

Field Survey Manual 2013

PART 1: GENERAL GUIDELINES

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Conducting Interviews**
 - Some Basic Principles
 - How to Ask Questions
 - Noting Answers
 - Language and Communication
 - Personal Observations
- 3. Group Discussions**
 - Convening the Group
 - Wide Participation
 - Avoiding Hangers-on
 - Conducting the Discussion
 - Ethical Debate
 - Drunkards and Trouble-makers
 - Recording the Proceedings
 - Mike
- 4. Documentation and Media Work**
 - Documentation
 - Media Work
- 5. Team Work**
 - Coordination and Tasks
 - Time management
 - Survey Routine
 - Daily Meeting
 - Eating and Sleeping
 - Accounts
 - Team Kit
 - Team Diary
 - Troubleshooting
- 6. Practicalities**
 - Logistics
 - Local Assistance
 - What to Bring
- 7. Ethical Issues**
- 8. A Few Tips to Stay Safe**
- 9. Recap: Dos and Don'ts**

PART 2: SURVEY- SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

- 10. The PEEP Survey**
- 11. Work Plan**
- 12. Survey Activities**
- 13. Survey Routine**
- 14. Field Activities**

Appendix: Public Hearings

PART 1: GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. INTRODUCTION

This manual was prepared for student volunteers who participate in field surveys (usually during the summer break) aimed at informing campaigns for the right to food, the right to work and related concerns. Earlier surveys have focused on issues such as midday meals, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), and the Public Distribution System (PDS). Most of the surveys were action-oriented, and in some cases, the teams even engaged in campaign activities (such as public hearings and social audits) along with the survey work. An effort was made to build on basic principles of "research for action": the possibility of combining strong commitments with objective enquiry; the notion of research as a collective endeavour; the special value of learning from experience; the use of diverse media to communicate with a wide audience; and the general need to link research with social and political action. This manual is based on "learning by doing" over the years. We hope that you will find it useful!

2. CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

This section discusses how to conduct individual interviews (e.g. to complete a "household questionnaire") – group discussions are dealt with in a separate section.

Ideally, an interview should be methodical but at the same time have the character of an informal conversation. It should cover all the issues relevant to the completion of the questionnaire, but this does not mean "shooting" questions one by one in the same sequence as in the questionnaire. Following that sequence, if feasible, is preferable, since there is a logic in the structure of the questionnaires. But sometimes going back and forth between different parts of the questionnaire helps the flow of the conversation. Also, you should not prevent the respondent from talking about matters that "deviate" from the questionnaire. In fact, this additional information is often worth recording, e.g. in the blank space at the end of the questionnaire.

Further interview tips are given below.

Some Basic Principles

- **Working in pairs:** Normally, two investigators should work together on each interview. One investigator should conduct the interview, and the other should record the answers.
- **Introducing yourself:** The first step is to introduce yourself briefly but clearly, and to explain the purpose of the survey. (A simple “mantra” for this purpose will be discussed during the training workshop.) You should also seek the respondent’s consent for the interview. If he or she is unwilling, do not insist.
- **Unwanted “escorts”:** If at all possible, avoid visiting households with the sarpanch or other local *netas*. If they follow you around, try to explain that you have strict instructions to visit the households without escort. There is no harm in getting help (e.g. for translation and related purposes) from local residents who don’t have too much of a vested interest in this matter, e.g. a local teacher or social worker.
- **Avoiding proxy respondents:** It is important to get the answers directly from the concerned person(s), rather than from relatives, neighbours, etc. For example, if you interview a female NREGA worker, it may happen that her husband is around and tries to answer on her behalf. This must be avoided.
- **Crowd management:** It may happen, sometimes, that several people (neighbours, friends, relatives, even passers-by) gather around when you are interviewing a particular respondent. Since group discussions are being conducted separately, it is generally best to avoid this kind of interference, and to focus on the concerned person’s answers. If necessary, explain to the others that it is important for you to talk to this person alone and that you will give them all a hearing once the interview with the respondent is over.

How to Ask Questions

- **Wordings:** As far as possible, you should ask each question as it is worded in the questionnaire (usually, the questionnaire will be in the local language). However you can clarify the question with further explanations in your own words, if needed. In fact, this tends to be quite helpful.
- **Probing:** Some questions may not elicit a response immediately. In such cases, you will have to “probe” a little, for instance by asking the same question in different ways until the respondent is able to give you a clear answer. Please make sure that the meaning of the question is not altered in the process of probing.
- **Leading Questions:** Make sure to avoid “leading questions”, i.e. questions phrased in a manner that nudges the respondent in the direction of a particular answer. We have tried to avoid leading questions in the questionnaires, but the need to avoid influencing the

respondent has to be borne in mind at every step. Example: it is better to ask “Do you feel that the PDS dealer is helpful or unhelpful?” instead of “Do you feel that the PDS dealer is helpful?”.

- **Reference Period:** While asking questions, always pay attention to the reference period, especially as the reference period may be different for different questions. You may need to help the respondent to focus on the relevant period, possibly by using terms such as “after Holi” or “before the rice harvest” instead of calendar dates.

- **Units of Measurement:** Where appropriate, please pay attention to units of measurement (Rs/day, cubic feet, acres, etc.). The relevant units of measurement are clearly specified on the questionnaires. If you are unable to get an answer in the pre-specified units, just note the answer in the respondent’s own words in the appropriate space (outside the box on the right-hand side).

Noting Responses

The questionnaires are quite user-friendly, with brief “instructions” (in italics) addressed to the investigators from time to time. After a few exercises at the training workshop, you should have no difficulty in completing them. But please remember the guidelines below.

Some Basic Principles

- Clarity is paramount. In particular, use your best handwriting, and make sure that all numerals are clear. Illegible information is useless.
- Always use Arabic numerals (1,2, etc.), not Roman (I, II,...), Hindi, etc.
- Generally, the right-hand column in the questionnaire is reserved for numerical data. This column should be as clean as possible, to facilitate the work of the data-entry operator. Make sure that the numbers are easily readable, and avoid any other writing in that space. Comments and detailed responses should always be written to the left of the data-entry column: generally in the middle column, but the left column may also be used.
- You can note responses in either Hindi or English. However, when you are quoting the respondent, Hindi is often better since it conveys the nuances.
- In places where there is space for “qualitative information”, please make an effort to note any interesting details that may be relevant to this study (instead of “doing the minimum”). If you run out of space to note any details, please write at the bottom of the same page.

- As far as possible, avoid blanks (blank answers can be quite problematic at the analysis stage because one doesn't know how to interpret them). If, for any reason, a question is not applicable, write "NA" in the box. The only good reason to leave a blank is when you are absolutely unable to choose one of the pre-specified codes (e.g. because none of them apply). The codes have been designed to ensure that this problem rarely occurs, but if it does, just note the respondent's answer in "long-hand" outside the box and leave the box blank.

Types of Questions

Most of the questions can be grouped into three broad types, depending on the way you are expected to note the responses. They are: "simple-choice" questions, "quantitative-response" questions, and "open-ended" questions.

- **"Simple Choice" Questions:** In the case of Simple Choice questions, you are required to select one valid option (code) from a list of options, as the following example shows. Most of the questions are of this type.

Example 1:

Circle the response here

Have machines ever been used on this worksite?

[1=Yes; 2=No]

Write the corresponding code here

/ 2 /

Note: The codes are supposed to be "mutually exclusive and exhaustive", so that you can always select one. In rare cases where you find that several codes apply, you can circle several codes and leave the box blank – we will construct an additional, "composite" code at the data entry stage. Otherwise, just circle the relevant code in the list and write the same code in the box on the right-hand side (doing both will ensure that there is no ambiguity).

- **"Quantitative Response" Questions:** These are questions where you just have to fill in the response in numerical form. Make sure to pay attention to the units of measurement (e.g., km or Rs/day) and to write the numerical answer as neatly as possible.

Example 2:

How much agricultural land do you own (acres)?

/ 5 /

- **Open-ended Questions:** Some questions are “open-ended”, in the sense that the responses are not “pre-coded” – you are expected to write the response as it is, in a few sentences. Please record the responses as clearly as possible, in a concise manner, in the space provided in the middle column.

In writing the open-ended response, don’t miss important details, but do not give irrelevant details either. Write as precisely as possible. The best open-ended responses are those that are concise but informative. An example of open-ended question is as follows:

Example 3: What are the main difficulties you face in buying grain from the PDS? Please explain.

Language and Communication

Smooth communication is essential for a successful interview. If you are not conversant with the local language, you should seek help from a translator or helper. If help is not available within the team, you can seek assistance in the village, e.g. from a local youth or teacher. However, you should try to make sure that this person has a good rapport with the respondents, and does not try to influence their answers for one reason or another.

You should also try to familiarise yourself with local terms of interest. For instance, in Odisha a Job Card is often known as “coolie card” or “labour card”. Similarly, the standard “pit” that labourers are expected to dig when they work on a piece-rate basis has different names in different areas, e.g. *chowka* in Jharkhand and *khunti* in Uttar Pradesh. Try to use these local terms whenever possible.

Personal Observations

Before concluding an interview, remember to record any personal observations of interest in the blank space at the end of the questionnaire. These observations are often as useful as the survey responses.

3. GROUP DISCUSSIONS

From time to time you will need to convene group discussions, e.g. with workers at a NREGA worksite. Special care has to be taken to ensure that group discussions are orderly and focused. Most of the basic principles discussed earlier apply to group discussions as well. For instance, as with individual interviews, you should work in pairs and begin by introducing yourself. Here are some further guidelines for group discussions:

Convening the Group

You should be clear as to whom you are trying to consult, and choose the time and venue of the discussion accordingly. For instance, to complete the Worksite Questionnaire, you need to talk to NREGA labourers at the worksite. On the other hand, a public meeting to discuss evidence of fraud would be of interest to a wider group, and would have to include Gram Panchayat functionaries such as the sarpanch and secretary.

Wide Participation

Within the relevant “focus group” (e.g. NREGA workers), try to ensure that no-one is excluded. It is especially important to ensure that both women and men participate, and that women are able to speak out. Sometimes it is best to conduct separate discussions with women and men. Other marginalised people should also be encouraged to participate and speak.

Avoiding Hangers-on

Quite often, attempts to disrupt or dominate group discussions are made by persons with vested interests such as landlords, contractors, local leaders or government functionaries. You should do your best to defeat these manipulations. For instance, when you conduct a group discussion with NREGA labourers at a worksite, make sure to avoid any interference from the supervisor, contractor, or other people in whose presence the labourers may not feel free to talk. One way of doing this is for one or two members of the team to “distract” hangers-on by holding a separate discussion with them at a safe distance.

Conducting the Discussion

A group discussion should always have a moderator (preferably one of the team members). The moderator should request the participants to speak one at a time, give everyone a chance to speak, and try to restrain any shouting or abuse. He or she should begin by introducing the survey team and the purpose of the discussion.

Ethical Debate

In some of the public meetings you will be convening, the debate may become quite animated or even chaotic. The following general principles of ethical debate are quite useful in such situations: (1) no use of foul language; (2) adherence to the agreed agenda; (3) no personal attacks or political party propaganda; (4) no-one under the influence of alcohol should be allowed to speak. These principles should be announced at the beginning of the meeting if there is any likelihood of disruption.

Drunkards and Trouble-makers

The presence of drunk persons or other trouble-makers at a public meeting can be quite disruptive and irritating. Sometimes it is part of a deliberate attempt to sabotage the meeting. In such situations, try to avoid losing your temper or getting drawn into a futile argument with the trouble-maker(s). Quite often, it is best to let the village community deal with them. If it looks like things are getting out of hand, you can state calmly that the meeting will be closed unless calm is restored – and close the meeting if the warning has no effect.

Recording the Proceedings

As always, be careful with record-keeping. One team member should be designated to record the proceedings. This is best done in the “Team Diary”, unless there is a reason to do it in some other way. In the case of group discussions held prior to filling a questionnaire (e.g. the Worksite Questionnaire), notes may also be taken on a rough copy of the questionnaire.

Mike

If a sound system is available in the village, don’t miss a chance to borrow it for the public meeting. A mike can be of great help not only for effective acoustics but also to facilitate orderly proceedings.

4. DOCUMENTATION AND MEDIA WORK

Documentation

The field records are not limited to survey questionnaires. Other important forms of documentation include:

- *Photographs*: Visual evidence can be very powerful. If you have a camera, please be alert to the chance of taking an informative picture (and not just snaps of your favourite team member). Creative photographs of NREGA worksites, PDS outlets, midday meals, official records, public meetings, transparency devices and other subjects have been used quite well in different contexts. For instance, a photograph can be very effective as evidence of the use of machines at NREGA worksites, or of child labour in a public establishment. Photographs of people's homes, families, activities, Job Cards and ration cards can also be very helpful.
- *Videos*: Similar remarks apply to videos, e.g. testimonies presented at a public meeting or during the survey. However, make sure not to intimidate people with unwanted "shooting", especially during interviews and group discussions.
- *Testimonies and case studies*: Specific "stories" of particular persons or families can serve as helpful illustrations of the ground situation. For instance, a simple story about how someone's life changed after he or she got employment under NREGA can convey more about this Act than reams of statistics. There is some space for case studies in the questionnaires, but you can also record testimonies and case studies on separate sheets of blank paper whenever it seems useful.
- *Team diaries*: Another useful mode of recording is the team diary – see below.

In all circumstances, please be as rigorous as possible in your documentation. The more accurate the information, the more useful it is likely to be.

Media Work

Sometimes, an effort is made to ensure that the irregularities identified during the survey are redressed without delay. Local media coverage can be of great help in the grievance redressal process, and also in ensuring that this process has larger "demonstration effects". Preparing occasional press releases will be part of our work. However, media work needs to be done carefully, in consultation with the survey coordinators. Please be particularly careful in answering enquiries from media persons; if at all possible, tell them that you will respond in writing. If in doubt, refer these enquiries to the survey coordinators.

You should consider holding a press conference at the end of your work. If you do so, make sure to prepare appropriate material (e.g. a summary of your findings) in writing for media persons. Whenever possible, give them written material (in local language and/or English) – this is much safer, especially when local journalists have a poor understanding of the issues.

5. TEAM WORK

Throughout the survey, you will be working in one small team (say, four or five volunteers). Below are a few guidelines for effective team work.

Coordination and Tasks

Each team will have a coordinator. The main responsibility of the coordinator is to ensure adequate quality and timely progress of the survey work, and also to liaise with the survey coordinators. As far as possible, the team coordinator should call the survey coordinators every day for a brief report.

A clear division of tasks within the team is essential. The specific division of tasks will be finalised during the training workshop, after the formation of the teams. Aside from a coordinator, each team should have: (1) a “record keeper”, who is responsible for documentation, (2) a “treasurer”, for accounting and cash management. You may also find it convenient to assign “logistics” to one volunteer within the team (possibly by rotation, e.g. one week at a time).

If the team includes local volunteers, make sure that they are well integrated with the rest of team. Involve them in all team discussions and survey activities. Quite likely, you will have much to learn from their skills and knowledge. Similarly, if any team members have special cultural or communication skills, try to put them to good use.

Time Management

Careful time management is essential for effective team work. If different team members sleep, eat and bathe at different times of the day, much time is likely to be wasted. Try to agree on a basic “routine” (preferably starting early in the morning) that suits all team members, with set times for different tasks, and to stick to the routine. Try to develop a habit of punctuality, at least for the time of the survey!

In most cases, you should be able to complete the planned tasks in the assigned time without any problem. If for unavoidable reasons (e.g. long distances in difficult terrain) you are unable to keep up with the planned schedule, make sure to inform the survey coordinators as soon as the problem arises.

Survey Routine

Quite likely, the survey coordinators will ask your team to follow a particular itinerary and “survey routine” (with specific activities on different days). In that case, please follow the survey routine and always consult the survey coordinators if you need to deviate from it.

Daily Meeting

Each team should hold a daily meeting, to review the progress of the work and discuss any problems that may arise, e.g. with survey work, logistics, health, team dynamics, etc. The meeting need not be long, but it should be held every day as far as possible (even if you are tired!). Take this opportunity to deal promptly and frankly with any personal tensions or issues amongst the team members. Make sure to pay attention also to any health problems that any team member may have.

Eating and Sleeping

Make sure to eat well and try to avoid skipping meals. An empty stomach is a recipe for poor work and bad temper! Sometimes you may need to work late at night, so that the work remains on track, but don't go overboard - some volunteers work round the clock for a few days and then collapse!

Accounts

Each team will have a treasurer, responsible for cash management and careful accounting. Please cooperate with the treasurer, be considerate with team funds, and keep receipts whenever possible. If any differences arise about spending the team funds, the team coordinator and treasurer should decide together.

Team Kit

Each team will be carrying a “kit” with questionnaires, forms, guidelines, stationary, and some basic equipment (e.g. first-aid). One person should be in charge of safe-keeping of the team kit throughout the survey. Please keep the kit in good order, protect it from rain and rodents, and keep it safely at all times - day and night.

Team Diary

The team diary should be maintained by the “record-keeper” and kept in the team kit. The diary can be used to note useful observations that are not covered in the questionnaires, and also to keep a brief record of the team's activities (without going into trivial matters such as

where or what the team is eating). A good time to fill the team diary is after the daily meeting, but entries can be made at any time.

Troubleshooting

Try to resolve any problems that may arise through team discussions. If you have a serious problem and are unable to resolve it as a team, call the survey coordinators.

6. PRACTICALITIES

Logistics

Logistic issues will be discussed at the training workshop. Briefly, you will have to make your own arrangements for transport, food, and accommodation, with the available team funds. Since the funds are quite modest, you will have to look for low-cost arrangements.

For accommodation, please don't run to the nearest city or guest house – staying in villages may seem less comfortable, but is likely to be much nicer. In most villages you will be able to find a suitable place to stay, e.g. the local school or Panchayat Bhawan.

For transport, you should generally use local public conveyance. If no conveyance is available and the distances are not too large, don't miss the chance to walk (provided that it is not difficult for any team member). In exceptional circumstances where the distances are large and no public conveyance is available, you can hire a vehicle in consultation with the survey coordinators.

As far as meals are concerned, you can accept local hospitality, but please avoid being a burden on anyone or accepting hospitality (accommodation or food) from persons with vested interests such as the local sarpanch, sacheev, MLA, contractor, PDS dealer, etc. Where you feel welcome, you can ask the village community to feed each team member in a different house. This arrangement is highly recommended, also because it is an opportunity to spend time in people's houses and have informal discussions with them. Another possibility is to ask someone (e.g. the person who cooks the mid-day meal in the local school, or one of the poorer residents of the village) whether he or she would be willing to cook for you for a reasonable remuneration. This will give him or her some extra income and, again, give you an opportunity to spend time with a local person. If all else fails, or if time is too short to explore other options, just look for a *dhaba*.

As a matter of principle, you should not accept any hospitality or logistic assistance from government officials. Their cooperation with the survey (especially in terms of answering queries and providing information or documents), of course, is welcome.

Local Assistance

In some places, a local “host organisation” will be available to help you. The extent of assistance may vary from general advice to providing local hospitality and accompanying you to the field. It is very important to maintain a good rapport with the host organisations and to be considerate towards them. This is especially so in the case of organisations that have limited resources. For instance, you should avoid making unreasonable demands, imposing a financial burden, disrupting their work, or being a nuisance in other ways. It is a good idea to discuss the purpose, method and findings of the survey with your hosts rather than just treat them as a guest house or travel agent. We leave the details to your wise judgement.

What to Bring

It is a good idea to travel light, especially if long walks are involved (which is likely to be the case). However, don’t forget to bring essential equipment such as comfortable footwear (one pair!), a towel, bedsheet, notebook, etc. When packing your clothes, think not only about weather and comfort but also cultural appropriateness. Feel free to bring a light musical instrument, puppet or other items that may help with communication or entertainment. It is also useful if at least some team members have a digital camera and laptop.

7. ETHICAL ISSUES

It is important to conduct the interviews in an ethical manner, and in particular to avoid taking advantage of the position of power in which you may find yourself. For instance, make sure to introduce yourself clearly, to explain the purpose of the survey, and to be considerate in accepting any refreshments that may be offered. Also, do not press the respondent for answers, if he or she is reluctant. In some cases (e.g., sacheev or contractor), however, gentle persistence may be required from time to time.

If people come to you with complaints related to the subject matter of the survey (e.g. delays in NREGA wage payments or irregularities at the local ration shop), please listen to them and consider helping, especially if this can be done within the framework of survey activities (e.g. by organizing a public meeting). However, avoid empty promises (e.g. “we will come back” or “we will speak to the District Collector”) and impulsive interventions that cannot be

sustained. If you decide to intervene, you should do it as a team and not individually, and preferably in consultation with the survey coordinators.

8. A FEW TIPS TO STAY SAFE

Some of the areas where you will be working are considered as sensitive areas. There is no cause for worry, but you must be responsible and protect your (and everyone's) safety. The following tips may be useful in this respect.

- Follow the survey guidelines and cooperate with the team coordinator.
- Team coordinators should speak with the survey coordinators at least once in day.
- Make your stay arrangements in the morning – never wait for the evening.
- Do not move around after dark. Stay together at the site of overnight stay.
- Avoid any bravado or provocative behaviour.
- As far as possible, stay in groups (at least two) at all times, and in any case after dark.
- Avoid going to very remote areas except in consultation with the survey coordinators.
- Be particularly careful in areas without mobile network coverage.
- Carry your ID and letter of introduction with you at all times.
- If local residents give you advice related to security (e.g. to leave a village before dark), take it seriously and discuss it as a team.
- Avoid unnecessary polemics, e.g. about party politics.
- Don't respond to any provocations from drunkards or other trouble-makers. Stay calm and try to let local residents deal with them.
- Do not consume alcohol or any intoxicant at any time – no compromise on this!
- In the event of an emergency, avoid panic reactions, especially if you are on your own. Try to respond calmly as a group and call the survey coordinators immediately.

Please bear in mind not only your own safety but also that of others – teammates as well as local residents, especially those who may be submitting complaints. For instance, collective complaints are always safer than individual complaints (in terms of avoiding possible harassment). If you record individual complaints or testimonies, think about the possible consequences and make sure that the person concerned is aware of them. Try to ensure that he or she knows how to seek help if needed.

9. RECAP: DOS AND DON'TS

Before saying good-bye, we reiterate a few crucial points:

General

- Follow the guidelines at all times.
- Keep in touch with the survey coordinators every day.
- Be considerate towards the host organisations and avoid being a burden on them.
- Be mindful of your safety as well as that of others.
- Try to make good use of creative means of communication and documentation.
- Don't accept hospitality or assistance from vested interests or the local administration.
- Aim at high standards of data quality.
- In the event of any problem, call the survey coordinators.

Interviews

- Introduce yourself clearly and patiently.
- Work in pairs as far as possible.
- Pay attention to reference periods, units of measurement, etc.
- Avoid blanks (if the question does not apply, write "NA").
- Write clearly, especially in the right-hand column.
- Take time to record the respondent's comments as well as your personal observations.
- Be kind and considerate with the respondent – and your teammates.
- Work hard but enjoy yourselves!

PART 2: SURVEY- SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

10. THE PEEP SURVEY 2013

This survey of five major entitlement programmes is being conducted in ten states: Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. The schemes covered in the survey are the Public Distribution System (PDS), the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme, the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Scheme, and social security pensions (mainly old-age and widow pensions, under the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme and Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme respectively). If time permits, we will also include a brief inspection of Primary Health Centres (PHCs). The survey comes at an important time – a time of lively debates about the National Food Security Bill as well as about larger issues of social policy in India.

The basic purpose of the survey is to assess the achievements and failures of these major programmes, and how they can be improved. The comparative perspective will help to identify lessons that can be learnt from the more successful states. The exercise will be conducted in partnership with local organisations that are working on these issues and have expressed an interest not only in participating in the survey but also in helping to translate its findings into practical change.

11. WORK PLAN

Each team will work in one particular state, and in that state, visit two districts. The proposed timetable is as follows:

Training workshop at IIT Delhi	24-25 May
Travel to District 1 and local orientation	26-27 May, 2013
Survey of four villages in District 1	27 May – 3 June
Travel to District 2 and local orientation	4-5 June
Survey of four villages in District 2	6-13 June
Campaign activities	14-17 June
Travel to Delhi	16-17 June
Debriefing workshop at IIT Delhi	18-19 June

In each sample district, we have selected one block for the survey, and in that block, four villages (in different Gram Panchayats) have been selected through random sampling. In each block, you will have eight days to survey these four villages – two days per village. Thus, there are 80 sample villages in the survey as a whole, with each of the 10 teams covering 8 villages. The list of sample villages is in your team kit.¹

12. SURVEY ACTIVITIES

In each village, there are five major tasks: (a) A Village Questionnaire with general details of the village (and also of the local ration shop); (b) A general household questionnaire for the sample households; (c) A separate questionnaire for sample pensioners; (d) Checklists for the ICDS and MDM schemes; (e) A social audit of the old-age and widow pension schemes (i.e. verification of pension lists). Thus, in each village, the team has to fill five questionnaires aside from conducting the verification of pension lists:

1. Village Questionnaire
2. Household Questionnaire
3. Pensioner Questionnaire
4. MDM Checklist
5. ICDS Checklist

Village Questionnaire

The first task when you reach a sample village is to complete the Village Questionnaire with the help of knowledgeable local residents (including, if possible, at least one Gram Panchayat functionary such as the secretary or Gram Rozgar Sevak). If there are gaps, you can fill them as you go along (e.g. after consulting Gram Panchayat records, which may not be possible as soon as you arrive), but please try to obtain most of the essential information at the beginning, as this will help you to proceed with other questionnaires.

The last section of the Village Questionnaire is about the local ration shop (PDS outlet). To complete this section, you will have to make a surprise visit to the local ration shop and meet the PDS manager.

¹ The survey districts are: Katihar and Muzaffarpur (Bihar), Rajnandgaon and Sarguja (Chhattisgarh), Shivpuri and Mandla (MP), Kullu and Sirmaur (Himachal Pradesh), Latehar and Dumka (Jharkhand), Nandurbar and Osmanabad (Maharashtra), Koraput and Sundargarh (Odisha), Baran and Sirohi (Rajasthan), Chitrakoot and Lakhimpuri Kheri (UP), Dindigul and Villupuram (Tamil Nadu).

Household Questionnaire

In each sample village, we have selected 30 sample households at random from the list of NREGA Job Cards for that village (available on the internet). The list of sample households is in your team kit, along with a print-out of their “electronic Job Cards”. As far as possible, you should interview *all* 30 sample households in each village. The household questionnaire, and how to fill it, will be discussed in detail during the training workshop – see also Part 1 of the Survey Manual.

Pensioner Questionnaire

This questionnaire focuses on issues related to the old-age and widow pension schemes. It is addressed to individual pensioners, selected from the pension lists. Please make sure to interview the pensioner himself or herself, and not other family members.

You should try to interview 12 pensioners in each village, selected at random from the pension lists (with the proportion of elderly and widowed pensioners similar to their ratio on the pension lists – more on this during the training workshop). If there are fewer than 12 pensioners in the sample village, interview all of them.

We are trying to get hold of the pension lists for the sample villages in advance. In many states, however, this is proving difficult. If the pension lists are not available in advance for any of the sample villages, then on the *first day* of the survey week (for each of the two sample districts/blocks) two team members should take charge of getting a copy of the pensions lists (for the sample villages) from the block office. If it takes time, the team should proceed and these two team members should catch up whenever they are able to get the pension lists.

MDM Checklist

The midday meal checklist is a simple list of questions about the midday meal in the local school. It should be filled at local government schools, initially with the help of the midday meal cook, and then with one of the teachers, preferably the headteacher. You should try to fill this checklist at *two* local government schools – those closest to the sample village. If you

run out of time, then visit one school at least. If schools are closed at the time of your visit to a particular village, you can skip this questionnaire.

ICDS Checklist

The ICDS checklist is a simple list of questions about the local Anganwadi centre (AWC). Like the MDM checklist, it should be filled at the *two* nearest Anganwadis, with the help of the Anganwadi worker (AWW). Anganwadis are supposed to be open throughout the year, so this checklist must be filled in *all* villages.

Verification of Pension Lists

Finally, you should conduct a full verification of the entire pension lists for the sample village, i.e. check whether each name on the list corresponds to someone who is alive, eligible for the pension, and receiving the pension regularly. For this verification exercise, please use the “Pension List Verification” format. This involves tracing *all* the beneficiaries listed on the official old-age and widow pension lists for the sample village, to verify whether they are actually getting a pension, and to check whether there are any fake names on the list (e.g. “duplicates” or “ghosts”). A large part of this verification exercise can be done in a public meeting, or a series of public meetings, but as far as possible you must try to meet all the pensioners on the list, to be on the safe side. Further guidelines for conducting the verification of pension lists will be discussed in the training workshop.

13. SURVEY ROUTINE

In each survey district, on the first day, please spare some time to plan the route chart for your time there. In many cases, you will have a route chart prepared in advance by the state co-ordinator. In others, you may have to seek the help of a local organization to figure out the most efficient – both in terms of time and money - way to cover all the sample villages in the time that you have, i.e. roughly eight days per district.

The survey schedule is quite tight – just two days per village, with no extra time for travel. Each interview, as mentioned above, must be conducted in pairs. As each team will have at least six investigators, you are expected to split into three groups: two pairs to conduct the household interviews while the third pair can visit the local Anganwadis and government schools to fill the ICDS and MDM checklists. Besides this, you need time to fill the Village Questionnaire, visit the local ration shop, verify the pension lists, and interview the sample pensioners.

Given this tight schedule, you will need to:

- Be punctual and disciplined.
- Cooperate with the team coordinator.
- Keep some time each day for a group meeting and “fairing out” your questionnaires.
- Plan ahead, e.g. find out in advance about travel options to the next village.

14. FIELD ACTIVITIES

If you have time after you have completed your five tasks, you may use it to:

- Conduct a longer informal group discussion or public meeting on matters related to the functioning of these schemes and programmes.
- Distribute the “Know Your Rights” leaflet at this meeting and discuss it with the participants.
- Help people file collective complaints (if they want), and submit them to the Block Development Officer or Block Supply Officer. Make sure they get a dated and signed receipt, and keep a copy if possible - otherwise the complaint is unlikely to be heard.
- Prepare a press release based on your survey findings. If there is a local organization helping, they can put you in touch with the local media. But please do not allow local media to disrupt your survey in any way. Be sure to discuss this with the local organization before doing any media work.

Otherwise these activities may be conducted during the action phase of the survey, i.e., in the second district of each state (except Maharashtra, where the action district is the first district).

Appendix: Public Hearings*

It is a good idea to conclude your work with a “public hearing”, where the survey findings can be presented, along with testimonies from concerned persons. However, this should be done (if at all) in consultation with the local organization and with its full involvement, since organizing public hearings on our own is beyond our capacity.

Below is a possible “agenda” for a public hearing:

- Introduction of the public hearing and participants
- Brief presentation on the Act and its significance
- Summary of survey findings
- Testimonies from NREGA workers and concerned persons
- Responses from the public to the findings
- Responses from government authorities
- Resolutions if any

These suggestions are not exhaustive and the teams should feel free to plan the agenda and event in the light of their own experience.

Village functionaries and government officials should attend these public hearings. Queries from panelists and the public can be addressed to them through the meeting. For this and other purposes, it is very important to conduct the meeting in a firm yet fair manner. The person coordinating the meeting should instill confidence that he/she is giving everyone an opportunity to present their point of view.

Here are a few other points to consider:

Application drives: Participants who have a job card may be given an opportunity for on-the-spot work applications, at a desk on the side of the public hearing (concurrently with the public hearing). Please ensure that dated and signed receipts are issued the same day, and that entries are also made on the job card.

Layout and display: Careful layout of the venue and creative displays can be of great help in making the event come to life. Possible items for display include charts of summary findings, illustrative case studies, sample verification sheets, posters, primers, leaflets, etc.

Sound and mike: The sound system should be of good quality and tested well in advance. Control of the mike should remain at all times with the person coordinating the meeting.

Recording and proceedings: Please ensure that the proceedings are carefully recorded, including video recording wherever possible. Team of volunteers should be formed for detailed note-taking. Every issue, presentation and resolution must also be minuted and recorded as per the ordinary procedures of the Gram Sabha.

Time-keeping: Try to avoid long speeches and make sure to end by 3 pm so that all members of the social audit teams may reach the Block Headquarters early the same evening.

Ground rules of ethical debate: The following are general principles of ethical debate that have been proposed in earlier events of this kind: (1) no use of foul language; (2) adherence to the current agenda item; (3) no personal attacks or political party propaganda; (4) no-one under the influence of alcohol should be allowed to speak. These principles should be announced at the beginning of the meeting.

* This note was written with reference to NREGA but can easily be adapted for other purposes.