

## Annex 9

### How to get the most out of field trips and interviews

*Adopt an approach closer in style to investigative journalism than to scientific research*

Deadlines determine the level of detail but within that framework there must be a high degree of rigour. A unique mixture of flexibility and standard operating procedures is required.

*Meet people in their own surroundings and in sight of practical reality, whenever possible*

Most people (farmers and officials) are more comfortable talking in their own surroundings where they can look at and refer to their own activities or documents. The interviewer can also judge responses and ask follow-up questions arising from the reality around. Arrange to talk to farmers on their own farms, or at least out-of-doors. Meet with officials in their own offices where they have immediate access to data, wall-charts, reports, etc. as *aide-mémoire*.

*Recognize that access to information is a privilege not a right*

Farmers, traders, extension workers, government officers, NGO staff, millers, threshing-machine operators, combine-drivers give up their time to share their knowledge with you.

*Show respect; avoid arrogant or intrusive behaviour*

Address farmers and other interlocutors with courtesy. Drive carefully on people's properties. Listen, don't preach. Don't interrupt when an informant is answering a question. Don't intervene when another team member is asking questions.

*Don't intimidate*

Avoid having too many people (or vehicles) on visits to field sites. Only one or two team members should conduct an interview with farmers or households. If the sub-team is large, split the group and interview more persons.

*Have a lead interviewer for each interview*

From the outset of any particular interview, one team member should orchestrate the interview. Contributions from other team members should come after the main interviewer has finished. Let the group leader guide the flow of questions/answers in a structured and organized manner.

*Stick strictly to the purpose of the mission, which is to learn about the situation*

CFSAM field visits are *not* extension visits to correct or influence the actions of farmers or anyone else, or opportunities to collect data unrelated to the mission. Objective is to "receive" knowledge/information not give it, so listening is more important than talking.

*Use standard, agreed checklists and data collection instruments/formats*

Standard interview guides and recording formats add rigour to semi-structured interviews and ensure that similar questions are asked by all teams in a similar order.

*Be prepared!*

Every team member must be prepared and able to “hit the ground running”. This includes having studied relevant secondary data as well as having all necessary interview guides, recording formats and equipment.

*Use every journey as a “transect”*

Don't be content with information given to you during pre-set interviews at given sample destinations. Observe conditions and take notes on all journeys to zones and individual field sites, see 🌐 **Technical Note P1**.

*Make no promises*

Emphasize that you are not decision-makers and it is not your business to prepare project proposals, but to compile the most accurate picture possible of the situation.