

Tips for conducting a Focus group Discussion

General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Select participants based on discussion point(s) ✓ Select participants by sex/gender, age, common profile, etc. ✓ Preferably have female facilitators to lead all women/girl discussions and male facilitators for men/boys' discussions ✓ Prepare and adapt relevant tools according to the context ✓ Have 8-12 people in each discussion group ✓ Create a safe space for discussion - introduction, clarify roles, ensure confidentiality. If it is not safe (e.g., in a conflict context or in places where there are public tensions) to hold group discussions, do not lead a group discussion. ✓ Conducting a joint safety audit through observation or focus group discussion
Creating the Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Keep the number of questions reasonable (under 10, if possible). This prevents the participants from getting confused or worn out by a long discussion. ✓ Keep the questions simple and short. FGD participants won't get the chance to see the questions like in a survey. ✓ Ensure that the wording on questions is clear. Otherwise, participants will end up discussing the question itself, rather than what the question was trying to ask. ✓ Be careful that questions about sensitive issues or topics are asked carefully. Otherwise, the FGD will stop just because people are too embarrassed to answer. ✓ Make sure that questions are worded in a way that cannot be answered with a simple "Yes" or "No" answer. Using words like "Why" and "How" will help elicit better responses from participants.
Question Types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Probe questions: these introduce participants to the discussion topic and make them feel more comfortable sharing their opinion with the group ✓ Follow-up questions: delve further into the discussion topic and the participants' opinions ✓ Exit question: check to ensure that you didn't miss anything
Length of the Focus Group Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ An FGD should be between 60 and 90 minutes. If the FGD is shorter than 60 minutes, it is often difficult to fully explore the discussion topic. If the FGD is longer than 90 minutes, the discussion can become unproductive (as participants get weary) and the discussion can start to impose on participants' time.
Selecting the Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Focus group discussions involve eight to twelve people on average. Greater than twelve participants become crowded for a FGD. Creating homogeneity in the FGD group can help participants feel more comfortable expressing their opinions. ✓ Consider the following when you are choosing your participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender: Will men and women feel comfortable discussing this topic in a mixed-gender group? For example, women might feel uncomfortable discussing maternal health if men are in the group. • Age: Will age affect the way that people react to this topic? For example, a young person might feel uncomfortable talking about his drinking habits if older people from his community are in the room. • Hierarchy: Will people of different hierarchical positions be able to discuss this topic equally? For example, a student might feel uncomfortable discussing her teachers if the school principal is in the FGD. ✓ Certain criteria should be set up front and used to screen potential FGD participants.

Preparing for the Focus Group Discussion	<p>Make sure the participants have provided informed consent verbally or ideally on a written form, in line with research ethics best practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sure to make the location and time of the FGD are clear to all participants. • If you anticipate some participants not showing up, invite 10-20% extra participants. However, be careful to not create too large of a group. • Make sure the FGD location is safe and confidential. • Make sure that the setting does not bias the information being collected. • If it is important to collect demographic data from participants (like age, gender, caste, etc), design a short form that takes no more than 2 or 3 minutes to complete. The form can be administered before the focus group starts.
Moderator Techniques for Focus Group Discussions	<p>As a moderator, it is important to ensure that all participants are comfortable and engaged with the discussion, and that their opinions are being heard. The following techniques are helpful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain neutral to ensure that everyone feels comfortable expressing their opinion. No nodding or shaking your head, raising eyebrows, agreeing or disagreeing with comments, or praising or denigrating participants. • Elicit further information from shy participants with comments like “Can you tell me more about that?”, “Help me understand what you mean”, or “Can you give an example?” • Deal with dominant participants by acknowledging their opinion and soliciting other opinions. Sentences like “Thank you. What do other people think?” can be helpful. • Paraphrase or summarize long, unclear comments by participants. This shows participants that the moderator is actively listening, and it helps the moderator to ensure he or she has understood the participant’s statement. • Act spontaneously if needed. If the conversation goes in an unexpected, but productive direction, go with it and ask questions that were not on the initial questionnaire. Probe deeper into new topics and ideas, as long as the information being gained is valuable.
Getting started- introduction	<p>Starting a focus group discussion: Talking with the community, separately with men, boys, women, and girls in group discussions, is an important part of understanding the security issues as perceived by the different groups at the sites. Separate discussions with women and girls should be facilitated by female staff. Each focus group should have 8-12 participants and should not exceed 90 minutes. Before starting, create a safe space: Introduce the discussion team, roles, including notetaking, and connect with participants to make them feel comfortable.</p> <p>CONFIDENTIALITY - 1) Do not take or write down participants' names; 2) tell participants that they are NOT being asked to share information about specific issues or cases; 3) try to find a quiet, private place for the discussion</p> <p>INFORMED CONSENT - 1) explain the purpose of the activity; 2) participation is collective and voluntary; 3) information will be used to improve the safety needs of women and girls</p> <p>SAFETY - if you believe that any staff conducting this activity or participants may be in danger, do not proceed with the activity. Do not ask for information about GBV survivors or cases of GBV during the survey.</p> <p>CONCLUSION: At the end of the discussion, thank the participants for their participation. Share the contacts of the relevant protection or GBV actors/services if they have any concerns related to protection, including GBV/SEA.</p>