



Hiring and training enumerators

Palitha Jayaweera, Beth Karanja, Joyce Mpalanyi, Brenda Nahidu and Vincent Njuguna

When the sample size is too big to carry out a survey on your own you have to hire enumerators. This article shows how.

Whenever research design requires a large sample size, enumerators must be hired. The research described in this *Waterlines*, examining the sustainability of promoted hygiene practices, involved six organizations from Asia and Africa, and large sample sizes (see Bolt article for the research outline, and Shordt and Cairncross for the results).

Hiring enumerators requires careful selection. This is followed by pre-testing of the tools we had developed for the research, which can be combined with the training of enumerators. Pre-testing helps us to identify areas of improvement of the tools, and involving the enumerators has the added advantage of creating a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Selecting enumerators

Enumerators may be university students; they may also come from a government ministry. In Sri Lanka we selected enumerators using criteria such as previous experience with data collection, and a friendly and non-threatening attitude towards those responding to the questionnaires. In Uganda enumerators could be selected if they had participated in research or studies that were community based and were familiar with the local languages in the project areas. Here we selected three enumerators, of whom two were female secondary school teachers and one was a male social scientist. In Kenya we felt that familiarity with hygiene concepts and with the social geography of the area was also an asset. We selected public health technicians within the divisions of Maseno and Kombewa where we did our research.

Training enumerators

Even though enumerators had previous experience in similar exercises for other agencies, they had not been involved in the initial development of our data collection tools. We therefore had to organize a training course to familiarize them with the research, and to practise using the tools. It is of crucial importance that all enumerators use similar criteria when judging, for example, the condition of a latrine or the thoroughness of hand washing. The criteria also need to be in line with what was promoted through the hygiene education intervention, and the enumerators need to be familiar with that.

This became very evident during the pre-testing and enumerator training in Uganda. As part of their training, the enumerators went to a number of house-

holds to pre-test the tools as well as to practise their use and the coding of the answers on the forms. When discussing their pre-testing experiences and the coding results, it became clear that definitions of hygiene behaviours and facilities varied between the enumerators. Some considered a 'hole with poles and cloth around it' to be a latrine, whereas according to others a latrine requires a superstructure made out of stones. If this difference in perception had remained, the research would have been 'comparing apples with pears'. Pre-testing resulted in adaptation of the tools and further specification of criteria.

Support

After enumerators were trained, they needed continuous support and monitoring. As the researcher, you have to make sure that the quality of data collection remains the same throughout the study, and this is affected by:

Box 1. Elements of a typical enumerator-training programme

- Background about the research, its objectives and methodology
- Role and responsibilities of the enumerator in the research
- Sampling of households for data collection, description of the sampling procedure and a demonstration
- Explanation of the data collection tools
- How to conduct household surveys through questioning, spot observation; asking for demonstration and pocket chart voting, including 'climate setting' – establishing rapport with the respondents
- The difference between non-participatory and participatory methodologies for data collection
- How to code responses
- Field practice and testing of tools
- Adaptation of tools.

- proper use of the tools and by proper coding
- continued enthusiasm of the enumerators.

Regular get-togethers with the enumerators – certainly at the beginning of the data-collection period or even daily – to discuss difficulties encountered and to check the coding forms, helped us to detect flaws in the quality of the data or even data that were contradictory. Talking to enumerators helped us to discover whether this was caused by a lack of clarity in the tools used to collect the data, by insufficient insight into how to collect the data, or by the enumerators' energy levels declining. Depending on the cause, we could determine remedial action, such as

adapting the tools, additional training, re-interviewing a sub-sample of households together, triangulation of data using different data collection tools, or even just having a drink together to give the enumerators a boost.

Make sure that . . .

The research should start promptly after the training and pre-testing. This helps to ensure that the enthusiasm generated during the training and pre-testing is maintained and that the information is still fresh in everyone's mind. There is also less risk of 'losing' enumerators. In our case a few enumerators, while waiting for the research to start, were transferred or found a more permanent job and quit their jobs as enumerators. The risk of ending up with too few enumerators can also be mitigated by training a few more than are needed. This also leaves a margin so that if necessary, you can dispense with any who turn out to lack the discipline, honesty, intelligence and sensitivity required of a good enumerator.

Conclusion

The use of enumerators was very help-



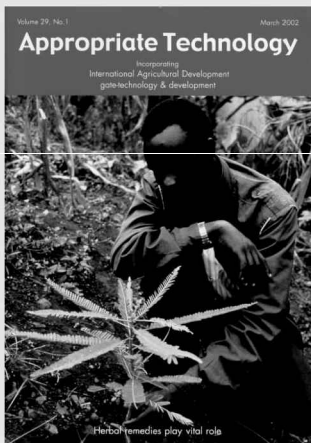
It became clear that definitions of hygiene behaviours and facilities varied among the enumerators

ful, not only for getting the work done, but also because the process of training the enumerators made us critical of our tools. However, to make sure that good-quality data are collected requires some investment in terms of training and supervision.

About the authors

Mr Palitha Jayaweera is with the Foundation for Technical Cooperation (COSI), Sri Lanka, Ms Beth Karanja and Mr Vincent Njuguna are with the Network for Water and Sanitation (NETWAS), Kenya, and Ms Joyce Mpalanyi Magala and Ms Brenda Nahindu are with WaterAid Uganda.

Appropriate Technology
The quarterly magazine of practical change in the developing world
 Editor: David Dixon



"... so many ideas and methods are adaptable in so many ways ... Thank you for producing such a useful magazine",
 VSO fieldworker, Thailand.

Wherever you live in the world, you will find lots to interest you in *Appropriate Technology*. Concentrating on real-life experiences and problems, the magazine deals with practical development in a clear, straightforward way - and the lessons can be applied in every part of the globe.

Each issue provides practical technologies, policies and ideas addressed to the elimination of poverty and hunger, with articles and case studies giving a full range of viewpoints and perspectives.

Appropriate Technology is published quarterly and is sent to subscribers by airmail, at £45 (personal or developing country) or £116 (institutions).
 Credit card: Visa / Mastercard / American Express
 Card No: / /
 Expiry date:
 Signature:

"If you are working in a developing country and can afford only one journal, this is the one to get", *Appropriate Technology Sourcebook*

View a sample copy on our website:
www.researchinformation.co.uk/apte.html

Please complete the form below or use the order form on our website.

- Please invoice me.
- I enclose cheque/money order for
- Please charge my credit card, details below left.

Name:
 Organisation:
 Address:

 Tel:
 Fax: