

Good practices in Social Auditing

Guidance for auditor

1 Dos and Don'ts during interviews

The following table summarises Dos and Don'ts in tackling challenges of social auditing and during interviews. The best practices listed shall equip auditors with practical strategies in making social auditing more effective.

Challenges	Don'ts	Why This Should Be Avoided	Dos
Interviewee is shy to talk/lacking trust in the auditor	Start with auditing questions right away	Jumping right into the topic with technical questions like "have you received training on XY?", will frighten the interviewee	Start with small talk or ice-breaking questions that are not directly linked to the audit criteria, yet Explain the purpose of the audit properly; clearly state that all answers are confidential and that it is not about testing the interviewee on anything, e.g., how well they absorbed the content of trainings or how well they behave in the workplace, but to foster continuous improvement of the operations and their workplace
The situation at a farm is opaque/unsure which workers to interview	Pick the workers recommended by the BP or the ME	In social audits the risk that the employer (BP or ME) might influence their worker prior to the audit to give specific answers, is especially high in social audits as they rely heavily on the content of interviews If BPs or the ME have "favourites" the information obtained from those workers might not be accurate	Conduct a group interview first to obtain general information and identify individual workers to be interviewed further in individual interviews
Interviewee appears intimidated by their superior or employer	Interview workers with their superiors or employers being present	The mere presence of their superior might exacerbate the desire of the interviewee to be a "good employee" with nothing to complain about	Interview workers without their superiors being present When conducting group interviews pay attention to the homogeneity of the group in regard to their hierarchical level, gender, ethnicity or any other characteristic that might create power imbalances within the group

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Transferring checkpoints from audit checklist into interview questions	Read out the checkpoint with a question mark	The audit checklist very technical terms, e.g., forced labour, that can be misunderstood (especially in different languages) as work that is simply physically hard. Asking straight-up questions from the audit checklist can lead to incorrect answers, e.g., “Yes, we have force work here”, when the interviewee is in fact referring to physical hard work but not forced labour.	Describe complex terms in simple and local words, explain vague concepts by using examples In the example of forced labour, rather describe indicators of forced labour and relating conditions than using technical terms that can be misinterpreted, e.g., “How did you get to know about this work?”, “When you were contracted by your employer, what did the process look like?” “Did he/she keep any documents of yours?”
Simplifying questions and context	Oversimplify questions while trying to break down complex concepts, e.g., “Do your children perform like child labour or do they go to school?”	BPs and workers usually have a sense of what is “bad” and should be negated, especially if questions are already formulated in a way that suggests that a “good” or socially desirable” answer should be “no”.	Break down highly sensitive topics into several sub-questions, e.g., “How old are your children? Which grade are they in? Where is the school located that they attend? What is their usual school schedule? Do they like going to school? Do they help you at the farm sometimes after school? In which occasion?” Rather, look for indicators of social issues, such as indicators of child labour, indicators of forced and bonded labour (listed in the verification guidance of the audit checklist with respective instructions) than oversimplifying the topic .
Interviewee is overly motivated to give answers	Give in on fast and positive answers received, such as, “everything is alright here, we don't have any complaints”	Overly positive answers can point to a phenomenon called “social desirability bias”, which implies that the interviewee is eager to give the most socially accepted answer to please the auditor.	Clarify the role of an auditor and that the audit is not about uncovering infringements but rather areas of improvement Stress aspects of confidentiality and the power of constructive feedback/observations in improving the conditions of all, give examples to make this more concrete for the interviewee

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<p>Interviewee seems unaware of his/her own rights</p>	<p>Give in on short, plain, or resigned answers without asking further.</p>	<p>It is often assumed as a pre-requisite that workers, BPs or other interviewees can give clear answers on issues of their day-to-day work or what could be improved about it (e.g., adequacy of their housing situations, social dynamics among co-workers or supervisors, adequate training on health and safety). However, if they are not properly trained on e.g., what discrimination means, which behaviours can be classified as social harassment, or what is crucial about health and safety at work, they will not be able to mention this, even though it might be occurring.</p>	<p>Ask concrete questions about, e.g., danger zones in the workplace, what the safety precautions are for e.g., using the de-pulping machines.</p> <p>Use context-setting questions, e.g., “I can image that as the only woman among men working can be tough here sometimes. I can imagine that it can feel uncomfortable from time to time. Does this sound familiar to you? In which situation does this occur?” without putting word in the mouth of the interviewee.</p> <p>Inform the interviewee on e.g., what can be dangerous about concrete activities and if they have any habits/rules at the farm to prevent this, what can be signs of discrimination or inappropriate behaviour.</p> <p>Depending on the checkpoint unawareness can also point to a lack of training and should therefore be recorded as a non-conformity in providing training on ME or BP level; however, when dealing with knowledge or awareness gaps, avoid giving the interviewee a feeling of failing a knowledge test.</p>
<p>Interviewee is reluctant to share information</p>	<p>Insist on receiving an answer.</p>	<p>If interviewees are questioned over and over in order to confirm a suspicion by the auditor, this can lead to adverse effects. Pressuring interviewees can create “false confessions”, through which the interviewee aims to escape the situation of pressure that the interview presents to them. In severe cases this can lead to exaggerating or making up situations that the auditor appears to be looking for, e.g., cases of abuse in order to be released from the situation.</p>	<p>Respect the right of the interviewee to remain silent or to negate a suspicion.</p> <p>Rather increase the sample size (interview additional workers, additional stakeholders, etc.) instead of forcing an answer.</p> <p>Another strategy can be sharing your contact information with the interviewee for them to contact you after the interview.</p>

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Information from interview is incomplete/ambiguous	Close checkpoint as conform as no clear non-conformity was identified	The absence of a clear non-conformity (e.g., a confirmed case of child labour) does not equal the state of conformity (e.g., when a case of child labour is suspected, but cannot fully be proven because it is, for example, not evident of the child in question does really attend school regularly).	<p>Interview additional stakeholders (schoolteachers, community leaders, NGOs, authorities in the region, etc.) and review additional documentational evidence (registries, attendance lists) to triangulate information.</p> <p>In the example of suspected child labour additional information could be obtained from interviewing school staff and by reviewing attendance/matriculation lists to complement the information obtained.</p>

2 Example questions to use in interviews

In the following, you will find a list of example questions that can be used in interviews with BPs and workers to assess aspects like child labour, youth work, and general working conditions of workers to detect any issues.

2.1 Child Labour

Questions to BPs to assess the risk of child labour:

- Do you employ any workers that live at the farm? Why do they live on the farm? Do they come from far? Do they travel on their own or do they bring their family and children with them? Do these children live at the farm?
- Where do the families with children live? Do they go to school? Where is the closest school nearby?
- What kind of school is this? Which grades do they cover? Is the school day all day long or do kids only go there in shifts (e.g., only in the morning or only in the afternoon)? How long is a typical school day?
- What do children living at the farm usually do after school? Who takes care of them?
- How do these children get to school? Are there any difficulties that you could describe? Do you offer any support in transportation to school?
- Do school breaks and vacations overlap with peak harvest season? If yes, where and how do children spend their day?
- Is there a lot of work during harvest season? How do you usually cover this increased workload?
- We have heard that in this region people start helping in the coffee production at an early age? Would you say this is true? How does it manifest?

Questions to BPs to assess their level of awareness:

- Have you received any training (from the Managing Entity) on how to protect children's rights? Can you imagine what it could be about?
- If you have received training, what was it about? What did you learn? How did it shape/change your operations?

Questions to parents of children (BPs or workers):

- How many children do you have? What are their names?
- How old are they? Which grade are they in? So, which school do they attend? When do they usually go there? How do they get to school? Are there any difficulties in getting to school? Has it happened that they couldn't go to school one day? Why was this the case?

- When do your children usually get out of school? In the afternoon, around lunch time? Or later or earlier? How do they usually spend time after school?
- If they help you in anything, how much time do they usually spend doing this?
- And what type of work is this? Are you accompanying the child in this? Does this work involve any tools, chemicals or machinery?
- Has this ever happened during school time or in the morning? Does performing this work prevent the child from going to school?
- How does the child feel physically while doing the work? After doing the work? Is the child too tired to go to school or do homework after doing this work?
- Would the child still have time to play and participate in social/family activities?
- Does any part of the work make the child feel unsafe, excluded, or threatened?

Questions to **children**:

- Can you talk a bit about yourself?
- Where do you live?
- Do you like school? Why? Or why not? Which grade are you in?
- How many members are in your family? What are your parents' names?
- What are your parents doing? Where are they?
- Do you have siblings? Are they studying or working? How many years older/younger than you are your siblings?
- Do you know your birthday by day, month, and year? It's no problem if you don't remember? Do you remember the last birthday that you celebrated? What did you do? Do you remember how old you turned?

2.2 Youth workers

Questions to BPs to assess the working conditions of young/youth workers:

- How do you usually employ young workers (below the age of 18 but legally allowed to work for a limited time)?
- What does the employment process look like? Can you describe it? Is this documented somewhere? Can you show this? How do you verify how old they are?

- How do you determine which activities can be conducted by young workers? Can you explain a bit more about this by using examples?
- How do you train young workers on what is important to know about their job? How can they protect themselves against risks and hazards in their daily work?
- What would a typical workday of a young worker look like? How many hours does this add up to? Does this include breaks?

Questions to **young workers** to assess their **working conditions**

- Which grade did you finish and when? Which grade are your siblings in?
- Or when did they finish school and at what grade?
- Was this a school in your hometown? Where is it?
- Do you have friends from the same hometown/school here? Do you keep in contact with your classmates? Which grade are your classmates in now if some are still in school?
- Is this your first job? Have you ever worked before? What kind of job have you done before? How long did you work for the last job?

2.3 Working conditions

Questions to **BPs** about **their workers**:

- How many workers do you employ? How do you recruit them? Could you describe the process? Are there any documents to support this?
- When do you usually employ them? Are there more workers during harvest season? How long do they stay? Where do they live?
- What types of jobs do your workers perform? How do you train the workers on these jobs? How can they protect themselves from any dangers or hazards related to their job?

Questions to **workers**:

- Can you tell me how you first found out about this job and what kind of information you were given before starting? Who arranged or paid for your travel?
- What happens with your documents when you arrive?
- Who do workers usually talk to when something feels unfair or unsafe? If you have a problem concerning your work, how do you usually address it? Who do you talk to? Is there a way to report a problem or suggestion anonymously? Do you know how such a cases are followed up on? Would you feel comfortable to report a case? Has there been a time when someone complained and something changed?

- Have there been any meetings or trainings among workers lately? What are these meetings usually about?
- What does a typical workday look like? At what time do you wake up? When do you take the bus to go to work? When do you get home, do you have the time for your children or family? Do you have time to cook? How far is your home from work? How is your schedule during busy seasons? When do you usually rest or have free time?
- When you are paid, do you receive something that explains the payment? What are the usual deductions or expenses you have from your pay? Can you rely on your wage to cover your basic monthly needs? How do you usually find out what's being deducted from your wages? What kind of costs are included?
- What happens if someone wants to stop working or take a few days off? Have you seen how that works here?
- What happens when someone is sick or expecting a baby? How are breaks handled during the workday? Can you tell me what people usually do if they need to take time off?

2.4 Discrimination

Questions to women or other vulnerable groups:

- In your community, would you say it's been more difficult for women to find work than for men?
- Have you heard of women who could not access job opportunities? Why?
- Would you say that this is a common issue? Is it true here?
- In your community, would you say it's been more difficult for women to find work than for men?
- Have you heard of women who could not access job opportunities? Why?
- Would you say that this is a common issue? Is it true here?
- Have you ever felt being treated unfairly or differently than others? In which occasions did this take place?
- Have there been times when you've felt treated differently because of who you are? Do you feel like identity - like gender or race - might have played a role in how that happened? Are there parts of the situation that felt especially personal or identity-related?

2.5 Harassment

Questions women or other vulnerable groups:

- Have there been times when you've felt treated differently or uncomfortably?
- Have you ever experienced unwanted behaviour, repeated negative attention, or any situation that felt strange or embarrassing to you? Have you ever experienced any offhand comments or jokes that felt disrespectful to you?

- Can you describe a bit more about how this happened? Have there been times when you've felt treated differently because of who you are?
- If you're comfortable, would you be open to sharing a bit about what happened? I'm here to listen - take your time. There's no pressure to share more than you're ready to. Whatever you're feeling is completely valid.