Working group 1

GUIDELINES CONCERNING THE PRE-INTERVENTION STUDY

PARTICIPANTS TO THE WORKING GROUP

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Note: *Dr. Khuat Thu Hong has written the following guidelines.*

We believe that most associations of a given territory working with groups of street children are facing common problems in the preliminary phase of their intervention. The lack of knowledge and understanding of the groups' key features makes difficult designing appropriate and cost-effective strategies and programs.

Before any intervention to support street children, it is important to study the field's reality. This type of study may be referred to as pre-intervention, or action research.

The local often disregards this type of research associations for two main reasons: methodological complexity and excessive financial costs.

The following guidelines offer the possibility to design a research framework adapted to the association's needs and abilities. Depending on the local environment, specific cooperation between associations can allow a mutualization of resources to share costs and results.

The general objectives are:

- to introduce systematic steps to design and conduct a research that will be used for small-scale intervention programming,
- to provide simple and easy-to-use instructions for those who have little/no research experience.

The guidelines are based on a number of designs and methods used in research of street children carried out in various developing countries.

1 BEFORE THE START OF THE PRE-INTERVENTION RESEARCH: THE PREPARATION

The preparation for a pre-intervention research should always be done according to the necessity of getting quickly an easily usable information. It consists of two major tasks:

- **Identification and involvement of stakeholders into the research:** Street children existence may often be denied based on the absence of viable statistics. Their specificities and needs are often ignored or badly known which prevent from taking adequate decisions. It is crucial to have a wide range of stakeholders sharing common goals and requiring the same information basis: social workers, representatives of social organizations and NGOs, community leaders, local authorities working with children and families, as well as the children themselves.

  Stakeholders provide insights on the studied subjects and help building ownership for later interventions and commitment for taking actions. They participate from the beginning and through the different steps of the research: defining its purpose, commenting on the design and tools, giving practical help, and, once a draft study is done, commenting on the structure and contents of the draft and suggest a strategy of dissemination.

- **Creation of the research team** (and logistic arrangements: contacting local authorities, financial and human resources, preparation of stationeries, transportation, etc.). The research team should fulfill the following tasks:

  - organization of the fieldwork: data collection (questionnaires, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews),
  - data processing (entry, cleaning and processing of collected data),
  - data analysis (report's elaboration and presentation of results).

2 DESIGNING THE RESEARCH

Step 1. Defining research objectives

Review goals and objectives of the **intervention project**: they will define research objectives and research questions. They will also have an incidence on the type and scope of the research as well as the target groups.

Research objectives determine what knowledge and information that the research should produce that can be used to guide the intervention design. As described later, research objectives will direct the creation of research questions, and determine the subsequent research tasks (e.g. sampling, methodologies, instruments, etc.). It is advisable that the number objectives should not be large, as these are fundamental issues that need to be addressed by the research. These objectives should also be clear, precise, and feasible to achieve.

Step 2. Formulation of research questions

The research questions:

- must be answered in order to meet the research objectives,
- help developing research instruments, i.e. questionnaires and/or guidelines for data collection,
- help directing data analysis (consistency with the project objectives).

The research questions: some examples concerning the pre-intervention study

What do the street children currently know about HIV/AIDS, modes of HIV transmission, and methods of prevention of infection?

- Which is the children's current level of awareness of the risks?
- What do children know about their rights to health?
- How do the children know and like peer education on HIV/AIDS?
- How do they prefer the peer education to be? What model would they suggest?
- Who and which organizations the children see and expect to support them in regard of HIV/AIDS prevention? And why?
- Do the stakeholders recognize their role in supporting the children in HIV/AIDS prevention activities?
- What are the possibilities for the setting up a network of the supporting stakeholders?

Step 3: Selecting research methodologies and techniques of data collection

Methodologies and techniques of data collection are guided by research objectives and questions, but in fact are defined by:

- Types and depths of information needed:
  - If the research questions are on trends of certain behaviors of street children, then **quantitative information** collected from a **sample survey** is appropriate (e.g. to answer question of how many?).
  - If the research questions required **in-depth information**, then **qualitative research methods** should be adopted to provide required information (e.g. to answer question of why/how).
- Scope of the research and resources available. If the research is nationwide with large amount of finance and humans allocated, then quantitative research methods can be adopted.

Obviously, no research method can be regarded as being stronger than other methods. Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages, and the adoption of it depends on a variety of factors. It is strongly suggested that a research should combine a number of research methods and data collection techniques. In fact, no research can be considered as exclusively 'qualitative' or 'quantitative'.

Selecting research methodologies

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods can be applied for the pre-intervention of street children-HIV/AIDS. The quantitative research, through survey with a questionnaire of close-ended questions, helps with the collection and analysis of data that gives information of trends within a sample, which should be selected to represent certain populations, or groups, of street children (not the whole population). The qualitative method (through focus group discussion or/and semi-structure interviews) will be used to collect in-depth information that is complimentary to the quantitative ones.

Step 4. Developing research tools

Questionnaires (or structured interviews):

- collect the same information from all the children interviewed,
- generate representative quantitative data of the target children population,
- suitable for collecting straightforward factual information from a large number of people.

Different options of answers (yes/no, often/never, etc.) are indicated on the form so that the interviewer simply ticks the selected reply. In many cases some open-ended questions are added to provide in-depth information complementary to the quantitative data.

Brings out data easy to analyze.

Semi-structured interviews: Informal sessions, usually with individual participants, using a list of questions or themes rather than a questionnaire with fixed questions. The interviewer is free to phrase the questions, and to ask them in any order as long as they follow the broad themes of the research. This approach gives participants greater control over the direction of the conversation and allows them to tell their story in their own way. Participants usually enjoy such interviews.

Focus group discussions: They are facilitated discussions on a specific topic. They are useful for exploring agreed ideas and attitudes in the early stages of fieldwork, in order to find out what questions to ask and what words to use in interviews and questionnaires. They do not produce factual data: they simply provide ideas about what people think are the facts. They are also useful for identifying the knowledge, ideas, values, beliefs and attitudes of a group, as well as for discussing questions about the kind of interventions that people think would be successful.

Step 5. Sampling

Sampling is a strategy used to identify and select a sample (or sub-population) of the population targeted by the research. There are a number of appropriate sampling methods:

Selecting a sample for quantitative survey

The most appropriate sampling method often used in a quantitative survey of the street children is cluster sampling. Since the population of street children in a city is basically unknown, a random sample is impossible to draw. Street children often live/work in certain, scattered neighborhoods of a city. In addition, at each neighborhood, there may have different groups of children who share similar features such as place of origin, ethnicity, type of work, etc. A cluster sampling therefore starts with a mapping exercise of venues where street children are mostly found in relatively large numbers. This can be helped with either field visits or the use of statistics provided by local authorities. The mapping should collect information on the relative number of children in those venues and their key features to ascertain that the samples selected will have children of different groups. It is important for the sampling frame to increase the heterogeneousness across groups and (relative) homogeneousness within each group. Then, a cluster sampling strategy can be introduced to have proportional sub-samples of street children across the identified venues. It is strongly suggested that the researchers should not be too ambitious in selecting too many venues in a large geographical area.

Sample for quantitative survey

For this research, sub-samples of street children can only be meaningful if the number of children is not less than 50. For example, in our research, we focus on variables of age (between 7 and 12 and between 13 and 17 years of age), gender (male/female) as we can argue that these are most important in defining the vulnerabilities and risks of the children to HIV/AIDS infection. Then a sample of 200 street children consisting of 100 boys (50 aged between 7 and 12 and 50 aged between 13 and 17) and 100 girls (50 aged between 7 and 12 and 50 aged between 13 and 17) are appropriate.

Table 1. Distribution of sample for quantitative survey

Sub-group	Boys	Girls	Total
Aged between 7-12	50	50	100
Aged between 13-17	50	50	100
Total	100	100	200

Recruiting participants for qualitative research

One method of selecting a sample for qualitative research on street children is snowball sampling. The selection of children to be interviewed starts with one child and asking for suggestions about, and introductions to, other street children who might be interested in taking part in the research.

Another way to do sampling for qualitative research can also begin in a similar fashion mentioned previously, i.e. having a mapping exercises to identify venues and features of children groups. Then only a limited number of children will be selected from each group, depending on the scope of the study. It is however important to have the selected children representing key features of the group (e.g. age, education, gender, place of origins, work, etc.).

If in the research, group discussion of street children is considered useful, then a number of children will be drawn from the selected sample for that purpose. Children in a focus group discussion should share common characteristics, for example, a group of street girls aged 13-17 discussing their risks of HIV infection. Discussions should be arranged with more than one group of girls, in different places, in order to crosscheck the information. In addition, focus groups with adults (NGOs, social organizations, local authorities, police, etc.) could be organized to find out about attitudes towards the risks the street children may face.

Samples for qualitative study

For example, of each from the four sub-groups defined above, we can select 5 children for in-depth interviews, making a total number of 20 children covered by the qualitative research. Participants for 4 focus group discussion can also be recruited from these sub-groups.

Table 2. Distribution of participants for qualitative research

Number of participants from each sub-group per method	**Boys**		**Girls**		Total
	7-12	13-17	7-12	13-17	
In-depth interviews	5	5	5	5	20
Focus group discussion	8	8	8	8	32
Total	13	13	13	13	52

In this study we also want to explore possibility to set up a supporting network of different stakeholders, such as local authorities/community leaders, representative of local social organizations, social activists, NGOs, police, community members, etc. Focus group discussion or semi-structure interview are most appropriate methods to collection information from these people. It is ideal to have 2 focus group discussions with the stakeholders and few interviews with key informants who work in areas related to HIV/AIDS prevention or those who have experience in working with street children.

For instance, 2 group discussions will be held with the following people:

Group 1: local agencies

- 2 local authorities
- 2 policemen who work with street children
- 2 representatives of 2 social organizations which work with street children
- 2 NGOs staffs

Groups 2: community members (those who are active in social activities, 4 men and 4 women)

Interview key informants:

- 1 or 2 local health workers
- 1-2 experts who have experience in working with street children like psychologists, counselors, etc.

Step 6. Data collection

Once the sample has been selected, then process of data collection can begin.

Key steps for data collection should be taken are as follows:

For quantitative survey

- Prepare a full list of respondents (street children), including addresses (i.e. places where they can be approached).
- Make copies of structured questionnaires (make sure to have more copies than the actual number of street children to be interviewed as some copies may be lost, lack pages, damaged or interviewers can make some mistakes and want to re-fill the questionnaires).
- Assign each interviewers a number of respondents to interview drawn from the full list of the whole sample. The list should include names of the respondents and location where they were interviewed.
- Interviewers approach and interview the listed respondents, filling the questionnaires and taking notes of what happen during the interview.
- Supervisors (researchers) check the filled questionnaires and talk with the interviewers to clarify unclear issues. This should be done daily so that interviewers can still remember information provided by the interviewees, or they can correct mistaken information by going back to the same interviewees to get correct/additional information.
- It is useful to have daily meeting between researchers/PI(s) and data collectors to discuss any emerging issues so that necessary actions can be taken timely.
- It is advisable that each data collector keeps a fieldwork diary in which he/she puts all the notes of the fieldwork for later consideration (in report writing, data analysis, etc.).

  Note: At each site, it is also good to have observation of the socio-economic condition of the place and the group as well as to have background information such as local statistics and reports. This information will help to put the analysis in a broader context. Information is often available at local authorities or resource people.

For qualitative study (Focus group discussion)

- Invite participants selected for the discussion. Usually six to eight participants with the same characteristics (gender, age, place of living).
- Prepare the venues, drink, and other necessary facilities. The venues should be comfortable place with sufficient space for everyone to sit down comfortably in a circle and with no interruptions or spectators.
- Set time for discussion (no less than one hour and not normally more than two).
- The guidelines prepared should be ready (listing ideas, questions or topics to be covered).
- Moderator/facilitator lead the discussion, using the guidelines.
- Note-taker(s) should take notes of the discussion and record the discussion using tape recorder (if necessary and with consent of the participants).
- Assistant(s) should make sure that the discussion going smoothly without being interrupted by outsiders. They should also pay attention to any discussion that may occur between participants that are not moderated by the moderator(s), or keep record of any action of the participants that may bring about attention later by the research team.

For in-depth interview

- Make a list of people selected for the in-depth interview and assign each interviewer to cover a number of them. The lists would have all the names and locations where they are to be found.
- Make appointment with each of the participants (time and place).
- Interviewer approaches and conducts the interview as planned, using guidelines already prepared, and tape recorder (if necessary and with consent from the interviewees).
- The interview should be conducted in a convenient place that gives the participants a comfortable feeling.
- The interviewer should make a rapport with the participants and have their full consent to take part in the interview.
- While interviewing, interviewers should take notes of the main points of the interview.

Step 7. Analysis

Once the data has been collected, there will be a task of organizing the data for analysis. Data should be sorted by tools and cleaned. If possible, some data can be entered onto computer, using appropriate software (e.g. SPSS, NUD-IST, Ethnograph, Excel, etc.). For qualitative data collected in in-depth interviews and group discussion with tape recording, transcribing the tapes should be made.

The key steps for data processing and analyzing are as the follows:

For quantitative survey:

- Cleaning the data, making sure that all questions are answered properly and consistently.
- Code/re-code the data if necessary.
- Enter the data on computer, using appropriate software (if possible).
- Analyze the data to answer the research questions.
- Run frequencies (for all the variables).
- Make tabulations (e.g. education and income, types of job and place of origin, etc.).
- Do other statistical analysis if needed (correlations, regressions, etc.).

For qualitative survey:

- Transcribing the tapes.
- Coding the transcripts.
- Identifying themes.
- Analyze the themes to answer the research questions (highlighting phrases/sentences relevant to research questions; identifying relations among themes; finding answers to 'why'/'how' questions, etc.).

Combining and comparing quantitative and qualitative data:

- Check the consistency between quantitative and qualitative data set.
- Check to see if those data support/contradict each other.
- If the data are not consistent, explore reasons why.

Step 8: Report writing

The final step is writing the research report. A report may have the following structure:

Example of a report structure

Title page

Title, authors, date, organization, place, contact information.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements

Glossary

Explain technical terms, special words used, terms in the local language, acronyms and abbreviations.

Summary

(usually 1-3 pages)

This is a condensed version of the main report. It is not a description of the main report. The summary is always written last, once the main report has been completed. It should state in clear language: objectives, methods and circumstances of the research (who, what, where, why, when); main results; main conclusions and recommendations. Unless the report is targeted to specific agencies who intend to take (execute) actions on the basis of recommendations, the summary is not an 'Executive summary'.

Introduction

Background and justification of the research, audience and structure of the report.

Background and context

Population; economy; political background; legal framework; what was already known about the target group.

Research objectives

Justification and purpose of the study.

Methods and research process

Explain reasons for selecting overall research approach.

Describe each research tool, stating why it was used; what specific questions it was designed to ask; exactly how it was used.

Comment on difficulties experienced, especially those that might have affected results; describe the data obtained. Mention gaps in data and the shortcomings of the research.

Include profiles of the research area(s) in this section (reasons for choosing them, population, local economy; community infrastructure and so forth).

Research findings

This should be the largest part of the report, at least three-quarters of the total length. This part should be structured by sections (and sub-sections) that address main research question. Tables/diagrams/charts/quotations/boxes should be used to support the arguments and findings. Each section should end with a conclusion based on the data and analysis.

Conclusions

Base these directly on analysis of the data collected and explained in earlier chapters. Try to answer, or at least comment on, all the main research questions. Do not present new data or ideas in the conclusion; make a distinction between conclusions you can be sure about and those that are not certain. Include analysis of factors critical to designing policies and putting them in to practice.

Recommendations

Make a clear distinction between conclusions and recommendations; make only practical recommendations that could be carried out by organizations likely to read and act upon the report; base recommendations on the data and analysis presented in the report.

Bibliography

List all sources cited and used in the report.

Appendices/Annexes

If necessary these can be used to present some examples of data that are too long or complex to be included in the main body of the report. But appendices must not be longer than the report.

CONCLUSION

These guidelines, as mentioned in the introduction, are intended to be useful to the design and conduction of a pre-intervention research by people with little or no research experience. It has therefore been designed to allow readers, by simply follow all the steps described, to generate and execute research themselves. However, it must be emphasized that this is not a sort of cookbook, as many detailed instructions of how to perform each task are not described in the guidelines. The readers should therefore consider the guidelines as general orientation and should apply them in flexible ways to meet their research goals.

FOR FURTHER REQUEST

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This working group were formed for the international seminar organized by UNESCO and UNAIDS 'Protecting the rights of street children: combating HIV/AIDS and discrimination', which was held in Bamako, 3-5 December 2003.

The ideas expressed in this publication are the results of a working group and, therefore, only reflect the participants' opinion.

The following **six groups** were formed for the international seminar 'Protecting the rights of street children: combating HIV/AIDS and discrimination':

1. **Pre-intervention study**
2. **Advocacy** (in french)
3. **Listening and teaching skills for educators** (in french)
4. **Contents**
5. **Provision of care and support for HIV infected street children** (in french)
6. **Getting children off the street** (in french)

The six guidelines are available on the website **www.paueducation.com/sida**

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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p.a.u.education

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