

Using the Key Informant Interview Technique for Collecting Quick Impact Assessment Information



In the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, which destroyed large areas along the Sri Lankan coast, the government gave priority to the affected people and by facilitating them return to their homes by rehabilitating the destroyed housing infrastructure and by restoring amenities.

The IFAD-supported Post-Tsunami Coastal Rehabilitation and Resource Management Programme (PTCRRMP) partnered with the state-owned National Housing Development Authority (NHDA) and the tsunami-affected communities to undertake the construction of 1,000 new houses for tsunami victims. The programme was able to complete 890 new units. The programme wanted to study and assess the outcome of its

Tsunami devastation

In Sri Lanka, about 36,000 people lost their lives; 80% of the coastline was affected and more than 110,000 houses were damaged or destroyed. Fishing folks living in simple houses and shelters were the main victims of the tsunami disaster. More than 7,000 fishermen died and more than 300,000 fishing families were displaced. About three-fourths of the coastal fishing vessels were either completely destroyed or seriously damaged.

housing construction activity and to share relevant information materials with similar projects across Sri Lanka and beyond. The key informant interview (KII) method was selected as the most appropriate tool to collect this information.

Housing rehabilitation

During the post-tsunami recovery phase, the Government of Sri Lanka used two approaches: (i) donor-driven housing construction and (ii) owner-driven housing construction. Families that opted for relocation to other areas in the country were provided with housing following donor guidelines.

After a careful evaluation of two ongoing schemes, IFAD and the Government of Sri Lanka reached an agreement to apply the owner-driven approach in its housing development component. The beneficiary community agreed to partner with the NHDA to obtain technical assistance (designs, house plans and overall supervision of the project).



The PTCRRMP management and IFAD local officers were very keen to evaluate the seemingly successful implementation of the housing intervention. The staff observed that the values of some houses were higher than the value of the grant provided (Rs. 500,000). It was decided that an outcome assessment be done to obtain more detailed information about the use of the grants and the construction of new housing stock.

Key informant interviews: how they were done

Selection of project interventions and planning

The key questions/research objectives were identified by the project officers. In a broader discussion among key project staff from the national, district and local levels, the following three key research questions were raised:

1. Is the housing construction process being effectively managed and does it respond to the needs of the community?
2. How can the housing construction process be improved and what innovations can be introduced?
3. What are the lessons learned that can be shared through knowledge management materials?

Key Informant Interview (KII)

The term 'key informant' refers to a person who can provide detailed information and opinions on a particular subject based on his or her unique knowledge of a particular issue. Anyone can be a key informant (young/old, male/female, rich/poor, various ethnic or religious groups and others). KIIs are open-ended, semi-structured interviews. Every interview has clear objectives, which determine what kind of information is needed and how this information will be used.

Considering the information needed, the project officers decided to apply the key informant interview tool to collect the required data.



Selection of key informants

Key informants were selected from five project districts where newly constructed houses had been completed. The district officers provided assistance in the selection of these informants. The individuals to be interviewed were selected by convening groups of local beneficiaries. This approach was designed to enhance local ownership and to ensure that the opinions of the broader community were represented by the individuals interviewed. The key informants for this study included representatives of beneficiaries, women's groups, local leaders and community elders, representatives of district and government civil officers.

Preparation of performance questions and data collection formats

Based on the outcome indicators extracted from the project logframe, simple open-ended questions were formulated. When possible, background information on the interviewee and his or her experience with the project was utilised to revise the questions.

Training interviewers on data collection

The interviews were primarily conducted by the M&E officers from the programme. They were given a short training on KII techniques, using the IFAD KII tool as a guide manual. The training focused on ensuring the quality and accuracy of the data, so that data collection and analysis would be consistent across different locations and enumerators (especially when external enumerators had to be employed).

Interviews and data collection

While visiting the sites where the housing construction was completed, the M&E officers (and, when needed, external enumerators) conducted interviews. They also walked around the houses to carry out direct site observations. This approach was perceived to be the most appropriate as it allowed the interviewees to freely express their opinions. The officers could also conduct observations and subsequently use this information in the construction of follow-up questions for the second batch of interviewers. This combined approach helped collect a rich set of observations and inputs from key project beneficiaries.

Data analysis and documentation

A specific format was used to collect and record information (see Table 1 for a listing of the key questions and answers provided). Depending on the results of the primary findings and the field observations, a second round of interviews could be conducted to collect additional information.

Producing knowledge management materials

All data and information, including photographs and other audio and video materials recorded during the KII process, were used to develop articles for the IFAD Sri Lanka Newsletter. The photos and video clips taken during the process were also published by various media outlets. Several local radio programmes also broadcast the key findings and information.

Publishing and knowledge sharing

The knowledge and experiences captured were published in an article 'Owner-driven housing construction: a cost-effective model for rebuilding the lives affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami'. The experiences and good practices derived from this previous construction process were then applied in the second phase of construction of 100 new houses in Ampara District in eastern Sri Lanka.

Table 1. Questions and answers from key informant interviews.

Specific Question	Answers and collected information
<p>Are the houses constructed well and in accordance with floor plans and regulations?</p> <p>Are the beneficiaries satisfied with the houses?</p>	<p>The beneficiaries demonstrated very high satisfaction.</p> <p>The cultural values of the three main communities—Muslim, Sinhala and Tamil—were considered in the design and construction of each house (e.g., location of kitchen, well, toilet). This was made possible by utilising the owner-driven approach to post-tsunami reconstruction of housing.</p>
<p>How did the community participate in project implementation?</p> <p>Did women participate in planning and monitoring?</p>	<p>Community development committees were formed.</p> <p>The community was involved in planning, monitoring and procurement. Women played a major role by helping during construction (physical labour, cooking, etc.).</p>
<p>How were the beneficiaries involved in the construction process?</p> <p>How did they benefit?</p>	<p>Bulk purchases (such as cement, tiles and steel) were made from local wholesalers. This approach ensured significant cost savings and improved the quality of procured material.</p> <p>The beneficiaries also directly supplied locally available materials, such as bricks, sand and timber.</p> <p>The beneficiaries provided unskilled labour.</p> <p>They also received informal training in masonry and carpentry. Some of the beneficiaries now work as semiskilled workers alongside experienced masons and carpenters.</p>

Specific Question	Answers and collected information
<p>What are the perceived socioeconomic benefits?</p>	<p>The housing stock is recovering. Larger houses of bigger value are being built to satisfy beneficiary needs.</p> <p>The village economy has expanded due to the additional funds that are flowing into the villages and auxiliary services that are required (food, etc.).</p> <p>New employment and business opportunities have emerged.</p> <p>The communities empowered.</p> <p>Good inter-community relations in the village exist.</p>
<p>How have the new houses changed living conditions and well-being?</p>	<p>There are more social events.</p> <p>There is reduced tension within households (visible as reported incidents of domestic violence).</p> <p>Health conditions, social status and social relations have improved.</p>

Lessons learned

- KII is a simple, effective tool for collecting specific information within a short time period.
- One-on-one interviews are more effective for collecting accurate first-hand information than other methods such as group interviews.
- Community consultation and beneficiary agreement regarding the informants to be interviewed are vital factors for the success of the study.
- Data collected by M&E officers tend to be more reliable and accurate than data gathered by external enumerators.
- Using advanced technical aides (such as digital cameras and audio recorders) during the KII was very helpful in keeping the interviewees focused and interested.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

KII	Key informant interview
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NHDA	National Housing Development Authority
PTCRRMP	Post-Tsunami Coastal Rehabilitation and Resource Management Programme
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development

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