

## Guidance Note – Focus group discussion

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This guidance provides a structured process in the conduct of a focus group discussion

### Introduction

Good morning/afternoon, we are *[insert name of interviewers and note taker]*. We work for ACT Alliance, a global alliance that works with *[insert name of requesting member and/or their implementing partner]* in their humanitarian response to *[insert type and name of emergency]*. Do you know ACT Alliance?

*(If no, explain – ACT Alliance is a global coalition of more than 150 churches and related organisations from over 120 countries created to provide humanitarian aid, on needs basis alone)*

We are here today to discuss your experience with the services provided by *[requesting member]* and learn about your needs and thoughts.

### Setting the ground rules

The information provided will be used by ACT Alliance to *[insert FGD objectives]*.

- Participation in this discussion, that will last approximately 45 minutes, is free and there is no obligation to respond; you can stop at any point.
- Your personal data will not be shared with others and the information provided will be analyzed anonymously and used confidentially.
- Your opinions are valuable and very important to us; feel free to share your views openly.

Do you have any questions?

Do you provide consent to document, use, store and share the information provided for reporting and communication purposes anonymously?

*(If NO, thank the attendant and allow them to leave)*

### Focus Group Discussion Guiding Questions

1. List a few questions in appropriate language, along with 1-2 explanatory questions to clarify the main one.
2. If an interpreter is necessary, inform her/him about the questions prior to the meeting.
3. Keep the number of questions short (6-8 are ideal for a focus group question).
4. Make sure that the synthesis of the monitoring team is gender-sensitive

### Tips

Preparing the room

- Arrive an hour early with the note-taker to set up the room to have enough time to mitigate room scheduling and logistical challenges.
- Place signs with directions so participants can easily locate the FGD space.

- Test the recording equipment to be sure it works properly

### Opening the session

- Introduce the monitoring team and the purpose of the focus group.
- Explain the ground rules for the focus group discussion
- Allow time for questions, and ask participants to quickly introduce themselves

### Facilitating the focus group

#### DOs

- Open the session with a light, open-ended question; this will enable everyone to develop a comfort level within the group
- Pay attention to non-verbal signals for someone might feel uncomfortable or excluded
- Ask open-ended questions. If the response is unclear, ask, “Can you say more about...”
- Ensure balanced participation by asking, “Who else has something to say?” or “I would like to hear more from...”
- Redirect the discussion when it goes off topic.
- Record the participants’ actual words as much as possible and don’t paraphrase

#### DON'Ts

- Don’t read the script questions, as it may sound too formal.
- Don’t finish people’s sentences or make assumptions
- Don’t allow anyone to dominate or to use the focus group for their own agenda.
- Don’t allow side talking
- Don’t challenge what is being said
- Don’t share your own opinion
- Don’t favor one participant over the others
- Don’t use jargon or technical terms

### Closing the session

- End the discussion by summarizing the key take-aways
- If there is time, ask the participant whether they have any additional thoughts to share.
- Thank the group for participating
- Ensure that all notes and recordings are saved and collected
- In case that a report will be produced, let participants know when it might be available

### Analyzing the results

- Review the answers to the questions asked and search for common ideas or recurring themes. Note which seemed to be most important to the participants
- Safeguard confidentiality by making sure that participants cannot be identified by their views or FGD notes

- Triangulate. Remember that the views and perspectives shared are valid only for the participants and may not reflect the perspectives of other people. Conducting multiple focus groups may be effective for gathering feedback that is more representative.