Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide

Appendices and Glossary

FAMILY HEALTH INTERNATIONAL

Appendix A:
Exercises for Training Data Collectors

The most effective way to learn how to use the qualitative methods described in the preceding modules is to practice them. The following exercises have been used extensively in training workshops for developing country settings. Trainers should feel free to use and modify them as they see fit.

Participant Observation

Exercise 1: Planning for participant observation

Objectives:

- To choose an appropriate location for doing participant observation
- To decide how to best match field staff to the study population and context
- To create a list of topics or questions to guide observation

What you will need:

- A research topic (real or hypothetical)
- A study population (real or hypothetical)

Instructions:

As a class, in groups, or in pairs, discuss places that would be appropriate for doing participant observation on a research topic of interest. Consider which field staff members would be best suited for each location and how they might adjust their appearance in order to be inconspicuous. Determine the best times to do participant observation activities, including times of day and days of the week. Create a list of questions or topics to direct focused observation. Discuss safety issues that might arise.

Exercise 2: Practicing collaborative participant observation in a natural context

Objectives:

- To experience being a participant observer
- To discover the challenges of taking notes during participant observation
- To practice describing settings, people, and activities
- To work collaboratively with other field staff to combine multiple perspectives
- To become more aware of researchers' potential biases
- To practice differentiating objective observations from subjective interpretations

What you will need:

- An observation site accessible from the training facility
- A research topic (real or hypothetical)
- A study population (must be real people)
- Field notebooks
- Large sheets of paper, such as flip chart paper
- Markers

Instructions:

In pairs or small groups, go to a location specified by the trainer, with the objective of describing the setting and people in it. Spend anywhere from 45 minutes to two hours at the location, depending on the type of place it is.

a. Writing field notes

While at the site, write your observations in your field notebook. Address the following questions:

- Where are you?
  - Area description
  - Map of the area
- Who is there?
  - Approximate age
  - Ethnicity
  - Languages spoken
  - Gender
  - Occupation
- What are they doing?
- As you observe, what questions come to mind?

b. Combining your observations with those of other staff for a class presentation

Return to the training facility. Spend one to two hours working in small groups to prepare a 15-minute group presentation synthesizing what you observed. Draw a map of the location where you did participant observation to show as part of your presentation. (See Exercise 3, page 95, for a more detailed map exercise.)

c. Supportive class critique

After each group presentation, other class members will question and critique the presenting group in a constructive manner. Give special attention to distinguishing between objective and subjective elements of the group's presentation. The goal of this critique is to encourage each group to think about what they may have not considered, help them identify their biases, and practice distinguishing observation from interpretation.

d. Debriefing session

Complete the exercise with a general debriefing session among class members. Address the following questions:

- How did the participant observation experience go overall?
- Were you able to engage in conversation with people? How did you do this?
- Describe what you did to map out the site.
- What note-taking strategies did you use?
- How did you practice discretion?
- Did you feel uncomfortable at any time?
- Did you decide to explain your identity and purpose to anyone? If so, what did you say?
- Did you choose to remain an outsider or did you try to blend in?
- What could you have done to more effectively assimilate with the people in the setting?
- How would you change what you did in this exercise if you could do it again?
- What evidence do you have for the observations you made?

Exercise 3: Making an ethnographic map

This exercise can be done in conjunction with Exercise 2, page 93.

Objectives:

- To collaboratively create a map of the participation observation setting that will be useful to consult throughout the project
- To experience being a participant observer
- To practice investigating a location, including asking people to help you understand particular aspects of it
- To practice revealing your purpose to people in the observation site
- To describe a setting in detail
- To work collaboratively with other field staff to combine multiple perspectives

What you will need:

- An observation site accessible from the training facility
- A research topic (real or hypothetical)
- A study population
- Courage
- Field notebooks
- Large sheets of paper, such as flip chart paper
- Markers

Instructions:

a. Investigating the site

In pairs or small groups, go to a specific nearby location for the purpose of making a map of the location and its environs. While you are there, ask people around you for help in understanding the activities taking place and in identifying any organizations, stores, etc., that may not be obvious to you. Take care not to alarm people about the purpose of your map. Reveal your identity and purpose to the extent you think reasonable and appropriate. Also take advantage of this opportunity to talk informally with people who are potential key informants.

b. Sketch a map and write field notes at the observation site

Sketch a small map in your field notebook. Observe what activities are being done where and note them on your map. Note the types of people who are there and anything else you observe.

c. Collaboratively make a map and present it to the class

Return to the training facility. Using your notes and any drawings you made while at the site, work in your small groups to create a combined, detailed map of the observation area, indicating where pertinent activities are occurring and the key actors involved (each small group should create one map). Make it as complete as possible, including any significant markers, businesses, buildings, or geographical formations. When you have finished, brainstorm about the implications of your map. Based on what you learned, what recommendations might you make concerning potential participants or about doing research in this community? Present your map, its implications, and your recommendations to the class for feedback.

d. Supportive class critique

After each group presentation, the class or a specific group should question and critique the presenting group in a constructive manner. Give special attention to distinguishing between the presenting group's objective and subjective elements. The goal of this critique is to encourage each group to think about what things they may have not considered, to identify their biases, and to practice distinguishing observation from interpretation.

Exercise 4: Practicing objectivity in reporting

Objective:

- To practice differentiating objective observation from subjective interpretation
- To practice taking notes in the observation setting

What you will need:

- An observation site or sites
- Observation objectives
- Field notebooks

Instructions:

a. Reporting observations

Individually or in teams, go to different observation sites or different areas of a single site. Spend 30 minutes to one hour there quietly observing. In your notebook, record what you see. On one page, present your observations as objectively as possible. On a second page, report the same observations in a more subjective manner, indicating your own interpretation of what is there.

b. Supportive class critique

Return to the training facility and divide into pairs. Exchange notebooks with your partner. Read your partner's notes describing objective observations and subjective interpretation. Provide your partner with constructive feedback about his or her ability to distinguish between objective observation and subjective interpretation. When everyone has finished, each pair will present a summary of the feedback to the class. Data collectors should always be able to provide evidence for their observations.

In-Depth Interviews

Exercise 1: Interview circle

This exercise works well with both large and small groups.

Objectives:

- To practice interviewing and probing
- To experience being interviewed
- To become familiar with the interview guide
- To enable trainers/project leaders to evaluate each team member's strengths and areas for improvement

What you will need:

- An interview guide (preferably one to be used in the study)

Instructions:

a. Round robin

One person starts by asking the person next to him or her the first interview question. The interviewer should ensure that the question is addressed completely, including following up with appropriate probes. That interviewee responds to the question, and then turns to the next person and asks him or her the second question in the interview guide. Continue going around the room until everyone has had an opportunity to ask and answer a question, or until all the questions on the interview guide have been exhausted.

b. Self-critique

At the end of the round robin, each individual team member should describe the difficulties experienced as an interviewer and as an interviewee.

c. Supportive class critique

Individuals comment on the performance of other team members, focusing on whether the interviewer was successful in eliciting answers that satisfied the question.

d. Instructor critique

After everyone has had a chance to describe their experience, the trainer provides feedback regarding what team members did well during the round robin, as well as areas needing improvement. The trainer should also review interviewing techniques as necessary.

Exercise 2: Establishing rapport

Objectives:

- To practice putting participants at ease
- To become more conscious of how your behavior could affect people negatively

What you will need:

- Familiarity with local cultural norms

Instructions:

a. Identify positive techniques

As a class, make a list of suggestions for culturally appropriate ways to put someone at ease from the beginning to the end of an interview. Address the following questions:

- How should you start the interaction?
- What could you say or do initially to make the participant feel relaxed?
- What could you say or do to make the participant feel more comfortable during the interview if the conversation becomes tense?
- What would make a participant feel that he or she could trust you?
- What parting words or behaviors will help the participant leave with the feeling that he or she had a positive interview experience?

b. Identify potentially damaging techniques

As a class, make a list of things an interviewer might do that would be offensive to a participant or that would discourage the participant from speaking freely. Address the following questions:

- What sort of blunder might an interviewer commit that would make someone feel uncomfortable? Offended? Hurt? Angry?
- What kind of clothing would express disrespect for the participant in this culture?
- What kinds of culturally specific words or gestures would convey interviewer bias?

Exercise 3: Paired interviews

Objectives:

- To practice conducting interviews
- To practice probing
- To become familiar with the interview guide

What you will need:

- An interview guide

Instructions:

a. Interviewing

Pick a partner in the group and decide with that person who will play the role of interviewer and who will be the participant. Spend 10 minutes asking your partner questions from the interview guide. The person playing the participant should feel free to take on a persona, such as talkative, irritable, shy, etc. This will help the interviewer to work on probing. After 10 minutes, exchange roles and repeat the exercise for another 10 minutes. Use different questions so as to become familiar with the entire interview guide by the end of the exercise.

b. Performance and supportive class critique

At the end of the 20 minutes, each pair will perform their interview for the class. The class will then critique each pair, citing both the positive points of the interview and areas needing improvement.

Exercise 4: Mock interviews

Objectives:

- To practice interviewing someone outside of the research team
- To practice recording and taking notes during an interview
- To practice identifying and avoiding leading and closed-ended questions
- To practice transcribing an interview

What you will need:

- Someone who is not a member of the research team
- Tape recorder, cassettes, batteries
- An interview guide

Instructions:

a. Mock interview

Outside of the training facility, do a mock interview with someone who is not a member of the research team (for example, a friend or family member). Use a real interview guide. Tape-record the interview and take notes just as you would during a real interview.

b. Transcription

The trainer will assign you a point at which to begin transcribing the interview. You may transcribe by hand or at a computer. Transcribe about five minutes of the tape.

c. Supportive class critique

After you have finished transcribing a five-minute segment, exchange your transcript with a partner and give each other feedback on:

- The positive points of the interview
- Areas for improvement
- Use of leading and closed-ended questions
- The quality of the transcription

After all pairs have had a chance to critique their work, each pair will present a summary of their critiques to the class.

Exercise 5: Probing

Objectives:

- To become more proficient at knowing when to probe
- To become more proficient at using the probes scripted in the interview guide
- To improve your ability to create probes spontaneously based on individual participant responses
- To practice identifying and avoiding leading and closed-ended questions
- To know the questions well enough to not have to focus on reading from the guide

What you will need:

- An interview guide

Instructions:

Either in pairs or in interview circle fashion, team members will play the roles of interviewer and participant. Interview each other using a real interview guide, and focus on probing both with scripted and original probes. Probing requires being attentive and responsive to the participant. To practice this skill, cover up the interview guide after asking each question. This will force you to focus your attention on the participant instead of the guide.

Probes should be purposive and related to the objectives behind each question. After asking a question and following up with probes, ask yourself if the information you received from the participant is useful and satisfies the intent of the question. Identify any leading and closed-ended probes you asked and discuss with your partner how to word them differently.

APPENDIX A

Focus Groups

Exercise 1: Role-playing

Objectives:

- To practice leading a focus group
- To practice probing
- To practice accommodating different types of personalities

What you will need:

- A focus group guide
- At least four people (one to play the moderator, three to be participants)

Instructions:

a. Assign roles

Select one person to be the moderator. The other members of the research team will suggest a type of personality they would like to play. These could include types such as talkative, aggressive, shy, or scornful, as well as other culturally relevant examples (devout, elderly, young, silly, joker, etc.).

b. Mock discussion

Have a mock focus group discussion, with each person playing the role he or she selected. Let speakers take turns playing the moderator.

c. Supportive class critique

As a group, discuss positive points about the mock discussion as well as areas that need improvement. Give each other suggestions on how to respond and react to each type of person.

Exercise 2: Note-taking and role-play

This exercise can be done in conjunction with Exercise 1, above.

Objectives:

- To practice taking notes during a focus group
- To practice probing
- To practice accommodating different types of personalities

What you will need:

- A focus group guide
- At least four people (one to play the moderator, two to be participants, and one to be the note-taker)
- A note-taker form

Instructions:

a. Assign roles

Select one person to be the note-taker and another to be the moderator. Identify types of characters and assign them to other team members, as described in Exercise 1, page 101.

b. Create a note-taking form

The person chosen to play the note-taker will devise a form to use in keeping track who is speaking.

c. Mock discussion

Have a mock focus group discussion, with each person playing the role he or she drew and the note-taker taking notes on the discussion. Let team members take turns in the note-taker role.

d. Supportive class critique

After everyone has taken a turn as note-taker, compare and discuss as a group the adequacy of the different note-taking forms created, the specific difficulties you had taking notes, and solutions for how you might address these. Discuss how effectively the group feels each note-taker documented what was important in the discussion.

Data Management

Exercise 1: A Day in the Life

This exercise can be used with any size group and adapted to any qualitative method. It can also be done as part of a longer mock interview or focus group exercise.

Objectives:

- To rehearse the steps of data management from beginning to end
- To practice creating and using data collection checklists

What you will need:

- Flip chart and markers
- Paper and pens for each team member
- Large, heavy-duty envelopes
- Equipment relevant to the method
  - Interviews: tape recorders, cassettes, batteries, field notebook, pens
  - Focus groups: tape recorders, cassettes, batteries, field notebook, pens
  - Observations: field notebook, pens

Instructions:

Choose the method you will practice during the exercise (participant observation, interview, focus group). Adapt the instructions below according to the method you select.

a. Creating checklists

As a group, create two checklists appropriate to the data collection method. One should be called "What to Take with You" and the other, "What to Submit after Data Collection." The checklists provided at the end of the interview and focus group modules can serve as models. Each team member should make a handwritten checklist to use later.

b. Creating forms

As a group, create the forms you will need for data collection with the particular method. These include:

- Observations: list of focal points for observation
- Interviews: informed consent forms, interview question guide, reimbursement forms
- Focus groups: informed consent forms, focus group question guide, note-taker form, debriefing form, reimbursement forms

c. Getting ready for data collection

Assemble the materials you would need for data collection on a table. Include equipment, large envelopes, and forms. One by one, each team member should approach the table and use their checklist for "What to Take with You" to make up a packet of materials. One person acting as the data manager should stand at the table and assign a sequential archival number to each person as they complete their packet.

d. Practice using forms and equipment

Label all materials with the assigned archival number. Fill out all forms as if you had done the data collection. Sign the informed consent and reimbursement forms. If practicing interviews or focus groups in the exercise, test the recording equipment. Do not forget to make a page labeled "Expanded Notes."

e. Submitting the data

Using the checklist for "What to Submit after Data Collection," assemble the completed forms and all other data collection materials you would need to submit. Return the packet to the data manager.

f. Supportive class critique

The data manager will open one packet and check its contents for completeness in front of the group. Then each team member should be given a packet not their own, check its contents, and report back to the group.

Appendix B:
Tools for Data Managers

All data collectors will perform some aspects of data management as they collect and handle data, using the forms and procedures described in the preceding modules. However, it is likely that a person in the role of data manager will take primary responsibility for keeping close track of all the data at once. In this appendix we provide models of data archival and transcription protocols that data managers may use or adapt to meet the needs of the project.

Model Data Archive Protocol

How to archive the data

1. Create a master archival log for each field site, such as the one in the sample below. Each data collection event will have its own entry on the log and be assigned an individual archival number. The archival number is made up of letters indicating the name of the field site (CC for Capital City), the data collection method (FG for focus group), participant category (FPU for family planning users), and a sequential number. For simplicity, some data managers will elect to assign each data collection event a sequential number as it is entered into the archival log, grouping participant observation, interview, focus group data together – for example, CCFGFPU01, CCIISP02, CCIIFPN03, etc. Other data managers may choose to keep a separate log (and number sequence) for each type of data collection method and category of participant – for example, CCFGFPU01 (focus groups with family planning users), CCIISP01 (in-depth interviews with service providers), and CCIIFPN01 (in-depth interviews with family planning non-users). (See sample, page 89.)

Sample Master Archival Log

Master Log

Site Name: ____________________ Page # _____

Archival #	Interview	Focus Group	Participant Observation	Date Assigned	Number Assigned by:

2. Assign an archival number to each data source as you enter it on the archival log. The data manager should assign each event an archival number before the data collection event. (This could be done as the field staff member checks out the recording equipment and other necessary documentation materials.)

CASE STUDY

Sample Archival Information Sheet

Archival Information Sheet

Title of Research Phase/Project: FP-VCT Integration Archival #CCFG-U01

Data type: (circle one)	Interview	Focus group	Participant observation
Indicate type of participant(s) or observational setting:	__ FP provider __ HIV clinic staff __ FP users __ FP non-users	X__ FP users __ FP non-users	__ FP clinic __ HIV clinic

Number of persons interviewed/observed: 10		Gender of person(s): (circle): Female Male
Approximate age of person(s): 18 - 40		Ethnicity (if appropriate): Bimouti
Method of recording data (mark all that apply):		Additional/backup location(s) of data:
Audiotape	X	Storage Closet
Field notes		
Interview guide notes		
Focus group note-taker notes	X	Photocopies of all
Focus group guide notes	X	in storage closet
Expanded field notes	X	
Transcription	X	
Translation	X	
Electronic, translated transcription	X	

Person(s) who collected data:	Sundrine B. -mod Marie K. -NT	Date: 15-6-04
Person(s) who transcribed data:	Marie K	Date: 19-6-04
Person(s) who translated data:	Marie K. simultaneous translation	Date: 19-6-04
Person(s) who typed data:	Marie K trans transc/type	Date: 19-6-04

3. Label a large, heavy-duty envelope with the archival number and place all labeled items from the data collection event inside it. Do not write any potentially identifying information such as full or partial names or addresses on the envelope or any other item. Use one envelope for each interview, focus group, or participant observation event. Do not include materials from more than one interview or focus group in a single envelope. Write the archival number on every item that is related to a data collection event and that is placed into the archival envelope.
4. Create an archival information sheet for the data source, such as the one in the sample on page 106. It should ask for type of data, date of data collection, data collector, translator, typist, number/age/gender of people interviewed or observed, characteristics of participants (such as sex worker, truck driver, community leader, elder, employer, service client, or medical research participant), data collection method (such as notes or tape recordings), location of original data, and the electronic file name. Note that the first box on the archival information sheet requests the archival number.
5. Fill out the archival information sheet with as much information as possible.

How to keep track of collected data

1. Make every effort to ensure that envelopes containing data are filed at the research office as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after data collection. Between the time the data are collected and the time the envelope is filed at the research office, all materials must remain in the possession of the interviewer/moderator or in a securely locked location. Under no circumstances should a field worker give data to someone outside the research team, even to hold or watch temporarily.
2. Follow the sign-out procedures established by the data manager. Whenever an item is removed from an archival envelope, record the following information: the name (not just the initials) of the person removing the item(s), the date removed, and the reason for removal. Record the date the items are returned. Note that these procedures apply to removal of tapes even for transcription, for translation, and for checking a transcription or translation against the original tape. Sign-out procedures must be followed even if the item is removed only for a few minutes.
3. List all transcripts, translations, and typed notes on the archival information sheet when you add such materials to the archival envelope.
4. Note the location of all computer files on the archival information sheet, including the specific computer where the digital copies are stored and the specific folder where the files are located.
5. Submit transcripts, typed field notes, and typed debriefing notes to the sponsoring organization electronically, by fax, or by courier. We recommend that you include an itemized list of all materials being sent and include the archival number.
6. Place copies of all materials documenting the transfer of files to outside parties in the archival envelope. This includes copies of e-mails showing electronic transfer of files, and copies of fax cover sheets and fax delivery confirmations. For material sent by courier, include copies of the cover letter, shipping instructions, and tracking number.

Model Transcription Protocol

The following, adapted from McClellan, 2003, is an example of what a transcription protocol might look like. Data managers are free to adapt it to suit project needs.

Tape Storage

Store all tapes that are not actively being transcribed or reviewed in a locked cabinet.

Text Format

Transcribe all interview and focus group recordings using Times New Roman 12-point font, with one-inch margins on all sides and left justification of the text.

Interview Transcript Header

Label all individual interview transcripts with the following header, left justified at the top of the document:

Participant ID:

Interviewee Category:

Site/Location:

Date of Interview:

Interviewer ID:

Transcriptionist:

For individual interviews, the Participant ID is composed of the archival number of the interview tape, followed by the sequential number assigned to each participant. For example, for the participant interviewed on the tape with the archival number LL007, the Participant ID is LL007_1.

For Interviewee Category, indicate Service Provider, Community Gatekeeper, or Service Consumer, as noted on the tape. Record the location, date (day/month/year), and the interviewer's identification numbers.

Press "Enter" twice after the header, leaving a single blank line between the header and the interview transcript.

Type the speaker ID. Before the transcript of each question or response, identify the speaker using the Interviewer ID or Participant ID, preceded and followed by a double pound sign (##). For example: ##LL007_1##.

Press "Enter" once after the speaker ID.

Start the text of the question or response on the next line.

The first part of every document will thus resemble the following sample:

Sample Interview Transcript Header

Interview Transcript

Participant ID:	LL005_1
Interviewee Subgroup #:	Service Provider
Site:	Lilongwe Clinic
Date of Interview:	05/11/03
Interviewer ID:	ILL3
Transcriptionist:	John Smith

##ILL3##
OK, before we begin the interview itself, I'd like to confirm that you have read and signed the informed consent form, that you understand that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, that you may refuse to answer any questions, and that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

##LL005_1##
Yes, I had read it and understand this.

##ILL3##
Do you have questions before we proceed?

Focus Group Transcript Header

Label all focus group transcripts with the following header, left justified at the top of the document:

Focus Group Archival #:
Participants:
Site:
Focus Group Sample:*
Date of Interview:
Moderator ID:
Note-taker ID:
Transcriptionist:

* The Focus Group Sample refers to the subgroup of people who are participating in the focus group (for example, truck drivers, community stakeholders, public health officials).

Press "Enter" twice after the header, leaving a single blank line between the header and the focus group transcript.

Type the speaker ID. Before the transcript of each question or response, identify the speaker using the Interviewer ID or Participant ID, preceded and followed by a double pound sign (##). For example, ##LL007_1##.

The Participant ID for each individual participating in the focus group is the archival number from the focus group tape, followed by _1 for the first speaker, _2 for the second speaker, etc. (for example, tape archival number LL007 becomes Participant ID LL007_1 for the first speaker, LL007_2 for the second speaker, and so on.)

For focus group participants who cannot be readily identified on the tape, type the archival number from the tape, followed by _UNKNOWN. For example: LL007_UNKNOWN would mean unidentifiable participant for the focus group with archival number LL007. Do not use "UNKNOWN" in interview transcripts.

Indicating the Start of a New Tape

Indicate the start of a new tape for an interview or focus group by typing "START OF TAPE _, SIDE A." Be sure to use capital letters. You should also indicate in the transcript when you turn the tape to side B. For example:

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

Transcript

SIDE B

Transcript

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

Indicating End of Interview/Focus Group

Press "Enter" twice after the last line of interview/focus group transcript text, leaving two blank lines.

Type END OF INTERVIEW in capital letters on the last line of the transcript to indicate that the interview session has ended. For example:

Sample End of Focus Group Transcript

Excerpt from Focus Group Transcript

##ILL3##
Is there anything else that you would like to add?

##LL007_1##
Nope, I think that about covers it.

##ILL3##
Well, thanks for taking the time to talk with me today. I really appreciate it.

END OF INTERVIEW

APPENDIX B

Transcribing Contents of Tape

Transcribe all tapes verbatim (that is, word-for-word, exactly as words were spoken).

Indicate all nonverbal or background sounds in parentheses. This includes laughter, sighs, coughs, clapping, snapping of fingers, pen clicking, car horn, birds, etc. For example: (short sharp laugh), (group laughter), or (police siren in background).

Do not "clean up" the transcript by removing foul language, slang, grammatical errors, or misused words or concepts.

Transcribe any mispronounced words exactly as the interviewer or participant pronounced them. If a transcribed mispronunciation risks causing problems with the reader's comprehension of the text, use the following convention: [/word as it would correctly be pronounced/]. (For translation, mispronunciations will be ignored and only the correct translation will be provided.) For example:

> I thought that was pretty pacific [/specific/], but they disagreed.

Standardize the spelling of key words, blended or compound words, common phrases, and identifiers across all interview and focus group transcripts.

Transcribe both standard contractions (e.g., contractions of the following words: is, am, are, had, have, would, or not) **and nonstandard contractions** (e.g., betcha, cuz, 'em, gimme, gotta, hafta, kinda, lotta, oughta, sorta, wanna, coulda, couldn've, couldna, woulda, wouldn've, wouldna, shoulda, shouldn've, or shouldna).

Transcribe all fillers, sounds that are not standard words but that do express some meaning. For example: hm, huh, mm, mhm, uh huh, um, mkay, yeah, yuhuh, nah huh, ugh, whoa, uh oh, ah, or ahah.

Transcribe repeated words or phrases.

> I went to the clinic to see, to see the nurse.

Transcribe truncated words (words that are cut off) as the audible sound followed by a hyphen. For example:

> He wen- he went and did what I told him he shouldn've.

Unclear Speech

Indicate tape segments that are difficult to hear or understand on the transcript. For words or short sentences, use [inaudible segment]. For example:

> The process of identifying missing words in a tape-recorded interview of poor quality is [inaudible segment].

For lengthy segments that are difficult to hear or understand, or when there is silence because no one is talking, record this information in square brackets. Also provide a time estimate for the information that could not be transcribed. For example:

> [Inaudible: 2 minutes of interview missing]

Overlapping Speech

Indicate overlapping speech (when multiple participants are speaking at the same time) that is difficult to separate and assign to individual speakers by typing [cross talk]. Resume transcription with the first speech that can be attributed to an individual.

Pauses

Mark brief pauses with periods or ellipses (. . .). Brief pauses are breaks in speech lasting two to three seconds. They often occur between statements or when the speaker trails off at the end of a statement. For example:

> Sometimes, a participant briefly loses . . . a train of thought or . . . pauses after making a poignant remark. Other times, they end their statements with a clause such as but then . . .

Mark pauses longer than 3 seconds by typing (long pause). For example:

> Sometimes the individual may require additional time to construct a response. (long pause) Other times, he or she is waiting for additional instructions or probes.

Questionable Accuracy

Indicate that a word or phrase may not be accurate by typing the questionable word between question marks and parentheses. For example:

> ##LL004_1##
> I went over to the ?(clinic)? to meet with the nurse to talk about joining up for the study.

Sensitive Information

When an individual uses his or her own name during the discussion, replace the name with the appropriate Participant ID. For example:

> ##LL008_2##
> My family always tells me, "LL008_2, think about things before you open your mouth."
>
> #LL008_4##
> Hey LL008_2, don't feel bad; I hear the same thing from mine all the time.

If an individual uses the names of people, locations, organizations, etc., identify them by typing an equal sign (=) immediately before and after the sensitive information. For example:

> ##LL001_1##
> We went over to = John Doe's= house last night and we ended up going to = O'Malley's Bar = over on =22nd Street= and spending the entire night talking about the very same thing.

Proofreading and Reviewing for Accuracy

Proofread (read through for errors) and check the accuracy of all transcripts against the audiotape, then revise the transcript computer file accordingly. Check each transcript while listening to the tape three times before submitting it.

Check transcripts for accuracy. If the transcriptionist is not the same person who led the interview or focus group, then the interviewer or focus group moderator who did lead the session must also check every transcript for accuracy against the tape.

Removal of Sensitive Information

Replace sensitive information in the transcript with generic descriptive phrases enclosed within brackets. Sensitive information includes incidental mention of names of individuals, organizations, or locations that may compromise the identity of the participant or another person, such as a family member, friend, partner/spouse, coworker, doctor, study staff, clinic, hospital, social service agency, public figure, religious leader, entertainer, print media, restaurant, educational facility, or place of employment. The use of generic descriptions for names, places, groups, and organizations permits analysts to retain important contextual information while protecting the identity of the individual, place, or group.

Transcriptionists will have already identified sensitive information in the transcript by enclosing it within equal signs (=). To locate these easily, do a "search" for equal signs (=) in the text file. However, it is important for the interviewer or focus group moderator also to review the entire transcript in order to catch any sensitive information that the transcriptionist may have missed. For example:

[counselor's name omitted]
[name of local AIDS service organization omitted]

Saving Transcripts

Save each transcript as an individual MS-DOS ASCII text file with a .txt extension or a rich text file with an .rtf extension.

To name individual interview transcript files, use the interview name followed by the participant ID. For example: SOCLL007_1.txt = TDF interview for Lilongwe participant #007_1.

To name focus group transcript files, use the study name followed by the archival number for the site/location, followed by the designation for the sample population. For example: SOCLL009TDF.rtf = TDF focus group for Lilongwe, archive #LL009, TDF participant.

Backup Transcript Files

Backup all transcript files to a diskette or CD. Do not store diskettes or CDs in the same location as the audiotapes.

Destroy Tapes

Destroy all audiotapes when transcription is complete, unless the research protocol specifies a length of time to keep them. Once a transcript has been reviewed for accuracy against the audiotape and the corrected transcription file has been saved and backed up, erase all tapes using an audiotape eraser. Recycling of audiotapes is permissible, provided that their sound quality is tested and new labels are affixed to the tape.

Glossary

archival log	The list of sequential numbers assigned to each data collection event; used to track data. Also called the master archival log.
archival information sheet	An information sheet to be included in the envelopes containing data, to indicate what is inside (transcripts, tapes, field notes, etc.).
archival number	A number assigned in sequential order to each data collection event as it is entered on the master archival log.
beneficence	Taking steps to minimize psychological and social risks to research participants while maximizing benefits to them.
community	All people living in a geographic area (village, city, state, or region) or a group of people who identify with one another or share a common characteristic (for example, a religious, ethnic, or immigrant community).
community gatekeepers	People whose position in their community affords them formal or informal power to influence researchers' access to members of the study population (for example, village chiefs, elected officials, government appointees, religious leaders, highly respected or influential members of the study population).
data collection instruments	Tools or forms used to collect data from research participants. Data collection instruments include in-depth interview guides, focus group guides, observation guides, and interviewer scripts. Equipment used during data collection, such as tape recorders or microphones, are not data collection instruments.
data tracking	Monitoring the status of data processing.
facilitator	The moderator or note-taker of a focus group.
focus group	A qualitative research method in which one or two researchers and several participants (usually representatives from, or individuals associated with, a target/study population) meet as a

group to discuss a specific research topic. This technique is effective for quickly accessing a broad range of views on a specific topic. During a typical focus group, one researcher (the moderator) leads a discussion by asking participants to respond to open-ended questions while a second researcher (the note-taker) takes detailed notes on the discussion.

in-depth interview	A qualitative research method in which a researcher/interviewer gathers data about an individual's perspectives on a specific topic(s) through a semi-structured exchange with the individual. The researcher/interviewer engages with the individual by posing questions in a neutral manner, listening attentively to responses, and asking follow-up questions and probes based on those responses.
informed consent document	Form(s) approved by all relevant ethics review boards containing information about the purpose of the research study, expectations for research participants, expected risks and benefits to them, the voluntary nature of participation, their right to withdraw at any time, and contact information for study officials available to answer questions. Research staff read the forms to prospective study participants, ask them questions to evaluate their comprehension of the contents, and then ask if they consent to participate. Participants may or may not be required to sign the form, depending on ethics review board requirements for the study. Signed forms are kept on file.
instruments	(see data collection instruments)
interviewer	Person who conducts in-depth interviews; can also refer to the person who asks questions during focus groups. Also known as the moderator.
iterative	Subject to continual revision and adjustment. Researchers continually consult collected data throughout all stages of qualitative research and use what they learn to shape and inform what they do next. This may occur at the level of study or instrument design, such as revising and creating research questions, or at the level of researcher-participant interaction, such as when an interviewer decides what questions to ask based on the responses of the participant.

justice	The fair distribution of risks and benefits resulting from participation in research; includes treating research participants fairly and making sure they have equal access to all available information, prevention methods, effective treatments, and research results.
moderator	Person who facilitates a focus group. Also known as a facilitator.
note-taker	Person responsible for taking notes during a focus group. Also known as a facilitator.
participant observation	A qualitative research method in which researchers gather data either by observing or by both observing and participating, to varying degrees, in the study community's daily activities, in community settings relevant to the research questions. Examples include bars, brothels, and health clinic waiting areas.
quota sampling	A process for selecting research participants in which the criteria and number of people to be included in the study are predetermined. A target number of participants is set, and people who meet the desired criteria are recruited until the target number is reached.
reimbursement	Money or goods given to research participants to acknowledge the time they have taken from other obligations and the expenses they may have incurred in order to participate in the study.
reimbursement form	A statement the interviewer or facilitator signs to certify that each participant was given the reimbursement. In studies that require written informed consent, participants may be asked to sign a receipt.
respect	Commitment to ensuring that research participants are not used only as a means to achieve research objectives by ensuring their autonomy, voluntary informed consent, and confidentiality, and by protecting persons with diminished autonomy.
sponsoring organization	The institution that provides funding and scientific oversight for the study; is responsible for overall management of the project; ensures the scientific integrity of research at the local site; and serves as a link between the funding institution and local research activities.

study population	The pool of people from which research participants are drawn. For example, for a study of family planning users, a study population might be users and non-users of family planning among women of reproductive age in Capital City, Developing Country.
textual	In the form of written words, phrases, and sentences, as opposed to numeric (characterized by numbers) or pictorial (in the form of images).
theoretical saturation	The point at which new data collected and analyzed no longer bring additional insights to the research questions. For example, if interviews 11 through 15 contain the same information found in the first 10 interviews, theoretical saturation has been reached.