HEAR

2ND EDITION

H C D

HEAR: GOALS

Designing meaningful and innovative solutions that serve your constituents begins with understanding their needs, hopes and aspirations for the future.

The Hear booklet will equip the team with methodologies and tips for engaging people in their own contexts in order to understand the issues at a deep level.

Goals of this book are to guide:

» WHO TO TALK TO
» HOW TO GAIN EMPATHY
» HOW TO CAPTURE STORIES

“”

Great technique for getting farmers to tell stories.

—IDE ZAMBIA

H C D

HEAR: OUTPUTS

At the end of the Hear section, prepare to go to the field by completing these worksheets from the Field Guide:

Recruiting Plan
Research Schedule
Identity, Power & Politics
Group Interview Guide
Individual Interview Guide

Outputs of the Hear Phase are:

- **» PEOPLES' STORIES**
- **» OBSERVATIONS OF CONSTITUENTS' REALITY**
- **» DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF NEEDS, BARRIERS, & CONSTRAINTS**

Qualitative research methods enable the design team to develop deep empathy for people they are designing for, to question assumptions, and to inspire new solutions. At the early stages of the process, research is generative — used to inspire imagination and inform intuition about new opportunities and ideas. In later phases, these methods can be evaluative—used to learn quickly about people's response to ideas and proposed solutions.

H C D

HEAR: THEORY

What will qualitative research methods do?

Qualitative methods can uncover deeply-held needs, desires, and aspirations. It is particularly useful in early-stage research to test assumptions about the world, and when we cannot assume that the researchers already know the entire universe of possible answers, beliefs, and ideas of the participants.

Qualitative methods can help unveil people's social, political, economic, and cultural opportunities and barriers in their own words.

Qualitative research can also be powerful for analyzing and mapping the relational dynamics between people, places, objects, and institutions. This is possible because phenomena in the social world tend to be internally related (that is, they are mutually-dependent and co-constituted).

By examining the extreme ends of a set of phenomena in depth, the entire universe of relationships can be illuminated since other instances will fall somewhere on the map of relations and links. Once a set of relationships are identified, they can be interrogated using interpretive methods or further refined for quantitative testing.

What will qualitative research methods not do?

Qualitative methods will not determine "average" behaviors/attitudes or answer questions such as: "Are people in X region more likely to do this than in Y region?" This is because qualitative methods do not cover a sample large enough to be statistically significant.

Deep understanding, not broad coverage, is the strength of qualitative research.

In later phases of the design process, quantitative research becomes a good complement to understand, for example, the potential adoption of a new solution or to understand how the effect of solutions will vary from region to region.

STEP 1

IDENTIFY A DESIGN CHALLENGE

The foundation of HCD is a concise Design Challenge. This challenge will guide the questions you will ask in the field research and the opportunities and solutions you will develop later in the process. A Design Challenge is phrased in a human-centered way with a sense of possibility. For example: “Create savings and investment products that are appropriate for people living in rural areas.”

Facilitator Notes

Time:
1-1.5 Hours

Difficulty:
★★★★★

Step 1: Work with leadership to identify a list of criteria for the challenge. (i.e. Does it need to fit into a certain timeframe? Does it need to have a geographical or topical focus? Does it need to fit into an existing initiative? Does it need to explore new opportunities?)

Step 2: With leadership, the design team, and/or constituents, make a list of the challenges you are facing.

Step 3: Re-frame those challenges from the constituent’s point of view and broader context.

Step 4: Vote or select the top two or three challenges based on your criteria.

Step 5: Narrow to one challenge with input from key stakeholders.

Step 6: Write a succinct, one sentence Design Challenge to guide the design team.

TIP #1

The Design Challenge can be decided by organizational leadership or can be developed through a team-based approach. In either case, begin by identifying challenges people are facing or springboard off opportunities the organization is interested in exploring. Narrow this list down to one specific design challenge.

TIP #2

A good Design Challenge should be:

» Framed in human terms (rather than technology, product, or service functionality)

» Broad enough to allow you to discover the areas of unexpected value

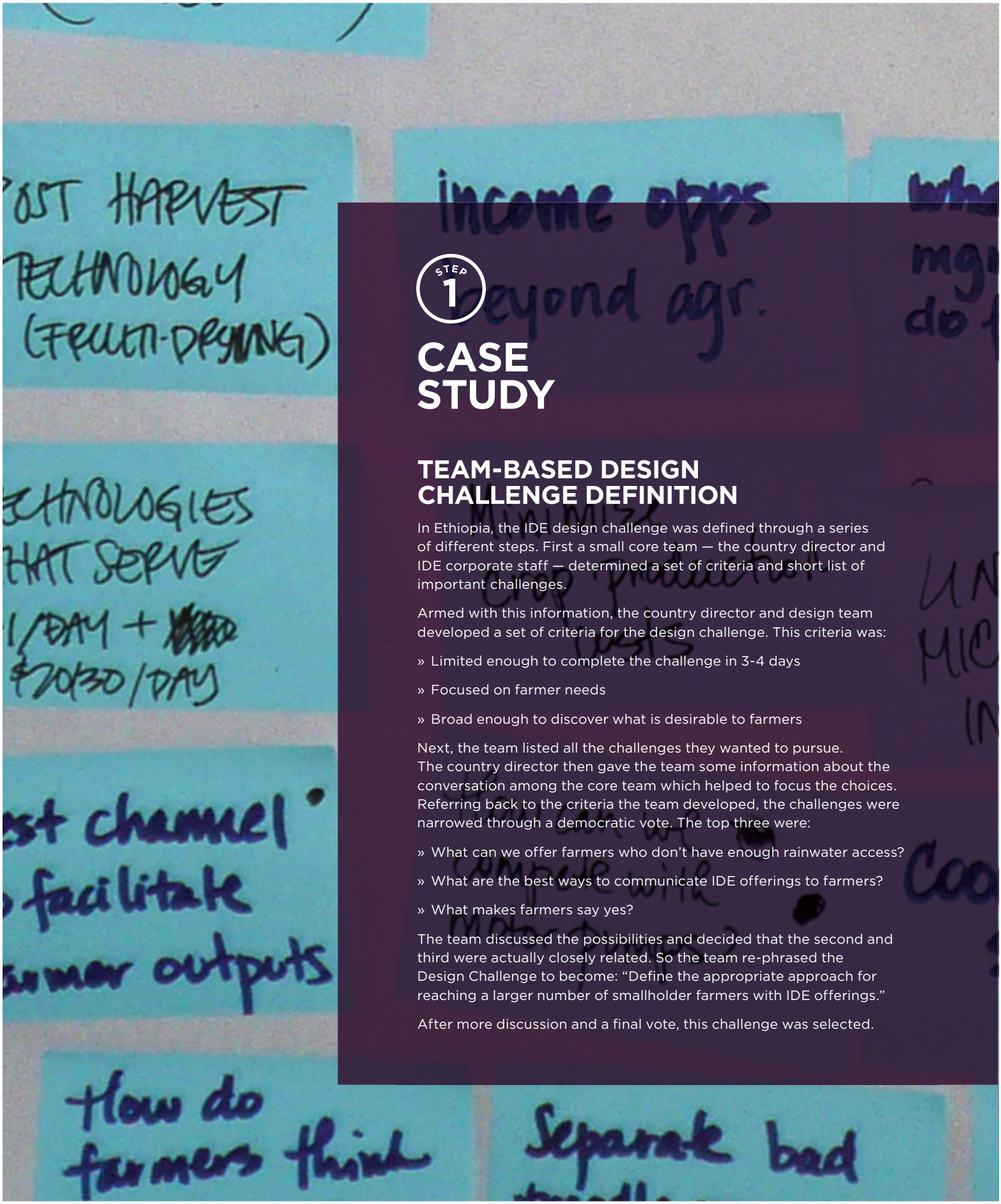
» Narrow enough to make the topic manageable

WATCH OUT

The challenge you choose may be related to adoption of new technologies, behaviors, medicines, products, or services. This might lead to framing a design challenge that is organization-focused, such as “How can we get people in villages to adopt savings accounts?” Instead, to act as a springboard for innovation, the challenge should be re-framed in a more human-centered way, such as “How can we create a financial safety net for people in villages?”

TRY

Start the design challenge with an action verb such as “Create”, “Define”, “Adapt”, etc. Or phrase the challenge as a question starting with: “How can...?”



STEP 1

CASE STUDY

TEAM-BASED DESIGN CHALLENGE DEFINITION

In Ethiopia, the IDE design challenge was defined through a series of different steps. First a small core team — the country director and IDE corporate staff — determined a set of criteria and short list of important challenges.

Armed with this information, the country director and design team developed a set of criteria for the design challenge. This criteria was:

» Limited enough to complete the challenge in 3-4 days

» Focused on farmer needs

» Broad enough to discover what is desirable to farmers

Next, the team listed all the challenges they wanted to pursue. The country director then gave the team some information about the conversation among the core team which helped to focus the choices. Referring back to the criteria the team developed, the challenges were narrowed through a democratic vote. The top three were:

» What can we offer farmers who don't have enough rainwater access?

» What are the best ways to communicate IDE offerings to farmers?

» What makes farmers say yes?

The team discussed the possibilities and decided that the second and third were actually closely related. So the team re-phrased the Design Challenge to become: "Define the appropriate approach for reaching a larger number of smallholder farmers with IDE offerings."

After more discussion and a final vote, this challenge was selected.

STEP 2

RECOGNIZE EXISTING KNOWLEDGE

Chances are good that you already have some knowledge about the topic. Conducting a "What Do We Know?" session helps call forth existing knowledge related to the Design Challenge. Once documented, you can freely focus on discovering what you don't yet know.

Facilitator Notes

Time:
30-60 mins.

Difficulty:
★★★☆☆

Step 1: Post the design challenge so that the team can see it.

Step 2: Hand out post-it notes to the design team, and ask them to write what they already know about the topic. Have one piece of information per post-it note.

Step 3: Ask each person to read their notes, and post them under the design challenge. Ask others to disagree or challenge any of the assumptions that come out.

Step 4: Ask the team to write down on post-it notes what they don't know about the challenge and read their notes. Post these notes in a different area.

Step 5: Group the post-it notes into themes to help the team develop research methods, a recruiting plan, and the interview guide.

TRY

First, on Post-Its, write down what you already know about the Design Challenge, including:

» What people need or want

» What technologies can help in this challenge

» What solutions or ideas are being tried in other areas

» Any early hypotheses about how to solve the Design Challenge

Are there any contradictions or tensions that emerge? Where is the team's knowledge the strongest: on the needs of people, on the technological possibilities, or in how to implement ideas?

Next, write down what you don't know but need to learn about the area of investigation, such as:

» What constituents do, think, or feel

» How people value offerings

» What constituents' future needs may be

» Challenges to implementation of ideas

Where are the biggest needs for research?
How should the recruiting strategy be tailored?
Which categories might structure the discussion guide?

Facilitator Notes

Time:
30-60 mins.

Difficulty:
★★★☆☆

Step 1: Develop the spectrum along which to recruit. Generate several options (i.e. High income to low income, early adopter to risk averse, large landholder to landless). Individually or collectively narrow to one or two relevant spectrums to make sure "extremes" are covered in the research.

Step 2: Identify the relevant locations to recruit participants. Ask stakeholders to list good areas for this research. Pick 2-5 field sites that vary from one another (i.e. a dry and a wet site or a site in a central district and one more remote).

Step 3: Select appropriate community contacts to help arrange community meetings and individual interviews. Make sure community contacts include men & women.

STEP 3

IDENTIFY PEOPLE TO SPEAK WITH

Recruiting appropriate and inspirational participants is critical. Attention to gender, ethnicity, and class balance is crucial for research.

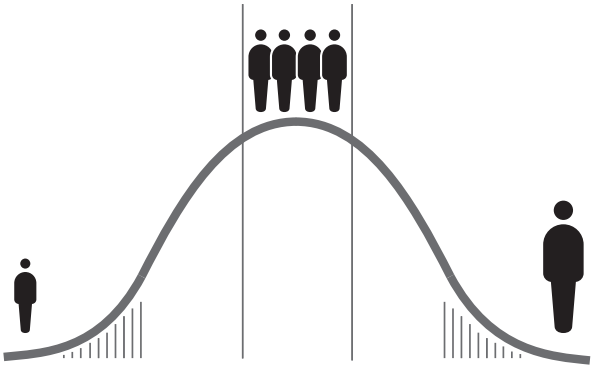
For research meant to inspire new opportunities, it is useful to find people who represent "extremes." Extreme participants help to unearth unarticulated behaviors, desires, and needs of the rest of the population, but are easier to observe and identify because they feel the effects more powerfully than others. By including both ends of your spectrum as well as some people in the middle, the full range of behaviors, beliefs, and perspectives will be heard even with a small number of participants. Including this full range will be important in the later phases, especially in constructing good frameworks and providing inspiration for brainstorming.

GENDER

Some communities may be resistant to male NGO staff interviewing women. Make sure female staff help recruit & interview women.

WATCH OUT

Group sessions are a great springboard to identify participants for the individual interviews. However, communities often want to showcase only the most successful constituents or male community members to NGOs.



TIP #1

One-third of participants might be “ideal constituents”: those who are successful, adopt new technologies quickly, and/or exhibit desirable behaviors.

One-third of participants should be on the opposite extreme: those who are very poor, resistant to new technologies, and/or exhibit problematic behaviors.

One-third of participants should be somewhere in between: those who the researchers believe represent more “average” people.

TIP #2

To satisfy the economic spectrum from the more well off to the very poor, you might ask:

» “Can you introduce me to a family who cannot afford to send their children to school?”

» “Who has not been able to afford maintenance or repairs to their home?”

» “Who has experienced a recent setback (medical problems, bad harvest, etc)?”

Refer to the Field Guide to help guide your recruiting.

STEP 4

CHOOSE RESEARCH METHODS

Design research is useful to not only understand individuals but also frame individual behaviors in the context and community that surrounds them. Therefore, it will be important to employ many methods of research. In addition to the methods described in this book, secondary sources and quantitative data can be supplemented to understand income or asset variances across different regions.

Five methods described here are:

» Individual Interview
» Group Interview
» In Context Immersion
» Self-Documentation
» Community-Driven Discovery
» Expert Interviews
» Seeking Inspiration in New Places

METHOD: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

Individual interviews are critical to most design research, since they enable a deep and rich view into the behaviors, reasoning, and lives of people. If possible, arrange to meet the participant at his/her home or workplace, so you can see them in context. In-context interviews give the participant greater ease and allow you to see the objects, spaces, and people that they talk about during the interview.

Facilitator Notes

Time:
60-90 mins.

Difficulty:
★★☆☆☆

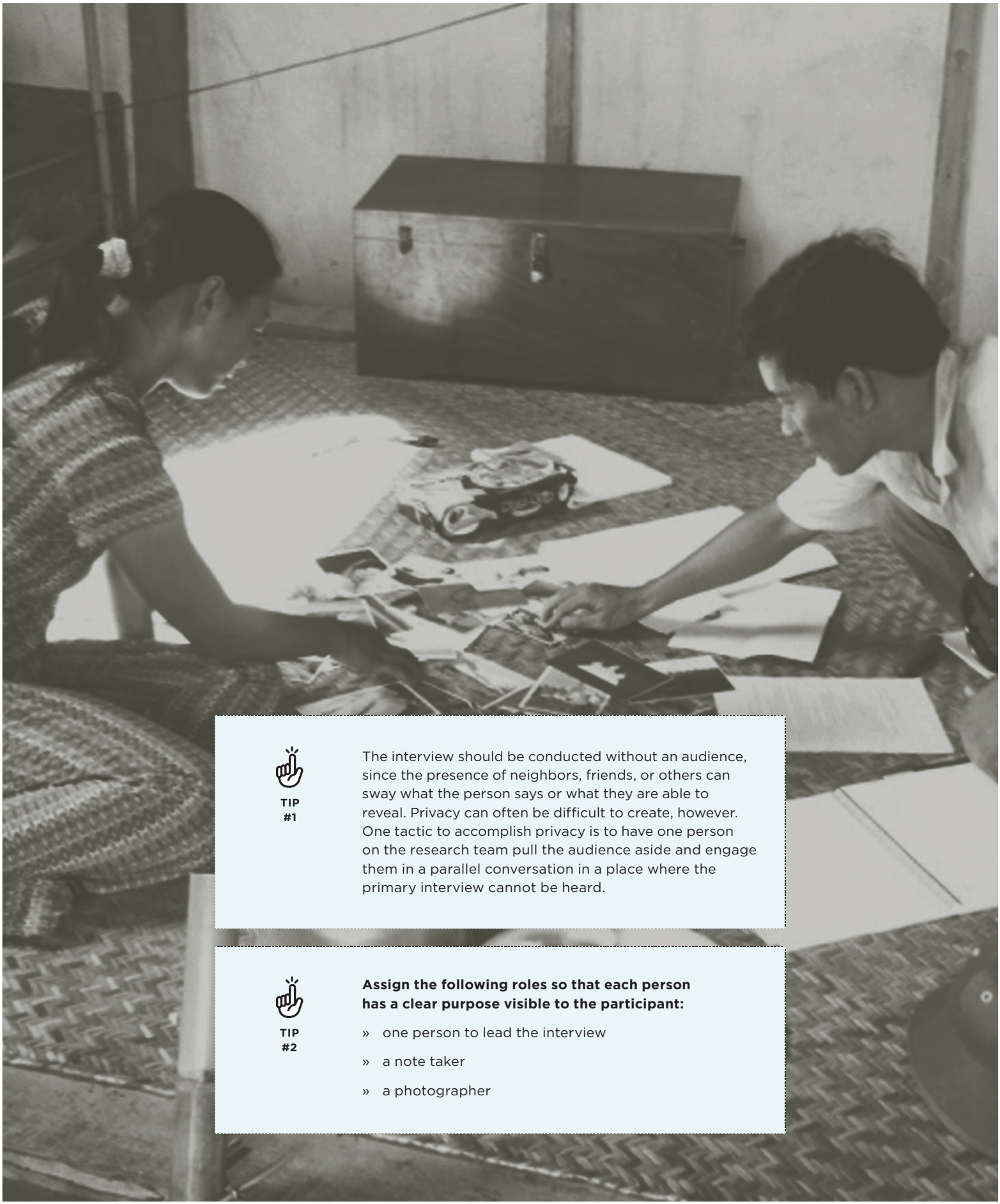
Step 1: After your team has written the Interview Guide (see Field Guide), practice the individual interview by partnering in teams of two. One person plays the role of the interviewer and the other the interviewee. Ask the teams to go through a "practice interview" with their partner.

Step 2: Ask the team what they learned through this exercise. Are there any topics or questions that are missing?

WATCH OUT

If there are many people on the research team, no more than three people should attend any single interview so as to not overwhelm the participant and/or create difficulty in accommodating a large group inside the participant's home.

Refer to Step 5: Develop an Interview Approach to create a set of questions for your individual interviews.



TIP #1

The interview should be conducted without an audience, since the presence of neighbors, friends, or others can sway what the person says or what they are able to reveal. Privacy can often be difficult to create, however. One tactic to accomplish privacy is to have one person on the research team pull the audience aside and engage them in a parallel conversation in a place where the primary interview cannot be heard.

TIP #2

Assign the following roles so that each person has a clear purpose visible to the participant:

» one person to lead the interview

» a note taker

» a photographer

STEP 4

METHOD: GROUP INTERVIEW

Group-based interviews can be a valuable way to learn about a community quickly. Group interviews can be good for learning about community life and dynamics, understanding general community issues, and giving everyone in a community the chance to voice their views.

Group interviews are not good for gaining a deep understanding of individual income streams, uncovering what people really think, or understanding how to change commonly-held beliefs or behaviors.

TIP #1

Guidelines for group meetings:
Size: 7-10 people from diverse economic backgrounds

Place: Meet on neutral ground in a shared community space that all people have access to (regardless of age, gender, status, race).

Gender: Mixed or same-sex groups depending on the customs in that community (if men and women should meet separately, two facilitators can run the groups in parallel).

Age: Mixed groups of parents and teens/children, depending on the topic and local context.

WATCH OUT

Are the viewpoints of men and women equally valued in this community? If not, it may make sense to have two meetings, one with women only and one with men only.

Are political heavyweights (such as chiefs, local administrators, etc) present? If so, their opinions may hamper the ability of others to speak freely.

Does the community view you as a source of funds, gifts, or charity? If so, their interactions may be influenced by the desire to access potential benefits; it may be helpful to prepare an introduction that makes the purpose of the interview clear and state that nothing will be given away.

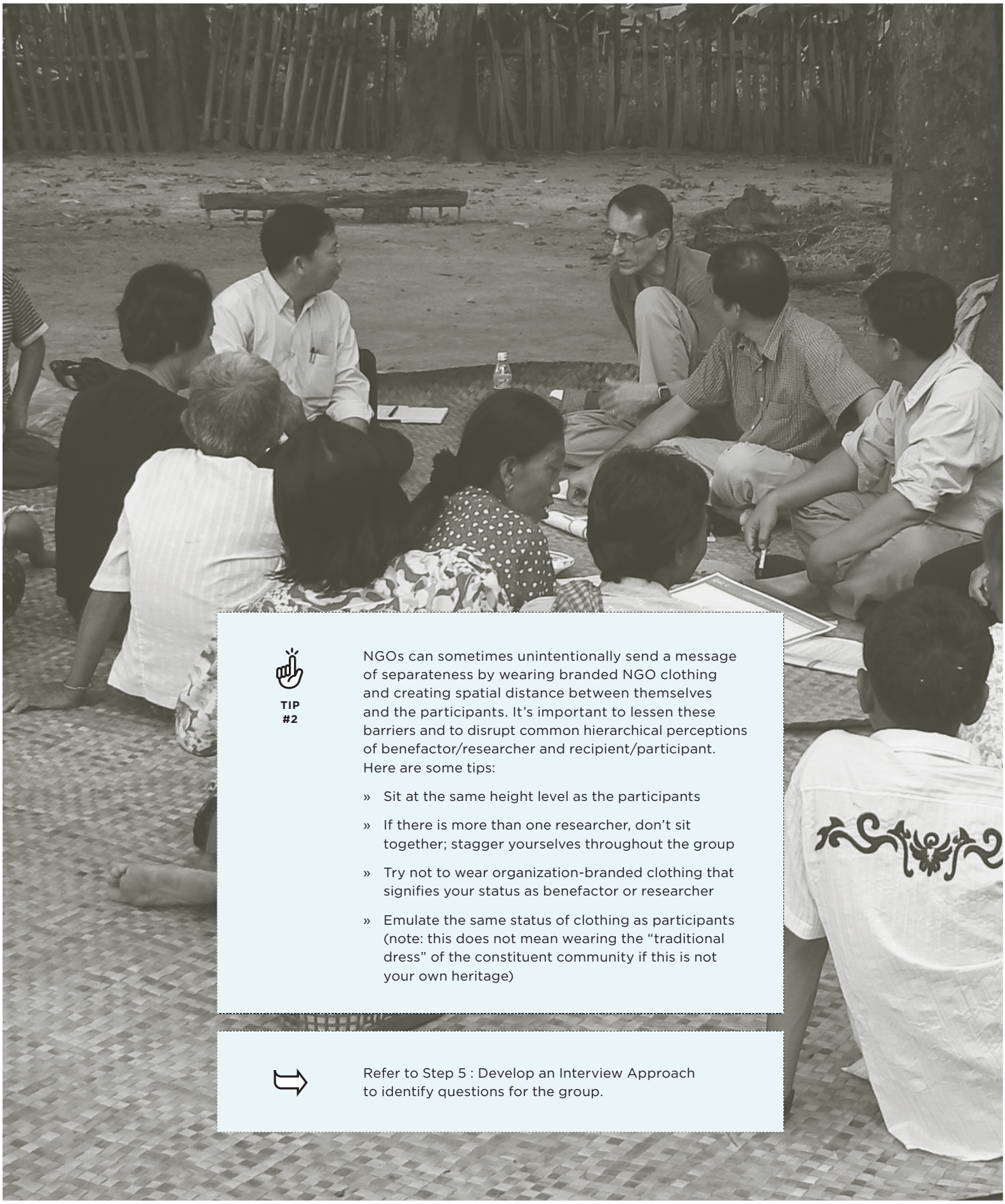
Facilitator Notes

Time:
1.5-2 Hours

Difficulty:
★★★☆☆

Step 1: After the team develops a Group Interview Guide (see Step 4), have the team partner in groups of two for a practice interview. Ask the interviewers to develop an approach for including women and quieter members of the group. Ask them also to develop strategies for asking people who may be dominating the conversation to allow other people to answer.

Step 2: Have the team share "best practices" for including quieter members of the group and redirecting the conversation away from people who are dominating the conversation.



TIP #2

NGOs can sometimes unintentionally send a message of separateness by wearing branded NGO clothing and creating spatial distance between themselves and the participants. It's important to lessen these barriers and to disrupt common hierarchical perceptions of benefactor/researcher and recipient/participant. Here are some tips:

- Sit at the same height level as the participants
- If there is more than one researcher, don't sit together; stagger yourselves throughout the group
- Try not to wear organization-branded clothing that signifies your status as benefactor or researcher
- Emulate the same status of clothing as participants (note: this does not mean wearing the "traditional dress" of the constituent community if this is not your own heritage)

Refer to Step 5 : Develop an Interview Approach to identify questions for the group.

STEP 4

METHOD: IN CONTEXT IMMERSION

Meeting people where they live, work, and socialize and immersing yourself in their context reveals new insights and unexpected opportunities.

Human-Centered Design works best when the designers understand the people they are designing for not just on an intellectual level, but also on an experiential level. Try to do what your constituents do and talk to them about their experience of life in the moment.

Facilitator Notes

Time:
2-4 Days

Difficulty:
★★★★☆

Step 1: To plan a homestay, identify people willing to host a researcher for one-to-three nights in their home. Depending on local customs, level of safety, and language barriers, team members can stay in homes individually or partner up in groups of two to three people.

Step 2: Make sure the team understands that the goal of this exercise is to see how participants live day-to-day. Advise your team not to bring elaborate gifts, food, or alcohol to the homestay. However, a small gift of ordinary household supplies or help with normal family expenses is perfectly fine.

Step 3: Tell team members to participate with the family in their normal routines. Ask the team to spend time with and talk to the men, women, and children in the household. It's important to see how the household works from all these different perspectives.

GENDER

On a project in rural India, people said that cultural tradition prevented women from touching men who are not immediate family members. However, by spending several days in a village, the team observed that there were many instances in which trained or uniformed women doing specific jobs were able to touch men without any serious problems. These gaps between what people say and what they do are not bad. In fact, seeing these differences may highlight new opportunities; for example, designing a new medical service that could be provided by uniformed women.

TRY #1

Work Alongside
Spend a few hours to a few days working with someone. By experiencing the business and activity firsthand, you may gain better understanding of their needs, barriers, and constraints.

TRY #2

Family Homestay
Ask a family to host 1-2 team members for a few nights in their home. Staying for a few nights allows the family to gain comfort and act naturally. After the second night, very few people can maintain a "show" for guests, and the understanding and empathy the team will gain will increase the longer you stay in one place.

TIP #1

What people say (and think) they do and what they actually do are not always the same thing.
With no intent to mislead you, people often have strong beliefs about what they do on a daily basis that differs from what they actually do. The goal is not to correct or point out the misperception, but rather to understand the difference.

TIP #2

Putting yourself in someone's shoes enables you to get beyond what people say to what they think and feel.
Being in-context means gaining true empathy through being with people in their real settings and doing the things they normally do. This kind of deep immersion gives us Informed Intuition that we take back with us to design solutions. We begin to take on the perspective of the interview participant which enables us to make design decisions with their perspective in mind. Of course, we always go back into the field and get feedback from the source to see if our Informed Intuition led us to the right choices, and how we can improve them.

TIP #3

Deep immersion shows commitment and staying power.
For example, working with a person for a day in his or her field, living with a family for a few days or helping them bring their products to market are ways of showing your deep interest in the day-to-day lives of your participants. Trust is built over time and people feel at ease sharing their plans and hopes for the future. Many NGOs gain this depth of connection over many months of relationship building. Some techniques like the overnight stay described in the case study on the next page can accelerate this trust building.

STEP 4

CASE STUDY

OVERNIGHT STAY IN THE FIELD

On a project to increase small holder farmer income for IDE Ethopia, the design team stayed overnight in Arsi Negelle, Ethiopia, where they plowed the family's fields the next morning. The overnight enabled the team to get beyond the common stories people are used to telling NGOs and learn about one farmer's most intimate plans for the future.

They visited a farmer named Roba the first evening and once again the next day.

When they first met Roba, he portrayed an overall sense of hopelessness. He described things that happened TO him, in particular the government's recent land redistribution. Some farmers received land in the irrigated area near the lake. Some did not. He was in the latter group.

The next day, he was shocked to discover that the team was still there. His demeanor had changed completely. He knew the team was committed. This time, he shared that in fact he did have a plan for pulling his family out of poverty. If he could secure a $200 USD loan, he would first buy an ox so he wouldn't have to trade two days of his own labor to borrow a neighbor's. Then he'd rent a piece of land in the irrigated territory and purchase improved seed. He no longer viewed the team as a wealthy NGO who was there to provide a free gift, but rather a partner in how he could take command of his own future.

STEP 4

METHOD: SELF-DOCUMENTATION

Self-Documentation is a powerful method for observing processes over a long period of time, or for understanding the nuances of community life when the researcher can't be there. Records of experiences, such as journal entries, allow the team to see how participants see their life, community, and relationships.

TRY

Recruit several people and give them cameras, video cameras, voice recorders or journals, with instructions. Ask them to document their experiences over a few days or weeks. Give participants instructions designed to guide them on how to easily record activities that will yield relevant information to the research project. The easier it is to self-document, the more likely it is that participants will complete the exercise.

TIP #1

Often teenagers and young people are good participants in self-documentary exercises. Young people tend to want to express themselves in new ways, and can find the process of documenting their lives and the community less intimidating than older adults.

TIP #2

You may find that your participants need a little help practicing the techniques for self-documentation. If this is the case, show some examples of how other people have done self-documentation, or spend a few hours with the participant to show them how to capture information.

GENDER

Be sensitive to who has access to what in a community. It is important to recruit both men and women in this exercise to have a balance of perspectives. Also be sensitive to class, age, and other factors that will affect the information people are able to collect and record.

Facilitator Notes

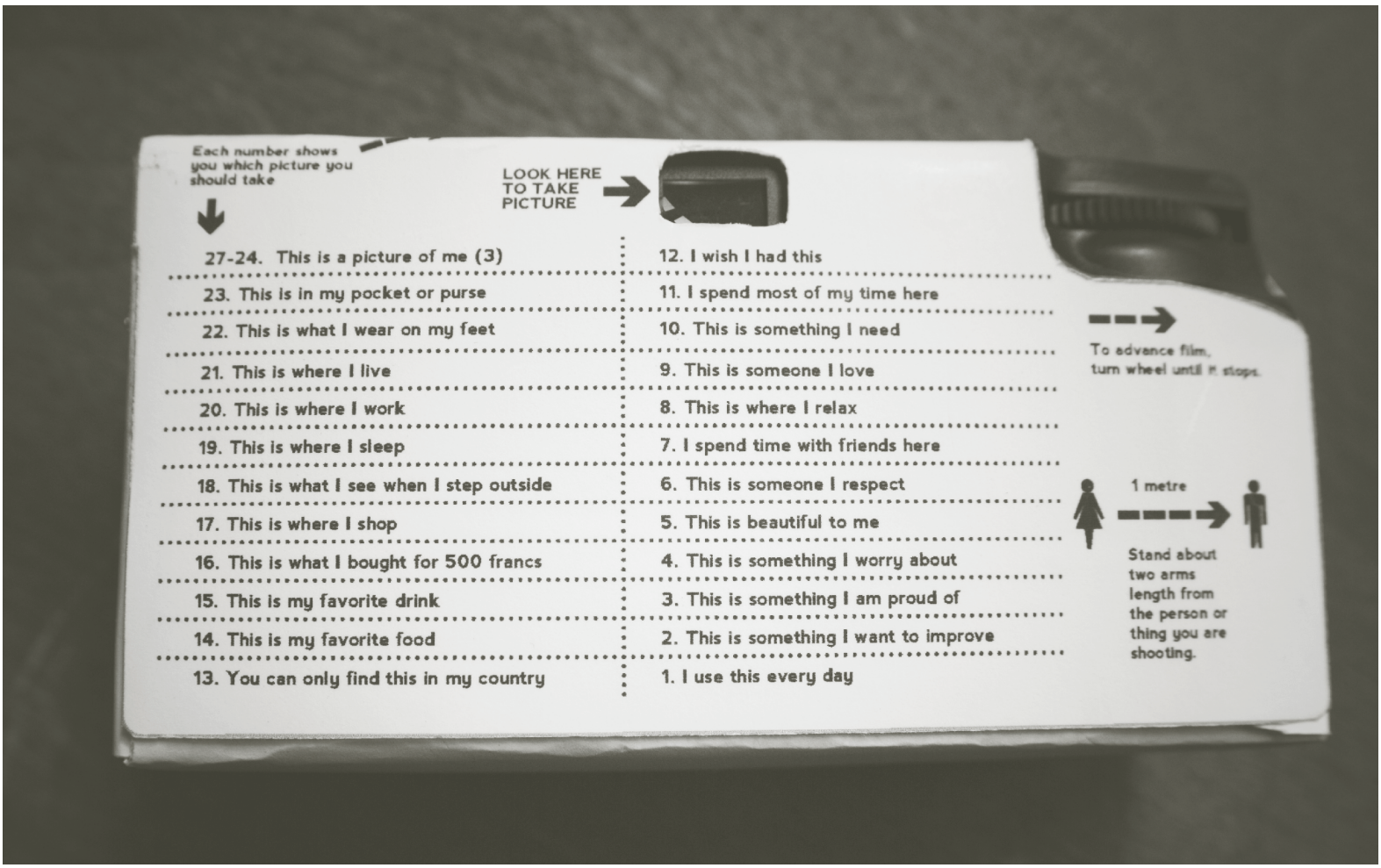
Time:
2-30 Days

Difficulty:
★★★☆☆

Step 1: Decide what you would like people to document — their feelings, activities, family life, income, or behaviors. Based on this, decide what the best mode for collection of the information might be: photographs, diaries, voice recordings, etc.

Step 2: Give participants the tools and instructions to document themselves for several days.

Step 3: When you return to the participants, review the materials together. Remember to ask them not just what the things are that they documented, but also why they chose these details and how they felt about the items.


Each number shows you which picture you should take
LOOK HERE TO TAKE PICTURE
27-24. This is a picture of me (3)
23. This is in my pocket or purse
22. This is what I wear on my feet
21. This is where I live
20. This is where I work
19. This is where I sleep
18. This is what I see when I step outside
17. This is where I shop
16. This is what I bought for 500 francs
15. This is my favorite drink
14. This is my favorite food
13. You can only find this in my country
12. I wish I had this
11. I spend most of my time here
10. This is something I need
9. This is someone I love
8. This is where I relax
7. I spend time with friends here
6. This is someone I respect
5. This is beautiful to me
4. This is something I worry about
3. This is something I am proud of
2. This is something I want to improve
1. I use this every day
To advance film, turn wheel until it stops.
1 metre
Stand about two arms length from the person or thing you are shooting.

STEP 4

METHOD: COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DISCOVERY

In most cases, the real experts on a certain topic and those with the most insight for the Design Challenge are the people in the community or end customers. Consider recruiting members of the community to be the primary researchers, translators, designers and/or key informants for the project.

Community members with strong relationships, respected leaders, or people with a reputation for intelligence and fairness are often good people to identify as research partners. By asking people in the community to lead the research, the other participants may be able to express their concerns more openly and honestly. In addition, through their intimate knowledge of the community, these research partners can help interpret the hidden meaning and motivations behind the statements of other participants.

Facilitator Notes

Time:
2-4 Days

Difficulty:
★★★★☆

Step 1: Identify a few people in the community that will be good members to have on the design team. Try to ensure that these individuals are trusted and respected members of the community, that they are fair and unbiased, and have no personal stake in the results of the design solutions.

Step 2: Decide how you will compensate these individuals. Sometimes it will be appropriate to pay them a salary based on what other members of the design team are getting paid, while in other situations, non-monetary gifts are more appropriate. If you are uncertain, seek advice.

Step 3: Integrate these design team members at every point in the project, valuing their knowledge of the community dynamics and needs.

WATCH OUT

Community politics can sometimes transform a research project into a community battle for access to the resources of the researcher and/or NGO. Even when these resources are not real, the perception of favoritism can be damaging. Before starting a project utilizing community-driven discovery, it is important to understand the relevant dynamics and power relationships.

TRY

Find people in the community who are particularly innovative or who have been doing things out of the ordinary in order to achieve success. How might you partner with these individuals to inspire new solutions? What can be learned by leveraging their innovations and knowledge?

STEP 4

METHOD: EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Experts can be called upon to provide in-depth and technical information. Reaching out to experts is particularly useful in cases where the team needs to learn a large amount of information in a short period of time, and/or where others have already done a lot of research on a topic.

Some examples of good times to call upon expert interviews are:

» To learn about the history of a particular community or topic

» To understand the regulations that might affect design and implementation of solutions

» To gather information about new technologies that have been recently invented or that are on the horizon

Facilitator Notes

Time:
1.5-3 hours

Difficulty:
★☆☆☆☆

Step 1: Identify the areas or topics that you would like to talk to experts about.

Step 2: Find and recruit these experts by telling them about your project and the intended length of time you will speak with them. Try to speak with people who have different opinions on the topics to challenge the team to think in new ways.

Step 3: Return to some of these experts during the Feedback portion of the project -- experts can be even more helpful when there is something tangible for them to respond to.

WATCH OUT

Expert interviews are not a substitute for primary research with participants and communities. Often experts overstate their expertise or develop their own assumptions and biases that can stifle innovation.

TIP #1

If possible, interview experts with different points of view on a topic in order to balance out biases.

TIP #2

Remember that the real experts are the people you're designing for. Don't ask experts for solutions or take their ideas as the final solution.

Facilitator Notes

Time:
20-60 mins.

Difficulty:
★★★☆☆

Step 1: Think about all the activities, feelings, and behaviors that make up the experience of your challenge. Ask the team to list these together.

Step 2: Next to each activity, feeling, or behavior, write down a few other areas or situations where this exists. For example, if the activity is "use a device at the same time every day", other situations might be how people use alarm clocks, wells, or mobile phones.

Step 3: Have the team vote on the situations that they would like to observe for inspiration and arrange for an observation.

Step 4: During the observation, have the team take pictures and notes of the experience. Together, debrief on what this experience was like and what they can apply to the design challenge.

STEP 4

METHOD: SEEK INSPIRATION IN NEW PLACES

One of the best ways to inspire new ideas is to look at similar experiences in other contexts, instead of focusing too narrowly on the research topic. The simple act of looking at different contexts can bring to mind new insights. For example a surgeon can get insights about organizing their medical supplies by visiting a hardware store, an airline employer might get ideas about check-in by observing a hotel front desk or a water-jug creator could observe other ways individuals transport heavy objects or liquids.

TRY

To identify inspirational settings, list all the distinct activities or emotions that make up the experience you are researching. For example, a doctor's visit might include the following activities and feelings: getting sick, discussing a doctor visit with family, travel, paying, and following doctor instructions such as taking medication or changing behavior. Find other situations that include some or all of these activities and then go and observe them.

TRY

This method is most useful when you have already done some research, and need to refresh your thinking.

STEP 5

DEVELOP AN INTERVIEW APPROACH

Interviewing is an art that balances the dual needs of getting relevant information from the customer and engaging with them as a curious and empathetic friend. Intentionally developing your strategy for interviewing is key to managing this balance. Here we include three interview methods that may help you to develop the interview approach right for you:

» Interview Guide
» Sacrificial Concepts
» Interview Techniques

Facilitator Notes

Time:
1-2 Hours

Difficulty:
★★★★☆

Step 1: Generate a list of topics related to your design challenge to cover in field research.

Step 2: Sort the topics based on what are the main categories and sub-categories.

Step 3: Identify if any topics are specific to male or female activities.

Step 4: Break into groups of two. Take each main category and assign a group to generate a list of questions to ask in the field based on the topics listed in the main category.

Step 5: Have each group present their questions to the larger team and add any additional questions that may be missing.

METHOD: INTERVIEW GUIDE

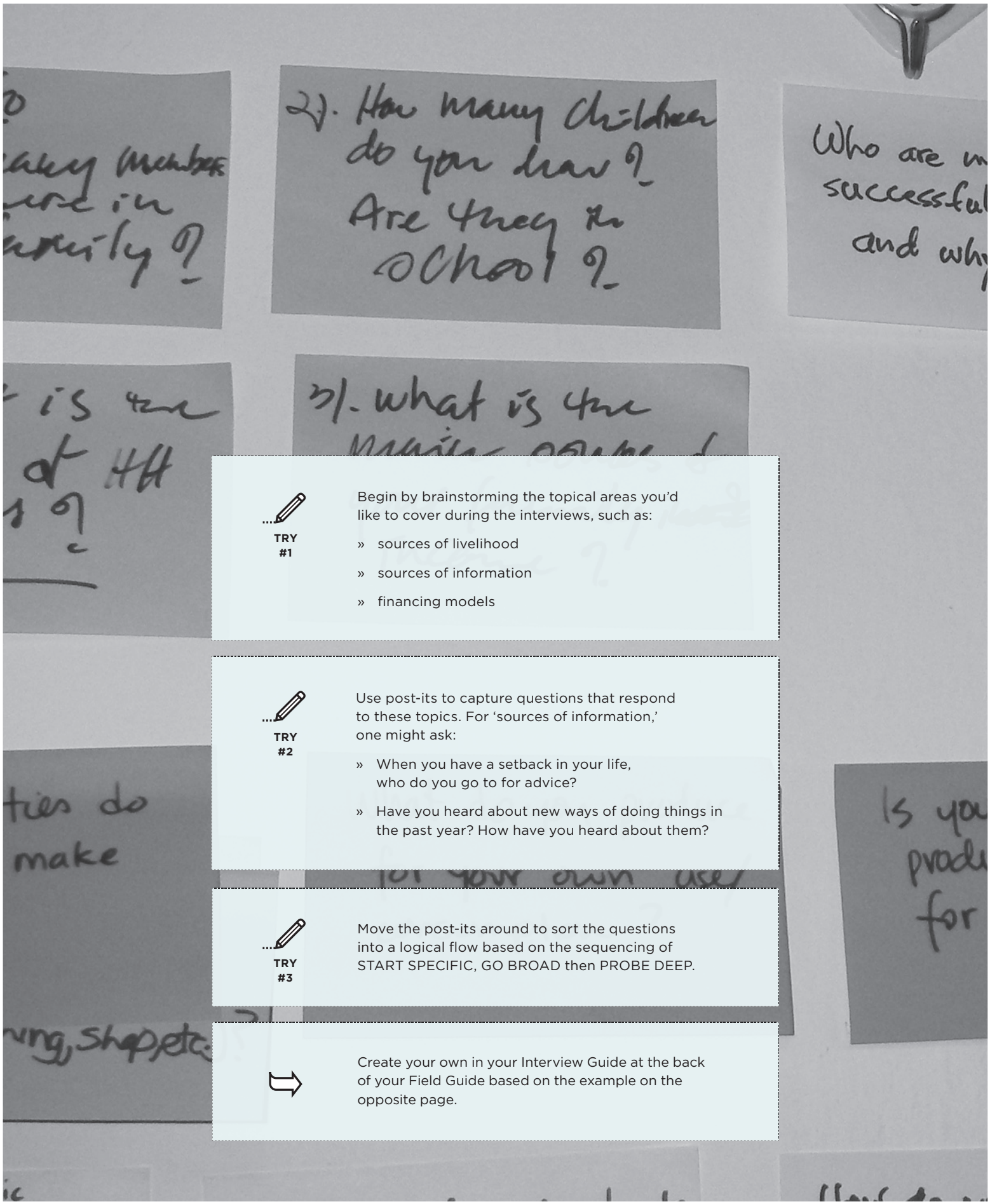
The semi-structured interview is a key method of enabling dialogue and deep engagement with participants while retaining focus on a particular topic. Thoughtful structuring of the interview questions will take the participant on a mental journey from the specific to the aspirational to the tangible.

TIP #1

OPEN SPECIFIC
Warm up the participant with questions they are comfortable with.
1. Household demographics
2. Who does what in the household?
3. Stories of recent past

GO BROAD
Prompt bigger, even aspirational, thinking that they may not be accustomed to on a daily basis.
4. Aspirations for the future
5. System-based questions

PROBE DEEP
Dig deeper on the challenge at hand & prompt with 'what if' scenarios.
6. Income sources
7. Questions specific to innovation challenge
8. Sacrificial Concepts



TRY #1

Begin by brainstorming the topical areas you'd like to cover during the interviews, such as:

» sources of livelihood

» sources of information

» financing models

TRY #2

Use post-its to capture questions that respond to these topics. For 'sources of information,' one might ask:

» When you have a setback in your life, who do you go to for advice?

» Have you heard about new ways of doing things in the past year? How have you heard about them?

TRY #3

Move the post-its around to sort the questions into a logical flow based on the sequencing of START SPECIFIC, GO BROAD then PROBE DEEP.

Create your own in your Interview Guide at the back of your Field Guide based on the example on the opposite page.

STEP 5

METHOD: SACRIFICIAL CONCEPTS

Scenario-based questions or Sacrificial Concepts can help make hypothetical or abstract questions more accessible. A sacrificial concept is an idea or solution created to help understand the issue further. It is a concept that doesn't have to be feasible, viable, or possible since its only purpose is deeper understanding. A good sacrificial concept sparks a conversation, prompts a participant to be more specific in their stories, and helps check and challenge your assumptions.

Facilitator Notes

Time:
30-60 mins.

Difficulty:
★★★★☆

Step 1: Based on your Design Challenge, identify an abstract question you would like to know the answer to. Pose the abstract question to your partner, and note the response.

Step 2: Now turn the abstract question into a concrete scenario with two options. Pose your scenario-based question to your partner.

Step 3: Now change a few of the variables in your scenario and pose the question again.

What kinds of information did you learn from the different ways of questioning?

TIP

Abstract concepts difficult to answer for many people include:

» Questions about risk, insurance, and guarantees

» Questions about trade-offs

» Questions about return on investment

» Questions about future behavior

TRY

Make a question less abstract by creating a Sacrificial Concept:

Instead of asking: "How much would you pay to reduce the risk of purchasing new technology?"

Describe two scenarios for the participant to choose from: "If you had a choice between two new technologies that could improve your farm output. The first technology costs 1,000 and comes with no guarantee. The second costs 1,500 and comes with a guarantee that by the second harvest, your farm output will double or else we will come back, take the technology away, and give you back your 1,500. Which option would you prefer?" Discuss why.

TRY #1

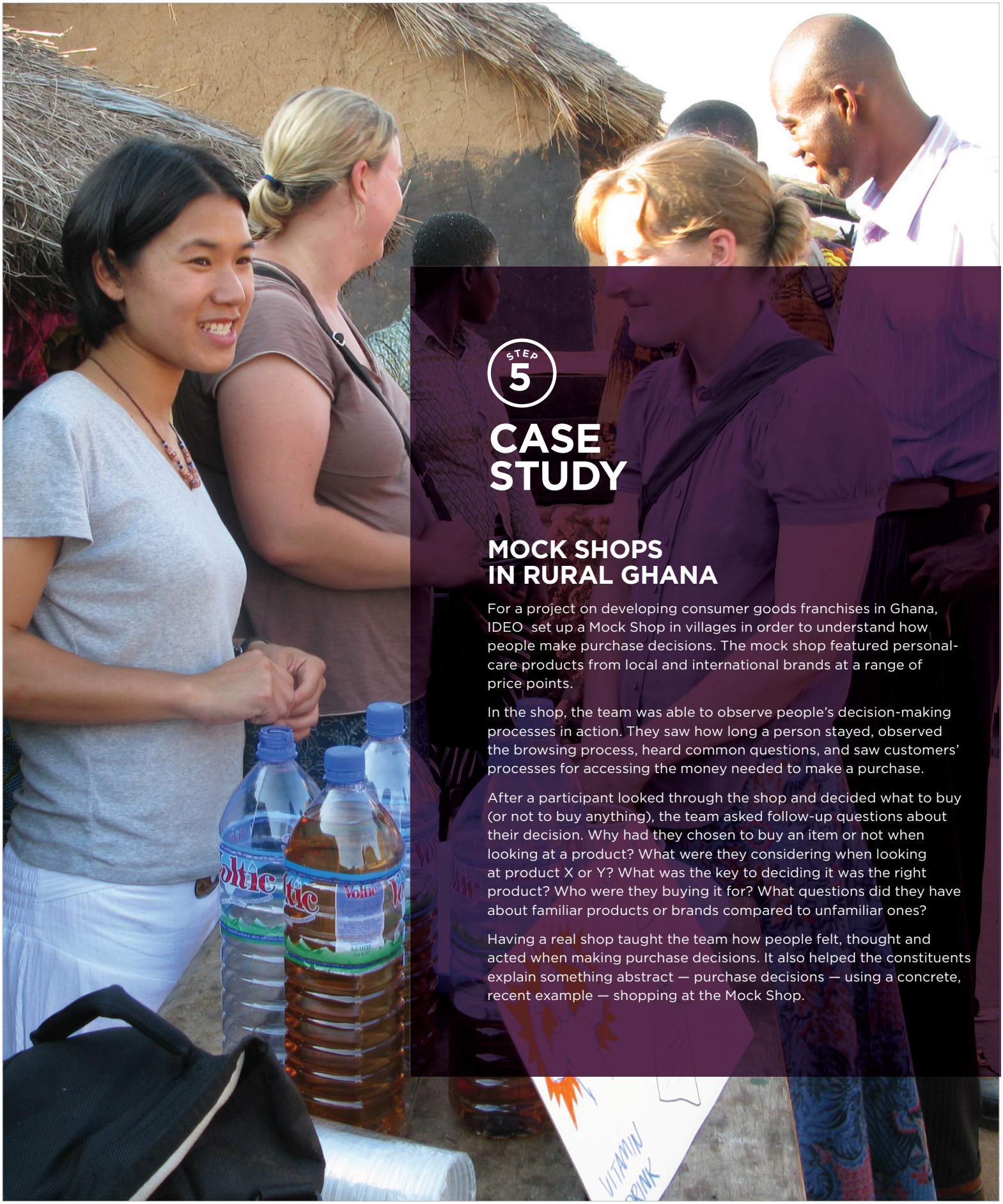
Ask a person to compare your concept to the way they currently do things. You might also create two concepts that contrast with each other or are opposites. People have an easier time reacting to concepts if they have something to compare it to.

TRY #2

A sacrificial concept might be a scenario told verbally or shown in pictures or drawings. It might be an object that the person can handle. It might be an experience that a participant can try.

TRY #3

Look at your design challenge and your big questions. What topics do you want to explore deeply? Create a sacrificial concept to help you prompt the right conversation.



STEP 5

CASE STUDY

MOCK SHOPS IN RURAL GHANA

For a project on developing consumer goods franchises in Ghana, IDEO set up a Mock Shop in villages in order to understand how people make purchase decisions. The mock shop featured personal-care products from local and international brands at a range of price points.

In the shop, the team was able to observe people's decision-making processes in action. They saw how long a person stayed, observed the browsing process, heard common questions, and saw customers' processes for accessing the money needed to make a purchase.

After a participant looked through the shop and decided what to buy (or not to buy anything), the team asked follow-up questions about their decision. Why had they chosen to buy an item or not when looking at a product? What were they considering when looking at product X or Y? What was the key to deciding it was the right product? Who were they buying it for? What questions did they have about familiar products or brands compared to unfamiliar ones?

Having a real shop taught the team how people felt, thought and acted when making purchase decisions. It also helped the constituents explain something abstract — purchase decisions — using a concrete, recent example — shopping at the Mock Shop.

Facilitator Notes

Time:
20-40 mins.

Difficulty:
★☆☆☆☆

Step 1: Have the team practice by partnering in groups of two. At least one person (Person A) in each team should have a mobile phone with them.

Step 2: Ask Person A to simply explain to their partner (Person B) how they enter a new contact into the phone.

Step 3: Have Person B use the Show Me technique with Person A.

Step 4: Have Person B use the Five Whys technique with Person A.

Step 5: Ask the team to come back together and ask, "What kind of information did you get from using Five Whys?" Then ask, "What kind of information did you get from using Show Me?"

STEP 5

METHOD: INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Through telling stories, human beings reveal important issues and opportunities in their daily experiences. Often, what people say they do and what they actually do are not the same thing. So it's important not just to rely on asking straight forward questions in an interview. Here are a few techniques for collecting rich stories in an interview.

TRY

Begin with a simple example, like how someone uses a mobile phone. Partner up and ask your partner to begin with a SHOW ME of how they entered the last contact into their address book. Next move on to the FIVE WHYS technique with your partner. Ask them to tell you about the last contact they entered into their address book and then five consecutive Why? questions.

DISCUSS

Compare and contrast the type of information you get from the different techniques. Let this inform your questioning techniques in the field.

SHOW ME

If you are in the interviewee's environment, ask him/her to show you the things they interact with (objects, spaces, tools, etc). Capture pictures and notes to jog your memory later. Or have them walk you through the process.

DRAW IT

Ask participants to visualize their experience through drawings and diagrams. This can be a good way to debunk assumptions and reveal how people conceive of and order their activities.

5 WHY'S

Ask "Why?" questions in response to five consecutive answers. This forces people to examine and express the underlying reasons for their behavior and attitudes.

THINK ALOUD

As they perform a process or execute a specific task, ask participants to describe aloud what they are thinking. This helps uncover users' motivations, concerns, perceptions, and reasoning.

Facilitator Notes

Time:
20-40 mins.

Difficulty:
★★★★★

Step 1: Ask the design team to look at the photo and identify what stands out to them. Note when people explain behaviors based on personal assumptions (i.e. "The man in the white lab coat seems to be the manager").

Step 2: Ask what past experience led to this explanation.

Step 3: Use 'opposite logic' to question the assumption the person has made (i.e. "Wouldn't those wearing lab coats need to be most sterile and therefore working closest with the machinery, not supervising?)

Step 4: Ask how the interpretation would change if a new piece of information were introduced (i.e. "What if I were to tell you that in this place white is the color that servants wear? How would you view this scene differently?").

Step 5: Ask the design team what they have learned from this exercise.

Step 6: Stress the importance of going into research with a "Beginner's Mind" and asking questions that you think you might already know the answers to, because you may be surprised by the answers.

STEP 6

DEVELOP YOUR MINDSET

The exercises listed under this step are valuable to put you in the right frame of mind for research. It is often difficult, but very important, for experts and professionals to put aside what they know when they conduct research. Keeping an open mind takes practice. The three exercises here can provide you with this practice before you go into the field:

» Beginner's Mind
» Observe vs. Interpret

MINDSET: BEGINNER'S MIND

Beginner's Mind is critical when entering a familiar environment without carrying assumptions with you that are based on prior experience. This is often very hard to do since we interpret the world based on our experience and what we think we know. This lens of personal experience can influence what we focus on and can make us unable to see important issues.

WATCH OUT

Remind yourself frequently of the need to approach your Design Challenge with Beginner's Mind, especially when you are in the field conducting research.

TRY

Here is one exercise to learn how to see the world through the eyes of a Beginner. Look at the photo on the following page and answer the following questions:

» What stands out to you? What is happening?

» What personal experience did you draw on when you looked at the picture?

» How could you look at the photo as a Beginner, without making assumptions about what is happening?

» What questions would you ask if you knew nothing about the context or activity of the people in the photo?

STEP 6

MINDSET: OBSERVE VS. INTERPRET

Building empathy for the people you serve means understanding their behavior and what motivates them. Understanding behavior enables us to identify physical, cognitive, social and/or cultural needs that we can meet through the products, services and experiences we create. This exercise helps us differentiate between observation and interpretation of what we see, revealing our biases and lenses through which we view the world.

Facilitator Notes

Time:
20-40 mins.

Difficulty:
★★☆☆☆

Step 1: Ask the team "What do you see happening in this image?" Listen for responses that have built-in interpretations and remind people to describe only what they see at this point.

Step 2: Ask "What might be the reason for this behavior?" and have the team generate at least five different interpretations about why this might be happening.

If people are stuck, throw out an idea like : "This person is displaying her clothes to her neighbors as a sign of wealth by hanging them in a public space."

Step 3: Ask "What questions would you ask to find out the real answer?" and make a list of the questions that would help your team discover the right interpretation for an observation.

TRY

Use the photo on the following page to practice making the distinction between observations and interpretations.

WHAT DO YOU SEE HAPPENING IN THIS IMAGE?
Describe only what you see, don't interpret yet.

WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THIS BEHAVIOR?
List five different possible interpretations that might explain this person's behavior.

HOW WOULD YOU FIND OUT THE REAL ANSWER?
List five questions you could ask her to determine which interpretation is correct.