? In the community?
- > Who deals with money issues?
- > Provide information on housing (lack of privacy; modern / traditional).
- > What are their needs and expectations as to health issues?

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> List of questions (cont.)

On traditional practices

- > How many healers?
- > What are their respective areas of expertise?
- > How do they transmit their knowledge?
- > For which diseases in particular do the population consult them?
- > What is their social and political status within the community? (influence)
- > How do they cooperate with modern health system?
- > What are their expectations and fears about the proposed project?

On modern health system

- > How long do people usually wait (in the waiting room) to see the doctor? How long does a consultation take?
- > Describe the nature of relationships with patients (empathy, violence, disinterest...)?
- > What do generally people think about medical staff? (reputation)
- > What is the salary of medical staff? Are there any sums paid, on an informal basis, to access care?
- > What are the difficulties (on a day-to-day basis) encountered by medical staff (lack of equipment, poor salary, heavy work-load...)?
- > Provide information on complaints about medical staff
Is there any respect of ethics issues? Professional confidentiality?

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> List of questions (cont.)

On international aid

- > How many NGOs are active on site?
- > Describe their actions? Who are the target populations?
- > Is there any institution in charge of coordinating activities?
- > How is international aid perceived by the population?
- > What do populations think about previous programmes?
- > What do they expect from the proposed project?
- > Who (among the community) has already been involved in projects?
- > What may lead individuals to be involved in the project?
- > How can the most vulnerable populations be involved in a project?

On medicines

- > Name of the medicines, which are most often purchased? For which purpose?
- > How many distribution networks of medicines are there, either legal or illegal?
- > Where does illicit sale of medicines take place ?
- > What is the importance of traditional medicines?
- > What are the names given to the most common medicines?
- > Are they incorporated into the modern health system?

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> Step I: Constitution of the focus groups

Constitute focus groups as follows:

- Women
- Men
- Young people
- Old people
- Literate people
- Healers

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> Step 2: Identification of appropriate places for the focus groups

→ Identify places according to the targeted groups:

- A house where women usually meet;
- A place dedicated to an association of young people...
- A square where old people meet.

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→ Identify informal places to avoid any censure or embarrassment.

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> Step 3: Topics

→ Once listed, the questions will have to be adjusted and account for the following:

- > Use words from the local dialect. It is advisable to use words which are currently spoken by populations (for the disease and care systems), for instance: How is 'sibiru' treated? Which diseases are treated by the 'fire remover'?
- > Avoid the use of scientific language or words specific to the project.
- > Questions should be 'open-ended' to stimulate the exchange of information and provoke discussions. Better to ask questions which begin with how, why, what is ..., who... ?

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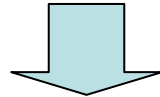
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> Step 4: Report back to the population

- > Organise a general meeting with all the target groups;
 - > Report on core issues raised by the groups during the survey, on an anonymous basis;
- Stimulate discussion



- > This group discussion will enable identification of the various interactions among the targeted groups: influence, leading/controlled groups, listening to women and children...,
The information gathered will be helpful to identify relevant coordination agents and to have the project implemented with the support of community.
- > Additional issues may result from the above discussions :reservations, reconciling issues, propositions on the way to deal with a project, which will enable all the relevant information for the implementation of the project to be elicited.

NB: Feedback should, as far as possible, be carried out by 2 individuals: one as moderator, the other will take note of all reactions, interventions, informal discussions, attitudes (smiles, embarrassment...)

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> Step 5: Restitution and synthesis of the gathered information

→ This workshop may enable you:

- > To draw a summary of significant and usable information on the populations and their expectations
- > To try to find appropriate connections between needs, beliefs and the project: appropriate beliefs and practice of the target population, once identified, may be useful in implementing the proposed project.



Cultural issues cannot be standardized or recorded on index cards : they often change and are disparate.

Information gathered may be kept in a database and enable a global approach to community issues.

!!! These data should be updated on a regular basis.

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