

Conduction Interviews and Discussion Meetings

Extension workers are often involved in conducting interviews and holding discussion meetings with farmers and Extension Field Staff (EFS). An interviews situation primarily involves two parties i.e. Interviewer and Interviewee interacting with each other for a specific purpose.

Common purposes of conducting interviews or discussion meetings are as under:

- Collecting information and data about a specific situation/issue or topic (Information Collection Interviews)
- Giving information and data about a specific situation/issue or topic (Information Giving Interviews)
- Selecting capable person for a job in any organization (Selection Interviews)
- Doing Assessment or evaluation of any activity, program or operations (Assessment Interviews)
- Counseling and helping people to make them understand a situation or problems (Counseling Interviews)
- Recommending people with high performance for appreciation and reward of their valuable work (Recommendation Interviews)

Types of Interviews

- Informal or conversational Interviews (Unstructured interview & Open Ended)
- Structured (Close Ended) interviews
- Semi-structured (Open Ended & Close Ended) interviews

Informal/conversational Interviews

In this type, the interviewer enjoys complete freedom and flexibility in asking the questions which he/she feels appropriate. The sequence and number of questions will not be same in all the cases. However, he/she has some specific purpose/objective in mind to control the interview process and major purpose of conducting interviews or discussion meetings.

Questions are spontaneous. This is a qualitative method. In most of the cases, data obtained through structured interviews is in the form of qualitative. Very useful for obtaining exploratory type of responses from interviewee. The interviewer mostly ask open ended questions.

It is difficult to compare information obtained through such interviews as different responses obtained from different persons. It is time consuming. However, the interviewer can cover a wide range in asking questions.

Structured interview (Close Ended)

A structured interview is a type of interview in which the interviewer asks questions which are planned and created in advance. The interviewer uses a fixed format. This is a quantitative method. In most of the cases, data obtained through structured interviews is in the form of quantitative. Very useful for obtaining descriptive type of responses from interviewee. The interviewer mostly ask close ended questions.

Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interview is a type of interview in which some questions are predetermined and others arise spontaneously during conversation. The sequence and number of questions is not pre-determined. This is mix method approach to collect information or data. Both qualitative and quantitative type of information/data will be obtained from such interviews. The interviewer ask a combination of open and close ended questions while conducting such interviews.

Guidelines for conducting Successful interviews

Following points should be followed for conducting good and effective interviews and discussion meetings:

- Initial contact is very important for any type of interview. Try to be informal and friendly. Be very polite.
- Try to win the confidence of interviewee to get actual feedback/information/data. Explain the purpose of conducting interviews or discussion meetings.
- Establish a basis for easy communication. Ask easy and simple questions in the beginning. Move from general (simple) to specific (complex) questions
- Use local language and style. Avoid unnecessary technical terms and difficult words
- Follow a logical sequence while asking questions
- Questions must be asked in an understandable way
- Be sure that the questions will not cause any offence that lead to non-cooperation. Be careful in asking sensitive or personal questions
- Try to be neutral as far as possible (A leading question (Didn't you like to take balanced diet?) is a type of question that implies or contains its own answer. By contrast, a neutral question (what do you think about benefits of balanced diet?) is expressed in a way that doesn't suggest its own answer)
- Two or two questions should not be put simultaneously. It will cause confusion and unreliable data or information
- Ask single barrel questions and avoid to ask double barrel questions
- Be careful about the time factor. The interview or discussion meeting should not be too lengthy. It will lose the interest of interviewee that cause collection of incomplete information and data
- Try to be good listener and record/observe all verbal and on-verbal responses of interviewee
- At the end say few words of thanks and appreciation and inform that the data/information obtained from you will be confidential.