

Eliciting Information - "The Approach is Every-Thing".

"Last evening many people came to me asking if I was sure you were not <sup>f</sup>frauding" says the secretary of the Qabula Chamber of Commerce, the 26 years old oil seller that I fortunately got to introduce me to that towns' materials industries entre-  
preneurs. "They said now that you know everything about their" <sup>(business activities)</sup> "karr-o-baar" how much they spend, how much they earn, what they own etc. you may turn it over to the government, and next we know, the tax collector will be around or the government will cut their selling price, now <sup>that they</sup> knowing, how much the brick <sup>s</sup> costs to produce... etc. I assured them you were not with the government and you were an attractive and sincere foreigner, <sup>(possessor of knowledge)</sup> "Talib-i-ilm" doing his Ph.D, and would take this information back to America and not a frauder" - Then after a pause.... "your not are you?" A slightly worried look crosses his face. "Otherwise, they said, they are going to get me and I ofcourse am going to collar Chaudury Sahib" - <sup>(Local Govt. & Rural Development)</sup> (the LGRD Project Manager who introduced me to him).

I assure him of the fact. Show him my passport, my M.I.T. papers etc. etc. Later he says, Ah, I will tell them now I have seen all your <sup>(papers)</sup> "Kaagerzaath" and indeed you are a foreign Talib-i-ilm and not a government agent".

Such concerns were almost universal with all those <sup>e</sup> I interviewed. Even in the technology study-questioning people about their house construction-some inquired worryingly if the house was to be taxed or bought up etc.

As I formulated the questionnaires for the materials industries I realised this problem - reluctance to divulge <sup>information</sup> ~~into~~ which would show how much the entrepreneur owned and earned, and sensitive issues such as in the case of the kiln owners', 'Paishgi and Kaats' - (advances and salary cuts) that kept their brick moulders in bonded labour to them - would be most acute, <sup>To overcome, this problem I did the following:</sup>

1. Be friended a well known and liked local person with no links to government

and some knowledge of the building industry. This was done through earlier field visits. These persons would accompany me, introduce me to respondents & translate whenever necessary. *These friends were:*

- 1) <sup>ln</sup> Chak Bedi: Mohammad Yusuf - Saw-Flour-Rice mill owner who used to be a building<sup>er</sup>.
- 2) <sup>ln</sup> Malka Hans: Mohammad Ali - a Mistree<sup>(builder)</sup>; generally accepted as the best mason in the area - now letting his sons and nephews do actual construction under his contract and supervision. Much respected as a private local citizen. *& recently elected as a local councillor.*
- 3) Qabula: Mian Ijaz Husain - local entrepreneur-diesel oil, wheat seller and buyer, "commission agent", also secretary of the fledgling Qabula Chambers of Commerce.

The "local friends not only introduced me, easing respondents' <sup>f</sup> years, but also tipped me off when, on occasion a respondent was not telling the whole truth. (e.g. Qabula, Salim, building materials seller)

2. ) <sup>m</sup> Made most of <sup>my</sup> being a foreigner, doing <sup>a</sup> the study for a foreign far away country "Amrikey, Kanaada" <sup>(America, Canada)</sup> with no link to Pakistan and the Pak. government, of that information given was not going to be spread locally ("tell me would the tax department send someone who can't even speak Urdu properly"?) On the other hand I played up my personal affinity with the locals - my speaking Urdu, occasional Punjabi sentence<sup>s</sup>, fellow citizen of a poor III world country Iranian muslim brother to muslim brother. "Bhai, Hum sub musulmaan eether bathey hein, ya sucha bola yar, ya kuch much bolo. (Brother, we are all muslims sitting here, either answer when you are sure, it is correct or give no answer"). In 2 cases I had to show my passport.

To get them to speak of irregularities, bribes etc. "Well that is the government rate for bricks/cement what do you sell it for or what can you get for

it in the open market particularly during shortages? For example in my country-Iraq-we can get Rs 'X' more than the government rate." or "in my country we have to pay off the tax man to get a reasonably low assessment. How do you do that here?" And so, somewhat mollified that in my eyes and experience such is the common practice, the respondent is more <sup>ne</sup> prove to admit that <sup>he</sup> has to do the same, sell above government rates, pay off the tax man, electricity telephone man etc.

"After 2 months of waiting to get our phone fixed we finally got a call through the phone people asking for 2 char-poys <sup>(rope-strung beds)</sup> to be delivered to them if we wanted our phone fixed." "The electricity inspector fiddles himself with our meter, shows it to us turning backwards and demands Rs.500/- not to report us."

"During shortages we can make 5-10 Rs. above the fixed price on cement/bag."  
"(My next question - in the last 12 months <sup>how many months were</sup> there were shortages <sup>?</sup> for how many of them?")

3. ) Made most of the study being an academic exercise - "at least at this stage" thus "aap ka na kuch faideh ho ga, na kuch nuksaan, sirf aik musulmaan, <sup>(unfortunately, my work is neither going to benefit you, nor harm you, I am not here to either buy anything from you nor sell anything to you, I am just here to ask for your help as one muslim to another, to answer my questions accurately)</sup> dusre musulmaan seh - sahee janab deej yeh", "Na maineh aya kuch ap seh khareedna, na kuch ap ko bejna." etc. In 1 case I had to show my U.S college papers.
4. Tried to minimise the effect of inevitable inaccuracies either of memory or cover-up, reluctance to reveal <sup>etc</sup> by saying also at the outset. "Now there may be some questions whose answers you do not either know, recollect, or even quite legitimately want to respond to, Please - Allah da vaastha - don't make up an answer - just say you do not know, can't recollect, do not have an estimate. It is better that I put a question <sup>mark</sup> work than an in-correct answer, my teachers will notice, and I may fail my examination (playing up the poor student bit). And when I noticed a reluctance or pause in reply to a question - I hastened

to say - "its' O.K. if you don't recall or do not have an estimate .. lets go on". And if he persisted by then giving a reply for e.g. last month, I sold 20,000 bricks" I asked - "are you sure? It would be alright if you sold 100 more or less but if it may have been 500, then please let me know." In some cases I then got a withdrawal - "well yes it may have been 15000." In most cases, the persisted reply given under my encouragement of <sup>to</sup> not replying, was a fairly considered and accurate assessment whose accuracy the respondent their hastened to assure me <sup>of</sup> ~~was~~ correct.

5. There was plenty of cross checking in the design of the study:

1) The questionnaires for each study stage, technology and materials industries study, had overlaps as did 2) questions within each questionnaire. Thus in both the technology study and the materials' industries <sup>u</sup> study the sale price of materials was asked. First from the buyer and then from the seller.

3) For each technology or material industry type, as far as possible, at least 2 people were asked the same set of questions. Thus 2 builders were asked about timber and tile roof construction, 2, usually 3, kiln owners about their kilns etc. in each area of 3-5 studies. Thus their <sup>re</sup> were usually at least 6 case examples of each type, 2 in each area to pick up contradictory responses that could not be explained by locational-spatial differences.

6. When I was not sure of a reply I asked the question again - at times risking being considered deaf or a dimwit - <sup>but often</sup> ~~at times~~ picking up nuances <sup>might otherwise have been</sup> that the ~~my~~ local <sup>friend</sup> translator had missed, but which were <sup>s</sup> critical.

e.g. a builder was presented to me for interviewing. My <sup>friend</sup> local ~~facilitator~~ assured me he was very much 'up', <sup>regarding</sup> have ~~all~~ types of the technologies. "So you know how to construct in mud-brick, fired brick and r.c.c etc." he asks the builder "O yes," the builder replies, and then he <sup>u</sup> mumbles something about <sup>(mosque)</sup> masjid construction." "Well go ahead, interview him," my <sup>friend</sup> ~~facilitator~~ <sup>prompts</sup> tells me."

I start by asking him "what project are you working on now," "a masjid roof repair"  
"he replies. "What project did you do before that, "A Masjid." "When and where was  
the last house you constructed." "OOO" - he has to think, pause - "Noor Ellahi's  
house I think." "But Ellahi constructed his house 15 years ago" my facilitator <sup>friend</sup>  
exclaims - you haven't done any house construction after that." "No" - the sheepish  
response - "I began to specialise in mosque construction." End of interview.

Another builder says he had "quite recently" constructed a timber tile roof, house.  
I decline my <sup>friends</sup> facilitators invitation to therefore begin my interview by first asking  
whether that house was constructed before the Union Council office or after. He  
says he constructed it before. Which dates this 'recent' house he constructed to  
before '63 which was during Ayub Khan's Basic Democracies period when all these  
offices were constructed for the B. Democrats.

7. For later ease of analysis the interview schedules had the name and address of the  
respondent as one of the first questions. However, this question was asked at the  
end of the interview or sometimes asked also of my <sup>friend</sup> accompanies before meeting with  
the respondent. The respondent was much more cautious about answers and less  
forth right when I asked his name and address at the outset.