

Working with Interpreters

The most important part of the team



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Introduction





The interpreter's role

Interpreters are the main communication channel for the facilitator and the participants. It is critical that the interpreter:

Translate exactly what is said.

Speak in the first person; they are translating not speaking on behalf of the facilitator or participants.

Do not censor what is said.

Do not change the interpretation to suit their point of view or beliefs.

Do not refuse to interpret a conversation because they are afraid that their translation will offend a facilitator.

Do not stand in front of or between the facilitator and the participants.

Do not conduct conversations with participants that exclude the facilitator or answer questions posed by participants without referring them to the facilitator.

Write the key points of a discussion onto flip charts in their native language.

Translate any relevant consultation materials for the group – this may require the assistance of a translator in some regions.

Briefing interpreters

The quality of the interpreter will have a big impact on the effectiveness of the training, and the learning outcomes participants gain. Interpreters may not be comfortable with some of the material which is presented or discussed, and may not be familiar with participatory and interactive training. It is therefore important that facilitators make the effort to meet with the interpreters before the training begins to discuss the available consultation material.

Potential interpretation problems should be identified early wherever possible, and may include but are not limited to:

The meaning of key words, phrases and terminology

Speed of speech

Sentence length

Confusion about what has been said

Difficulty hearing the facilitator due to noise distraction



Furthermore, it is important that interpreters feel that they are an integral component of a dynamic teaching team. Interpreters need to feel comfortable to communicate their concerns with facilitators so that they can interpret efficiently and effectively. Similarly, facilitators need to feel comfortable to ask the interpreters to restate something if it is obvious from the reaction of the participants that there has been a misinterpretation.

Effective facilitation

It is the responsibility of the facilitator to ensure that interpretation is effective. In order to overcome some of the issues mentioned above, a good facilitator should:

Communicate in several ways to ensure that the interpreter understands what is conveyed.

