



Training survey enumerators

This document outlines key considerations when organising a survey enumerator training.

A key objective of a questionnaire is to ensure consistency in the way people respond to the questions. This consistency is crucial for both quantitative and qualitative studies, as it enables meaningful comparisons between different groups of respondents. **By providing all respondents with a similar questionnaire experience, variations in answers reflect differing situations, rather than differences in how the question was asked or understood.** To achieve this, UNHCR staff and partners must invest time and resources to train enumerators that are responsible for conducting interviews and complete the questionnaire.

1. Always train survey enumerators

While a questionnaire may be well-designed, there is no assurance that enumerators will interpret the questions correctly. Therefore, **comprehensive training in the use of the questionnaire is always required.** During the training, review and explain each question, providing clear instructions on how to conduct the interviews, explain bias, and how to mitigate its influence.

2. Include all assessment staff in the training

All assessment staff, including data entry personnel, administrative staff, and analysts, should participate in the training. This will help ensure that colleagues know each other and are aware of the instructions given to others. By including all assessment staff in the training, they can support each other during fieldwork and participate in daily debriefings or joint analysis sessions. Including all assessment staff in the enumerator training will ensure that everyone has the same understanding of the questionnaire and of the data that will be collected, key to ensuring the success of the assessment.

3. Plan *at least* two days for training

Usually the training will take a lot more time than expected. Therefore, it is recommended to use at least two full days for an enumerator training. If there has been no preparedness or if insufficiently qualified staff are available, this time should be increased.

4. Select and explain the interview approach

Choose between a **standardized interviewing approach** and **conversational interviewing approach** (outlined below)¹.

	Standardised Interviewing	Conversational Interviewing
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uniform wording and methods. - Neutral probing for clarification. - Fast with reduced enumerator-induced effects. - Challenges with unclear questions, limited relationship-building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborative understanding between enumerator and respondent. - Focus on standardizing meaning, not wording. - Potential increased accuracy, but time-consuming and resource-intensive.

¹ Additional information can be found on [“How to design a questionnaire for needs assessments in humanitarian emergencies”](#) ACAPS

When to Choose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When there is a high risk of enumerator-induced effects (e.g., politically charged settings). - Need for a quick interview process. - Limited capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited time, knowledge, or capacity for universally understood questions. - Complex or sensitive questions in the questionnaire. - Field staff can effectively understand and translate concepts.
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During the training, **explain the approach selected and provide examples of how it should be implemented.**

5. Don't forget observations

It is common that the enumerator training includes a section on “what do to” and “what do not do” during a HH or key informant interview, but often recommendations about the observation method are forgotten. Ensure to **include a session on how to do observations during the training**².

6. Include topics beyond the questionnaire

The main responsibility of the enumerator is to conduct a good interview in order to collect the information needed to complete the questionnaire. To achieve that, the enumerators should have a comprehensive and clear understanding of the questionnaire. However, this is not enough. In addition to a detailed section of the questionnaire, an enumerator's training should include:

- Humanitarian principles and the importance of impartiality in data collection
 - Confidentiality
 - Sensitivity
 - Integrity
 - Informed consent
- Summary of the [assessment objectives](#) and the [assessment methodology](#)
- Role and responsibility of the [team leader](#) and the [enumerators](#)
- The [sampling plan](#) and pre-identified sites to visit for each team
- Logistic and [work plan](#)

7. Seek enumerator feedback, questions, and concerns

Ensure that the enumerators have the opportunity to ask questions and share thoughts. In some contexts or for specific reasons, enumerators can feel shy or insecure during the training. **Create a comfortable atmosphere that allows them to raise their questions and concerns** to ensure the success of the training.

8. Include practical exercises

Practical exercises play a pivotal role in reinforcing theoretical concepts and ensuring that participants can apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios. **Incorporating practical exercises is essential** to prepare enumerators for the challenges they may encounter during data collection. Consider the following types:

1. Mock Interviews and Role-Playing:

Develop interviewing skills and enhance the understanding of questionnaire administration. Participants engage in mock interviews, taking turns playing the roles of enumerators and respondents. This exercise allows them to practice using the data collection tools in a controlled environment.

² A section of “Do's and Don'ts of Direct Observation” can be found on [“Direct Observation and Key Informant Interview Techniques for primary data collection during rapid assessments”](#)

2. Field Simulation - Pre-Test:

Apply learned techniques during the [testing and piloting](#) before the actual data collection. This exercise provides an opportunity to identify and address challenges in the field, ensuring a smoother process during the actual data collection period.

3. Data Uploading Simulation:

Familiarize enumerators with the process of uploading collected data, where enumerators practice uploading data to the system. This exercise ensures that participants are comfortable with the technological aspects of the data collection tools.

9.If needed, devote a specific session for sensitive questions

If the questionnaire includes sensitive questions, consider including a specific session for them. This session can be conducted by protection colleagues with expertise in interviewing respondents on these kinds of topics.

10.Train field teams to frequently state there are no wrong answers

Train the field teams to frequently encourage requests for clarification and to assure respondents that there are no wrong answers. Respondents may be reluctant to admit that they do not understand the question or know the answer, which can lead to **social desirability bias**. To avoid this, it is recommended to avoid starting questions with sentences such as ‘as you know...’ or ‘many respondents have stated that...’.

11.Highlight the importance of regular enumerator debriefing.

Enumerator team leaders should conduct a debriefing at the end of the assessment day (or every two days) to give enumerator team members the opportunity to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the interviews, the interview process, and any additional observations.

12.Ensure enumerators understand how answers will be used.

Some questions are collected to facilitate very specific analysis, such as an expenditure model that can be used to help calculate vulnerability to meet basic needs. Modules such as this must be collected with maximum accuracy, hence special attention will need to be paid to the different recall periods of sub-modules, and enumerators should be encouraged to probe, for example when expenditures or consumption look excessively low or high. **Having a clear understanding of why this data needs to be collected, and how it will be analysed, helps enumerators to ensure that they can get as accurate a response as possible** from respondents.

13.Create an enumerator interview manual

Create an **enumerator manual** that includes key training takeaways, such as definitions and guiding principles, as well as information on assessment logistics, such as contact details of relevant staff members, maps, and instructions in case of an incident and distribute and explain it during the training.

Key reference documents

- [How to design a questionnaire for needs assessments in humanitarian emergencies](#), ACAPS
- [Direct Observation and Key Informant Interview Techniques for primary data collection during rapid assessments](#), ACAPS
- [Need Assessment Handbook](#), UNHCR