

Youthlinc's mission is to *create lifetime humanitarians*. Through the process of having cultural conversations—or interviews—our team members are able to powerfully connect and find commonalities with, learn from and honor the people they will be serving. Furthermore, the people are able to share and teach our teams, which allows for reciprocity and mutual respect. The benefits of conducting these interviews promote humanitarianism.

The Guiding Principles of Community-Based Interviewing:

1. **Gain an understanding of the history of the people.** Read books, watch documentaries, spend time online. The more you understand about what the people have gone through, better the interview will be. Having more knowledge will also help you create a list of themes or questions to ask.
2. Understand how to **create a safe place**, where there is sense of trust and compassion.
3. Understand how to **obtain permission** from interviewees, which is the ultimate act of respect.
4. Learn (and practice) how to **be present** through active listening and your body language.
5. Remember what ties humankind together is what we have in common, not our differences. **Seek the commonalities** when developing your interview questions and during the interviews.

Any standing committee can develop questions that can be used during home visits, as we are interested in the culture, vocations, health, education, and lives of those we are partnering with. Be sure to coordinate with the International Service Director or in-country coordinators and community leaders on appropriateness of questions and the visits. Below is a sample list of interview questions:

- How many people are in your family? How old are they and what are their names? Generally folks share names of grandparents who live with them, and the children that died, but these can be separate questions.
- How is everyone's health? When you get sick, what are the problems?
- How old are people in this village when they get married? How do you meet the person you are going to marry?
- How old are women when they start having children? Stop having children?
- What do you eat? In the summer, in the rainy season, cold season, etc?
- How does your family make money?
- Do you ever leave the village? Why do you leave the village?
- Do people from this village go to secondary school? College?
- What are the biggest problems in the village?
- What are your biggest hopes for your children?
- Do you have anything else that you'd like to add or tell us?

The Interview Process:

1. Before the interview:
 - Make sure you have a good dialogue with the translator about the purpose of these interviews, the approximate time-frame (20-30 minutes), and to *translate exactly what is said between parties*.
 - Have a list of questions or topics to address based on your researched knowledge of the village.
 - Establish a safe place (see script document for specifics)
 - If recording the interview or taking photos:
 - Ethically and legally, we must have oral or written permission to do so. Use the permission form on the back of this document.
 - Bring an ink pad or black sharpie to get a fingerprint if the interviewee cannot write.
 - Practice using your recording device ahead of time. Make sure to have the device between those being interviewed, and propped up to get the best sound if necessary. Bring extra batteries.
2. During the interview:
 - Bring a notepad in order to take plenty of notes, especially noting names, dates, important events.
 - With your list of questions, start with the simplest ones (What food do you eat? How many children did you give birth to? How are they doing now? What is the important work men/women/children do? Then, perhaps: we know your community went through a lot during X, can you share with us your experiences?)

- Be open with your emotions. Nod and shake your head, but *always exude respect and calmness* even when responses are shocking or difficult to hear. If there is awkward silence, don't immediately jump to the next question. Silence may just be a moment of introspection, which can bring depth to the experience.
- Be like a good friend who is listening to everything that is said. Absorb each word like a sponge.
- Use your intuition to sense how and when to move from topic to topic and end the interview.

3. After the interview:

- Thank the interviewee for their time.
- Ask the interviewee if he/she/they have any questions they would like to ask.
- At the evening team meeting, discuss what was said, why was it significant, how did the experience impact you? Get your journal out for personal reflection.
- Back up the interview and photo on a computer as soon as possible.
- When back in the States, send the interviews and photos to the International Service Director at Youthlinc.