**Would house height affect mosquito house entry and keep houses cool?**

**Participants experiences – Focus group discussion**

**People present:** Musa Jawara, Amfaal Fofana (fieldworker), Bakary Fadera (fieldworker), participants/sleepers and Majo Carrasco-Tenezaca

**Location and date:** Wellingara village, Central River Region, The Gambia. October, 19th 2019.

**Length for FGD:** 1 hour and 3 minutes.

**Context:** The FGD took place after the study was completed. The participants and the field team met at the same place where the study was explained and the participants were recruited, an open space close to the experimental huts. All participants talked about their experiences in order of social position and age (elders first and youth last). We have included all of the dialogues here because they contextualize the importance of religion in the villages. The original discussion was in Mandinka and has been translated into English.

Musa: Salam Aleikum

All: wa alaikum as-salaam

Musa: we are the ones who call you here to discuss the work we have just completed. We are grateful for your participation in the study. The work we started together went fine. We have successfully finished it. We want to thank you once again. You all did your job as you were supposed to do it. On that note we once again thank you for your participation. We hope that our agreement was fulfilled by both parts. The essence of calling this gathering is for us to exchange ideas, so if similar work happens again, we all know what to add or subtract. That is the purpose of this meeting today. On that note we would like you to explain to us about your experiences during your work and sleeping in these houses. What are some of the things you encountered? What are some of the difficulties you have been facing? What are the challenges you have gone through during this period? And if you have anything to tell us that bothers you, all of you will be given the chance to explain anything you want to say based on your experiences. Also, if you want to tell us which of the houses you prefer most, which is the level of the houses that you prefer. So based on that we would like each one of you to tell us your experience in the houses. We are going to start with the participant 1 (the most senior member of the group).

Participant 1: We thank you all. We started working in peace and thank God everything ended in peace. Sleeping in these experimental houses the little difficulties we have encountered in there is not that much. All that I have explained to you about the place is how it used to be hot. The only disturbance or difficulty there is the temperature, the house used to be hot until midnight, then starts cooling down. The little difficulties we have there, after the temperature, is those small insects that get inside the houses specially when the bed is just near the trap or when the houses are lower off the ground. The little difficulties are about the insects also. Those small insects, tiny ones, that use to get inside the houses despite the fact you make your bed in order. You know the bednet holes are kind of big, so those insects can get inside the bednet. We don’t have any disturbance from mosquitoes. After all, concerned about the level, when we are on top of the houses if you have a stair that you know it won't be removed. It would be fixed to the house, just to be fixed to the house. I prefer the stair to be fixed permanently to the houses, the stairs in that form would be much more appreciated. because when you are sleeping you are dead, sleeping is like being dead because you might wake up from your sleep and think you are in your own house, especially when you are in level two (2m) or level three (3m) you might fall down from the houses but thanks to the obstruction that you have put on those doors, those ones have really helped us. When you wake up and think you are in your own house, but unconsciously think you are sleeping in your own house but when you get to those obstructions there you become conscious that "no, it is not the house that I think I was in". Frankly, I didn't have any disturbance or problem regarding the sleeping I that house. I started sleeping there in peace and I ended sleeping there in peace. I don't have anything else to say, I thank you all. Thank God our agreement was fulfilled, we started in peace and we ended in peace. Maybe we can continue with this kind of work in the future.

Participant 2: First I will thank Almighty God for everything he does for us. Because we are human beings, everything comes from God. God decides everything for you, everything you have is decided before by God. I have been doing this kind of work for quite a long time, but this year the way I found this work is much easier compared to other works before. First of all, I didn’t encounter any difficulties sleeping in this houses and mosquitoes didn't disturb me. Everything you and me have agreed on, everything was fulfilled. Everything, even my payment was not delayed, and I thank each and every one of you. Those people that I am also working with, I didn’t see anybody with a problem. At first, we were a little bit afraid, at the beginning of the project. At the beginning of the work, we were a little bit afraid but thank God everything was under control. After that, everything went peacefully and smoothly. So, on that note, I want to thank each and every one of you. The only thing I am appealing to you, any kind of work you see you will have some kind of difficulty attached to it, or sometimes you find it easy sometimes you find it difficult. We and you guys have been working for quite a long time now, today is not the first time we are working, so we thank you once again. As I said, everything of what we have agreed you have fulfilled, everything the way you supposed to. We are also hoping whether this agreement we also fulfilled. For you, you fulfilled all that you were supposed to do but now my doubt is whether we have fulfilled our agreement with you. You are the guys that will free us now from that doubt, whether we did everything we were supposed to do between you and us, or not. There are many people that are supposed to talk, so I am going to stop my speech here.

Musa: Ok

Participant 3: Thank God since we started this work, thank God everything went in peace. There was not suspicion among we the sleepers and there was not suspicion among you guys, coming to meet us here. Everything that you find yourself in is just life. There was no problem among us. They are also very hardworking, Amfaal and Fadera, they are always waiting for us here. Fadera and Amfaal were always with us, they were always speaking to us. The only difficulties we have encountered concern the excretions. Thank God this problem has been solved, you brought a container for us where we could ease ourselves in. Because when the house is at a certain level, to come down the house will be a problem but thank God the container supplied for us are very much useful to us. There were no delays in our payment, we agreed in two weeks and in those two weeks there was not delay. You even told us if we wanted every week, we would have our money, but we agreed on two weeks and those two weeks were never in delay. That is a good task from God. In some other works you will be doing works with some other person, there will be assigning you to work instead of they paying you, you will have to follow them day and night to have your money from them, that would be a problem. But for us we didn't encounter such with you people that is a great, thanks.

Musa: We thank you very much. We have heard what you said. There is one thing you have mentioned, and I will also return thanks to Majo, thanks and praise to Majo. The one that is sitting with us here. If you see that your payment is not delayed, we are never delayed, that one is not the work of any other person but Majo. Because her hand is always in her pocket to make sure you have your money. Last year we encountered such problems here. That is in the nature of MRC. To get money from MRC sometimes it becomes a problem. Anytime you have the payment that paper has to pass through many places before it reaches where it’s supposed to reach. That is the main reason we had delay. But this other one, Majo is the one that has been in charge of it. To ensure that in our agreement there is no disappointment in our agreement, she is paying you every time when the payment is due. To ensure there is not disappointment in the agreement. That is the main reason, even if there is no money from MRC to pay you people, she is the one that used her own money to pay you until the money is refunded. So, praise and thank Majo that is the one that did it. We want all of you to understand that you take care of your work and we ensure we do it how it is supposed to do the work.

Participant 4: Since we started the work there was no problem encountered. When we started was the only time, we had little bit problem, one of our colleagues, an elderly person, who had encountered a major problem. So that was the reason that people got scared. But thank God everything is going ok now. Apart from that I didn't see any fall from anyone of you, I am very much happy for you people. I can say [participant name] is my senior but these other are under me. On that note, I will thank and praise each and every one of you, specially my tubab Majo. I am very much happy about her. She was never in delay in our payment, everything went "tap-tap" there was no problem. If you see an elderly person, he is always very serious about what he is doing, there is something underneath and he is going very smoothly. Concerning about the houses, when you get in around night the place used to be hot until around one, that is the time when it started feeling cooler. Sometimes I cover myself with a blanket, with my bedsheet, they don't provide blankets. I didn't have any problems or difficulties concerning the mosquitoes, I didn't encounter any problems with mosquitoes because I had a bednet. The only disturbance I have is the small insects that will get inside my bednet. Those insects that get inside the net, those ones I am aware from those insects that are inside the net. But apart from those insects I didn't have any problem or another disturbance from mosquitoes.

Fadera: In which level are you more comfortable:

Participant 4: I am comfortable with all the four houses. The one that is level zero [0m], the one that is one [1m], the one that is two [2m] and the one that is three [3m]. I am comfortable with all of the four houses.

Musa: But which one of the four is the most comfortable?

Participant 4: I don’t have problems with the houses.

Musa: Just the way you said it. If you see an elderly person drinking tea, you know it is sugar.

Participant 5: I want to thank God for this work that was done in peace. What I have to say is not much, the ones before me have said everything but I hope there are many projects like this one in the future.

Amfaal: How did you feel sleeping in the houses?

Participant 5: The houses are not a problem. They are comfortable. As the previous sleepers said the houses were getting cold from twelve [midnight] onwards.

Musa: As Fadera asked, through some light on this, from all the levels which one do you prefer most?

Participant 5: Levels two to three

Musa: Thank you.

Participant 6: Thank God the work went well. I have very little to say here because the elders have spoken before and they have said everything. All that I have to say is that the work has no difficulties, we have encountered no difficulties during the work. As the previous speakers said, it used to be very hot initially but from twelve [midnight] onwards we have some nice breeze and it started to get cold. In regard to the payment, we are very happy, we never had a delay in our payments. Once we come down [from the houses] we are paid. So, we are grateful. That is what I have to say.

Musa: As far as you are very happy about the payments, I will never be tired of telling you it is because of Majo, you are always paid on time. So, we also thank her. Also pray for her. As Fadera asked previously, the houses are at different levels, which level do you prefer most? Especially if they tell you "today you are going to this level you are very very happy". and which level are you not happy, especially if they tell you "you are going to this level" and you are kind of disappointed.

Participant 6: I am very happy whenever I am going to level three, I am very very happy. I am not happy if I am at level two, I am not happy at all. I am happy with level one, I am happy with level zero, but I am not happy with level two. Because...

Musa: We are coming to that in a bit. Thank you very much. Please [name of participant] come and share your experience.

Participant 7: I am very happy, the work we are doing here is very important because it helps us feeding, becomes very easy and school fees also become very easy. If you have this money, whenever we have this money, we spend it on our feeding, we spend it on our school fees. So, your work is very very important. We have no disturbance from the mosquitoes, the house is usually very hot initially but as time goes on it becomes cooler and cooler. That is what I have to say.

Musa: Which house are you happy and which house are you not happy with?

Participant 7: I am happy with level zero.

Musa: Why?

Participant 7: Because it is on the ground, so to get in is very easy.

Musa: So, you don’t like the ladder?

Participant 7: Yes. Because initially I was with somebody in the same house, and he fell off. So, this then I didn't like it.

Musa: Now we know why you are saying this. The next speaker is going to be [name of participant 8]

Participant 8: I have nothing to say.

Musa: Come on, whatever you have to say, say it. Come on, everyone has to say something. You don't have thanks, you don't have praises with your colleagues? No, that's not true.

Amfaal: Come on, just tell us how you spend the night in the house? How was the house? That is all you have to say.

Participant 8: I am very happy about the work; I had no problem. But I have one issue to raise, initially the house is very hot but then it becomes cold, and I didn't have any blanket to cover myself. Sometimes I would like to take the bedsheet and cover myself with it, but I don't do that.

Musa: Which level are you happy with?

Participant 8: Ground level which is level zero. I am not happy with level three, because if it rains during the night, it shakes a lot.

Musa: These are the things we want to know. If it is cold, you get cold. If it shakes you get a little bit frightened. These are the kind of things we want to know. Did you ever ask for a blanket?

Participant 8: no

Musa: next time, I am advising you, if you are in this kind of work and you see something or you need something, just ask for it. Supposed that you asked for a blanket, we would have given you all of you blankets but because nobody asked for it and it was hot, so we assumed there was no need for blanket, otherwise we would have given you blankets. Now everybody has spoken. There is one thing that stands.

Participant 9 (temporary replacement): Thank God for this job. I am very happy, since we started spending the night in the houses, we had no difficulties. Mosquitoes don't disturb us, only these small insects. Only those small insects I think they are attracted by the light but eventually they will enter into the net and they will disturb us.

Musa: Which level do you prefer?

Participant 9 (temporary replacement): the ground level. Because one day I was in the last level [level 3] and it was raining the whole house was shaking. It is like the house does not hold very well. It shakes.

Musa: That is true, it shouldn't shake. Thank you. On your side sleepers, you have spoken your views. Now I am going to summarize what you just said. You are happy to sleep in the house but if I say something that you didn't say please correct me, tell me. You said you are very happy to sleep in the house, you are not disturbed by mosquitoes. Initially it is very hot inside before twelve, but after twelve it starts to get cold. It becomes so cold that sometimes you cover yourself and you also said that the last level is too shaky, especially when it is windy. And then you are somehow frightened. But you also indicated that you would prefer if the stairs were permanent and are not moving. You also said that you are not disturbed by mosquitoes, but you are disturbed by small insects, especially on the ground floor. On the issue of small insects, I want to shed some light on it. Those insects come because simply when you put light on from nine to seven, they are attracted to that light, that is why they are there. If there was no light you will never see those small insects. But because there is light from nine to seven that is why you are seeing these insects. You talked about the hotness, now I want to qualify how hot is it. Is it that the house in your homes are as hot as the houses here?

Participant 2: They are also hot, in fact maybe they are equal, they are similar. But what is the difference now, is that in our homes we go in our house the time we want.

Musa: Ok. You said they are equally hot; the difference now is that you enter this house at a certain time and in your own house it is at your own time when it is cold. It is good for us to know that. The time we tell you to go inside the houses is different from the house people usually go to bed and that is true. Now I will leave my colleagues to throw some light on how work was, if they have comments or if they have questions they can ask. So Amfaal the floor is yours.

Amfaal: First of all, I am giving thanks and praise to all of you. Since we started work, there has not been any problem. No man is perfect, from my own side no one of you have ever offended me but if I have offended anyone I am asking for your forgiveness. Perhaps sometimes you will do something to someone without even noticing, if that happens, we are all humans, so I want to thank you all for what you have done. Thank you very much.

Participant 2: This work is mainly do it in the rainy season. There are some difficulties about it. most of the time if it is time to work you must come to work even if it is raining. If you come out with your clothes out, if it is raining you get wet. Although it is not possible, we know it is not possible, we are appealing next time if this kind of thing is happening you make sure you try raincoats for us. Because if you come up in your wet clothes and you go up with that to bed it is very difficult.

Musa: Thank you very much, these are the kind of things we want. To be honest, the request for your raincoats has reached us but the time it came the raincoats available had all been distributed, they placed an order for raincoats to come. That is why you couldn’t get raincoats. If what said that if the coats arrive and the work is still on, we will give you coats but if by the time the coats arrive and the work is finished, then we cannot give you coats. And that is how it happened, the coats are not here still, and the work is finished. Next time, if there are not raincoats, we will make sure to buy an umbrella to each and every one of you.

Participant 2: Sometimes if we are going, we borrow the umbrella, but I don’t think that will hold much water. [joking]

Musa: I think both of the field workers have lost sight of that because they would have brought umbrellas from the project money. That blame goes to the fieldworkers. They could have used the money to buy umbrellas for themselves and buy umbrellas for all of you. But because no man is perfect... If I was here that wouldn't have happened, I would have bought the umbrellas. But because Fadera is new, but Amfaal has been here before it could be it just escaped his mind. Let's just forget about that, it is all part of work. Any difficulty that was there they were there, and they were able to resist it. If they had reported it, we could have bought umbrellas of we could have done something different. Now Fadera you can also say something.

Fadera: Thank you all very much, I am very happy. I have been working for MRC, but this is the first time to come to this side of the country. It is a new experience for me, I knew another people and I have worked for another project that give me another knowledge, another experience, another knowhow. Any group you meet, you have another experience. The people I meet here are fantastic people and I have not seen any fault from anyone. But I cannot praise myself, they are the ones that can say "Fadera the other day what you have done is not good, the other day what you have done is good". If I have failed anyone please come out. But because I am not here alone, I am here with Amfaal I would say you can come around and say, "the other day what you have done it is not good" and if there is a way in which we can improve of it. Because tomorrow we will work with another group, if we are told here, we won’t make the same mistake with the other group and it will be knowledge from you. On that note, I am very happy. Thank you all very much.

Musa: Thank you very much. Majo you can say something.

Majo: I am really grateful for coming here today and I am sorry for being so hard on the times. I know they left their wives or girlfriends depending on the case, to come here or their parties. I have some questions, but I don't know if they already talked about that but if I am repeating something you can skip the question. They said they liked the house at three meters.

Musa: Some of they liked it, some of them like the one on the ground.

Majo: Why? Did they talk about why?

Musa: Those who said zero said because they feel the top one shakes when it rains.

Majo: Does it shake a lot?

Participant 2: Not a lot.

Majo: So, keeping that in mind, would they live in a house that is high? Because these are experimental houses, they knew there was an end but if it was permanent.

Musa (after asking the participants): All of them said they prefer the upstairs if it is solid, if the house is solid on top and there is a solid ladder to go on top, they will prefer to have their houses at the three-meter high.

Majo: Ok. would they live in a house like this? [picture of a southeast Asian house]

Participants: yes.

Majo: You can tell them that the picture is of a house in south-east Asia and that we have houses like that in Latin America too, but because of the height it is impossible to build with blocks [mud blocks] it has to change the material. Would you be willing to change the material?

Musa (after asking participants): It is an emphatic yes.

Majo: yes? All of them, yes?

Musa: All of them yes.

Majo: I don't know if they talked about this. Did they feel a difference in temperature and comfortability in the houses at different heights? if one house was more comfortable than others related to temperature, not about mosquitoes.

Musa: They said they have any mosquito bites.

Amfaal: Did you feel more hot in any of the houses?

Participant 2: The ones that are low, on the ground and at level one were a little bit hotter.

Majo: What about the rest of them?

Amfaal (after asking participants): They all said one or two.

Majo: Can they think about any useful thing about moving the houses up and down other than having less mosquitoes and that they are cooler? Can they think of any other useful thing about having a house up from the ground?

Participant 2: If the houses are solid like the ones on the ground are we would prefer that.

Majo: I want to know if someone has asked about the houses and if yes, what? if their wives have asked about the houses.

Participant 3: My wife has asked me about the house whether if it is very hot at night.

Majo: Were they worried about them?

Participant 3: They have no worries.

Participant 5: My kid crying at night is my only worry.

Majo: Were the kids asking about the houses?

Participant 6: They tried to ask me. Children will come when I am laying down to ask me questions "the house you use to sleep, we see the house upstairs. So how do you get to those houses?" so I explain them we get there using ladders.

Majo: So, their [the children] main concern is about how to get there?

Amfaal: Not only about that but how it is changing [height]

Musa: They see them down one time, they see it up.

Majo: So, they are curious about it. I don’t think I have any other question. But if you want to say something about the houses that we haven’t asked about please do.