DOING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

A step-by-step guide

About this guide

This guide provides an overview on how to undertake qualitative research. It is intended for anyone wanting to undertake qualitative research within development programming, and who may be relatively new to leading or designing qualitative research. It draws on material developed for The Asia Foundation program staff and local partners to support them in conducting a qualitative research project in 2021.The project was part of a larger effort to support locally-led research in development by investing in local program staff's research capabilities and supporting them to develop practical experience in designing and implementing qualitative research.

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The Asia Foundation

Who is this toolkit for and how to use it

This guide has been put together for The Asia Foundation program staff and local partners who are relatively new to leading or designing qualitative research for development programming.

This guide details the main steps of designing and producing a qualitative research report, including examples from the inequalities research project, templates that can be used to support a research project and additional reading resources.

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THINKING OF RESEARCH UPTAKE AND USE

Icon Guide

Practice note

Practice Notes include practical tips for readers on applying key concepts during the research.

Example

Authors have included **Examples** from a regional study that The Asia Foundation conducted in 2021-2022 on understanding the impact of Covid-19 on key marginalized populations. They have been included to show how these key concepts, principles and tools were applied during research.

Further Resource

The guide includes a box on **Further Resources** at the end of each chapter that include links for further readings and resources on research that are available online.

Tool

Each section of the guide also includes **Tools** and templates that researchers can use in their own research.

1 Introducing Research for Development

Research is a collection of evidence (data and information) that is transformed into knowledge through a process of analysis and learning. Evidence is anything that you see, experience, read or are told that causes you to believe that something is true or has really happened. It can be objects, photos, documents, official statements, and experiences that are used to prove that something is true or not true.

In the development sector, quantitative research is often preferred to qualitative research. This is because quantitative research provides clear results and answers that are easy to understand and communicate in graphs and tables. This perception means that qualitative research is often overlooked in development and seen as less useful or important. Despite this, qualitative research is a powerful tool in promoting local voices and presenting them as a good form of data and evidence. Qualitative data can complement quantitative data by introducing a more human and local perspective, making the analysis more useful for designing development programs and policies. It is important to understand that quantitative research and qualitative research can complement each other and provide different pieces of a broader research puzzle.

DATA
Facts, figures, numbers, measures...

INFORMATION
With **context**, it becomes...
Organized, structured, useful, condensed

KNOWLEDGE
With **meaning**, it becomes...
Learning, idea, synthesized, compared, thought-out, discussed

Development programs use research at different points of the program cycle. For example,

- **Context analysis and program design**: to understand the problem, political-economic context. Examples include needs assessments, baselines, context analysis.
- **Program set up and development:** to test what would work and be preferred by stakeholders.
- **Implementation:** to assess if the program is progressing towards its goals and track changes in socio-politcal-economic context.
- **Evaluation and learning:** to assess program impact.

Most research in development programming draws on two overall approaches to conducting social science research: quantitative research and qualitative research. This guide focuses on qualitative research especially for development programs.

Before moving further, it is important to understand the differences and uses of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Both approaches provide valuable insights into a research question and can be used together. Many researchers often deploy a "mixed method" approach, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand a particular situation experience and/or challenge. In development, qualitative methods of research are often applied during program design and implementation. They can be used to identify policy gaps, influence programmatic strategies, and/or inform chosen pathways for change.

The differences between quantitative and qualitative research

Qualitative research

Answer questions of 'why', 'how' and 'for whom'.
For example, how did families cope with job loss during the pandemic? How did the pandemic affect the mental health of those managing small businesses? Why did families prefer services from local organizations instead of the government? Which support did households find most useful? How did households decide how to use cash assistance?

Qualitative research helps us understand and explain **why** something is the way it is, **how** it is experienced, and **what** actions could be taken as a result.

What are you trying to understand?

Quantitative research

Answer questions of 'how much', 'how often' and 'where'
For example, how many people lost their livelihoods during the pandemic? Which sectors where the most impacted? What proportion of men versus women were laid off? How many hours did women spend on childcare as opposed to men? How many people were able to access government schemes?

Quantitative research helps us understand trends across large groups of people. It provides tools to measure how a situation, experience and/or challenge is impacting different people based on variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, level of income, for example.

What can the research be used for?

Qualitative research

Explains relationships and differences, why something is the way it is, and highlights complexity within a situation, experience and/or challenge. Qualitative research also allows for a more participatory approach by including people or communities actively in the research process.

Quantitative research

Explains patterns and relationships by gathering information from large numbers of people. Quantitative research is useful for identifying trends over time, for comparing groups and geographic areas or for estimating the relationship between two or more factors, such as the link between education levels and likelihood of a woman experiencing gender-based violence.

Type of data collected

Qualitative research

Words, images, sounds, or objects
Qualitative researchers collect data through interviews, focus group discussions, life histories, observation of research participants and participatory exercises including art, music and other creative expressions. Sometimes, these types of data are also called:

Ethnography, where researchers immerse themselves in a particular culture or social group to understand their lives.
Narrative approaches, which weave together ‘stories’ from different people into a coherent whole.
Case studies, which look at particular events, organizations or phenomena in detail, or make comparisons between different cases.

Quantitative research

Numbers
Quantitative researchers collect data through surveys, questionnaires, randomized control trials where half of the research participants are

2 Before you start your research – ensuring ethical research

In research, ethical guidelines make sure that the research is designed, planned, collected, written up and shared in a fair and honest way that does not cause harm to the research participants or researchers. Research ethics must be followed by anyone who commissions, manages, conducts or reviews research or evaluations. They are an essential part of doing research and are not optional.

Below are some of the common principles which researchers use to guide ethical behavior in their research. When using these, you will need to think about what is ethical in the context where you are doing your research. To do this properly, everyone on the research team needs to understand these principles and what they mean in practice.

Practice note

FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT

Respect for human beings means understanding that people should be able to choose whether or not they want to participate in your research. Some people might be too busy, unwell or disagree with your research approach or focus.

Participants should always be given enough information about the research – what it is for, what the benefits and risks are, and what they will need to do if they choose to participate – so that they can make an informed decision. They should also make their decision freely or voluntarily, without feeling pressured to participate.

Researchers need to give participants information about the research in a way that helps them to fully understand, even in situations where participants might have a low level of education, not speak the same language as the researchers and/or have a disability (visual, hearing or cognitive). Information can be given through speaking, writing, or a combination of both.

Participants can give their consent either by signing a consent form or by telling the researcher verbally that they agree to participate. In many contexts, people feel more comfortable giving their consent verbally than signing a document.

Consent is also 'active'. Participants may agree to participate at the beginning of the research process but change their mind later. Researchers need to explain to participants that they can choose to stop participating at any time and that they won't be disadvantaged if they do. Researchers must provide contact information so that research participants can revoke their consent at any time.

See Tool#2 (below) for more details.

Practice note

ADAPTING RESEARCH ETHICS TO YOUR CONTEXT

'Ethical research' may mean different things in different cultures and contexts. For example, ethics in the Global North focus on individuals and their decisions about whether to participate in the research or not. But in many societies and communities, spouses, families, or community leaders may have an important role to play in this decision. Women, for example, may often need permission from their husbands to participate in research

Different cultures may also understand and value privacy and confidentiality differently. In the Global North, the right to privacy is seen as an individual right. But in groups or cultures which see community and family interests as very important, privacy and confidentiality may be seen as a 'group right'. There are also cultural differences in what information is considered to be personal and sensitive.

Whether research is considered necessary and useful may also differ depending on culture or context. Doing ethical research therefore involves thinking about what research value and integrity, justice, bringing benefit and avoiding harm, and respect for persons looks like in context where you are doing your research

Example

APPLYING ETHICS IN PRACTICE

Researchers involved in the ‘Inequalities in Asian Cities’ research thought carefully about how they would apply each of the ethical principles in their context.

Respect for human beings: All of the teams felt it was important to acknowledge the impact of the pandemic on research participants, including the fact that they may be experiencing higher levels of financial and psychological stress. Keeping this in mind, they considered the timing of interviews carefully, so they did not coincide with periods of intense lockdowns. Some teams also provided information on available government assistance for people impacted by the pandemic.

Bringing benefit and doing no harm: In talking to research participants the researchers were very clear that they would not receive any direct benefit from participating in the research, such as payment or access to other resources. Some research teams also made a conscious decision not to ask about gender-based violence, as they did not feel prepared to talk to research participants about this issue. However, researchers had the details of referral services on hand, so if research participants did mention this issue, they could connect them to appropriate support.

Research merit and integrity: All of the research teams conducted literature reviews to refine their research questions and make sure they were asking relevant and important questions. They also developed their skills in research by completing a short training course on qualitative research methods and worked with an experienced research mentor.

Justice: All the teams made sure that research participants did not lose money from participating in the research. This included providing phone credit at the end of phone interviews and paying for bus fares. They also made sure that interviews did not last more than 1 hour and that they were scheduled at a time that wouldn't interfere with research participants' work or household commitments.

Further Resource

The Research for Development Impact Network has curated some useful materials on ethical research and evaluation, including guidelines, case studies and a ‘starter kit’ for ethical practice.
https://rdinetwork.org.au/effective-ethical-research-evaluation/

Tearfund and Christian Aid have developed a helpful guide to ethical research and evaluation, which explains all stages of the research process and includes checklists and tools to help researchers think through practical ethical issues.
https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/tools-and-guides/doing-research-ethically

Tool #1:
APPLYING ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

PRINCIPLE	WHAT THIS MEANS IN THEORY	WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE	HOW THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED IN YOUR RESEARCH STUDY List practical steps you will take to make sure these things happen
Principle 1: RESPECT FOR HUMAN BEINGS	• the welfare of people who have a role in the research – whether as researchers or as participants is more important than the research itself • the aim is to develop a research process which gathers the necessary data but, in a way that is respectful, safe and enjoyable for all of those involved • researcher activities can have unintended consequences and the research process may need to be paused and/or adapted as a result • the research process needs to be empowering and not just a means to an end in terms of extracting data from people	**Conducting a risk assessment is required before collecting data from human subjects. Such assesments should include:** • consider how various methods, timeframes and approaches may impact on participants and researchers. Think about where and at what time you conduct interviews. Will participants feel comfortable and safe? Is it a good time of the day for them? Are you asking them for a reasonable amount of time? • ensure questions, methods and sampling approaches are appropriate to local context. This requires you to understand the cultures, values, customs and beliefs of your research participants. Be aware of differences in values and cultures between you, your research team and the research participants. • ensure research participants are given the choice to voluntarily participate through ongoing and informed consent, not only in terms of what/how information is collected, but also how it is used • ensure participants know they can stop the research process or refuse to take part in any aspect of it if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable • listen to feedback from participants and researchers and be open to changing methods and approaches in order to respond to what we hear • protect the privacy and confidentiality of research participants. If you are asking for personal or sensitive information, make sure you do this in an area where the research participant is comfortable sharing and only ask for this kind of information if it is very important to the research. Make sure you keep interview notes and other files locked up and secure, so that only members of the research team can access them.	*For example, actively check in with research participants during the interview to check how they are feeling or if they would like a break. If participants look uncomfortable, ask if participants would like to skip the question.*

Principle 2: BRINGING BENEFIT AND DOING NO HARM	• needs to be of value, collected for a reason and in a way that has the potential to inform positive change • should do no harm and the research process should prioritize safety and reduce risks for participants and researchers	• ensure participants and researchers are fully aware of the benefits and risks of taking part so they can factor this into their decision making about giving ongoing consent • provide clear messaging to manage expectations so that participants understand the research has no direct impact on decisions about access to resources or services • be prepared to respond to any concerns raised by participants or researchers about their own safety or other people's. This includes being in a position to refer them to support – and escalate as necessary. • ensure methods do not risk embarrassing or degrading people, for example we will not ask participants to discuss personal or sensitive issues in front of others in a group setting.	*For example, find out the contact details of helplines, service providers or other specialized services so these can be shared with participants if they bring up experiences of violence or abuse.*
Principle 3: RESEARCH MERIT AND INTEGRITY	• the people who conduct the research should have appropriate competences and skills • the purpose of the research needs to be clearly reflected throughout the research process, with a clear logic between the research questions and the methods being used • It is important that your research contributes to something valuable to society, such as new knowledge and understanding of an issue or improvements in the wellbeing of participants or the wider community. Make sure that your research doesn't repeat or copy any other studies or research.	• enable sufficient tailoring of methods so they are appropriate to local contexts. • use warm up and warm down questions where needed so that sensitive topics are carefully approached and to allow time for researchers and participants to get to know each other so they feel comfortable and relaxed • ensure all researchers understand not only what data they need to collect, but why they need to collect it and how this fits with the broader purpose of the research • ensure researchers have a solid understanding of the local context, a commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment and at least basic qualitative data collection skills. • focus on depth rather than breadth, only collecting the data we really need. This will avoid wasting people's time and generating an unmanageable and overwhelming amount of data to analyze	

Principle 4: JUSTICE	• inclusion applies to both the researchers and the participants. Often, research teams focus on including a variety of perspectives from different research. • participants. Equally important is ensuring the research design includes multiple perspectives and ideally include speople from the groups with whom • you plan to conduct research in the research design. • the process of selecting people to take part in the research needs to be fair and the burden placed on individuals and groups should be reasonable. • all relevant social groups should be actively included in the research so that the process does not – even unintentionally - act to further discriminate against and exclude marginalized groups	• take a tailored, country-specific and inclusive approach to sampling, with an emphasis on including women from marginalized groups • make necessary adaptations to methods, tools, timings and venues in order to enable all participants to take part in a meaningful way • recognize the opportunity costs for participants taking part in the research, ensuring they are provided with refreshments and reimbursed for travel costs. Recognize that participants' time is valuable and thank them for being generous with it.	*For example, if interviews are taking place at the time when female research participants usually prepare dinner for their family, consider providing take away dinner for the family at the end of the interview.*

Tool #2:
SAMPLE CONSENT FORM

You can use or adapt the text below to provide research participants with information about your research and get their consent to participate. You can either provide this information verbally and note down the research participant's response or provide this information on paper and ask them to sign it.

Tip: This can take about 10 minutes so you need to factor in time at the beginning of the interview to explain this information and receive informed consent.

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INFORMED CONSENT CHECKLIST

Drafting an informed consent clause or reviewing one from a partner?
Use this checklist to ensure that the informed consent is truly informed.

WHEN DRAFTING OR REVIEWING CONSENT, MAKE SURE THE LANGUAGE ANSWERS:

- ☐ **WHAT DATA OR INFO IS BEING COLLECTED?**
  Are you collecting personal or sensitive data? Explain in clear language exactly what kind of data is being collected.
- ☐ **WHO IS COLLECTING IT?**
  Be transparent about who is collecting the data. Include TAF, any partners involved, and possibly the donor funding the data collection.
- ☐ **HOW IS IT COLLECTED?**
  Explain how data is being collected. Is it on paper? Digital? Using an app? Over the phone? Through social media?
- ☐ **WHY IS IT BEING COLLECTED?**
  Note why data is being collected and any foreseeable benefits for the individual or community.
- ☐ **HOW WILL IT BE USED? BY WHOM?**
  Who are the intended users of the data? How will the data be used by TAF, our partners, host governments, and donors?
- ☐ **WHAT ARE POTENTIAL NEGATIVE EFFECTS?**
  Include a reasonable description of any potential harm to individuals or groups from loss of privacy and confidentiality.
- ☐ **WITH WHOM WILL IT BE SHARED?**
  Include any and all parties with whom you plan to share the data. Are you contractually obligated to share data with the government or a donor? What types of data will be shared?
- ☐ **HOW LONG WILL PERSONAL OR SENSITIVE DATA BE RETAINED?**
  Note how long you plan to store any personal or sensitive data. Will data be aggregated and retained anonymously?
- ☐ **WHAT ARE THE INDIVIDUAL'S OR COMMUNITY'S RIGHTS RELATED TO THEIR DATA?**
  Provide a clear explanation of people's data rights as outlined by relevant privacy laws (i.e., GDPR, national privacy laws, regional laws).
- ☐ **WHO CAN THEY CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?**
  Provide a phone number, address, and possibly an email address where people can contact TAF or our partners for more information.
- ☐ **HOW CAN THEY WITHDRAW CONSENT?**
  What is the process for revoking consent or correcting data that is held about an individual?
- ☐ **ARE YOU WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS?**
  Include language for adults to consent for children and adolescents, and a place where adolescents can assent. Is the consent/assent language child friendly?

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INFORMED CONSENT TEMPLATE:#1

[local greeting],

I am   from [organization responsible for data collection], [brief description of the organization]. In partnership, with The Asia Foundation, we are collecting information to [purpose of data collection].

This study is supported by funding from [donor(s)]. The objective of the study is [objective of the data collection]

You have been randomly selected for this face-to-face/phone/online interview. Data will be collected [however]. During this interview, I will ask you some personal information about.... I might also ask you to tell me about [sensitive topic]. The interview will take about [X] minutes. In this survey, you are free to express your opinion and there are no right or wrong answers. You can end the interview at any time, and if there are questions you prefer not to answer, that is fine.

[provide explanation for how data is collected, stored, and with whom it will be shared].

Example: Your responses will be recorded in a digital questionnaire on a tablet/laptop/smartphone. The responses will be stored in a secure place for [x amount of time]. After that time, we will either remove your name from the records or destroy any records that could be used to identify you. Only authorized staff from [partner] and The Asia Foundation will have access to your information and your responses. We will use your responses to [how the data will be used]. We will not share your name when we talk about this research, so your individual answers will remain confidential.

If you would like us to remove your information from our files, change the information that we hold about you, ask any questions about this research, or if you have complaints or feedback about the research process, please contact:

[CONTACT NAME AND ADDRESS: (physical address of partner office/TAF, phone number, if relevant, email address, name of contact person, if possible, but ensure that there is general information in case of staff turnover]

Do you agree to participate in the study by sitting for this interview?

- Yes
- No

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Adolescent's Assent

I have understood the above information and I agree to take part
Yes / No I am happy for [partner org] and/or TAF to contact me in the future if they need to   Yes / No

Printed Name: ....
Signature: ....
Date:

Parental Consent for children/adolescents under the age of 18

I confirm that I am the parent/guardian of..

I have read and understood the above information and confirm that
Yes / No I consent for my child to take part in this [activity].

Printed Name: ....
Signature: ....
Date:
Phone Number and/or Address:

INFORMED CONSENT TEMPLATE:#2

I am going to give you some information so you can decide if you want to take part in this research. This research is being conducted because [briefly explain the purpose of this research]. You are being asked to take part in this research because [briefly explain why they have been selected]. The interview should take no longer than [add in time in minutes].

The information you give us today will be used to [briefly explain how the answers they give will be used]. There are no right or wrong answers, or better or worse answers, we just want to hear what you have to say.

If it is okay with you, I/my colleague will be taking notes during our conversation so we can remember what you said. We would also like to record the interview. If you say anything which you do not want us to write down or record, please let us know at any point. Everything you say will remain confidential, meaning your name will not be associated with any of your responses or the notes I am writing down.

We will store the notes, recording and transcript of this interview in a safe place. Once the final research reports have been written, we will destroy the notes and recording. You can choose whether we also destroy the transcript, whether we keep it, and whether we can share it with other organizations who might like to use it for their research in the future.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Whether or not you decide to participate and what you tell us will not affect your relationship with [organization the researcher works for and any other organizations involved in the research] or any services you receive. You are free to decline to answer any question, to pause or take a break or to completely stop the interview at any time.

If you have any questions or would like to report anything that happened during the process of conducting this research, you can contact [give name of organization/individual to report to]. If, during the interview, you tell me something about you or anyone else being in danger, I would talk to you about how you or others could receive support and whether this needs to be reported to anyone.

Do you have any questions about anything I have just said?

Do you understand the purpose and nature of this research? [record 'yes' or 'no']

Do you wish to participate in this research by answering a set of questions? [record 'yes' or 'no']

Do you want the transcript of your interview to be: destroyed/kept by [insert organization]/kept by [insert organization] and shared with other organizations who might like to use it for their research in the future? [record type of consent given]

[If remote interviews are being conducted and the interviewer deems it necessary, they can also ask]: Are you currently in a safe place? Are you alone to answer the questions?

3 Designing your research

Stage 1: SELECTING A RESEARCH TOPIC

You probably have some ideas about what you are interested in researching. It might be an issue that has come up through your conversations with partners or communities, through monitoring and evaluation processes, through discussions on program steering committees or elsewhere.

A good development research project is

a. has a well-defined purpose i.e. you have a clear idea of why you are conducting the research and importantly, **where and how it will be used.** You need to know who the primary audience for this research will be at the start of the project.

b. and is **focused**. While there are many things that we would like to know about we have limited funding, time and access. For qualitative research in particular, it is essential that the research is asking questions that can be successfully answered using a qualitative research methodology. We will come back to this point under the sampling section as well.

c. Is **action-oriented**. The program team have a clear sense of how the research should feed directly into program activities, who might be influenced to do what, as a result of the research.

d. Is **participatory and consultative**. Development research should engage with the audience directly as early as possible in, and throughout, the research process so that the recommendations that flow from the research will be as relevant to the audience and other stakeholders as possible.

This means you need to spend some time at the beginning of the research study clearly defining what it is you are interested in, why the research is needed, and what change the research aims to produce.

Tip: Engage your audience (i.e. primary user) of the research at this stage to better understand what questions they are most interested in and what types of evidence they will find most useful. Doing this will not only help focus your research questions but will increase the likelihood of the research being used.

Stage 2 :
DEFINING THE RESEARCH PURPOSE

As you speak with your team, partners and audience start to clarify who the research is for and why it is needed. For example, would you like politicians or government officials to use your research to inform policies or programs? Do you think your research would help staff in non-government organizations to advocate on a particular issue or design new programs? Would you like to inform how donors are developing their development priorities in a specific context?

As a result of these conversations, you might identify policy or implementation gaps in a specific sector; or a need to generate evidence to inform a policy making process or program design; or produce analysis that will contribute to your program or a wider group of practitioners in the sector.

As you start to get clarity on what it is that you want to research and why, start to write down the purpose, users, why they would be interested in your research, and how you would like your research to be used. See Tool #3 as an example:

Tool #3:
DETERMINING RESEARCH PURPOSE

TOPIC	Economic impacts of COVID-19 on women working in the informal sector
POTENTIAL USERS Who do you think might be interested your research? Why would they be interested? Why will your findings be important?	*For example, national government officials, local government officials, NGOs, others* *For example, national government officials want to support economic recovery but do not have a good understanding of how COVID-19 has impacted workers in the informal sector, particularly women. The findings of the research will help them design relief and recovery schemes which better meet the needs of these workers.*
USES How would you like your research to be used? How will you present your research?	*For example, to help government officials design well-targeted schemes which respond to women's needs and are accessible to them* *As you think about your audience, consider how you can present your research to different audiences in order to maximize uptake. For example, is the research better presented through shorter presentations, round table discussions, blogs, videos etc.*

Further Resource

There are some useful guides to help you think about and plan for engaging with potential research users, including the Rapid Outcome Mapping Approach developed by the Overseas Development Institute (available at https://odi.org/en/about/features/roma-a-guide-to-policy-engagement-and-policy-influence/) and a practical guide to Research Impact in International Development developed by the Research for Development Impact Network https://rdinetwork.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ERIID_V8_DIGITAL.pdf

Stage 3:
REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

Literature reviews are important because they help

a. **to confirm that your research is filling an existing knowledge gap,** I.e. your research responds to a question that hasn't been answered already, either by other research or by common understanding.
b. **to further focus** your research.

Reading what others have written about the topic can provide a foundation for your research, help you identify gaps in knowledge that your research could help to fill, and help you further refine your research questions.

Your literature review can include

- Reports and studies relevant to your research topic published by development organizations
- Academic journals or books (if accessible)
- Newspaper and magazine articles, blogs
- Podcasts or webinars

It is important to include things written by local experts and in different local languages where possible, as these may bring different perspectives.
In addition to the literature on your country or context, you may like to include literature from other countries. This can be useful in building your understanding of the topic, even if they do not directly apply in your context.

As you are reading the literature think about how reliable the sources are, who produced the research and what perspectives or biases they may bring to it.

Tip - In some cases, development organizations conduct research that hasn't been published for an array of reasons. It is useful to speak to organizations and researchers working on similar topics to see if you can gain access to unpublished research and are aware of on-going research projects.

When should you do a literature review?

(a) As you design your research - it is important to understand your research topic and how it fits within the broader literature before you start collecting data. This will help you to make sure that your research project is contributing to knowledge gaps as well as consider who might be interested in your research findings. A literature review will help you to make sure that your conceptual framework and research questions are on the right track and aligned with your research purpose and goals. It is a helpful way to test your questions and framework with a colleague or friend at this stage.

(b) **When developing your data collection plan:** Once you've finalized your research design, a literature review helps you gather available data for each of your research questions. This is important because it allows you to focus your primary data collection to answering aspects of your research question that either have-not been researcher before or where the available findings are disputed.

(c) **When analyzing your data** – consider how your initial findings relate to broader literature – do they match current assumptions? Do they fit in with other related research? If not, what are the key differences?

Example

REVIEWING THE LITERATURE ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TOURISM WORKERS IN LAO PDR

As part of writing their research questions, the research team in Lao PDR completed a literature review of online articles and reports on gender dynamics within Lao PDR's tourism industry and the impact of COVID-19.

They didn't find much information on the impacts of COVID-19 on the economy and livelihoods. This confirmed that the research was useful and contributing to an existing knowledge gap.

There was more information available on gender dynamics within the tourism industry. The team found that in Lao PDR, more women than men are employed in tourism. However, men hold more managerial positions in both government and private tourism businesses. Research from the early months of the pandemic indicated that a higher number of women workers lost their jobs because of the economic slowdown and loss of customers. A potential reason for this was the pre-existing gender segregation of the labor market that increases the risk of women losing their jobs compared to men. This helped confirm the focus of the research and allowed the team to explore the impacts for women in interviews as well as contrasting the different experiences of men and women.

Stage 4:
DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework is a way of sorting and organizing information and ideas about your research topic into themes or categories and showing how these are related to each other. It can help you map what information you already have on a topic and organize your ideas in a visual form. This can make difficult topics easier to understand, help you define the focus of research, and write key questions.

Practice note

DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

You do not have to start from scratch with your conceptual framework. When you review the literature, you will probably find examples of conceptual frameworks that other people have already developed on your topic. You may like to adapt or improve one of these or mix them together bringing together parts from many different frameworks.

Your framework can be simple or complex. What is important is that it helps you think about your research topic in a logical and clear way.

Once you have written your ideas down, you can start to organise them into themes and categories. It's great if you can involve your research team and other colleagues in this process by using tools such as sticky notes, flip charts, or whiteboards or online tools such as MURAL (https://www.mural.co/), Padlet (https://padlet.com/), Miro (https://miro.com) or Jamboard (https://jamboard.google.com/). Look for similarities between the different ideas and concepts. You can use arrows or lines to show the links between the clusters. It's ok to experiment and move things around in your conceptual framework – it doesn't need to be completely right the first time. It can also be helpful to not look at it for a few days, and then come back to it after a break.

It is likely that you will not be able to research everything that is in your framework. Below are some steps to help you decide which part of the framework to focus on:

1. Remove the areas which have already been well-researched.
2. Think about which areas are most important for you and for the people you hope will use your research.
3. Think about which areas are possible to research in the time available and with the team and budget you have. Often the most interesting areas to focus on are the relationships between different parts of your conceptual framework, so look to the arrows and lines between the categories and themes.

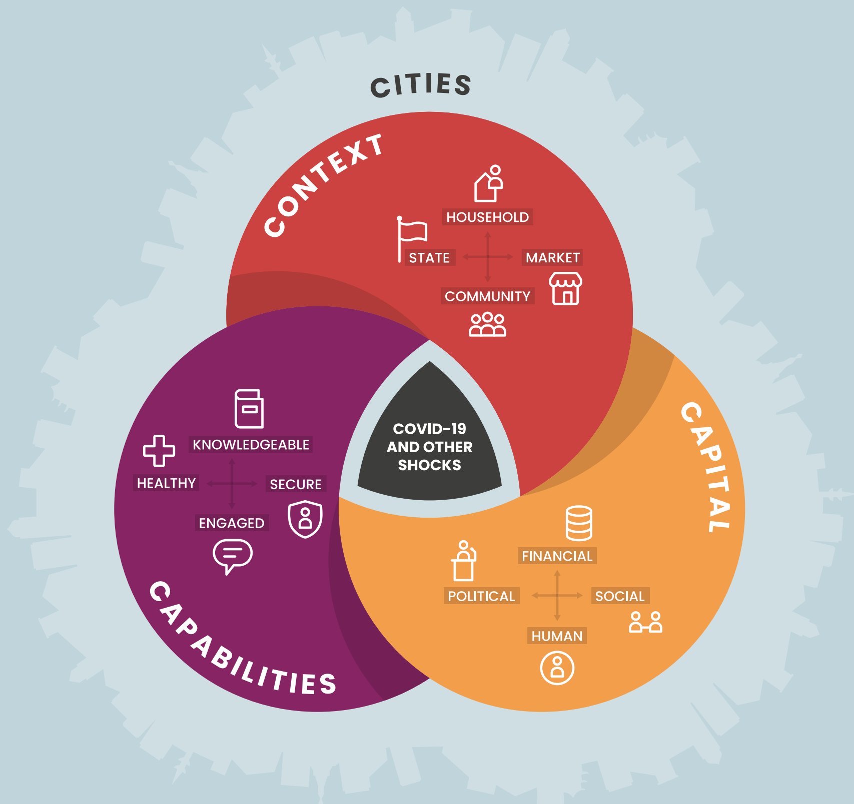
Example

THE ASIA FOUNDATION'S URBAN INEQUALITIES FRAMEWORK

This framework was developed through workshops with The Asia Foundation, Kore Global and DFAT. It drew from existing frameworks such as the Multi-dimensional Framework for Inequality and Amartya Sen's work on capabilities and well-being.

This 5C's framework responded to two key needs:

- It communicated the research teams understanding of inequality:
  - First, that inequality takes various forms – it's not just about inequality in terms of income or wealth
  - Second, that inequality operates at a range of levels – in the household, the community, at a national level, in markets etc.
  - Finally, that present day inequalities influence inequalities of outcomes or capabilities – a concern ultimately with what people are able to 'be' and 'do'.
- It allowed research teams across different countries to develop locally responsive research questions while also enabling regional comparisons



Stage: 5
FINALIZING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Once you've defined the broad focus and purpose of your research, you will be ready to draft your research questions.

For example, you might start out with a topic such as 'urban inequality'. There are lots of different research topics within this area. You might choose to focus on how different groups of people earn an income, the impact of pollution on people's health, or the experiences of people who have moved to cities from rural areas for work.

From there, you can start to develop some research questions.

For example, if your research topic is the experiences of people who have moved to cities from rural areas for work, then your research question might be: 'What impact does migration from rural to urban areas have on people's income and wellbeing?'. This question is still very general, so it is useful to break it down into more specific questions. These could include:

- What impact does migration to urban areas have on people's employment, income and working conditions?
- What impact does migration to urban areas have on people's access to housing, health, and education?
- What impact does migration to urban areas have on people's social networks?

These are still quite broad, so it may be useful to break each of them down further into sub-questions.

Tip:

- Be realistic about which questions are the most important, and which ones it will be possible to answer given the number of people working on the project, budget, and the time available.
- While there is no rule on the number of research questions you can have, it is good practice to have no more than 3 overarching questions with 2-3 sub questions.
- Sub questions are not additional questions but provide greater clarity to overarching questions (See example below)

Example

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WORKING MOTHERS IN ULAANBAATAR, MONGOLIA

In Mongolia, the research team wanted to focus on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on working mothers. The research questions they focused on were:

1. To what extent have social support mechanisms, flexible working conditions, and government measures influenced women's ability to work during the COVID-19 pandemic?
    a. What social support mechanism were available? Were they accessible to working mothers? If so, did they influence their ability to work during Covid-19?
    b. Were working mothers able to access flexible working options in the public and private sector? Were these measures seen as helpful to their ability to continue working?
2. To what extent has the pandemic's impact on women's employment affected their wellbeing and careers?
3. To what extent has the pandemic affected women's roles in household decision-making?

Further Resource

There are some very useful guides which can help you with developing your research topic and questions.

The UAGC Writing Center has developed a short guide to narrowing your topic and developing a research question which you can find at https://writingcenter.uagc.edu/narrowing-topic-and-developing-research-question.

These websites include useful information on how to develop a strong research question https://students.unimelb.edu.au/academic-skills/explore-our-resources/research-techniques/developing-a-research-question
https://www.monash.edu/library/help/assignments-research/developing-research-questions

For a longer guide, take a look at Chapter 3 'Topic, Purpose and Research Questions' in A Guide to Qualitative Field Research. Its downloadable for free at https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-assets/87236_book_item_87236.pdf

Stage: 6
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Once you have developed your research purpose and topic based on an initial literature review and in line with your conceptual framework, and drafted your research questions and sub-questions, you will be done with your research design.

This is a good stage to take stock of your progress, share your design with colleagues and partners for their feedback, and making any final changes before embarking on your data collection plan.

Tip:

- While there is no rule on the number of research questions you can have, it is good practice to have no more than 3 overarching questions with 2-3 sub questions.
- Sub questions are not additional questions but provide greater clarity to overarching questions.

Tool #4:
COMPLETE RESEARCH DESIGN - RESEARCH QUESTIONS, PURPOSE AND POTENTIAL USERS

Overarching Question 1:	write the question here
Sub question 1.1:	write the question here (if needed)
Sub question 1.2:	write the question here (if needed)
Overarching Question 2:	write the question here
Sub question 2.1:	write the question here (if needed)
Sub question 2.2:	write the question here (if needed)
Overarching Question 3:	write the question here
Sub question 3.1:	write the question here (if needed)
Sub question 3.2:	write the question here (if needed)

Who needs to know the answers to the research questions you have identified?

List intended users of the research here

Why do they need answers to these questions?

Explain how you expect the research to be used

Literature review (Stage 1)
Has the literature review helped to answer certain aspects of your overarching research questions? If so, what do you need the focus of your primary data collection to be? Are there certain overarching questions or aspects of them which your primary data collection should now focus on? As a result of the literature review, you may want to add questions, refine questions or cut questions.

Explain what the literature review has told you. How does this help you focus your primary data collection?

One way to structure your literature review is to answer the following questions:
- What do we know?
- What do we think we know?
- What do we not know?

Example

USING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TO DESIGN RESEARCH QUESTIONS IN MYANMAR

RQ 1: How have Covid-19 related restrictions affected the livelihoods and wellbeing of households engaged in vending in Taunggyi?

1. We KNOW vendors are more restricted in where they can sell produce, are experiencing a closure of market spaces and loss of customers, leading to a loss of income

2. We ASSUME that shocks to income have resulted in vendors spending their savings and selling assets to meet basic needs and may find it challenging to resume business operations once pandemic restrictions end

3. We ASSUME that the economic impact on vendors and their families will, in turn, impact their physical and emotional wellbeing, including reduced food consumption and increased stress

Example

USING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TO DESIGN RESEARCH QUESTIONS IN MYANMAR

RQ 2: Which groups of vendors are better able to cope with the impact of Covid-19 restrictions and which groups are finding it more challenging?

MARKET

1. We ASSUME that vendors' ability to cope will in part depend on where they are selling products (i.e formal markets or in more informal spaces)

SOCIAL

2. We ASSUME personal and community connections will play a role in determining vendors' access to information and ultimately in helping or worsening vendors' ability to cope

RQ 3: To what extent are government and non-government response measures relevant in terms of responding to vendors' needs and effective in terms of supporting them to cope with the impact of the pandemic?

STATE

1. We ASSUME that vendors' relationship with the state (WA, Local Authorities, S/R government) will have an impact on their ability to access information and support and to cope with restrictions

POLITICAL

2. We ASSUME that as vending largely takes place in the informal sector, vendors are less engaged/less able to engage with government and thus, often fail outside Covid-19 response.

Example

RESEARCH QUESTIONS FROM MYANMAR

OVERARCHING QUESTION 1:

RQ 1: How are COVID19-related restrictions affecting the livelihoods of vendors in Taunggyi?

Sub question 1.1: To what extent are vendors having to spend savings and sell assets in order to buy food and other basic goods, and what impact is this having on their ability to restart their businesses?

Sub question 1.2: To what extent are livelihood impacts having a further impact on the physical and emotional wellbeing of vendors and their families?

OVERARCHING QUESTION 2:

RQ 2: Which groups of vendors are better able to cope with the impact of COVID19-related restrictions and which groups are finding it most challenging?

Sub question 2.1: To what extent is vendors' ability to cope with restrictions dependent on whether they are selling products in formal markets or in more informal spaces?

Sub question 2.2: Is there a difference in the nature of support men and women vendors can access? Are men more likely to be covered under government-led schemes?3

Sub question 2.3: What role do personal and community connections play in determining vendors' access to information and ultimately their ability to cope with restrictions?

OVERARCHING QUESTION 3:

RQ 3: To what extent are government-led COVID-19 relief measures responsive to challenges vendors' are facing and effective in supporting them cope with the impact of the pandemic?

Sub question 3.1: To what extent are the needs of informal workers such as vendors considered in COVID-19 response measures?

Sub question 3.2: To what extent do vendors' relationships with the government officials (Ward Administrators, Municipal Authorities, State and region government, MPs) impact their ability to access information and support?

4

Collecting qualitative data – Methodology and Tools

Planning for data collection

Once you have completed your research design, you can develop your plan for gathering the data needed to answer your research questions. For each research question you might need secondary data or primary data or a combination of both.

This is the second time you will conduct a literature review. At this stage, you should focus on scanning available published and unpublished data and knowledge for each research question. Doing so will enable you to determine what to focus your data collection. This is important from a research ethics perspective. Primary data collection asks for people's time and emotions. It is qualitative researchers responsibility to ensure that people are only asked to give their time for information that is unavailable or remains contested.

Once you determine what information needs to be collected through primary data collection, you can start developing your sampling plan.

What is sampling?

Sampling is a process to determine who you need to speak with in order to capture different perspectives needed to produce a high quality and persuasive analysis.

The first step to sampling is to choose the focus (also known as units) of your research. A unit can be different things such as countries, communities, points of service delivery (like health clinics or schools), households or individuals. Within a research project, you may choose to include more than one unit.

For example, if conducting a multi-country study on education, you would first need to decide which countries to include, then which locations within those countries, then which schools and then which people for example teachers, students, school administrator and/or parents. This means you need to make a range of sampling decisions to work out the focus of your research.

It is important to think about what you want to do with the information collected before making decisions about sampling. This will mean looking at your research questions and thinking about what type of data you need to answer them.

Sample sizes and composition

Taking an intersectional approach does not mean you need to include everyone. Your budget and time constraints mean you need to decide on a realistic sample size and composition that makes sense for your research topic.

When you are deciding on sample size, it is important to think about how much data it will be possible to collect, organize and analyze. For example, conducting individual interviews in three locations with four females and four males each seems fairly simple. But you need to think about how long it will take to set up 24 interviews, travel to each location, conduct the interviews and transcribe them. This could take 60–100 hours and generate over 100 pages of notes. These kinds of estimates can help check how realistic your research plans are.

Qualitative researchers often collect more data than they can analyze and use. This is not only a waste of resources -- it is also an important ethical issue, since people will have given you their time and shared their perspectives, but it will not be reflected in your findings.

Practice note

THREE STEPS TO SAMPLING

Step 1: Start with your basic criteria e.g. food vendors who work in X city

Step 2: Decide what comparison you are most interested in e.g. between men and women or between vendors working in formal markets and informal markets.

Step 3: Identify groups that you want to include in order to ensure diversity in your sample e.g. persons with disability, people who identify as LGBTQI, members of ethnic minority groups, people of different ages etc. These will probably not be in large enough number to be able to compare their experiences, but your research will at least reflect a variety of perspectives.

THREE STEPS TO SAMPLING

Here is how the research team in Myanmar applied this approach:

1

16 interviews with vendors in Taunggyi Township

All 16 interviewees should have been vendors before Covid-19

2

2 Main comparison groups:

(a) 8 men vs. 8 women

(b) 8 vendors working informal markets vs 8 vendors working in formal markets

3

(1) Vendors who are based in Taunggyi vs. those coming into the city on a daily basis to sell

(2) Female headed households reliant on selling goods

(3) Venders selling food/ perishable goods (cooked/raw)

(4) Venders who are mobile versus those who sell in one place

4+4+4+4=16

Tool #5:
CALCULATING YOUR SAMPLE SIZE AND COMPOSITION

Use this tool to help you think about the kinds of perspectives you want to include in your research, how you will identify them, and how many people you want to include in your sample size.

Whose voices, experiences or perspectives will the research need to capture in order to answer the research questions?	How will you identify these people in order to ask them to take part?	How many people from this group will you need to speak to in order to feel you have sufficiently understood their views and experiences?
list the types of people who will need to be invited to participate in the research – use a different row for each type of person. E.g. 'older migrant men working as street vendors'	Briefly describe the approach you will take to identifying people – e.g. will you sample them based on their current job? Their experience – and whether it is 'typical' or unusual, whether they are linked to an organization, for example a trade union etc	Add up the number of people you are aiming to include in the research
Overall total number of people		Add up the overall total number of people this means you would include in the research.

Approaches to qualitative sampling

The most common approaches to qualitative sampling are convenience and purposeful sampling.

Convenience sampling is when a researcher selects units which are easy to find. This could include selecting cities which are within easy reach of where research team members live or interviewing community members who are visible in public spaces. You may get some diversity when you are sampling this way but it is not guaranteed and will be based to a large extent on luck. Because it is easy, quick and cheap, convenience sampling is often used but it is not generally considered a robust approach.	**Purposeful (or purposive) sampling** is when a researcher decides on some rules to help them select units. For example, you could select cities that meet certain criteria (population size, poverty levels, religion or other cultural identities). You could then select individuals within those cities that meet criteria that you are interested in learning more about. This could be people of a certain age, ethnicity, or gender, people who have recently made a complaint about a public service, or people who work in a certain area.

'Types of purposeful sampling'

There are a large number of purposeful sampling strategies.

- **Snowball sampling**, sometimes called network sampling, is when researchers choose a participant who meets the criteria they are using and then asks that participant to ask someone else that they know to participate in the research. The next participant does the same, and so on until the researchers have collected enough data based on their sample size. This approach can be helpful for identifying participants who are harder to reach or particularly marginalized, either because those people are less visible in society, or because they are more likely to feel comfortable about participation if they are approached by someone they know.

- **Typical case sampling** is when researchers choose a unit that is average or typical. For example, if studying crime in a city, you might look at data on crime rates across different suburbs, and then choose those with average crime rates, rather than suburbs with very high or very low rates. This would help you to understand what crime usually looks like in that city.

- **Extreme** / **deviant case sampling**, is when researchers choose extreme examples of a norm or trend, for example, by sampling the highest performing schools or communities with the lowest crime levels.

Good research designs will need to combine a mix of sampling approaches depending on what is most relevant to answering the research questions. It is unusual that a single sampling strategy will be enough, so it is important to think about how you might use a combination of sampling strategies.

Example

APPROACH TO SAMPLING FROM THE ASIA FOUNDATION'S 'INEQUALITIES IN ASIAN CITIES' RESEARCH IN LAO PDR

The Asia Foundation 'Inequalities in Asian Cities' research in Lao PDR wanted to explore the different experiences of men and women working in the tourism industry. They chose a sample of eight men and eight women from four cities that rely heavily on tourism: Vientiane, Vang Vieng, Pakse, and Luang Prabang. The sample included tour guides, tour operation officers, tour drivers, and cooks, cleaners, and hotel and restaurant staff who had lost their jobs due to the pandemic. The team made efforts to ensure diversity with the sample and included people living with disabilities and LGBTQI individuals.

The research team initially used their own personal and professional networks to find research participants. They also used a snowball approach, particularly for Vang Vieng research participants.

Further Resource

For some useful information on sampling, see this guide produced by INTRAC https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Sampling.pdf and the information on the Better Evaluation website https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/rainbow_framework/describe/sample

If you are interested in understanding more about intersectionality, these guides are a helpful place to start:

Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice produced by the Association for Women's Rights in Development: https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/intersectionality_a_tool_for_gender_and_economic_justice.pdf

The Gender and Development Network's primer on the intersection of gender and Disability: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/536c4ee8e4b0b60bc6ca7c74/t/5f3bc55aab40561612fd4092/1597752667157/Gender+and+Disability+Briefing+2020.pdf

UN Women's Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit includes a helpful 'intersectionality wheel' on page 8. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/01/intersectionality-resource-guide-and-toolkit

Qualitative data collection methods

There are a range of methods for collecting qualitative data. The most commonly used methods are through one-on-one guided interviews and focus group discussions.

Interviews

Different kinds of one-on-one guided interviews include:

- **Semi-structured interviews:** conversations rely on a list of open-ended questions or themes that researchers what to understand. These types of interviews are useful when interviewers already have a good understanding of the issue and therefore know what topics to explore and what questions to ask. This approach can provide participants and the interviewer to be more flexible by allowing new topics to emerge or going deeper into a single aspect of the research.

- **Narrative interviews** are unstructured, and encourage participants to tell their stories in their own words, with only minimal questions from the researcher. This approach is useful for collecting stories based off personal experience.

- **In-depth interviews** are more structured than narrative interviews and help the interviewer to explore topics more deeply than in semi-structured interviews. The interviewer will generally use lots of questions to get detailed information from participants, including exploring participants feelings, perspectives, experiences and opinions.

Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions are group interviews which usually involve people from similar social groups, or with similar backgrounds and experiences.

It is important that focus group facilitators pay attention to and account for group dynamics – such as being aware that some people might be more talkative or more comfortable to voice their opinions? It is likely that some people in the group have more social or political power than others?

These can be addressed by:

- **Ensuring groups are selected based on similar characteristics** whether it is experience, status, or identity. For example, researchers often speak to men and women or young people in separate groups

- **Preparing for unequal group dynamics**. Researchers should come prepared with a range of tools that they can use if they find one or few group participants starts to dominate the discussion. It is important that when encouraging quieter participants to participate or dominating ones to pause, it is not done in a way that make participants feel singled out or uncomfortable. Researchers can do by use phrases like "lets hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet" or "we want to hear everyone's opinion so let's hear everyone's responses one by one".

Managing group conversations is a key skill of qualitative researchers which involves creating an environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing their views and experiences.

Rather than asking everyone in the group the same question, focus group facilitators should ask open-ended questions that encourage participants to build on, agree or disagree with what someone else has said.

Researchers can also explore other methods to gather information. These include, for example:

- ***Participant observation:*** Participant observation involves the researcher observing and recording daily life to understand what happens in people's homes, workplaces, public spaces, or other social spaces. The researcher joins social activities such as mealtimes, commutes, or cultural events, and observes what is happening and their own reflections on that, and then records this.

- ***Participatory exercises:*** Participatory exercises involve collection of data from groups of research participants. Rather than participants answering questions, participatory exercises engage people in creating something together, such as a picture, diagram, or map, often by drawing or using items such as stones or local objects. Examples of participatory exercises include group mapping of local spaces, ranking exercises which use pictures or objects to encourage discussion about how people spend their time or money or how they prioritize different things or creating a timeline of an important event in the area.

- ***Research participant data:*** Researchers can also ask research participants to record data. This could be in the form of a written journal of daily routines, reflections on a particular topic, or photos or videos of their environment.

Steps to ensuring good quality data collection

Step 1 - Develop useful interview questions

While you might want to try to gather information on many different aspects of your research topic, **exploring a few topics in depth** is often more valuable than trying to cover lots of topics and rushing through them.

Make sure you **phrase your questions in an open-ended and neutral way** so that participants don't feel pressured to answer them in a particular way. Open-ended questions are questions that cannot be answered with 'yes' or 'no'. Open-ended questions such as "Can you tell me about your experience of going to your local health clinic?" or "How do you feel about taking the bus at night?" invite research participants to provide more information and stories which will help you to collect more data for your research. Closed questions, on the other hand, can lead to short responses, limiting the information that people provide. Depending on how they are asked, closed questions can also lead people to answer questions in the way they think the researcher wants them to. For example, asking, "Did you feel the nurse was friendly and professional?" might make people think that the interviewer is looking for a particular answer.

Asking probing questions is also a great way to encourage people to provide more detail. So rather than rushing on to the next question, you can instead say, "That's interesting, can you tell me more about that?" or "Why did you feel that way?". 'Why?' is one of the most important words in a qualitative researchers' toolbox.

Finally, once you have an interview or discussion guide, practice using it with a colleague or friend before starting your data collection. . This will help you to make sure that your questions are easy to understand and reduce the number of questions if the interview length is too long.

Step 2 - Tailor interviews to the needs of interviewees

If your research involves persons with disability or low levels of literacy, as well as children or older people you may need to adjust your methods or the tools you are using to accommodate their needs. You should also be mindful not to overly disrupt participants' daily lives. Plan interviews and discussions at times that are convenient for participants and do not take up too much of their time. Ensure research is conducted in a language that is comfortable and ideally the primary language spoken by the research participant

For topics that are sensitive or carry reputational risks ensure the research is conducted in a safe environment that ensures privacy and comfort to the research participant. You may be asking people about sensitive topics, so make sure where you are is private. Also, think about whether people can get to the location easily and safely. If you are conducting the interviews remotely, consider whether respondents and your own phone reception or internet connectivity are adequate.

If you need to ask sensitive questions, do not just start with these questions. Instead, start by asking some general questions of the same topic, so the person becomes more comfortable before asking specific questions. You can also frame it in general terms, for example, "I've heard from some women in the community that they face abuse from their in-laws. Can you tell me about your understanding of this issue? Is it common here?".

Step 3 - Research participant validation

One of the best ways to check that you have accurately understood or interpreted what research participants have said is to share your draft findings with your research participants and ask for their input and feedback. Getting honest feedback from research participants is more likely when as researchers you have spent time getting to know what life is like for them . But even in short, formal interviews, it is possible to check your understanding. You can do this by closing the conversation by repeating what you think are the most important points that the research participant raised in the interview and asking for clarification if you have not quite understood or captured these accurately. Make sure you allow time for this validation step in your research plans.

Step 4 - Use a notetaker and/or record the interview

Before conducting the interview, think about how you will record the data. Having a notetaker or recording the interview (with the participant's permission) will allow you to focus on asking questions and listening to the responses. Using both a recording and notetaker is helpful. Sometimes recording equipment does not work, or parts of the recording are unclear. The notetaker might miss something important, or you may want to double check exactly what was said or add more detail that was not captured in notes. Remember that notetaking should be discreet and not dictate the pace of an interview, for example where the participant stops speaking while notes are written. Notetakers should offer to show or read out loud to a participant the notes they are making. The participant should feel a sense of control over notes being made about them. They may want to check that the notetaker is accurately reflecting the things they are saying.

After the interview, you should record your own reflections on what you have heard during the interview, including how you interpret certain things which the interviewee has said, things that surprised you and so on. This should be done as soon as possible after the interview, either as written notes or on an audio recording. Remember to make it clear in the notes that these are your reflections – not what a participant has said – so there is no confusion at the analysis stage.

Step 5 - Translation

If you need to translate your transcripts into another language – for example, so that other researchers can read them or work with you on data analysis – make sure these keep the original meaning of what was said. Translation always takes longer than you expect – it can be 4 hours for just a 1-hour interview. Rushed translation can mean that all the hard work put into data collection is undermined.

When you write up the transcript, make sure you maintain participants' confidentiality. Remember that participants will not be 'anonymous'. You will know their names, and possibly their address or where they work. Confidentiality means keeping participants' personal information private. You will need to remove names or other information that could be used to identify a participant from the transcript. This includes the participants' name, as well as the names of others they mention in the interview, such as a husband, neighbour or employer. Instead, allocate each participant a number or code that only you and other researchers on your team know.

Example

ORGANIZING SAFE, REMOTE INTERVIEWS IN THE ASIA FOUNDATION'S 'INEQUALITIES IN ASIAN CITIES' RESEARCH IN PAKISTAN

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated limitations and restrictions on travel and congregation, The Asia Foundation research team in Pakistan decided to conduct interviews remotely using mobile phone and/or web based online tools. A local partner was asked to arrange a safe space for the women interviewees to come for the interview. However, women were reluctant to move far from their homes due to concerns about the pandemic and associated costs. After several discussions, a female community mobilizer, who was well connected in the area, provided a room in her residence to set up a discreet interview space – which made it easier for women to attend and provided a comfortable and safe environment. The interviews were subsequently conducted through audio calls and a few through video interviews using Microsoft Teams, where connectivity allowed.

Step 6 - Triangulation

'Triangulation' means using more than one approach to collect data on the same topic. The purpose of triangulation is to capture different information about the same research topic or question, making sure that your research is thorough and accurate. There are three main types of triangulation:

Triangulation of methods: One of the most common forms of triangulation of method is to combine interviews and observation. For example, if you wanted to understand how local governments distributed supplies after a natural disaster, you might interview local officials and people who received food and other supplies. You could also observe how things worked at a distribution center to check the information that was provided in the interviews and add more detail.

Triangulation across time: This can help to record the order and process of events. For example, you might be interested in understanding how a disabled person's organization has worked with the legislature to draft a bill on employment and discrimination. To do this you would read formal minutes from meetings of the working group on disability and employment. But for a deeper understanding, you might also observe a planning meeting, interview committee members one on one before a meeting, or attend public rallies during the campaign period. After the legislative session when the bill is being presented for a vote you might also interview members of the disabled person's organization. Triangulating across time is important for rigor because it helps the researcher to understand cases where what people think happens is not what actually happens.

Triangulation of people – this involves speaking with a range of people, perhaps in different roles or positions. For example, research into public perceptions of public transport would not just ask five older women about their views or three young men but would also seek the views of a variety of different people.

Practice note

CONDUCTING RESEARCH REMOTELY

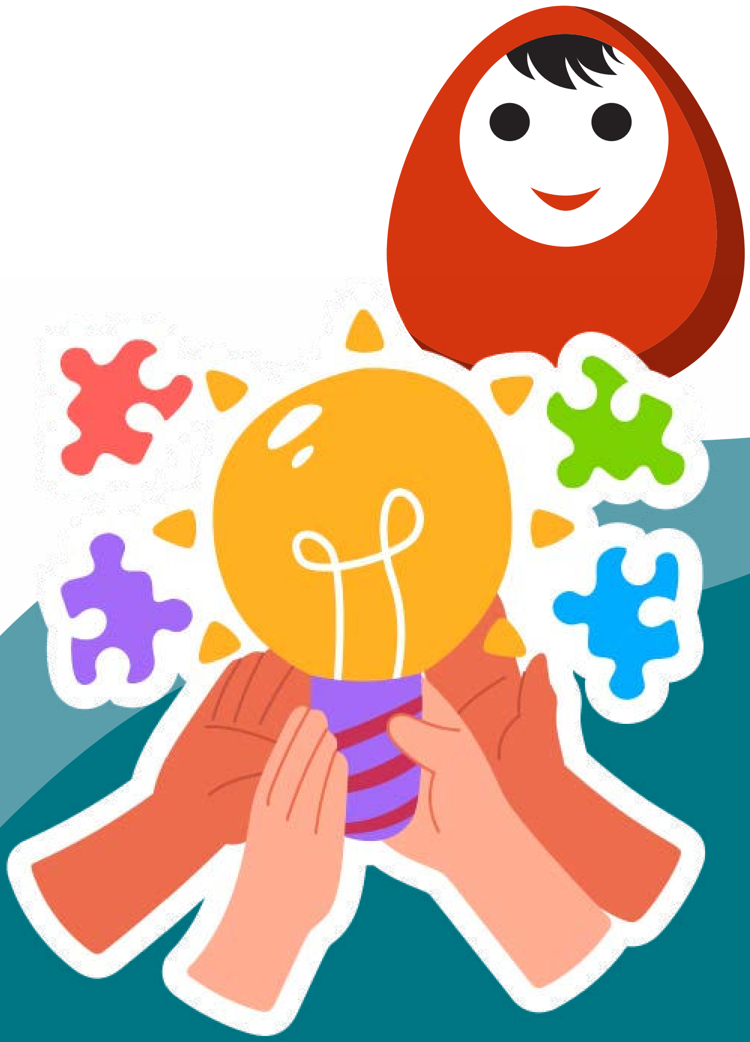
Conducting research remotely (via phone or online) can often be necessary but it does have limitations.

It can often take longer to collect data remotely and harder to build a rapport. This means you may get less data, or your data may be less reliable than if you had collected it in person. This may mean you have to lower your expectations and think carefully about the number of questions you ask.

You also need to be extra additionally conscious about participants' wellbeing. Without being able to read people's facial expressions or body language, you may not be able to see if your questions are making people uncomfortable. You may also not be able to determine if the participant has enough privacy to be comfortable answering your questions.

You also need to be especially careful about data security since you do not know if your research participants have full control of the device that they are using.

Access to technology may also influence who you are able to talk to and what data you are able to collect. Some research participants may share their device with a member of their household or may not have access to a device. Signal strength and cost of data can make it difficult for some people to participate.



Tool #6:
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

You can use the template below to develop your interview guide as well as to write up each of your interviews. List warm up questions, the main themes you want to ask about, the questions you want to ask, and what areas you would like to explore further. You will probably need to prepare tailored interview guides for the different groups of people participating in your research. Each guide should reflect the different types of information and perspectives you want to get from these different groups.

It is also important to remember that semi-structured interviews are just that: only *semi*-structured. During the interview, feel free to ask further probing questions to understand an issue or explore a perspective in greater depth. You should also make sure to stop asking questions or skip questions if they are not relevant or participants are finding them distressing.

Tip: Start by making your research participant feel comfortable and slowly build up to deeper questions. End your interview on a calming note by asking some easier or less sensitive questions. In order to give you enough time to dig deeper into each topic, keep to a maximum of three themes.

Interview number	Give the interview a number and add this to each page so the interviewee's name is not included anywhere on the notes (to protect confidentiality)
Interviewer	Write name of researcher
Note taker	Write name of notetaker, if different to the researcher
Type of interview	Write whether remote or in-person
Location	Write location within city, not the exact address
Date	Write date
Time started	Write time
Time ended	Write time
Consent given	Write 'yes' or 'no' If no, do not continue with interview!
Interviewee type	Write sampling group they belong to e.g. 'older migrant woman'

Introduction and informed consent (5-10 mins)	Explain your research clearly and succinctly using plain language. Ask research participants if they have any questions. Use the sample informed consent form to explain how participants' information will be used and ask them if they agree to participate in the interview.
Warm up questions (5 mins)	Write a brief explanation of what the following set of questions will focus on
	I: [insert question asked by interviewer] R: [insert response given by participant] and so on
Theme 1 (10 - 15 mins)	Write a brief explanation of what the following set of questions will focus on, including areas where you want to probe for more detail.
	I: [insert question asked by interviewer] R: [insert response given by participant] and so on
Theme 2 (10 - 15 mins)	Write a brief explanation of what the following set of questions will focus on, including areas where you want to probe for more detail.
	I: [insert question asked by interviewer] R: [insert response given by participant] and so on
Theme 3 (10 - 15 mins)	Write a brief explanation of what the following set of questions will focus on, including areas where you want to probe for more detail.
	I: [insert question asked by interviewer] R: [insert response given by participant] and so on
Wrapping up (5 mins)	▪ Thank the participant for being generous with their time, acknowledging any inconvenience that may have been caused and saying how helpful their responses have been ▪ explain what will happen next ▪ ask if they have any questions about the research or would like to clarify what has been recorded.

Researcher reflections	Make a note of things which may have compromised the quality of the interview, for example: ▪ If the participant seemed tired or uncomfortable ▪ If the interview was interrupted ▪ If the interviewer ended up asking leading questions by mistake ▪ If the participant seemed to be saying what they thought the interviewer wanted to hear Also make a note of anything which: ▪ Was surprising or unexpected ▪ Confirmed or challenged initial thinking in the conceptual framework ▪ Was confusing or difficult to interpret

Example

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FROM THE ASIA FOUNDATION BANGLADESH 'INEQUALITIES IN ASIAN CITIES' RESEARCH PROJECT

Research topic 1: The Impact of Covid on the businesses of women led micro-enterprises.	Thank you for telling me a little bit about you and your family. I would like to now ask you a few questions about your work and business. I understand that over the past year because of COVID-19 and the related government restrictions, a lot of small businesses have faced difficulties.
Note to researcher: An interviewee might find it difficult to share their experience with you about how Covid has impacted their businesses. Therefore, it is useful to take them back to the beginning of the pandemic and walking you through what the impact of different restrictions was sort of like a story.	**Q1.1. Thinking back over the past year, can you tell me about how COVID-19 and the related restrictions have impacted on your business?** PROBES: ● Thinking back to the early days of the pandemic, can you tell me about how the lockdowns and government restrictions affected your business? ● Were there particular restrictions that affected your business more? ● What kind of an Impact did this have your business? ● Did you have to close your business? ▪ Did you have to fire/layoff workers? ▪ Did you have orders that were cancelled? ▪ Did It affect your sales and revenue? ▪ Did It affect your Income? If so, In what way? ▪ Have there been other factors/things that have also affected your business during time? ▪ What do you think might be some of the long term effects of these impacts on your business?
	Q1.2. Do you think the businesses of other women entrepreneurs in Khulna have been impacted in the same way yours has? If so, what makes you think this? PROBES: ● Have they faced similar difficulties to you? ● If not, what are the other kinds of difficulties they have faced? ● Do you think some women owned micro-enterprises have been more affected than others? If so, why do you think that is?

Research topic 2: The Impact of COVID on the well-being of women and their families	Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me. I understand from what you've told me that it has been a challenging time for your business. I would like to ask you a few questions about how this has affected/Impacted you and your family. I know that this might be difficult and upsetting to talk about. So please do stop me at any point and I can go on to other questions.
	Q2.1. Can you tell me whether the impact of Covid-19 related restrictions on your business has affected you personally in terms of your own health and well-being? If so, how? PROBES: ● Has the impact on your business affected your health i.e. in terms of stress, sleep, anxiety, headaches, other ailments, work load in the home? ● For example, because of the travel restrictions and lock downs, was it difficult for you to socialize and keep up with your peers and others within the business community? What did that mean for you personally?
	Q2.2. Do you think these impacts will be short-lived, or will continue to affect you long-term? Why?
Note to interviewer: This is going to be a difficult question given the hardships that people have faced over the past year. The interviewer needs to be particularly mindful of this and again remind the person they are interviewing that this might be a difficult question to answer and that they can stop if they feel uncomfortable and move on to another question.	**Q2.3. Can you tell me whether the impact of Covid-19 and related restrictions on your business has affected your family and their health and wellbeing? If so, how?** POSSIBLE PROBES: ● Did the impact on your business affect your family's ability to buy goods and services i.e. if so in what kinds of ways? i.e food, medicines, rent, fuel, toiletries etc? ● Has the impact on your business affected the well-being of your family in terms of their physical and mental health?
	Q2.4. Do you think these impacts will be short-lived, or will continue to affect your family over the longer- term? Why?

Research topic 3. How women have tried to cope with the impact of the pandemic on their businesses and their families	Thank you very much for sharing your experiences with me. I know it must be quite difficult to talk about. I would now like to ask you a few questions about how you've tried to cope with the situation and what kind of support (if at all) you have been able to access.
	Q3.1. Can you tell me about how you've tried to cope with some of the impacts of Covid-related restrictions on your business? PROBES: ● E.g. taking a loan, using savings, selling assets (car, bike, home, jewellery). ● If yes, what impact has this had on your life and that of your family?
	Q3.2. Are you aware of any formal support from the government to help you cope with the impact of covid restrictions? If so, have you been able to access these? PROBES: ● Were you aware of and able to access the stimulus packages for SMEs? ● If the answer is yes, could you tell me a bit more about the kind of support you received and how it helped with your business? ● If not/why not? Can you tell me about some of the difficulties you faced in trying to get access to it? ● What kind of support would be most helpful for your business in recovering from the impact of Covid-19?
	Q3.3. Beyond government support, have you been able to get support from others including NGOs, friends, families or others to help you cope with the impact of Covid-19 restrictions? POSSIBLE PROBES: ● If yes, what kinds of support have you received in terms of your business? ● Have you received any support in terms of the well-being of your family? If so in what way? ● Have you personally had any support in terms of your own well-being? If so in what way?
	Q3.4. One year on, how do you feel about the future prospects of your business?
Warm down questions	Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me. I am really inspired to hear about your story and how you have been managing your business during this difficult time. If there is anything that you would like to share with me that you think is important, please do tell me.
Wrapping up	We have been talking for about 60 mins on the impact that Covid-19 restrictions have had on your business and your family. We are now at the end of the interview. I would like to thank you for speaking with me today and sharing your experiences with me. Through this research we hope to understand the impact that Covid-19 restrictions have had on women owned businesses in micro-SME sector. Before I conclude the interview, please do let me know if you have any questions or feedback for me on our discussion. It's been lovely talking to you and the discussion was immensely helpful. Have a good day!

Tool #7:
NOTETAKER GUIDE

Interview number	Give the interview a number and add this to the top of each page so the interviewee's name is not included anywhere on the notes (in order to ensure anonymity and protect confidentiality)	
Interviewer	Write name of researcher	
Note taker	Write name of notetaker, if different to the researcher	
Type of interview	Write whether remote or in-person	
Location	Write location within city, not the exact address (city, district)	
Date	Write date	
Time started	Write time	
Time ended	Write time	
Consent given	Write 'yes' or 'no'. If no, do not continue with interview!	
Type of interviewee	Write sampling group they belong to e.g. 'older migrant woman' If the interviewee is a key informant who is being interviewed in a professional capacity, write their name and job title	
Warm up questions introduction		X

Maximum 2 warm up questions	X **Probe: X**		
Research topic Q1: X **(10 - 15 mins)**	X		
Note to researcher: X	**Q1.1.** X Possible probes: ● X	N: [Notetaker to insert question exactly as asked by interviewer in the interview – include "entry question" and any probes]	R: [insert response given by participant]
	Q1.2. X Possible probes: ● X	N: [Notetaker to insert question exactly as asked by interviewer in the interview – include "entry question" and any probes]	R: [insert response given by participant]
Research topic 2: X **(10 - 15 mins)**	Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me. X Please do stop me at any point and I can go on to other questions.		
	Q2.1. X Possible probes: ● X	N: [Notetaker to insert question exactly as asked by interviewer in the interview – include "entry question" and any probes]	R: [insert response given by participant]
Note to interviewer: X	**Q2.2.** X	N: [Notetaker to insert question exactly as asked by interviewer in the interview – include "entry question" and any probes]	R: [insert response given by participant]
Research topic 3. X **(10 - 15 mins)**	Thank you very much for sharing your experiences with me. X		
	Q 3.1. X Possible probes: ● X	N: [Notetaker to insert question exactly as asked by interviewer in the interview – include "entry question" and any probes]	R: [insert response given by participant]

Warm down questions	Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me. X If there is anything that you would like to share with me that you think is important, please do tell me.
Wrapping up (5 mins)	We have been talking for about 60 mins on X We are now at the end of the interview. I would like to thank you for speaking with me today and sharing your experiences with me. X Before I conclude the interview, please do let me know if you have any questions or feedback for me on our discussion. It's been lovely talking to you and the discussion was immensely helpful. Have a good day!
N: [Notetaker to add to summarize any questions or follow ups discussed downing warm down or wrapping up]	
N: [Notetaker to add their observations about how the interview went. For example if the respondent was distracted, hesitant, excited or any other points that would be useful for others to know when reading through the transcripts]	

Further Resource

The Better Evaluation website has information on a range of different qualitative data collection methods. https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/rainbow_framework/describe/collect_retrieve_data

INTRAC's M&E Universe https://www.intrac.org/resources/me-universe/ has links to resources on interviews, focus group discussions and observation:
https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Interviews.pdf
https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Focus-group-discussions.pdf
https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Observation.pdf

The Institute for Development Studies has an entire website devoted to participatory approaches to collecting data https://www.participatorymethods.org/

This video provides some useful tips on ensuring reliability and validity in qualitative research: https://youtu.be/B_dEsGCT7CE and this guide from INTRAC provides more information on triangulation https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Triangulation.pdf

This blog from the London School of Economics has some tips on conducting remote research https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2020/04/20/carrying-out-qualitative-research-under-lockdown-practical-and-ethical-considerations/

5 Analyzing the data

Qualitative research is more than just writing up or restating what interviewees said or what you observed. This is where analysis comes in. Analysis involves looking at all the data collected and asking ‘so what is this telling me?’ about the research questions and overall topic of focus. It involves identifying key themes and implications that emerge from the data so that you are bringing together multiple perspectives or types of data to support a research finding or argument.

In order to find the key research findings and themes, you will need to look at your data in a systematic and rigorous way. Listing your personal opinions on the raw data in a report isnot likely to be considered very reliable or rigorous. By putting in place a system or framework for analyzing data, the themes and implications you identify are seen to be more reliable and therefore more convincing. There are a number of ways to do this, including the use of software such as NVivo. However, simpler non-digital tools can also be used.

The following steps can be used to simply but systematically analyze your qualitative data.

Step 1 Develop an analytical framework

Referring back to your conceptual framework, develop a spreadsheet (for instance in Excel) that includes your key research questions and each of your interviewees in each row. Create columns for each that include what interviewees said, what you interpreted this to mean, any questions you might have. This will provide with you a systematic way for entering in relevant data directly from interview transcripts, and then looking at what you interpreted the transcribed text to mean for each of your interview questions, as well as making a note of any questions arising.

Step 2 Edit transcripts or notes for readability

Read through your interview transcripts or notes from participant observation and make any light edits. This is to make the transcripts/notes easier to understand not to change what interviewees shared or what was recorded.

Step 3 Read transcripts or notes to identify themes and issues

Read through your interview transcripts or notes from participant observation again to understand overall what seems to be emerging. Make notes on:

- What themes or issues are repeated throughout the material? Have different interviewees mentioned similar experiences or feelings? (these are sometimes talked about as becoming ‘codes’).
- What connections between issues emerge?
- What jumped out at you when you read them (things that surprised you)?
- What was as you expected when you read them all?
- What worried you when you read them all?

If you are working in a research team, you may wish to work on a shared document that all team members can contribute to. From this initial analytical step, you may wish to update the analysis spreadsheet by adding new questions or themes/issues ('codes') that you think the qualitative data speaks to but was not initially captured in your research questions. For instance, if 'health' or 'gender' came up repeatedly in your data, you may include this as a 'code' in your analytical spreadsheet.

Step 4 Read transcripts or notes in detail to complete analytical framework

Read through your interview transcripts or notes from participant observation in detail. Using the analysis spreadsheet, copy and paste all supporting and contradictory evidence for each research question or theme ('code') into the relevant spreadsheet cell.

Step 5 Interpret the findings, paying attention to bias

Fill in the rest of the spreadsheet cells to capture what you interpreted from the interview material and any questions this raised. This step helps to draw attention to your own biases and how to make sure that your personal opinions and beliefs are impacting your interpretation of the data during analysis (see below). Looking across the whole spreadsheet once this data is inputted allows you to see similarities and differences between respondents and whether their responses are clear or contradictory.From this analysis, you can now begin to draft the findings for each research question, drawing on the primary qualitative data (eg: quoting from interviews with appropriate anonymization of identities), as well as the secondary literature from your earlier literature review.

Example

DATA ANALYSIS BY THE ASIA FOUNDATION'S 'INEQUALITIES IN ASIAN CITIES' RESEARCH IN PAKISTAN

After completing and transcribing 16 interviews with female bangle-makers in Hyderabad, The Asia Foundation research team undertook the following steps to undertake data analysis. First, they re-read the transcribed notes, checking that all data had been accurately captured. Second, the data from interviews was coded and inputted into a spreadsheet, recording relevant responses to each of the three overarching research question's themes. Data was also further sifted to draw out the views of household-maintainers and household-helpers (as two categories of distinct experiences). Third, following data entry, an in-depth data coding and analysis exercise was undertaken to draw out the evidence from the sample interviews. A reflection session was also held amongst the research team to check the data quality and further explore the key themes and information emerging. Finally, the findings from the data were then written up under each of the key research questions.

Checking bias during analysis

It is important to ensure that your own personal biases – related to your background, your positionality and your own life experiences – do not influence your analysis. While this cannot be removed entirely, high quality qualitative research needs to ensure a degree of objectivity or impartiality. This means that that someone else looking at the same data as you would very likely reach the same conclusions as to what they mean and are telling us.

There are a number of ways to help check your bias. There are a number of ways to help check your bias. First, think about your own positionality and how this may influence things. This means being aware and explicit about your identity as a researcher and the power dynamics that brings into the conversation.
Second, explicitly distinguishing in the analysis spreadsheet between precisely what respondents said and what you interpreted that to mean can help to highlight if you are bringing your own biases to the analysis.

Third, consider taking your draft analysis and findings back to research participants to check or validate that these accurately reflect their intentions. Such validation efforts also provide an opportunity for clarifications to ensure that how respondents have been interpreted is accurate. This is important for ethical reasons – to ensure that the research 'gives back' to the respondents who gave their

Example

PREPARING FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Before starting with formal data analysis, each research team participated in a workshop where they noted what surprised them, what stood out to them and what confirmed what that already knew. Each team noted their reflection on mural. The purpose of this activity was help research teams to discuss their reflections from the data collection process and make sure that their individual opinions and ideas didn't impact the data analysis process.

To add mural board that Sally created

Tool #8:
THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

time and views to the research project – as well as for reasons of rigorous analysis.

Step 1 – Get your data ready

- Make sure that transcripts are translated, reviewed, numbered and stored in one folder

Step 2 – Set up for coding your data

(a) Start by listing your comparison groups.

For example, you could be looking at the experiences of women versus men. Here your comparison groups would be
A1: Women
B1: Men

Or for a more complex research project you could be trying to understand the experience of old and young women versus old and young men. Here your comparison groups would be:

A1: Older Women
A2: Younger Women
B1: Older Men
B2: Younger men

Add the number of people interviewer in each comparison group under 'sample size'.

Comparison Groups		Sample size
A1		
A2		
B1		
B2		

Total sample size for each overarching research question	
Sizes of comparison groups for each overarching research question	X vs. X

(b) Develop data consolidation sheet

(i) Set up one sheet in excel sheet for each research question

(ii) For each sheet, develop a coding sheet that allows data under different themes to be separated out for analysis. For example:

DATA CONSOLIDATION SHEET									
NOTE: MAIN COMPARISONS		ALL WOMEN vs ALL MEN							
A1									
B1									
ANALYSIS RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTION X: For example, the research question is – "How does gender impact the ability of residents to access COVID-19 relief schemes?"									
Interview Number (Based on Transcript)	**Researcher Reflections/ Observation Notes**	A1 Experiences of WOMEN are ABLE to access government schemes	**Researcher reflections**	A2 Experiences of WOMEN are UNABLE to access government schemes	**Researcher reflections**	B1 Experiences of MEN are ABLE to access government schemes	**Researcher reflections**	B2 Experiences of MEN are UNABLE to access government schemes	**Researcher reflections**
x	Write any any important reflections from each interview here especially where you have noticed something that might mean that the data you collected was less reliable.	Put any relevant data from transcripts	Note what you are hearing based on the data? What are you strongly hearing? What are you not hearing? **Suggest discussing this in a group or with others in the research team where possible*	Extract relevant data from transcripts		Extract relevant data from transcripts		Extract relevant data from transcripts	

EXAMPLE Interview 01	The interviewee found it hard to distinguish between different government departments, officials and schemes.	*"I was given 100,000 by the government in July"* *"I did not know about any announcement, but my brother told me about the government schemes and took me to the office"*	Interview was able to access first round of government relief measures Interviewee did not know the specifics of the scheme It seems that information about round 2 assistance was not given during the first round of cash assistance						
EXAMPLE Interview 07	The interviewee had shifted to this locality 2 months before COVID-19 began							"It was hard to follow the various government announcements and schemes" "Due to COVID I was not meeting new people" "I don't know who my ward administrator is."	The interviewee was not aware of any schemes Seems that information was shared among friends more than through newspapers and flyers.

(c) Thematic analysis

Colour code responses for each respondent in a different colour

Open a word doc and start copying reflections based on comparison groups for each RQ

THEMATIC ANALYSIS SHEET	
Example	
#	**Data reflections – Research Question1.1** – IMPACT OF COVID-19 on BANGLE WORKERS
Data from Married Women	
INT-1	The interviewee found it difficult to anticipate what the long term implications of her current situation would be. She says she doesn't know when things will be normal again that it will depend a great deal on when she is able to work again. The opening of factories in October provided a temporary reprieve but the abrupt closure again indicates that there has been a lot of uncertainty and disruption and it has been difficult for her to predict when work will be available. She expresses hope that the upcoming Eid/Ramzan season will provide opportunities for her to work again as the city of Hyderabad provides bangles to other parts of the country. She notes that " Not just us, no one is doing anything, no weddings, no celebrations on child births and no spending. People are trying to get by, and it is hard enough as is.
INT-2	This woman has said that many people working in bangle industry are very poor and therefore, they are compelled to work on low wages. She already has a weak economic position because of working for low wages on daily basis and COVID-19 has worsen their economic conditions as she cannot work because of restrictions and hence, is unable to earn money to full fil the basic needs. The pandemic and closure of factories has definitely had an impact on her and her family's finances. She describes how she had to make difficult choices about what to purchase and had to prioritise essential items such as food/milk over toys, sweets, and anything for the house. She says poignantly that " I love to do makeup, making cloths for myself or my kids. I have stopped wishing for things for myself. I simply cannot afford any of these things right now."
Unmarried Women	
INT- 9	*N/A*
INT-10	*The interviewee and her family appear to have been able to continue to do some work during the lockdown as they were trying to earn money to support her sister's wedding. While they were unable to work as much she acknowledges that at least there was some work for her and her family. She describes how they lived frugally, only buying what they really needed.*

INT-11	*The interviewee has faced a lot of financial difficulties during this time and describes how the lockdown had made things very difficult to the point where even survival seemed really hard. She notes how her circumstances were already hard/challenging to begin with as she would earn low wages but even this has been reduced to nothing due to the restrictions and closures. She expresses a sense of hopelessness about what she will be able to do if the situation continues. In terms of the impact on her finances, she describes how she has stopped buying most things to the point where even as a diabetic patient she was unable to/had to stop buying medicines. This in turn has affected her health. But she says that in these times everyone has to make sacrifices as they cannot afford to buy things.*
INT-12	
INT-13	*For the interviewee, like others describes a situation of being out of work as a result of the closure of factories and lockdown and how the absence of work has meant no earnings. She says while she understands that lockdowns are necessary that it has had a major impact on earnings and is doubtful about how long people like her will be able to rely on the free rations, food and support that they have been receiving during this time. It seems that the only option that seems a viable one for her is that the factories open again.*

(d) Once all the data has been transferred for each research question, read all the responses for that research question and start noting any themes or common areas between interviewees that you can see
For example, role of community; access to information; relationship with local administrator etc .

(e) When you have identified a few themes, rearrange data under each of them

(f) Once all the data is arranged under each research question and newly identified sub-themes you are ready to start writing your final analysis.

(g) This is a good time to go back to your literature review to see how the data compares to the existing literature in the field e.g. is it similar to existing data or does it contradict it? Alternatively, does it add new information or perspectives that were not previously considered. You can include this analysis in your final write up.

(h) For data that doesn't neatly fit into any themes can be placed in a different column and addressed later.

(i) This is an iterative process that require change and adaptation. You are likely to refine these sub-themes as you continue writing up the analysis.

Further Resource

While focused on qualitative data for monitoring and evaluation purposes, this guide from Better Evaluation explains ways to order and analyze qualitative data: *https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/EA_PM%26E_toolkit_module_5_QDA_for_publication.pdf*

This guide from INTRAC is also useful. https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Qualitative-analysis.pdf

This open access article sets out a range of qualitative analysis methods and how to undertake them: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1534484320903890

This ten-minute video from Quirkos explains a simple way for analyzing data and drawing out key themes and issues: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peQBZNWM6w8

These are some qualitative analysis software you can use to assist you with analyzing large quantities of text:

- *Nvivo*
- *MAXQDA*
- *Atlas.ti*

6 Putting it all together: communicating your research findings

You have developed a research project, collected data and analyzed it. Now comes the last part: writing up your research in a way that is clear, coherent and compelling.

Writing a research report

When you are writing your research report, keep in mind who you are writing for and why they will be interested in your findings. Most likely, you will be aiming to reach policymakers or practitioners, who often have limited time to engage with research. Some tips for writing include:

- Keep your research report reasonably short, between 15 and 20 pages or 10,000 words
- Include 5 or 6 key messages and an executive summary of no more than 2 pages at the beginning of the report. This is the only thing that many readers will read.
- Use headings and sub-headings to help your reader navigate their way through the report
- Use topic sentences at the beginning of paragraphs to communicate the explaining the main thought of the paragraph
- Start a new paragraph when you move on to a new idea
- Try to keep sentences relatively short
- Use plain language, and try to avoid jargon or expressions that others might not understand
- Include infographics, graphs or diagrams to illustrate key points

While approaches to writing up qualitative research are more varied than for quantitative research, there are several elements which you should include:

- A statement about the **research topic.** What is the main issue you were interested in exploring and why is it important?
- An explanation of the **conceptual framework** you used.
- The **research questions** you explored and why these were considered to be important.
- The **method** you used (including how you selected research participants and how many were involved, what data collection methods you used, how you analyzed the data, and any limitations to your research). This helps readers judge whether your research is valid.
- Your **findings.** These could be organized according to your conceptual framework or your research questions.
- The **implications** of your findings for policy and practice. What should policy makers, program managers and other stakeholders be doing differently? How does government policy need to change? This gets to the 'so what' of your research.

These could be explained briefly in the main report, with more detail included in an annex if needed.

Tool #9: SAMPLE REPORT OUTLINE

1. BACKGROUND AND SCOPE
[1-2 PAGES]

- Write two paragraphs on the context.
- Paste in the **conceptual framework** which you developed at the start of the research. Write two paragraphs to explain it. This should be written in terms of what you knew and what you assumed at the start of the research.
- List the **overarching research questions** and any sub questions this research set out to answer, which were drawn from your conceptual framework.
- Write a paragraph on **why this research is needed** and who is intended to use it. This should make it clear why these research questions needed to be answered.

2. METHODOLOGY
[2 PARAGRAPHS + 1-2 DETAILED DESCRIPTION IN ANNEX OR 1-2 PAGES]

- Depending on your audience, you can choose to write a shorter methodology section in the main report and include the following details as an annex.
- Write a paragraph to explain the initial literature review you conducted i.e., the number and types of sources you used. Note the dates when the literature review was conducted.
- Write a paragraph to describe what tool you used for data collection and why. For example, if you used qualitative semi-structured interviews as your data collection method, note ways in which the questions you asked were informed by your initial literature review. Also explain how you conducted the interviews - e.g., over the phone, in person etc. and explain when and where data collection took place. (Paste the consent form and interview guide from your design document into annexes A and B).
- Write a paragraph to describe your sampling approach, including:
  - Your overall sample size, explaining what everyone in the sample had in common
  - The main comparison groups you selected, describing why they were chosen.
  - Composition of your sample in terms of the diversity within it
  - How participants were identified and invited to take part
- Write a paragraph to describe the way you recorded, transcribed, coded and analyzed your data.
- Write a paragraph to describe the ethical considerations you identified at the start and the way you addressed them (with ethics table from your design document in Annex C)

- Write a paragraph to explain any limitations of your research (including what it was unable to cover) and any unexpected challenges you faced during data collection or analysis. This could include delays, difficulties in setting up interviews etc.

- Write a paragraph to describe any ways you think your research might be biased, for example because of the way people were selected to take part or the way the questions were asked. Also note here any ways in which you have tried to minimize the risk of bias.

3. FINDINGS FOR [INSERT FOCUS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 1 AND ANY SUB QUESTIONS] [2 PAGES]

- Summarize what the initial literature review told you about this research question – so what you knew at the start:
  - Clearly reference where each piece of evidence comes from. Ensure all footnotes follow the same citation style.
  - Note what existing evidence could not tell you about this research question.

- Write down the findings from your analysis of your dataset which help to directly answer the research question:
  - Phrase each point so it is clear that it comes from analysis of your dataset, rather than your own opinion or from the literature review.
  - Group smaller points around themes, where you can. This should make it easier for the reader to absorb.
  - Add in some quotes directly from your transcripts to help bring the text to life
  - Note any differences or similarities between your comparison groups.

- Write down the findings from your analysis of your dataset which indirectly relate to this research question:
  - Phrase each point so it is clear that it comes from analysis of your dataset, rather than your own opinion or from the literature review.
  - Group smaller points around themes, where you can. This should make it easier for the reader to absorb.
  - Add in some quotes directly from your transcripts to help bring the text to life
  - Note any differences or similarities between your comparison groups.

- Write a paragraph or two to conclude:
  - Note the most interesting points about where your new research supports, challenges or builds on what was already known from the literature about this research question.

Note anything which your research couldn't explain or that wasn't clear in terms of answering this research question

4. FINDINGS FOR [INSERT FOCUS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 3 AND ANY SUB QUESTIONS]
[2 PAGES]

5. FINDINGS FOR [INSERT FOCUS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 4 AND ANY SUB QUESTIONS]
[2 PAGES]

6. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
[2 PAGES]

- Write down implications and recommendations emerging from your research findings – for policy makers, for programme practitioners, for researchers (where you think important research still needs to be done to fill gaps).
- Ways in which your findings have challenged what you thought you knew and what you assumed in your original conceptual framework.
- Areas for further research.

7. ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES
[2 PAGES]

Other ways of communicating research

Research reports are not the only way to communicate research findings. In addition to – or instead of – a report, you could also write a blog, record a podcast, hold a seminar or webinar, present your research at a conference or event, or produce a short video or film. Often, a combination of these approaches can be useful, with shorter blogs or interactive seminars being useful formats to raise interest in your longer report – increasing the likelihood that it will be read.

Example

COMMUNICATING THE ASIA FOUNDATION'S 'INEQUALITIES IN ASIAN CITIES' RESEARCH

The Asia Foundation's report From Hanoi to Hyderabad: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women and Marginalized Groups in Asian Cities draws together the findings of research in 5 countries. It includes clear headings, an infographic summarizing the key findings, a selection of quotes from research participants, and photos and illustrations, all of which make it easier for readers to digest.

Alongside this report, country researchers all presented their research findings in webinars and seminars that were targeted at researchers, policymakers and practitioners working on related issues in their country. In addition, country researchers in Bangladesh, Mongolia and Vietnam also wrote short blogs which were published on a well-known development blog.

- Holding up more than half the sky: women and childcare in Mongolia
- Barely staying afloat: COVID-19 and women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh
- Ethnic migrants in Hanoi: Hit hard by lockdowns

Taking your research findings back to participants

It is good practice to share your research findings with research participants. Research is meant to benefit people and communities and sharing your research may help people to learn more about themselves or understand their experience in new ways. It may also motivate them to take action to address an issue in their community.

Sharing research findings can also help build trust in the research process and strengthen your relationships with research participants. This is particularly beneficial if they belong to a community or group that you work with.

Research participants will not necessarily want to read a report, so it may be important to think about the best formats for sharing your research. This could include infographics, a one-page summary or a video.

Further Resource

The Research for Development Impact Network has collected some useful resources to help you think about communicating your research: https://rdinetwork.org.au/resources/skills-for-development-impact/research-communication/

https://medium.com/@effectiveserv/six-ways-to-share-your-research-findings-238549409534

And here are some thoughts about taking research findings back to participants: https://odi.org/en/insights/how-is-your-research-going-to-benefit-me-bringing-findings-back-to-communities-in-ghana/

https://theconversation.com/scientists-must-share-research-findings-with-participants-heres-why-133454

The Asia Foundation

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives and expanding opportunities across Asia and the Pacific. Informed by decades of experience and deep local expertise, our work across the region is focused on good governance, women's empowerment and gender equality, inclusive economic growth, environment and climate action, and regional and international relations.