

## General Community focus group guidelines

The focus group guidance below was adapted from Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (2018), Monitoring and Evaluation reference manual.

### Resources needed:

- 2 moderators (1 facilitator, 1 note-taker)
- Audio recorder (tape or digital; can be a smartphone)
- Notepads, pens for note-taker

### Moderators:

The ideal focus group **facilitator** has the following traits:

- Can listen attentively with sensitivity and empathy
- Can listen and think at the same time
- Believes that all group participants have something to offer no matter what their education, experience, or background
- Has adequate knowledge of the topic
- Can keep personal views and ego out of the facilitation
- Is someone the group can relate to but also give authority to
- Can appropriately manage challenging group dynamics

The **note-taker** must be able to do the following:

- Set up a tape recorder and check that it is recording well (if applicable)
- Run a tape recorder during the session (if applicable)
- Take notes; this is very important in case the recorder fails or the tape is inaudible (which is often the case because some participants speak very quietly)
- Note/record body language or other subtle but relevant clues
- Allow the facilitator to focus on moderating the group and do all the talking during the discussion

### Participants:

In each community (FbF intervention and comparison), 3 FGDs should be organized:

-

A discussion group should **not exceed** the maximum of **10** participants. **Bystanders should not be present**, meaning the group should have a quiet space to discuss undisturbed among themselves.

#### Group composition:

Discussion groups should be demographically **homogeneous**: FGD participants usually feel most comfortable sharing their views if they speak among peers. This means participants should have similar expertise and standing (e.g. do not put management with employees, doctors with nurses etc.).

### **ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR THE FGD FACILITATOR**

**Keep time:** The focus group moderator has a responsibility to adequately cover all prepared questions within the time allotted.

**Probe for more:** S/he also has a responsibility to get all participants to talk and fully explain their answers. Some helpful probes include:

- “*Can you talk about that more?*”
- “*Help me understand what you mean*”
- “*Can you give an example?*”

**Summarize:** It is good moderator practice to paraphrase and summarize (repeat in your own words) long, complex or ambiguous comments. It demonstrates active listening and clarifies the comment for everyone in the group.

**Remain neutral:** Because the moderator holds a position of authority and perceived influence, s/he must remain neutral, refraining from nodding/raising eyebrows, agreeing/disagreeing, or praising/denigrating any comment made.

**Actively moderate:** A moderator must tactfully deal with challenging participants. Here are some appropriate strategies:

- Self-appointed experts: “*Thank you. What do other people think?*”
- The dominator: “*Let’s have some other comments.*”
- The rambler (doesn’t stop talking): Stop eye contact; look at your watch; jump in when they inhale.
- The shy participant: Make eye contact; call on them; smile at them.
- The participant who talks very quietly: Ask them to repeat their response more loudly.

Additional guidance on focus group discussions can be found at the [Duke University website: https://guides.library.duke.edu/c.php?g=289813&p=1934019](https://guides.library.duke.edu/c.php?g=289813&p=1934019).