



African Population and  
Health Research Center

DFID-COVID 19 SEROSURVEY PROJECT

**Project title: Surveillance and Epidemiological Evaluation of  
COVID-19 in Kenya**

**Field Staff Training Manual**

Maurine Ng'oda  
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## Introduction

While the number of new COVID-19 cases are continually being identified from various parts of the country, we do not know the exact burden of COVID-19 in Kenya as no representative population level-study has been conducted. This is one of the several studies being launched aimed at generating new knowledge around the burden of SARS-CoV-2 virus infection COVID-19 and the national response in Kenya.

The MOH partnered with KEMRI-Wellcome Trust-Kilifi and the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) to conduct this study. The study in the two slums of Nairobi (Korogocho and Viwandani) being led by APHRC aims at estimating the number of people who have been exposed to SARS-CoV-2 before. This is the first study in the country quantifying the community spread using a non-biased population sample. Similar studies are being implemented in Kilifi and Kisumu by KEMRI.

**Scope:** The project will generate evidence from three counties in Kenya (Kilifi, Nairobi, and Kisumu).

**Duration:** 8 months

**Implementation:** African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) in collaboration with KEMRI Wellcome Trust and the Ministry of Health.

**Funding:** DFID

This training intends to prepare field staff to conduct quantitative data collection for this project. After the training course, selected interviewers will be tasked with conducting field interviews in the informal settlements of Korogocho and Viwandani sites where the project is being implemented in Nairobi.

The study targets 800 adults and children living within the Nairobi Urban Health and demographic surveillance systems (NUHDSS). They will be randomly selected and invited to take part in the study. At the end of this course, the field interviewers are expected to proceed for actual data collection. Field Interviewers are selected depending on the performance and assessments during the training period in the course. Those not selected may be retained in the reserve list. **The training will cover ethical guidelines, good interviewer practices, data collection and procedures for quality data.** Trainees will also conduct practice interviews among themselves and later on engage in a pilot at the study site to review the data collection guidelines and further enhance the trainees' skills.

Trainees are encouraged to study this manual and learn its contents to ease the level of understanding. Besides, understanding these contents is the basis of being selected as a field interviewer to proceed and be part of field team for the SEECK project.



### **A. Study Objective and Research Question**

The study will use serological assays to estimate the seroprevalence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies among target populations in Kenya.

*Research question:* What proportion of the general population has been exposed to SARS-CoV-2?

### **B. Study Participants**

The SEECK study project will collect information from NUHDSS residents in Korogocho and Viwandani (children and adults): For each NUHDSS site, the study will use the population register to select a random sample of residents across all age groups targeting 800-1000 persons in an age-stratified sample as 50 in each 5-year age band between 15-64 years and above and 100 in 5-year band from 0-14 years. This target sample size will yield 300 participants <15 years which will be enough to estimate 1% seroprevalence with a 2% margin of error. It will also give 500 participants in the 15-64-year-age group which will be enough to estimate a seroprevalence of 3-5% with <5% error margin.

### **C. Risks and Benefits**

No costs will be incurred and there shall be no individual benefits. However, individuals enrolled in serosurveillance among HDSS residents will be asked to visit a lab facility and will have transport costs reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses. To the general population this is expected to provide information that will improve the government's planning in response to COVID-19. We therefore expect that some of the findings may improve the health and livelihoods of those living in Kenya and may find use in other countries.

### **D. Study Data Collection Procedures**

Written informed consent will be obtained from all eligible NUHDSS residents. A questionnaire will be administered to all consenting participants to obtain demographic and COVID-19 exposure information, where known. A single blood sample – 5 milliliters– will be collected from adults (n = 500) while 2 millilitres will be collected from children (n = 300).

The field team will consist of 10 Field Interviewers; 6 (working in teams of 2), will conduct household visits and consenting and referring participants to the site office while the remaining 4 will be based at the sample collection site to administer the questionnaire to the referred participants. 1 lab technician will be at the sample collection site to collect blood samples from the participants.

The Research Officer together with one field supervisor will be responsible for coordinating and supervising fieldwork teams to ensure regular progress of data collection. A team of local mobilizers will work very closely with the FIs and offer any assistance needed especially in location of respondents. Selected community health volunteers from the DSS villages will support with information/location of children participants.



## **E. Interviewer's Role**

The interviewer occupies the central position in the study because he/she collects information from respondents. Therefore, the success of the study depends on the quality of each interviewer's work.

In general, the responsibilities of each interviewer will include the following:

1. Identifying all eligible respondents
2. Interviewing all eligible respondents
3. Checking completed interviews to be sure that all questions were asked and the responses neatly and legibly recorded
4. Adhering to data collection quality standards and ethics
5. Communicating any issues that may arise during data collection to the supervisor at the earliest possible time after occurrence.
6. Using APHRC program equipment assigned to you for the intended purpose and returning them at end of data collection.
7. Ensure equipment is working before the beginning of each interview and that the correct version of survey is downloaded in time.
8. Syncing and submitting filled surveys

## **F. Field supervisor's role**

Field supervisor will be appointed for this project. He/she will support the team and ensure that the data collected are of high quality.

Specific roles will include:

1. Supervise the team
2. Coordinate with the Research Officer in the distribution of work
3. Logistics (looking for appropriate venues, working with mobilisers to get eligible respondents, ensure equipment is working before the beginning of each interview)
4. Take part in back checks/spot checks to ensure that fieldworkers interview the correct respondents and eligible respondents as well as ask questions in the right manner and record the answers correctly
5. Meet with the interviewers daily to discuss fieldwork issues, data quality, performance and assignment of work
6. Prepare weekly fieldwork progress reports.

## **G. Training of Interviewers**

Although some people are more adept at interviewing than others, one can become a good interviewer through experience. This training will consist of a combination of classroom training and practical experience. Before each training session, you should study this manual carefully along with the data collection tools, writing down any questions you have. Ask questions at any time to avoid mistakes during actual interviews. Interviewers can learn a lot from each other by asking questions and talking about situations encountered in practice and actual interview situations.

Each of you will receive a package with the following materials.



- A tablet loaded with the study questionnaire
- Informed consent forms
- Interviewer's Training Manual
- Notebook and pen
- A folder
- A log for documenting data collection

Please ensure that you bring these materials each day of training and fieldwork.

During the training, the tools and instructions will be discussed in detail, section by section. It is important that you understand the kind of information that we will be looking at, and how to ask it.

You will participate in:

- Test-runs/ Mock interviews (role-playing in which you practice by interviewing another trainee.), that will be administered during the training and will be useful in assessing your understanding of the study and will also help us to gauge your individual strengths and weaknesses for timely support.
- Field practice will entail interviewing in which you will interview an eligible respondent.
- Use of tablets in data collection
- Tests/quizzes to see how well you are progressing during your formal training period.

At the end of the training course, field staff (and team leader) will be selected based on performance during the training. The training you receive does not end when the training period is completed. Each time you meet with your colleagues and supervisor to discuss work, your training is being continued. This is particularly important during the first few days of fieldwork. As you run into situations you did not cover in training, it will be helpful to discuss them with the project management team. Your supervisor will organize frequent team meetings for this purpose. New information may also emerge from the interviews- you will therefore be required to identify new issues to investigate.

## **H. Supervision of Interviewers**

Training is a continuous process. Observation and supervision throughout the fieldwork are a part of the training and data collection process. Your team supervisor and the field editor will play very important roles in continuing your training and in ensuring the quality of the survey data. They will:

- Review filled surveys to ensure completeness and consistency
- Observe some of your interviews by sitting in, to ensure that you are asking the questions in the right manner and recording the answers correctly
- Meet with you daily to discuss performance and give out future work assignments
- Help you resolve any problems that you might have with finding the assigned households, understanding the questionnaire, or dealing with difficult respondents.

## **I. Regulations and code of conduct**

The project Principal Investigator (PI) may terminate the services of any interviewer who is not performing at the level necessary to produce the high-quality data required to make the



study a success. For the workload to be equally divided and the support equally shared, the following survey regulations have been established and will be strictly enforced:

1. Except for illnesses, any person who is absent from duty during any part of the training or any part of the fieldwork (whether it is a whole day or part of a day) without prior approval from the supervisor may be dismissed from the survey.
2. The selection of the survey team members is competitive; it is based on performance, ability, and testing results during the training. Therefore, any person found offering assistance to or receiving assistance from another person during tests will be dismissed from the survey.
3. Throughout the survey training and the fieldwork period, you are representing APHRC. Your conduct must be professional and your behavior must be congenial in dealing with the public. We must always be aware of the fact that we are only able to do our work with the good will and cooperation of the people we interview. Therefore, any team member who is consistently overly aggressive, abrupt, or disrespectful to the people in the field may be dismissed from the survey team.
4. For the survey to succeed, each team must work closely together, sharing in the difficulties and cooperating and supporting each other. We will attempt to make team assignments in a way that enhances the cooperation and goodwill of the team. However, any team member who in the judgment of the field supervisor and project PI creates a disruptive influence on the team may be asked to transfer to another team or may be dismissed from the survey.
5. It is critical that the data gathered during the fieldwork be both accurate and valid. To control for inaccurate or invalid data, spot checks will be conducted. Interviewers may be dismissed at any time during the fieldwork if their performance is not considered adequate for the high quality this survey demands.
6. The study data are confidential. They should not be discussed with anyone other than members of your survey team. Under no circumstances should confidential information be passed on to third parties. In keeping with this policy, it is also important that you never interview anyone you may know in the survey. Persons breaking these rules, and therefore the confidence placed in them, will be dismissed.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment will not be tolerated during the process of conducting this survey. By sexual harassment, we mean unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other sexual comments or actions that make the receiver feel offended or intimidated. Sexual harassment may hurt work performance, and in some cases, an individual may feel that they must comply with the unwelcome advances or requests in order to keep their job. Sexual harassment can be committed by a man towards a woman, by a woman towards a man, or between two individuals of the same gender.

To avoid any appearance of sexual harassment, individuals should be careful to avoid unnecessary physical contact and suggestive language and should maintain a professional work climate at all times.



Anyone who feels that he or she has been the target of sexual harassment or who has witnessed an apparent incident of harassment should immediately report the incident to his or her supervisor, or to the project PI.

## **I. Use of Project Tablets**

The tablets that you are issued are to be used **ONLY** for the purposes of this project. You are expected to use them responsibly and make sure that you take every precaution to keep them safe. Field staff are also responsible for ensuring that the tablets have sufficient battery life before surveys. Persons breaking these rules, and therefore the confidence placed in them, will be dismissed.

## **II. Conducting the Interview**

Successful quantitative interviewing is an art and should not be treated as a mechanical process. Each interview is a new source of information, so make it interesting and pleasant. The art of interviewing develops with practice but there are certain basic principles that are followed by every successful interviewer. In this section, you will find several general guidelines on how to build rapport with a respondent and conduct a successful interview.

### **Locating respondents**

The field mobilizer will support you in locating the respondent and making the initial introductions. You will then proceed to interview your respondent. Please note that you must get informed consent from the respondent before interviewing them. You therefore should go through the study information sheets to understand the questions thoroughly.

For study participants aged <18, you must first get the consent of the parent/guardian before assenting the minor. Please familiarize yourself with the information sheets, but also note, that in case you are required to provide information that you are unsure about, contact the Research Officer for guidance.

### **A. Building Rapport with the Respondent**

As an interviewer, your first responsibility is to establish a good rapport with a respondent. At the beginning of an interview, you and the respondent are strangers to each other. The respondent's first impression of you will influence their willingness to cooperate with the survey. Be sure that your manner is friendly as you introduce yourself. Before you start to work in an area, your supervisor will have informed the local leaders about this activity. If necessary you will be given an approval letter from the Ethics Committee and identification badge that states that you are working with APHRC.

#### **1. Make a good first impression.**

Do your best to make the respondent feel at ease. With a few well-chosen words, you can put the respondent in the right frame of mind for the interview. Open the interview with a smile and greeting such as "good morning" and then proceed with your introduction.

#### **2. Obtain respondent(s) consent to be interviewed.**





You must obtain a respondent's informed consent for participation in the survey before you begin an interview. Please read the study information sheet and consent form to the respondents. Answer any questions the respondent may have. This information assures respondents that participation in the survey is completely voluntary and that it is their right to refuse to answer any questions or stop the interview at any point. Be sure to read the informed consent statement exactly as it is written before asking a respondent to participate in an interview.

**3. Always have a positive approach.**

Never adopt an apologetic manner, and do not use words such as "Are you too busy?" Such questions invite refusal before you start. Rather, tell the respondent, "I would like to ask you a few questions" or "I would appreciate some time with you to talk with you to have this discussion."

**4. Assure confidentiality of responses.**

If the respondent is hesitant about responding to the interview or asks what the data will be used for, explain that the information you collect will remain confidential, no individual names will be used for any purpose, and all information will be grouped together to write a report.

Also, you should never mention other interviews or show completed questionnaires to the supervisor or field editor in front of a respondent or any other person. Interviewing a respondent in the presence of other persons may cause them discomfort, render them unable to respond, or cause them to give inaccurate responses. In such cases, it may be necessary to request for a private place or time alone to interview the respondent, and if not possible, reschedule the interview for a time when they are alone.

**5. Answer any questions from the respondent frankly.**

Before agreeing to be interviewed, the respondent may ask you some questions about the survey or how he or she was selected to be interviewed. Be direct and pleasant when you answer. Tell the respondents that the information they give will help inform policy and similar interventions that will benefit communities. The respondent may also be concerned about the length of the interview. If they ask, tell them that it usually takes about 45- 60 minutes. Indicate your willingness to return at another time if it is inconvenient for the respondent to answer questions then.

Respondents may ask questions or want to talk further about the topics you bring up during the interview, e.g. about the COVID 19 vaccines. It is important not to interrupt the flow of the interview so tell them that you will be happy to answer their questions or to talk further after the interview.

**6. Interview the respondent alone.**

The presence of a third person during an interview can prevent you from getting frank, honest answers from a respondent. It is, therefore, very important that the individual interview be conducted privately and that all questions be answered by the respondent. If other people are present, explain to the respondent (and the other person(s)) that some of the questions are private and ask to interview the person in the best place for talking alone. Sometimes asking for privacy will make others more curious, so they will want to listen; you will have to be



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creative. Establishing privacy from the beginning will allow the respondent to be more attentive to your questions. Please ask the respondent where they prefer to be interviewed and make appropriate arrangements. Remember, respondents are provided fare reimbursements to support this movement.

In all cases where other individuals are present, try to separate yourself and the respondent from the others as much as possible.



## **B. Tips for Conducting the Interview**

### **1. Be neutral throughout the interview.**

Most people are polite and will tend to give answers that they think you want to hear. It is therefore very important that you remain absolutely neutral as you ask the questions. Never, either by the expression on your face or by the tone of your voice, allow the respondent to think that he/she has given the “right” or “wrong” answer to the question. Never appear to approve or disapprove of any of the respondent’s replies.

The questions are all carefully worded to be neutral. They do not suggest that one answer is more likely or preferable to another answer. If you fail to read the complete question, you may destroy that neutrality. If the respondent gives an ambiguous answer, try to probe in a neutral way, asking questions such as: “Can you explain a little more?” “I did not quite hear you; could you please tell me again?” “There is no hurry. Take a moment to think about it.”

If the respondent gives an ambiguous answer, try to probe in a neutral way, asking questions such as the following:

“Can you explain a little more?”

“I did not quite hear you; could you please tell me again?”

“There is no hurry. Take a moment to think about it.”

### **2. Never suggest answers to the respondent**

If a respondent’s answer is not relevant to a question, do not prompt her by saying something like “I suppose you mean that. . . Is that right?” In many cases, she will agree with your interpretation of her answer, even when that is not what she meant. Rather, you should probe in such a manner that the respondent herself comes up with the relevant answer. You should never give the respondent leads to answers to the respondent even if he/she has trouble answering. These details will be covered under the section of “interviewing skills”. Listening actively is also an important skill: **DO NOT** cut in a respondent’s explanation e.g. by finishing off the sentence for them- it is important to allow them to talk and finish what it is they want to say.

### **3. Do not change the wording**

The wording of the questions and their sequence in the questionnaire must be maintained. If the respondent has not understood the question, you should repeat the question slowly and clearly. If there is still a problem, you may reword the question, being careful not to alter the meaning of the original question. Provide only the minimum information required to get an appropriate response.

### **4. Handle hesitant respondents tactfully.**

There will be situations where the respondent simply says, “I don’t know,” gives an irrelevant answer, acts very bored or detached, or contradicts something they have already said. In these cases, you must try to re-interest them in the conversation. For example, if you sense that they are shy or afraid, try to remove their shyness or fear before asking the next question. Spend a few moments talking about things unrelated to the interview (for example, their town or village, the weather, their daily activities, etc.).



If the respondent is giving irrelevant or elaborate answers, do not stop them abruptly or rudely, but listen to what they must say. Then try to steer them gently back to the original question. A good atmosphere must be maintained throughout the interview. The best atmosphere for an interview is one in which the respondent sees the interviewer as a friendly, sympathetic, and responsive person who does not intimidate them and to whom they can say anything without feeling shy or embarrassed. As indicated earlier, a major problem in gaining the respondent's confidence may be one of privacy. This problem can be prevented if you are able to obtain a private area in which to conduct the interview.

If the respondent is reluctant or unwilling to answer a question, explain once again that the same question is being asked of respondents all over the site and that the answers will all be reported in summary form and their identity will not be revealed. If the respondent is still reluctant, simply make a note of it and proceed as if nothing had happened. Remember, the respondent cannot be forced to give an answer. Avoid all manner of distractions: use of mobile phones during interactions with respondents is strictly prohibited.

#### **5. Do not form expectations.**

You must not form expectations of the ability and knowledge of the respondent. For example, do not assume respondents from slum areas or those who are less educated or illiterate do not know about some of the issues addressed in the survey.

#### **6. Do not hurry the interview**

Ask the questions slowly to ensure the respondent understands what is being asked. After you have asked a question, pause and give the respondent time to think. If the respondent feels hurried or is not allowed to formulate their own opinion, they may respond with "I don't know" or give an inaccurate answer. If you feel the respondent is answering without thinking just to speed up the interview, say to the respondent, "There is no hurry. Your opinion is very important, so consider your answers carefully". Beware your body language may suggest that you are in a hurry, e.g. constantly checking your watch. Additionally, maintain eye contact and sit at a distance close enough for a chat minus straining. Be careful though, to observe social distance.

### **C. Language of the Interview**

The study tools for the study are in English and have also been translated into Kiswahili. One of the first things you will do when you approach a respondent is to establish the language or languages that are spoken there. Respondents will be interviewed in the language they are most comfortable with.

If in some cases, it is not possible for you to find a language which both you and the respondent speak, tell your supervisor or Team Leader so that he or she can arrange for another person to conduct the interview.

We will be practicing interviews in Kiswahili during training. However, there may be times when you will have to modify the wording of the questions to fit local dialects and culture. It is very important not to change the meaning of the question when you rephrase it or interpret it into another language.



### **III. Fieldwork Procedures**

Fieldwork for the study will proceed according to a timetable, and the data collection will be successful only if each member of the interviewing team understands and follows correct field procedures. The following sections review these procedures and describe the proper procedures for receiving work assignments and keeping records of selected interviews.

#### **A. Preparatory Activities and Assignment Sheets**

##### **1. Interviewer's Assignment Sheets and Cover Sheets**

Each morning, your supervisor will brief you on your day's work and explain how to locate the respondents assigned to you. An Interviewer Assignment Sheet will be provided to you to allow you include information of the work completed in the field daily. This sheet also allows us to monitor the work you are doing.

At the end of each day, be sure to record information on the result of the interviewing processing in the household on the Interviewer's Assignment Sheet.

It is important that you fill in the visit record on the Interviewer's Assignment Sheet accurately since this form provides a summary of all eligible respondents in the study sample. These forms and other monitoring tools will be returned to APHRC Main Campus for review after completion of interviews and will be used to check that there are interviews for all eligible respondents.

##### **2. Keeping data collection tools confidential**

You are responsible for seeing that the interviews are kept confidential. Do not share the results with other interviewers. You should never interview respondents who you know, even if they are only casual acquaintances. If you are assigned to a respondent you know, even if that person is not eligible for interview, you should notify your supervisor so he can assign that respondent to another interviewer. You should not attempt to see the completed interview for that respondent nor discuss the interview results with your colleagues.

##### **3. Supplies and documents needed for fieldwork**

Before starting fieldwork each morning, verify that you have everything you need for the day's work. Some necessary supplies include:

- Interviewer's Assignment Sheet
- Informed consent forms
- Interviewer's Manual
- Notebook and pens
- Tablets, charged and with correct survey version
- A folder to carry the materials



## B. Data Quality and Safety

Before starting an interview, confirm that your tablet has enough battery power and that the correct survey version has been downloaded. An interview may be unnecessarily disrupted due to battery failure.

Always ensure that you conduct the interviews in quiet settings to enhance clarity and ensure that responses are clearly captured. It is important too that for the record, you ask participants what they mean whenever they use short forms/ abbreviations. For example, do not assume that NHIF means National Hospital Insurance... always ask,” What does *[abbreviation]* mean?”

Each interviewer should check immediately after the interview that their filled surveys are properly saved for submission later in the day. After each day’s work, ensure that the filled surveys are submitted. On your field log for the day, ensure that the surveys, date of interview and other details required are captured.

Your supervisor **MUST** sign on the Interviewer Log sheet to acknowledge receipt of the day’s data.

No interviewer should fail to upload his/her work at the end of the day except for late evening callbacks that should be uploaded at the earliest chance the following day. In case of any difficulty ensure that your field supervisor is aware and relays the same to the research officer.



#### **IV. General Procedures for Completing the Tools**

To collect the information needed by the study, you must understand how to ask each question, what information the question is attempting to collect, and how to handle problems that might arise during the interview. You must also know how to correctly record the responses the respondent gives and how to follow special instructions in the tool. This part of the training manual is designed to familiarize you with the study tools.

Before the interviews begin, the interviewers should ensure that the right respondents are present and take the demographic characteristics of the study participants in the personal descriptive form provided. During the interview, be keen to observe the non-verbal cues.

##### **A. Asking Questions**

It is very important that you ask each question exactly as it is written in the questionnaire. When you are asking a question, speak slowly and clearly so that the respondent will have no difficulty hearing or understanding the question. At times, you may need to repeat the question to be sure the respondent understands it. In those cases, do not change the wording of the question but repeat it exactly as it is written.

If, after you have repeated a question, the respondent still does not understand it, you may have to restate the question. Be very careful when you change the wording, however, that you do not alter the meaning of the original question.

In some cases, you may have to ask additional questions to obtain a complete answer from a respondent (we call this ‘probing’). If you do this, you must be careful that your probes are “neutral” and that they do not suggest an answer to the respondent. Probing requires both tact and skill, and it will be one of the most challenging aspects of your work as a study interviewer.

You will notice that some questions contain one or more words in parentheses. As shown below, the presence of parentheses indicates that a sentence needs to be adapted to fit the respondent’s specific situation.

#### **VI. Ending the Interview**

Your approach when winding up the interview should be as courteous as the introduction.

It is very important that you outline any important points about the interview that may not be obvious when you examine the data but are likely to affect the data. These include your perceptions/ hunches/ gut feelings about how the interview process went. Was the interview easy/ difficult? Is there information that you found particularly interesting? Do you think respondent was uncomfortable about a specific topic? Did respondent make any references to specific persons?

The respondent has been patient with you, allowing you to ask all the questions and it will be important that you also allow them to ask any questions they might have. Please try and give honest responses without raising expectations.