

FORMATIVE RESEARCH BRIEF

I. Background: About the Project

Environmental factors disproportionately affect the health and wellbeing of low income families and children. The production and consumption of household goods plays a role in this. The situation is exacerbated by lack of access to information, and support for families to make informed choices, restricted choice due to limited income and other factors, and the market prevalence of poor quality, unsafe and environmentally unsound household products and services.

Consumers International's project "Giving the poorest consumers greater voice in India, Bangladesh and Indonesia" aims to promote use of safer and sustainable products among low income consumers, and, in turn, improve their health and wellbeing. Working with member organizations in India, Bangladesh and Indonesia, the project seeks to develop a scalable model to understand consumer behaviour, facilitate product testing, advocate for business and policy change, and empower low income consumers to assert their rights in the marketplace. In the long run, the project's goal is to promote healthy homes for children and their families.

The project plans to develop and implement behaviour change communication (BCC) activities to promote shift among the target group consumers towards buying and using products that are safe for them and their environment.

II. Need or Purpose of the Research

Before starting the project activities, we need to conduct formative research that will improve our understanding of the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes that drive the purchase and consumption behaviour of our key target groups, the decision making processes – who decides, who buys, purchase attributes considered; and their understanding of health and environmental risk from products of day to day use.

This understanding will help us in many ways, as described below:

- Inform the design of survey questionnaire to benchmark key knowledge, attitudinal, self-efficacy and behavioural indicators against which the project impact will be measured through an endline survey towards end of the project
- Generate a shortlist of product categories based on consumer needs and priorities, and key concerns articulated by them
- Validate the hypotheses through the baseline survey and use the understanding for developing communication activities specific and relevant to the target group needs

III. Target Audience

Target audience of the formative research would be members of low income households identified in six locations across the three project states of Tamilnadu, Gujarat and Rajasthan. Low income household is defined as a household with a monthly income of Rs. 27,400 or lower than that.

For the purpose of formative research, we will consider gathering data from adult male and female members of the household, and teenaged children (both male and female) between the age of 13-18 years. The male member is expected to be the key decision maker with regard to the brand and price of the products purchased, the female member is likely to be the buyer and user of the product, and children are expected to be consumers of the product, along with their families. Children may also participate in decision making or buying of certain product categories specific to them. It will be good to capture their opinions, views and perspectives to understand their role in decision making, buying and consumption process.

We would also like to include a small sample of the secondary and tertiary audience of the project in the formative research.

- ♦ Secondary Audience: The Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) from the target communities - elected representatives of local bodies, self-help group federation, school teachers, health workers, and local NGOs.
- ♦ Tertiary Audiences: District-level policy makers and administration, especially the officials from Food and Safety, Health and Factory Inspectors from Department of Industries, and local retailers and manufacturers of identified products. Among the tertiary audience, a sample of district administrative officials, local retailers and manufacturer

For the purpose of this research a few in-depth interviews will be conducted with manufacturers/distributors/retailers and district administration officials to understand the systems and institutions supporting consumer rights for safer products.

IV. Geographic Coverage

Formative research will be conducted in the following areas of the three project states:

1. Tamil Nadu: Model lane and Chengalpet
2. Rajasthan: Eral and Netawalgarh
3. Gujarat: Juhapura and Behrampura

The research would be conducted among a sample of households representing 6000 plus households that the project seeks to cover. Details of sample and sampling methodology are covered in the subsequent sections.

V. Research Approach/Methodology

Being exploratory in nature, formative research would focus on understanding purchase and consumption behaviour, and the “whys” behind them. In this context, we recommend using qualitative methods which are best suited for exploratory research.

Qualitative research records and analyzes feelings, behaviours and attitudes, thus covering the issues in depth and detail. Research data is collected through open ended discussions or observations, enabling the researcher to interact with the research subjects in their own language and terms. This enables the researcher to collect more accurate data because the answers are first hand and there is room for clarification.

Qualitative research can explain why a particular response was given. Data gathered by qualitative research is based on people’s experiences. This provides insights on the reasons behind people's actions and their feelings towards various actions. It is also more informative and compelling, providing a more realistic feel of the world. Qualitative research creates openness during research. By encouraging people to expound on their answers, responses can bring up new topics not initially considered, but equally as important. The objective of research can change with the emergence of new data.

Focus group discussions is a method well suited for gathering community opinions, perceptions and views relatively quickly. The rich narrative data in consumers’ own words allows the researchers to understand the phenomena that drive the behaviours.

Additionally, we will conduct In-depth interviews with key informants/experts. In-depth interviews are more practical with a smaller group of key informants/experts as the focus is on gaining deeper information from few people rather than gaining different perspectives from a wider group.

VI. Information Areas/ Questions

Information areas for the consumers:

- 1) Key product categories bought and consumed on a regular basis – food & beverages, toiletries, cleaning products, personal products, clothing & footwear, health products – supplements & medicines, kitchen and household appliances, electrical and electronic goods and other such categories.
- 2) Frequency of buying these product categories, average monthly expenditure, whether branded and packaged or loose and unbranded, attributes considered most important when buying and reasons, and place from where bought.
- 3) Who decides about the brand and pack size to buy, who actually buys, who processes/ uses and who consumes?

- 4) Which products would they put in the category of “unsafe” from the perspective of their own health and environment? What are their reasons for categorizing these products as unsafe? Which products do they treat as safe? Why?
- 5) How do they assess safety and environment friendliness of these products when deciding about the brand or type to buy? What is their source of information on safety features and environment friendliness? Do they look at the product labels for information on product safety, or accreditation labels, standard ratings or ratings published by consumer product testing organizations?
- 6) Have they ever experienced unsafe products/brands? What did they do to register their complaint/grievance? What was the outcome?
- 7) Are they aware of institutions/offices responsible to approach in case they experience unsafe product/brand? Are they aware of process/mechanism for communicating grievances against unsafe product/brand?
- 8) Are they aware of consumers’ right to demand safe products? Would they exercise their right if they need to? Why? Why not?

Information areas for the secondary and tertiary target group:

- 1) What are the safety standards for consumer products? Different safety standards for different product categories.
- 2) What actions do they take to ensure consumer right to safe products in their operational area (jurisdiction)? What actions have they taken to ensure availability of safe products to consumer? What actions have they taken to regulate the safety of products at the level of manufacturers/distributors/retailers? What are the major barriers that prevent them from regulating the product quality at the level of manufacturers and through the supply chain?
- 3) Have they held any awareness campaigns for the consumers to educate them on importance of safe products? When was the last campaign done? When is the next campaign planned? What are the major barriers that prevent them from holding such campaigns regularly?

Information areas for product manufacturers:

- 4) Do they understand their role in providing safe products to the consumers? What steps do they take to ensure safe products for the consumers? What challenges do they face in manufacturing and marketing safe products to the consumers?
- 5) What kind of quality checks, regulation and product tests do they comply with when manufacturing consumer products?

VII. Sample Sizes and Sampling Method

We propose to conduct 24 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 12 In-depth Interviews (IDIs) among different segments as under:

Sr.	State	Location	FGDs			IDIs		
			Adult Males	Adult Females	Teen-agers	Manuf acturer	Retai ler	Govt. Official
1	Tamilnadu	Model lane	2	1	1	1	1	
		Chengalpet	1	2	1		1	1
2	Gujarat	Behrampura	2	1	1	1		1
		Juhapura	1	2	1	1	1	
3	Rajasthan	Eral	2	1	1		1	1
		Netawalgarh	1	2	1	1		1
Total			9	9	6	4	4	4

The samples will be chosen purposively using judgment/referral sampling method. Members from the partners' team will recruit community members as per the briefing provided by Social Marketing Advisor in the respective location. Between 10-12 members will be recruited for each focus group discussion. A screener questionnaire will be provided to recruit the sample from among community households.

The recruited community members will be invited to a central place in the community for FGDs that are expected to last between one to one and half hour. The venue can be a member's home or a community hall, if available. The SM Advisor will train and orient members from the partners' team to moderate the focus groups. The FGD proceedings will be digitally recorded on a voice/audio recorder which will then be transcribed by CI partners for content analysis and report writing. The persons trained to moderate FGDs will also prepare a short summary after each FGD to capture the salient points discussed. The summary should be prepared immediately after each FGD to ensure that the salient points are captured when fresh in the memory of the moderators.

Similarly, the sample for IDIs will be chosen purposively in consultation with the members from CI partner organizations. IDIs will be conducted at the place convenient to the respondent, and will be audio recorded and transcribed like the FGDs, for content analysis. The interviewer conducting IDIs will also prepare and submit short summary immediately after each IDIs.

VIII. Deliverables

Partner organizations will handover the transcripts, audio recordings and short summaries to CI for the SM Advisor to conduct content analysis and write the report.