

WHOQOL TRANSLATION METHODOLOGY

The translation methodology described here has been developed in other cross-cultural work in progress at WHO. It has two features which give it considerable advantage over straightforward forward translation / back translation. First a bilingual group acts as a review panel looking at the original and translated documents, discussing and resolving issues around the translation process. Second a monolingual group, with no knowledge of what the document looked like in its untranslated version, reads the translated document commenting on any aspect of the document which appears less than satisfactory in the language of the field centre.

In the field centre the following individuals will need to assist in the translation process.

1. **A bilingual panel** (two to four individuals)

The bilingual group should have one person who supervises the translation process. These individuals should be familiar with the design and methodology of the project, and should be briefed by the principle investigator. In addition, these individuals should by virtue of their professional training be familiar with issues in quality of life.

2. **Four monolingual individuals** who will be able to comment in an articulate way on the translated document.

3. **One professional translator.**

The translation process has a number of steps. These are summarized below.

1. The original document is translated into the target language by one or two members of the bilingual group under the supervision of the bilingual individual supervising the translation process. The translators should have a clear idea of the population who will be asked to use the document. This will increase the likelihood that the language levels used in the translated document match closely the language usage of the target group.

The two translators should consult closely in the translation process so that both translators are in agreement about the translation.

2. A group of mono-lingual individuals (4) then 'tests' the document by reading through it and looking for aspects of the translation which are not clearly comprehensible or are ambiguous in the target language. Ideally monolinguals should not speak any English, although it is likely that in some field centres (e.g. The Netherlands) it is unlikely that it will be possible to find any individuals with no knowledge of English at all. In this case, the monolingual group should operate exclusively in the language of the field centre. In addition at least some of the monolinguals should have little formal education so that the comprehensibility of the document can be checked.

It would be acceptable for the monolinguals to make comments on the translated instructions, items and response scales for the questionnaire in a focus group situation. However, the participants should then have been allowed to read through the materials in the before hand and bring comments with them to the group. One of the bilingual group might be best suited to moderate this group in a non-directive / information gathering way.

3. The bilingual group (including the two individuals who originally translated the document) should consider the comments of the monolingual group and incorporate their comments into the

translated document wherever these comments can be said to accurately reflect the meaning of the original document. The bilingual group then reads through the document, discussing any further inconsistencies in the translation, and where appropriate amending these in the translated document. This group should ensure that the document is clearly comprehensible and grammatically correct in the target language.

4. The translated document is then back-translated to the original language by a professional translator.

5. The original and back-translated documents are then reviewed by the group of bilingual experts, to determine the accuracy and equivalence of the translation process. The panel should compare the original and back-translated document. If significant differences arise then the translation process has altered the meaning of the original document beyond acceptable variation. It is not unusual for the majority of the document to be relatively stable in the two languages, although a few aspects are likely to show a degree of variation. Problems should be dealt with through further translation / back-translation until a successful transfer of meaning is achieved. Wherever possible this should be done by the assembled bi-lingual panel. If equivalent, the translated document can then be accepted for use.

The bi-lingual group then prepares a summary report of the translation process. This should include a description of the individuals involved in the translation process, issues which arose in the translation and a copy of the final iteration back-translated document. This should then be transmitted to WHO Geneva.