

Report of a Five-Day Training of Field Research Assistants held in Benin City on the Project: “Gender Inequality and Rural Women’s Health in Post-Covid-19 Nigeria: Towards Inclusive and Sustainable Rural Women’s Health in Nigeria”.

April 3-7, 2023

Introduction

The Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED) is currently implementing a project in Edo and Delta states titled "Gender Inequality and Rural Women’s Health in Post-Covid-19 Nigeria: Towards Inclusive and Sustainable Rural Women’s Health in Nigeria." This project aims to address gender inequality and improve the health of rural women in the post-COVID-19 era.

As part of the project's preparations, CPED organized a five-day training workshop to equip the Project Field staff or Research Assistants with effective data collection methodologies. This training was essential to enhance the capacity of the research assistants to carry out their assignments effectively.

The project will be implemented in Edo and Delta states, targeting three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Edo state, specifically Etsako East, Esan Central, and Ovia South West, as well as three LGAs in Delta state, namely Ethiope East, Ika South, and Isoko South.

The training, spanning five days, was facilitated by one of the Principal Investigators (Mrs. Mary Igharo), Engr. Job Eronmhonele - CPED's Deputy Executive Director, Dr. Johnson E. Dudu (a project team member), Mr. Osagie Aitokhuehi, Mr. Kopdena Boniface John and Mr. Ernest Imongan and Mr. Jones Abriku. The training sessions were attended by 30 Field staff recruited from the project target LGAs in Edo and Delta States, comprising 15 males and 15 females. Additionally, program and research staff from CPED were also present.

This training plays a crucial role in preparing the project team to effectively collect data and fulfill their roles in the project. It is a significant step towards improving rural women's health and addressing gender inequality in the target communities of Edo and Delta States.

Sessions Covered in the Training

The training for the project field staff was conducted meticulously over the course of the five days, with various aspects covered:

Registration and Welcome: The training commenced promptly at 9:00 am on the first day with the registration of participants. Mr. Job Eronmhonele, the Deputy Executive Director of CPED, started the training with a warm welcome to the participants and provided a brief introduction of CPED as an independent, non-partisan, non-profit, and non-governmental research organization. CPED's dedication to promoting sustainable development and reducing poverty and inequality

through policy-oriented research and active engagement on development issues was emphasized. Also, the participants were introduced to the house keeping/training rules which should be adhered to by all participants. Thereafter, all research assistants, project staff and facilitators were giving the opportunity to introduce themselves in order to foster familiarity. This was then followed by the introduction of the project to the participants present.

The Deputy Director of CPED, also a project team member, presented the project titled "Gender Inequality and Rural Women's Health in Post-Covid-19 Nigeria: Towards Inclusive and Sustainable Rural Women's Health in Nigeria." He stated that the project's core goal is to promote gender equality in post-COVID rural Nigeria through knowledge generation, innovative women's empowerment approaches, and scaling of effective interventions, recognizing that transforming social structures and norms is crucial to empower women.

He stressed that rural women's significant contributions to Nigeria's development often go unrecognized and undervalued, as their roles are commonly perceived as centered around household duties as wives and mothers, rather than acknowledged as economic activities.



Photo: Research Assistants in one of the Sessions

He cited recent research conducted by the Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED) which highlighted the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls in rural Nigerian communities. In areas such as education, food security, health, livelihoods, and an increase in unpaid responsibilities. Furthermore, he pointed out that the diversion of resources from rural healthcare services to pandemic response negatively impacted women and girls' access to essential healthcare. He added the limited availability of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities in rural areas struggled to cope with the increased demand during the pandemic, consequently reducing women and girls' access to hygiene and sanitary materials.

Mr. Eronmhonele stressed the urgent need for further research to address knowledge gaps that should focus on recovery programs that incorporate diverse women's voices and promote gender-

transformative changes. He reiterated the importance of policy-oriented research aimed at eliminating barriers to women's resource access, involving men and boys in reshaping gender dynamics and cultural norms, and creating equitable economic recovery strategies. He underscored that gender-disaggregated data is crucial for measuring the pandemic's impact and post-COVID-19 recovery.

In his conclusion, the deputy director of CPED stated that the women-rise project aims to address the above highlighted issues, particularly in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria.

Introduction to Research methods: Mixed Method Research: This session of training was designed to exposed the research assistants to mixed-method research approach and also to learn various strategies for engaging with key informants during interviews and focus group discussions. Dr. Johnson Dudu was in charge of this session and kick-started the discussion by defining mixed method research as a research approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods in a single study or research project. He noted that the research approach offers researchers a powerful way to gather a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of a research problem by integrating the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.



Photo: Research Assistants in one of the Sessions

Key characteristics of mixed method research pointed out by Dr. Jonson are depicted below:

- Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods
- Sequential or Concurrent Phases
- Research Questions and Hypotheses
- Data Triangulation
- Flexibility

The trainer also highlighted the advantages of mixed method research as seen below:

1. Mixed method research provides a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem by examining it from multiple angles. It allows researchers to explore both the "what" and the "why" of a phenomenon.
2. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data can improve the validity of research findings by addressing potential biases or limitations associated with a single method.
3. Qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews and observations, offer in-depth insights into participants' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions, which quantitative methods alone may not capture.

4. Quantitative data can help establish statistical patterns and relationships that can be generalized to a larger population.
5. Mixed method research is often favored in fields like education, social sciences, and healthcare because it provides actionable insights that can inform policy, practice, and decision-making.

Data Collection Tools: Participants were introduced to mobile data collection and the use of ODK/Kobo Collect for data collection. The mobile data collection session which was facilitated by both Mr. Osagie Aitokhuehi and Mr. Kopdena Boniface John, began with the definition of mobile data collection. The facilitators made it clear that mobile data collection allows organizations to use mobile apps to collect a lot of quantitative data as well as qualitative data. According to them, instead of collecting data manually with pen and paper, the mobile data collection app facilitates data collection by ensuring that the data gets directly uploaded to the platform server, which is then stored in a database that could be used for further analysis to draw insights. In the class, the benefits of mobile data collection over the manual paper type were highlighted as follows:

- Reduced Cost
- Reduced Environmental Impact
- Increased Speed
- Increased Data Quality
- Automated Feedback
- Simple Storage and Backup
- Access to Analytics
- Proactive Decision Making

Practical Session with ODK/Kobo collect

The research assistants were formally introduced to the mobile app for data collection which is the ODK. This session was anchored by Mr. Boniface Kopdena John and Jones Abriku. They were able to defined ODK as an Open Data Kit, which is a system for facilitating easier and more streamlined collection of data using mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones. They opined that it is an open source that is freely distributed and accessible to anybody to use, replicate, and duplicate it for his/her personal applications they intend to make.

Some uses of ODK were explained to the participants and these includes:

- ODK features built-in checks and skip patterns, thereby eliminating the need for manual handling by data collectors. This enhances data quality and reduces the risk of human errors.
- It is able to monitor the progress remotely, able to make adjustments even once data collection has begun.

- It is easier to analyze and map your data faster.
- It has a centralized data storage.
- It improves use of time and costs. Especially with no need for time-consuming manual data entry when using paper questionnaires.

The facilitators further introduced the participants to mobile tool that they would be used for the project which they called *kobocollect*. They explained that kobocollect is part of the ODK family, because its underlying technology emanated from ODK. They made it clear that kobocollect is a data collection app which can be used on mobile devices to download forms from project, collect data from respondents and then upload that data back to the server. Some of the advantages of kobocollect they projected includes:

- Its ability to works both offline and online.
- Its user friendliness
- ODK simplifies the process of obtaining mapping data for geospatial analysis, making it more accessible and straightforward

Community Entry: This session was designed to elicit knowledge on community mobilization for effective project implementation. The trainers for this session were **Dr. Johnson Dudu and Mrs. Mary Igharo**. The first facilitator, Dr. Johnson talked about community entry and defined it as the process of initiating, nurturing and sustaining a desirable relationship with the purpose of securing and sustaining the community's interest in all aspect of a programme. He gave a clue on the initial preparation to make before any community entry. These includes identification of the target community, forming a scouting team to spy out the community, reading about the community from available sources(literature) and collecting informal information about the community (this is done through interview with individuals or associates who may have worked in that community before).

Dr. Johnson also highlighted the phases and steps to take in achieving a successful community entry as seen below:

Phase 1: Planning

Step 1: Get Ready

Step 2: Select a Community

Step 3: Identify Influencers/Leaders Who Will Support SYFF (Reference Groups)

Step 4: Decide on a Community Entry Strategy

Step 5: Prepare SYFF Information Materials for Key Audiences

Phase 2: Entering the Community

Step 6: Meet with the Community

Step 7: Be Ready to Answer Questions

Step 8: Leave Meeting with a Clear List of Next Steps and Commitments

Phase 3: Following-up and Continued Nurturing of Relationships

Step 9: Nurture Relationships with Reference Groups

The speaker Dr. Johnson Dudu highlighted some key issues on mobilizing community for effective implementation which include absolute respect to constituted community authorities and being friendly to community member.

Mrs. Igharo emphasized the significance of ethics and consent in community entry. She underscored the importance of conducting community entry activities in an ethically responsible manner. This entails respecting the rights and privacy of community members, ensuring their well-being and safety, and adhering to ethical guidelines and principles throughout the engagement process. She also highlighted the critical role of obtaining informed consent when engaging with a community. She emphasized that the process involves transparently explaining the purpose, objectives, and potential outcomes of the engagement to community members. It includes seeking their agreement or consent to participate and ensuring they fully comprehend their rights and the implications of their involvement.

Engaging community in local settings (Practice Session): There was also a Practice Session centered on engaging community in local settings. This gave all research assistants(RAs) the opportunity to be involved and learn from the practical activities that was aimed at developing the skills and techniques required to effectively interact with and involve community members within their specific local environments. This practice session typically includes activities and discussions designed to enhance one's ability to build relationships, communicate clearly, understand local context and culture, and promote active participation and collaboration within the community. The objective is to equip individuals with the necessary tools to work closely with community members to address issues, implement projects, or conduct research in a respectful and culturally sensitive manner.

This session was climaxed with a Questions and Answers presided over by Dr. Johnson Dudu. During the questions and answers session some RAs used the opportunity to shared their various experiences on what they have learnt during previous field work activities from different localities across the Niger Delta region. A Research Assistant shared his experience on how he was able to meet with the community timing in order to achieve his aim in the completion of research instruments. Another RA shared his experiences on how good communication skills and languages could bring out the best in the process of eliciting responses from the respondents while others were of the opinion that they were unable to access the community until they were able to pass through a community Chief/leader including scheduling his time to suit that of the community Chief in order not to interrupt with their market day activities.

In conclusion, the amiable facilitators were able to train and explain to the RAs the concept of community mobilization, emphasized the need to seek approval and inform village chiefs or community heads of the purpose of visits in order to gain access to communities effectively. They also learned the proper approach to community leaders during community entry and the importance of seeking ethics and consent in local settings.

Introduction to Data Collection Instruments: Household Questionnaire/Community Mapping:

This session was designed to familiarize the RAs with the household questionnaire and what community mapping is all about. This particular session was anchored by Mr. Ernest Imongan. He defined Household questionnaire as a structured set of questions designed to collect specific information from individual households. Mr. Ernest stated that this type of instrument aims to gather data about the following:

1. **Demographics:** Information about household members, their age, gender, education, and occupation.
2. **Economic Status:** Data related to income, assets, and livelihoods of household members.
3. **Healthcare:** Health-related information, including access to healthcare services and health conditions of household members.
4. **Education:** Details about educational levels, school attendance, and educational needs within the household.
5. **Housing and Amenities:** Data on housing conditions, access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and other amenities.
6. **Social and Cultural Aspects:** Information about the household's cultural practices, social dynamics, and community involvement.
7. **And other important issue related to the research topic**

The facilitator also discussed the concept of community mapping and described it as data collection technique that focuses on spatial information. He said it involves creating visual representations, often in the form of maps, to document the layout and resources within a community. According to him, community mapping seeks to:

- **Identify Resources:** Document the location of resources, such as schools, healthcare facilities, water sources, markets, and community centers.
- **Spatial Relationships:** Understand the spatial relationships between key community elements and landmarks.
- **Local Knowledge:** Capture local knowledge and perspectives on the community's geographical layout and landmarks.
- **Community Needs:** Highlight areas where specific interventions or improvements may be required.

Other important discussions that emanated from the teaching are highlighted below:

Understanding Mapping Terms:

- Base map: Is reference map that describes the geographical location and boundaries of an EA.
- Enumeration Area (EA): Is the smallest geographical statistical unit created for a housing and population.
- Housing Unit/Structure: Is a free-standing building that can have one or more dwellings for residential or commercial use.
- Households: Consists of a person or group of related or unrelated persons, who live together in the same dwelling unit that share common living arrangements, who acknowledge the same person as the household head, who eat together and are considered as one unit.
- Head of Household: Is a usual resident member of the household who is acknowledged by the other members of the household as the household head.

Household Mapping:

The key selections of Community Mapping are:

- All wards with target LGAs should be identified.
- All the wards within the LGAs should further be demarcated into blocks of 10 housing units.
- Randomly select a household to be administer questionnaires.
- Interview Head of household (male) and one adult female who may be the wife of the head of household in the selected household.

Mr. Ernest concluded that community mapping is particularly useful for projects that require a visual representation of community assets and challenges. The session was concluded when all research assistants were tasked with assignments that involved creating maps of their individual communities and identifying significant features and landmarks on these maps.

Guide to Conducting FGD/KII/Life History/Semi-Structured Interview: Conducting focus group discussions (FGDs), life history, semi-structure and key informant interviews (KIIs) are essential part of qualitative research and data collection. These methods help researchers gather in-depth insights and perspectives from respondents. Mr. Job Eronmhosele took charge of this session and helped in guiding the RAs on effective way to conduct qualitative interview. The guidelines for conducting the FGD as pointed out by the speaker are:

1. Group Size: For FGDs, select an appropriate group size, typically ranging from 6 to 10 participants. Ensure a diverse mix of participants.
2. Moderator: Appoint a skilled moderator to lead the discussion. The moderator should guide the conversation, ensure participation, and manage time.

3. Location: Choose a quiet and comfortable location for FGDs to encourage open and honest discussions.
4. Recording: Record FGD sessions (with participants' consent) or take thorough notes during the discussion.
5. Icebreakers: Start with icebreakers or introductory questions to establish rapport and create a relaxed atmosphere.

For the key informant, life history, semi-structure interviews, the guidelines include:

1. Selection: Identify key informants who are experts or highly knowledgeable about the research topic. These may include professionals, community leaders, or individuals with specific expertise.
2. Interviewer: Assign an experienced interviewer who can conduct KIIs effectively. The interviewer should be prepared to ask probing questions and follow up on responses.
3. Location: Conduct KIIs in a private and confidential setting to encourage candid responses.
4. Recording: Record KII sessions (with participants' consent) or take detailed notes during the interview.

The facilitator equally admonished the trainees to be mindful of the following when conducting a training session

- Open-Ended Questions: Use open-ended questions that encourage participants to elaborate and share their insights.
- Active Listening: Pay close attention to participants' responses and ask follow-up questions to dig deeper into their perspectives.
- Probe for Details: Encourage participants to provide specific examples and details to support their statements.
- Maintain Neutrality: Avoid expressing personal opinions or judgments during the sessions to maintain objectivity.
- Manage Time: Ensure that discussions or interviews stay within the allocated time frame.

Another issue that was brought to the fore was the ethical considerations. Mr. Job enjoined all RAs to adhere to ethical principles throughout the research, ensuring the well-being and privacy of respondents/participants and obtaining their informed consent before the commencement of interview.

At the later part of the session, questions were asked by participants and responses were giving by the facilitators present.

Practical Sessions: A practical session aimed at reviewing all the data collection instruments was held, to ensure a thorough understanding of the research tools with **Mrs. Igaro, Dr. Johnson, Miss Mercy, and Mr. Job** present to guide the RAs through the process. Various

explanations were provided for questions, and techniques for obtaining accurate responses from respondents were shared with the enumerators or RAs.

Pilot Testing of Questionnaires with Kobo Collect

Mr. Jones and Boniface conducted a hands-on session in which the RAs practiced using the KoboCollect app installed on their mobile phones to pilot test the Household Survey Instrument using the KoboCollect app was conducted in three communities in Edo: Ewodia, Ulemo and Eworioba communities. This provided field staff with firsthand experience and allowed them to apply their learnings. Challenges encountered during this exercise were shared and used as additional training opportunities. This activity was guided by project staff which included two project team members. During the visits, the project staff initiated the community entry process by seeking permission from the chiefs and elders of the pilot communities, which was successfully granted. Subsequently, all Research Assistants (RAs) or enumerators were organized into two groups, and each group was further divided into pairs. These pairs of RAs were then observed as they administered the research instruments in the respective communities.

The fieldwork provided several valuable opportunities for the RAs to:

1. **Assess their strengths and weaknesses:** The RAs had the chance to administer questionnaires, which allowed them to identify their strengths and weaknesses in data collection. This self-assessment helps in improving their skills.
2. **Observe Community Culture and Protocol:** During the fieldwork, RAs had the opportunity to observe and learn about the cultural nuances and local protocols of the communities they were working in. This knowledge is essential for respectful and effective engagement.
3. **Plan their work effectively:** The experience helped RAs plan their work more effectively. They could strategize how to cover the designated areas, manage time, and coordinate their efforts.
4. **Communicate and build rapport:** Interacting with community members during data collection allowed RAs to establish communication and rapport. Building trust and understanding with the community is crucial for successful data collection.

In summary, the practical exercise provided a hands-on learning experience for the RAs, enabling them to assess their skills, set up suitable working conditions, gain cultural insights, plan their work efficiently, and establish connections with the community members. This preparation is essential for the effective execution of data collection activities in the field.

Medical First Aids, Basic Safety and Security (HEAT): This session was designed to throw light on medical first aid skills with fundamental safety and security knowledge, in case any RA finds him/herself in a high-risk or challenging environments. HEAT stands for Hostile Environment Awareness Training, and it is essential for personnel working in conflict zones, disaster areas, or regions with elevated security risks. Facilitators for this session were **Mr.**

Boniface Kopdena, Dr. Johnson Dudu and Mrs. Mary Igharo. The following were what the participants learnt in this session:

1. **Medical First Aid:** Participants learnt essential first aid skills and how to provide immediate care in medical emergencies. This includes CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation), wound care, fracture management, and other life-saving techniques.
2. **Basic Safety:** Understanding and practicing safety measures are crucial in hazardous environments. Participants were educated on risk assessment, situational awareness, and personal safety protocols.
3. **Security Awareness:** Participants were abreast with knowledge about security risks and threats specific to the environment where their fieldwork would take place. This includes information on conflict dynamics, potential dangers, and methods to mitigate risks.
4. **Hostile Environment Training:** Participants learnt how to respond to threats, abductions, and other hostile situations. This training includes tactics for personal security and survival in hostile environments.
5. **Navigation and Communication:** Participants learnt some useful navigation skills and the effective use of communication tools which are essential for staying safe in challenging locations.
6. **Crisis Management:** The participants learnt about crisis management techniques that would help them remain composed and take appropriate actions during emergencies.
7. **Cross-Cultural Awareness:** Participants were encouraged to understand and respect the local culture and customs of the working environment.

Closing and Appreciation: The five-day training concluded with a group photograph and closing remarks delivered by the Executive Director of CPED, Professor Emeritus Andrew G. Onokerhoraye, who is one of the Principal Investigators commended the research assistants for their unwavering commitment to the quest for knowledge and also thanked the trainers for their outstanding contributions to the training.



Photo: Group Photograph of Research Assistants with Some Project Team Members

Table 1: Recruited Research Assistants(RAs) to carryout Data Collection

Sn	Names	Sex	Qualification	Designated LGA/State
1	Omouyi Jerry Negbenose	M	B.Ed. Business Education	Esan Central/Edo
2	Uduebholo Faith	F	B.Sc. HND Banking & Finance	Esan Central/Edo
3	Blessed Omoegbe Jattoh	M	B.A. (Hons) International Studies and Diplomacy	Esan Central/Edo
4	Egbochie Blessing	F	H.N.D. OND Peace Building and Capacity Development	Esan Central/Edo
5	Mary Awele Ugbome	F	B.Sc. in Microbiology Technology	Esan Central/Edo
6	Oba Evarista Aina	F	HND in Business Administration and Management	Etsako East/Edo
7	Afehomo Wuraola Precious	F	BSc. Public Health	Etsako East/Edo
8	Igbanor Anthony Abu	M	HND Painting	Etsako East/Edo
9	Agbugwi Godsfavour Elegbewutse	F	OND Environmental Health Technician	Etsako East/Edo
10	Ujene Japhet Ekene	M	B.Sc. Biochemistry	Etsako 11East/Edo
11	Alfred Sandra	F	B.Sc. Social works	Ovia South West/Edo
12	Gold Osemwonyemwen Osemwegie	F	M.Sc. Public Health	Ovia South West/Edo
13	Oviawe Binah Osadebamwen	F	B.A. History and international	Ovia South

			Studies	West/Edo
14	Omorogieva Liberty Omoruyi	M	B.Sc. Economics	Ovia South West/Edo
15	Abubakar Umar	M	OND Office Technology And Management	Ovia South West/Edo
16	Amgbaduba, Tare Aquila	F	B.Ed. Social studies Education	Ethiope East/Delta
17	Purity Onosiakpor	M	HND Office Technology and Management	Ethiope East/Delta
18	Iwhuwhavbe Ejiro Betty	F	B.A. Fine and Applied Art	Ethiope East/Delta
19	Isuekebhor Ehimeme	F	B.Sc. Microbiology	Ethiope East/Delta
20	Okerekutu Daniel Okiemute	M	B.Eng. in Chemical Engineering	Ethiope East/Delta
21	Ezeji Chinwe Celine	F	B.Ed. Social studies Education	Ika South/Delta
22	Eseka, Igwe Augustine	M	B.Sc. Industrial Mathematics	Ika South/Delta
23	Nwadozie Ifeyinwa	F	B.Sc. Biochemistry	Ika South/Delta
24	Ochei Nneka Joy	F	HND Computer / Mathematics	Ika South/Delta
25	Felicitas, Chizobam Nwadiolu	F	B.Sc. Computer Science	Ika South/Delta
26	Egi Alex Aforkoghene	M	B.Sc. Social Works	Isoko South/Delta
27	Ubogu Rukome	F	B.Ed Health Education	Isoko South/Delta
28	Jehian Tejiri Leo	M	B.Sc. Human Physiology	Isoko South/Delta
29	Princewill Ovie	M	B.Sc. Agricultural Science	Isoko South/Delta
30	Faith Ejomafuighoa	F	B.Sc(Ed) Environmental Education	Isoko South/Delta

Conclusion

The training equipped field staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively collect data for the project, ensuring that they are well-prepared to carry out their roles and responsibilities.