

## **Sinovuyo Teen Parent Programme: Qualitative study 2015 – 2016**

### **Use of interviews and focus group discussions**

Interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) are the most common methods of qualitative data collection. They both involve face to face interaction between researchers and the respondents. Essentially these are a form of conversation about a given research topic and question.

Interviews and FGDs are used for different purposes. A researcher may choose to use an interview because it allows the exploration of personal views and experiences of individual participants (Gill et al 2008). For example, in this study interviews were used to explore participants' experiences of the Sinovuyo parenting programme and stakeholders' perceptions of the relevance, acceptability, implementability and sustainability of the programme. Qualitative interviews allow the researcher to collect personal accounts without the group influence factor and this allows for in depth understanding of the subject under study (Gill et al 2008). Interviews are private and for that reason participants are comfortable to speak about their private lives and expand on things they would not be comfortable disclosing in a public forum.

Conversely, a researcher whose aim is to stimulate debate and find consensus on contrasting views and experiences may consider using FGDs (Gill et al 2008). This involves putting together a group of participants to discuss a given research subject matter. In this study the subject matter was beneficiaries' and stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of the Sinovuyo parenting programme. This group discussion must be guided by a moderator. There is no consensus as to how big this group should be, although "rules of thumb" indicate between 6 and 10 participants per group is optimal (Morgan, 1997, p.34). The most important thing is that the group is manageable. FGDs are useful for establishing collective views about a research subject and their meanings (Milena, Dainora & Alin 2008).

In this study, FGDs were helpful in exploring how groups namely teens, caregivers, facilitators and research assistants experienced the Sinovuyo parenting programme. They allowed FGD participants to reflect on the accounts of others and this allowed for the collection of data on common and divergent views and experiences of the programme (Gill et al 2008; Milena, Dainora & Alin 2008).

Interviews and FGDs were mutually reinforcing because while interviews gave the researchers an insider perspective through personal accounts, the robust discussions and debates in FGDs allowed for unexpected themes to emerge.

## References

Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups. *British dental journal*, 204(6), 291-295.

Milena, Z. R., Dainora, G., & Alin, S. (2008). Qualitative research methods: a comparison between focus-group and in-depth interview. *Annals of the University of Oradea, Economic Science Series*, 17(4), 1279-1283.

Morgan, D.L. (1997) Focus Groups as Qualitative Research. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. London: Sage.