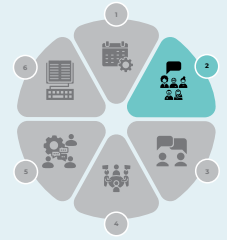


3 MODULE ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY



Engaging with relevant communities is a way of bringing local perspectives, understanding, and knowledge to the complex issue of AMR. However, it is important to define what is meant by ‘the community’ and how you plan to engage with specific communities in Responsive Dialogues.

This module provides guidance on the following:

- Who is ‘the community’?
- How to identify communities for Responsive Dialogues?
- How to inform and ask for consent to participate?
- How to monitor community engagement?

Who is ‘the community’?

“Communities are groups of people that may or may not be spatially connected, but who share common interests, concerns or identities. These communities could be local, national or international, with specific or broad interests” (WHO. (2023). 7th Global Conference on Health Promotion: Track themes).

‘The community’ is made up of people who have something in common that unifies them, for example, they are from the same geographical area, are part of the same system, share common interests and affiliations, have shared identities. See [Cross-cutting themes](#) for more on community engagement.



Defining ‘the community’

There are many ways to define or describe a community, for example:

Geographic community

Here ‘the community’ is based on people’s physical location or proximity to each other – where they live in a region, zone, or area. They are a community by virtue of the space they share, and also because of their local relationships and collective identity.

Systems community

‘The community’ is viewed as a complex interconnected system (think of a human body). This community is made up of individuals, groups, organisations, and institutions that interact and influence each other, within a specific geographical area or around a shared interest, such as the healthcare system in Lusaka, Zambia.

Interest-based community

'The community' forms around a shared interest, hobby, profession, or affiliation. People come together based on common passions, causes, or activities. Interest-based communities relevant to AMR may include: local farmers, such as backyard poultry or pig farmers united around animal health and livelihood issues; healthcare providers involved in prescribing or dispensing antibiotics; and environmental experts, such as ecologists and conservationists whose knowledge can guide efforts to preserve biodiversity and mitigate environmental risks. *See [Cross-cutting themes](#) for more on AMR and One Health.*

**Identity-based community**

'The community' forms around a shared identity or identities, such as gender, culture, ethnicity, religion, or being part of a marginalised group. Identity factors and common experiences unite people into an identity-based community.

Each perspective of 'the community' offers unique insights into the forces and dynamics that might operate in that community, and provides a valuable lens through which community engagement strategies can be developed to effectively involve and empower members of each type of community.

The communities and community members you engage are at the centre of Responsive Dialogues. Their stories, perceptions, and real-life experiences of AMR are the important evidence that feeds into the **co-creation** of feasible and effective solutions to AMR at the local and policy level.

GLOSSARY

Co-creation: A process that leads to the refinement of jointly generated ideas into concrete, tangible solutions that can be tried and applied in local contexts.

**A summary of the steps involved in engaging the community**

How to identify communities for Conversation Events?

The communities that are involved in Responsive Dialogues, and specifically in the Conversation Events, will depend on the objectives, scope, and focus of the project. This varies from project to project, as shown in the examples below.

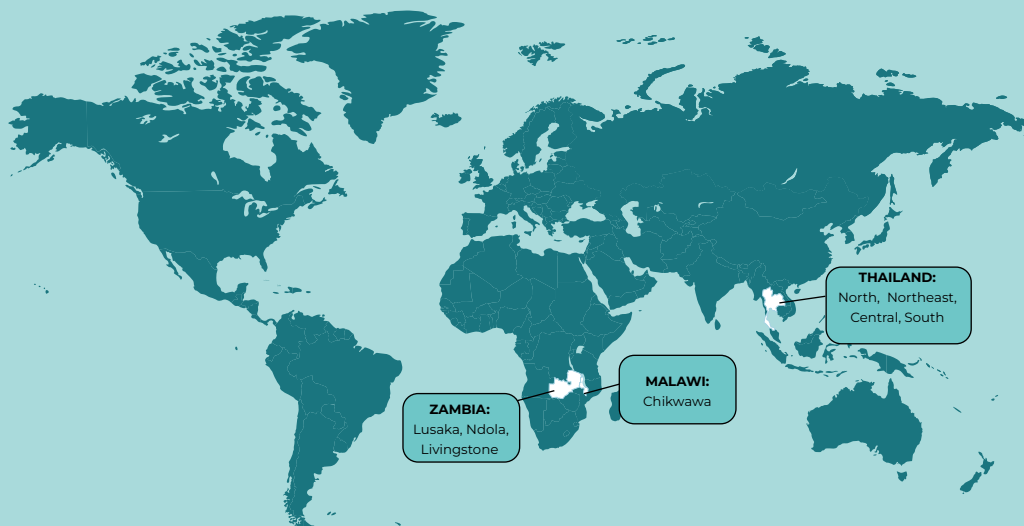
Examples from Responsive Dialogues projects



In the project in **Zambia**, 'the community' referred to women and men of reproductive age (16–45 years), pregnant women and their partners, a male group, and three female groups. Three districts and five areas were involved.

In the **Malawi** project, 'the community' and participant groups for Conversation Events were from one geographical area – in and around Blantyre, and covered three diverse interests – smallholder chicken farmers, medicine prescribers, and male community members.

In the **Thailand** project, the aim was to be as inclusive as possible and to maximise the chance of having a diverse community. Conversation Events were run in four geographic regions – North, Northeast, Central, and South – each of which was defined as a 'community'. National Conversation Events with adult participants were held, following which the project discovered that the solution was not tangible. They therefore decided that the most suitable way to proceed was to run the Conversation Events online with young people.



Identifying target groups

Within each community, it is important to identify specific target groups from which you can draw people to participate in Conversation Events. Some target groups already exist, such as women's groups, church groups, local community groups, or other special interest groups. In other cases, target groups are formed specifically for Conversation Events.

The type of target group from which you draw participants may shape the structure and facilitation of the Conversation Events. For example, a pre-existing church group might be easy to identify and reach, but their diversity may be limited.

Tips for identifying target groups

- A key element of Responsive Dialogues is the **potential that participants have to reach out to others** around them, to share what they have learnt in the Conversation Events, gather opinions, experiences, and insights from others, or influence others. Consider the following:
 - The potential reach participants have in their local community/communities
 - The potential participants have for national reach
 - The potential reach participants have in places where they live and work.
- Consider issues of **inclusivity and diversity**, gender sensitivity, people with special needs, or from underrepresented and marginalised groups, key populations, sex workers, and so on. See *Cross-cutting themes* for more on gender sensitivity and inclusivity.



Defining participant selection criteria

Once you have identified the target groups, decide on the criteria and methods you will use to select participants who will take part in the Conversation Events. The specific selection criteria may vary depending on project objectives and the targeted community or group. The important point is to define, document, and communicate what your selection criteria are and why you have decided on them – this relates back to your project objectives and scope. The criteria below are a starting point to develop your own selection criteria for the participants of your Conversation Events.

Example criteria to consider

Criteria	Issues to consider
Socio-demographic diversity	Consider age, sex, ethnicity, marital status, parental status, income level, employment status, profession or occupation, housing, education, location.



Criteria	Issues to consider
<p>Inclusivity</p> <p>See <i>Cross-cutting themes</i> for more on inclusivity.</p>	<p>Consider accessibility for people who are differently abled, those needing transport and accommodation, childcare, key populations, language and translation needs, those people with special needs relating to AMR, and those affected by AMR, such as farmers, patients, pharmacists, people working with natural resources, etc.</p>
<p>Knowledge, awareness, and experience of AMR and One Health</p> <p>See <i>Cross-cutting themes</i> for more on AMR and One Health.</p>	<p>Do you want to cluster participants with a similar level of knowledge, awareness, or experience of AMR and One Health, or deliberately mix them up for more diversity? For example, pharmacists or prescribers in one group, and patients in another. Your decision depends on your purpose and aims.</p>
<p>Power dynamics</p> <p>See <i>Cross-cutting themes</i> for more on power imbalances and gender sensitivity.</p>	<p>Power as control and domination can create barriers to participation in Conversation Events in terms of deciding who can participate and how this happens. For example, in mixed gender groups, women may share less because of the dominance of male participants.</p> <p>Consider the role that gender plays in decision-making and influencing attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and practices, and in framing solutions.</p>
<p>Capacity of participants</p>	<p>Consider level of awareness, sensitivity, confidence, and ability to engage in and bring different perspectives to conversations.</p>
<p>Reach and influence</p>	<p>Consider the potential of participants to reach and share their learning and experience with the local or broader community, and to bring in other local perspectives, insights, and experiences.</p>



Recruiting, selecting, and confirming participants

Selection processes will depend on the local context and the specific project objectives. The core implementation team may decide to consult local community representatives about the selection process, as well as other stakeholders, including researchers.

The selection method is most likely to be focused and purposeful, but could also include random selection. Commonly used selection methods include:

- **Through a participatory selection process:** Community members are involved in helping to select participants, using the selection criteria.
- **By invitation:** Participants are directly invited to participate in Responsive Dialogues.
- **By gatekeepers:** For example, a community leader, workplace manager, or official of an organisation. Gatekeepers can work for or against Responsive Dialogues:
 - If they think Responsive Dialogues are beneficial to their community, they can use their influence to open doors and persuade others to participate.
 - However, if they do not think Responsive Dialogues have merit, they can refuse to support the initiative and make it difficult to access community members.

GLOSSARY

Gatekeepers: "... members of a community and as such, understand its cultural and political environment. Their deep connection to community is acknowledged either by a formal position, such as an elected leader, or a person to whom the community turns to 'get things done.' Either way, a gatekeeper is a person of influence" (Gatekeepers: The politics of community, Notes from the Co-operative Innovation Project – September 2015).



Careful negotiation is needed to make sure that participants not only come with different opinions, views, and perspectives, but that they can express these freely and openly without any negative consequences for them or their families.

Screening and selecting participants

The selection criteria you develop help you to screen potential participants before there is any formal agreement about participation in the Conversation Events. The screening may be conducted in person, over the phone, via internet, online, or through a written questionnaire. It is also important to begin the informed consent process at this point (see below).

Once participants have been selected, the core implementation team may send them an invitation by letter, email, or in person, together with information about the purpose and goals of Responsive Dialogues. Participants who were not selected are also informed, with a brief explanation about why.

If possible, meet with participants in advance of the actual Conversation Events. Such a meeting may involve briefing participants about the process before they agree to be involved. Discuss time commitments, as well as the compensation that will be provided depending on funds available, for example, for travel expenses and meals.

How to inform and ask for consent to participate?

The informed consent process begins during the screening and selection stage. It includes carefully explaining to potential participants the following:

- What Responsive Dialogues and Conversation Events are
- How their contributions will be used and how they will be asked to give specific consent for their words (quotes), or photos, or other outputs to be used
- How participation is voluntary and anyone may withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and without any adverse consequences
- How and why confidentiality is important in Conversation Events
- How every person's rights (including legal, social, etc.) must be respected
- How appropriate referral pathways will be shared with participants who need support during or after the Conversation Events, particularly for sensitive matters that have been shared.

Participants should only agree to the informed consent when they fully understand what is required of them. If a person is unable to read or write, an impartial witness

can be present to observe the consent process and to co-sign the consent form. Other methods can be explored, such as voice recording of the consent, visual images to explain the process, or brail where necessary. For more on accessible contracts, including consent contracts, see <https://creative-contracts.com/>.

Example from a Responsive Dialogues project

In the **Thailand** project, participants were invited in writing to participate in the **evaluation** component which was conducted at the end of each Conversation Event. An informed consent process was used for only those participants who agreed to participate in the evaluation (i.e. it was not used for participation in the Conversation Events). Only those participants who agreed to participate in the evaluation were provided with all relevant details, which included:

- Participants were given a *Information Sheet* which explained the relevant details.
- Participants were given as much time as they needed to consider the information and to ask questions.
- Each participant was informed that they had the right to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. Withdrawal meant that their data would be excluded from analysis. The parts of audio and/or video recordings and written data that captured their views would be deleted.
- When participants were ready, they decided whether or not they were willing to allow their information to be collected and recorded.
- If they agreed to participate in the evaluation, they were asked to sign and date an Informed Consent Form.

See *Cross-cutting themes* for more on ethical considerations.

How to monitor community engagement?

Below are some key questions to include in your monitoring and documenting of community and participant engagement:

Defining and identifying 'the community'

- How was 'the community' that would be part of your Responsive Dialogues project defined?
- Were the project objectives, scope, and focus used to identify the community?
- Within the community, how was the target group identified?

Selecting participants

- Were participant selection criteria clear, transparent, and inclusive?
- Was the screening process transparent and inclusive?
- What participant selection method/s were used (e.g. gatekeepers, invitation, participatory selection)?

- Was gender taken into account in the selection process?
- Were people with special needs, or from underrepresented and marginalised groups, key populations, sex workers, and so on, considered?
- Was a diverse group of participants invited to engage in the Conversation Events?
- Are the invited participants well-suited as members of the Conversation Events?

Seeking informed consent

- What informed consent process was used?
- How were participants informed about their rights as participants?

See [Section 1](#) for more on the M&E Framework.

REMEMBER



Document and record each process you use in the community engagement and participation selection processes. Note down why any specific decisions were made about the recruitment and selection process. Store your documents in a systematic way.

Checklist of guidance in this module

Tick completed activities/tasks and those still needing completion.

Activities	Yes	To do
What is meant by 'the community' is defined		
The community for the Responsive Dialogues project is identified		
Participants for the Conversation Events are selected and recruited		
The process of informed consent is set up		
Community engagement is monitored		



Zambia Responsive Dialogues project.
Photo: Framaja Photography.