



सत्यमेव जयते

NITI Aayog



DEVELOPMENT MONITORING AND EVALUATION OFFICE

TOOLKIT

— Designing and Conducting Focus —

Group Discussions

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Toolkit for Designing and Conducting Focus Group Discussions

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1. Background

1.1 Introduction to Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a widely used qualitative method of data collection, which helps in gaining a deeper understanding of a study topic. In an FGD, a group of respondents of interest, usually homogenous with similar socio-economic characteristics, participate in a discussion together. FGD provides a single platform for collaborative sharing of qualitative information such as knowledge, attitude, practices, beliefs, experiences, behaviours, perceptions, views, opinions and so on, thus providing the opportunity for drawing more varied insights from a single round of discussion.

Focus group discussions are often used in accompaniment to quantitative data collection methods to capture non-quantifiable aspects and add nuance to the findings of quantitative research. They can also be used in conjunction with in-depth qualitative interviews.

Focus group discussions can also be conducted for the purpose of designing quantitative data collection tools. They can better inform researchers about the key areas of inquiry, as well as questions and options to be included in the structured questionnaires.

A facilitator or a moderator plays the central role in conducting the discussion by following a readymade discussion guide that covers all the themes that are relevant to the research. The facilitator also tries to emphasise the equal participation of all the respondents and strives to minimise digression from the discussion topics while maintaining decorum. A note-taker records the discussion, which is later transcribed and analysed for drawing insights. Nowadays, one can simply record the discussion; however, someone taking independent notes is always helpful and serves as a backup in case of failure to audio/video record the discussion.

The heat map below compares focus group discussions, In-depth interviews and quantitative structured interviews along various aspects. Darker shade in the heat map corresponds to a favourable attribute.

Ease of Execution

Attribute	Focus Group Discussion	In-depth Interviews (One-on-one)	Quantitative Structured Interviews
Time-Saving			
Ease of Administration			
Ease of Identification of Respondents			
Ease of Analysis			
Generalizability			
Elicit Detailed Information			
Flexibility to modify questions/adapt to the responses			

Created with Datawrapper

Figure 1: This heat map is based on the table provided on Key characteristics of FGD, IDI and Structures Interviews in Annexure-I (Note: Darker shade corresponds to a favourable attribute)

1.2 Role of Focus Group Discussions for Public Policy Analysis

Focus group discussions provide an opportunity for digging deeper and deriving insights about a programme or a scheme that are not always intuitive and cannot be captured through a structured questionnaire, in which the majority of the questions are close-ended. FGDs are used as a qualitative approach for developing a nuanced understanding of social issues. For instance, while we can measure the output, outcomes or impact of a scheme through a quantitative inquiry, a focus group discussion is a useful tool for eliciting behavioural and experiential responses from the beneficiaries of a scheme, which in turn can better inform the policymakers to improve the scheme. The technique emerged as a qualitative data collection approach and a strategy to plug the gap between scientific research and local knowledge (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995).



Qualitative methods can be a useful way of bringing equity component to the research by capturing perspective about a programme from the perspective of a specific group of stakeholders and driving policy-decisions that are cognizant of people's views or experiences of that programme.

Ford and Goger in 'The value of qualitative data for advancing equity in policy', The Brookings Institute (2021)

Insights and evidence from qualitative research like FGDs can also guide the researchers and policymakers on how to prioritise components of a scheme or a programme, identify what works and what doesn't work and take reformative actions.

This toolkit provides a beginner's guide for designing and implementing focus group discussion as an instrument of enquiry, especially for government programmes and policies.

2. Sampling and Respondent Selection for Focus Group Discussions

2.1 Sampling

Quantitative methods are generally used to test pre-determined hypotheses and generalise the results obtained from studying a representative sample of the population. Thus, the purpose of sampling, such as random sampling, in a quantitative research method is to ensure the representativeness of the sample, reduce sampling errors, and minimise the biases in selection to answer questions about the population.

When it comes to qualitative methods of data collection like FGDs, statistical validity is not usually a concern. This is majorly because, qualitative methods are used to answer (the reasons) 'why' and (the processes) 'how' questions and elicit non-quantifiable information from the respondents such as their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, experiences, awareness, practices, opinions, cultural norms etc. Therefore, even if the sample size of FGDs is large enough, it is difficult to generalise qualitative observations of a sample to the population. According to Kruegar et al. (2015), while randomisation is not a primary factor in selecting a sample for focus groups, a certain degree of randomisation is often deployed to eliminate the inherent selection bias that may creep in during the recruitment process. The challenge for FGD lies in relying on reports of a selected group of participants and ignoring other groups (e.g. opinions about hospital services from women who delivered in hospitals may be different from those who chose not to go to a hospital).

The oft-cited strategy for deciding the sample size or number of FGDs to be conducted is to rely on the concept of *theoretical or data saturation* (fig 2). Theoretical saturation occurs once new discussions stop revealing information that has not been covered by the previous discussions. As per Kruegar et al. (2015), conducting 3-4 focus groups with a particular category/type of respondents is considered as the

rule of thumb. If during the course of data collection, new information is being generated even after 3-4 discussions, more discussions may be conducted until theoretical saturation is attained.

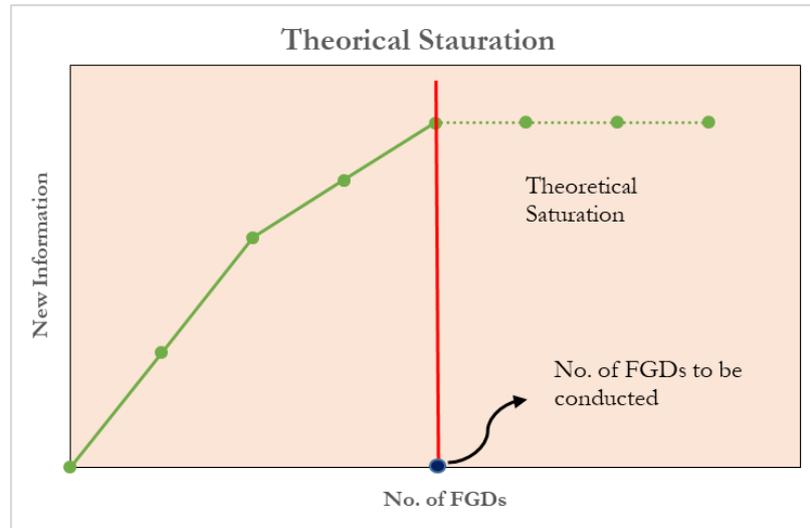


Figure 2: FGDs can be conducted till theoretical saturation has been achieved

2.2 Composition of the Groups

Before recruiting the respondents for the study, it is important to segregate the groups into appropriate categories. It is usually advisable to conduct discussions with homogenous groups belonging to a certain category while ensuring an adequate amount of variation within the category in order to make the discussion diverse and richer. Homogeneity will ensure that respondents having similar backgrounds or characteristics (depending on the context and need of the study), who are part of the same FGD, are able to relate to each other's experiences and express their views freely. Groups can be segregated on the basis of age, occupation, income, socio-economic status, gender, whether a recipient of the benefits of a programme/scheme, education, geographical location, rural/urban and so on. For example, in many rural areas in India, girls and women have limited autonomy and do not express themselves freely in the presence of elders or male family members. Against such a backdrop, mixing of gender or respondents of different age groups might lead to monopolisation of the discussion by certain participants and inhibit female participants from freely sharing their experiences, thus leading to capturing of incomplete and biased information.

In the Indian context, [socio-economic class \(SEC\) system \(2011\)](#) by Market Research Society of India, which is used for classifying Indian households, provides one criterion for categorising groups. This can be better understood with the help of an example: Suppose we want to gain insights into the barriers to education faced by adolescent girls in rural areas. Groups can be categorised on the basis of age, socio-economic class and geographical location. This would allow for respondents with similar characteristics of interest in the same group and would also provide an opportunity to capture diverse

responses and experiences of respondents from varied categories. For instance, mixing girls from affluent or educated families with girls from poorer families might constrain the latter from participating unreservedly in the discussion. Likewise, girls belonging to marginalised caste backgrounds may not articulate in an FGD that also has their peers from the dominant caste community. It is a useful practice to record the background details of the participants in an FGD while also ensuring confidentiality. Table 1 provides an example for categorising adolescent girls and young women on the basis of age and socio-economic class for focus group discussions.

Age of adolescent girl/young women	12-15		16-19		Total
	Group 1 SEC- A, B & C	Group 2 SEC- D & E	Group 1 SEC- A, B & C	Group 2 SEC- D & E	
North	3	3	3	3	12
South	3	3	3	3	12
East	3	3	3	3	12
West	3	3	3	3	12
Total	12	12	12	12	48

Table 1: Classification of FGD groups based on socio-economic class and age

2.3 Selection of the respondents

Generally, non-probabilistic sampling methods are used for identifying and selecting respondents for FGDs. Once the selection criteria for different categories of the group is decided, participants may be recruited from an existing **list** of the population. An already existing list of people that satisfies the selection criteria is a fast and economical way of recruiting respondents. Respondents can be randomly selected from such a list, thus also allowing for some amount of randomisation, which might also reduce the bias in responses. This can be illustrated with the help of an example. Suppose an FGD is to be conducted to understand the experiences of lactating and pregnant women who are a recipient of cash incentives under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY). In such a scenario, a list of pregnant and lactating women can be obtained from Anganwadi or ASHA workers, who are the key persons responsible for antenatal care in villages. The team leader who is involved in the study design should ensure that he/she collects the full list of pregnant and lactating women and not a truncated list, which itself can be biased from the beginning.

However, it may be noted that in FGDs such as these, it may be suitable not to include the ASHA or Anganwadi worker in the discussion itself, as the presence of a government functionary may be intimidating for the participants.

A **screening or a recruitment questionnaire** provides another additional useful tool for screening the participants further from an extensive list. Such a questionnaire would include a list of qualifying questions that would aid the researchers in filtering and selecting the required participants for the study.

Screening Questionnaire Example: Suppose an FGD is to be conducted with coffee growers who have received some kind of developmental support from the *Integrated Coffee Development Project* scheme in the last three years. The FGD is to be conducted with the following four types of growers:

FGD Groups	Group	Small/Marginal Coffee Grower (Holding size \leq 10 ha)	Large Coffee Grower (Holding size $>$ 10 ha)
Arabica Coffee Growers	A	A1	A2
Robusta Coffee Growers	R	R1	R2

Some examples of the questions that can go into the screening questionnaire are as follows:

1. Have you participated in a focus group within the past 6 months?
 - a. Yes (*Terminate*)
 - b. No (*Continue*)
2. Do you speak xyz language (language in which FGD is to be conducted)?
 - a. Yes (*Continue*)
 - b. No (*Terminate*)
3. Have you grown coffee in the last 3 years?
 - a. Yes (*Continue*)
 - b. No (*Terminate*)
4. Have you received any support from coffee board in the last 3 years?
 - a. Yes (*Continue*)
 - b. No (*Terminate*)
5. What kind of coffee have you grown in the last 3 years?
 - a. Arabica (*Shortlist for Group A*)
 - b. Robusta (*Shortlist for Group R*)

6. What is the size of the holding you work on?
 - a. ≤ 10 Hectares (*Shortlist for Group A1 if selected Arabica in 6 or R1 if selected Robusta in 6*)
 - b. >10 Hectares (*Shortlist for Group A2 if selected Arabica in 6 or R2 if selected Robusta in 6*)

If the respondent is shortlisted for any of the categories, seek willingness to participate in the focus group:

7. We are conducting an FGD for a study to understand the impact of support received by the coffee growers from the coffee board. Since you meet our eligibility criteria for the discussion, would you be willing to participate in a focus group discussion next week? Your inputs will be of great value to our study?
 - a. Yes, interested
 - b. No, not interested
8. If yes, please note down the contact details and date/time preference to participate in the FGD.

In case of the unavailability of such lists, **snowball sampling** provides another method of recruiting respondents. In snowball sampling, one or two participants of interest are identified for the study, and then these participants use their network to help identify more participants with desired characteristics for the FGD. Snowball sampling is useful when it is difficult for the researchers to locate participants. Relying on the existing network of people makes recruiting participants for the study simpler. However, such a method might reduce the intra-group variation in responses because of potential similarity in experiences of respondents from the same social network. The study designer may adopt certain screening techniques to ensure intra-group participant level variation in desired indicators. Key person in the community such as village representatives, local leaders, educators, and service providers may also be approached to **nominate** potential participants for the FGD.

While recruiting participants from vulnerable groups, **community mobilisation** might play an important role in increasing the willingness of the group to participate in FGD.

Another method that allows for some randomisation but is time-consuming is the **individual selection method**. In such a method, each participant is individually selected by the researcher/moderator. It starts with the identification of an initial participant who fulfils the selection criteria. Moderator then walks through the village/community/nearby area to personally recruit individuals who fit the selection criteria and are willing to participate in the discussion.

Advertising or a public call could also be used for recruiting participants with the required characteristics. Such a method of recruitment is time-consuming but might also bring some

randomisation to the group. However, publicising the requirement of respondents may not be an advisable strategy when respondents are being selected for studies that are sensitive in nature.

It is important to note that the list of methods for respondent selection provided above is not exhaustive. The selection of the respondents will depend on the requirement of the study, financial feasibility, and availability of information with the researcher. Consent, privacy and confidentiality of the respondents must be kept in mind while recruiting for FGDs and moderating them.

2.4 Size of the Focus Group

The number of participants in the focus groups may differ; commonly, focus group members consist of 10-12 people (Baumgartner et al., 2002) between six to ten (Powell & Single, 1996) and between six to eight (Krueger & Casey, 2000). However, the size of the group can be expanded to 10-15 as well, depending on the topic of discussion, characteristics of the participants and requirements of the study. Smaller groups are ideal for detailed, in-depth or sensitive discussions, particularly when respondents have a lot to share. On the other hand, groups of larger size can bring more diversity to the discussion and are preferable when the topic of discussion is not sensitive. While managing the discussion could be challenging in a large-sized group, smaller groups may make some participants feel pressured to contribute more.

2.5 Duration of a focus group discussion

Regardless of the number of focus group discussion meetings, it is important to consider the duration of the meetings. There is not a univocal answer to this question but depends mostly on the size of the group and the complexity of the research question under consideration.

The time of the discussion should be such that it is convenient for respondents, and some arrangement for caring for and entertaining children will improve the participation of mothers of young children

Longer meeting generates fatigue among the respondents and should be avoided. The general rule of thumb is 1-2 hours, based on the complexity of the study and the questionnaire. The duration should also take into account the respondent type into consideration. For instance, meeting with younger school children may require a shorter meeting period as the children have a shorter attention span (Gibson, 2012; Heary & Hennessy, 2002).

3. Preparation of Discussion Guide

A well-researched discussion guide constitutes an important preparatory tool for conducting an FGD. A discussion guide is a comprehensive list of questions that is referred to while conducting the FGD. Thorough secondary research, and a review of previously conducted similar studies must be carried out while designing the instrument.

A discussion guide provides cues and guidance to the moderator/researcher to pose questions and facilitate the discussion in a manner that can not only be easily followed by the respondents but also

enable the facilitator to gather insights that are relevant for the study. It includes questions to be asked to the participants as well as instructions to be followed by the facilitator such as when and how to pose follow-up questions, probe the respondents, carry out a participatory activity, and so on.

In the absence of a comprehensive discussion guide, a moderator might miss asking important questions or might face difficulty in framing the questions correctly. The FGD guide can be divided into sections, which can be organised in a suitable chronological order. Questions under the same section should be covered together and sections can be linked through a suitable transitioning question to maintain the flow of discussion. While it is difficult to pre-determine the direction of a discussion, having a list of pre-decided questions allows the moderator to keep track of the questions covered in the discussion and record the responses to those questions.

The flowchart below provides a sequence that can be followed for designing and facilitating the discussion guide.

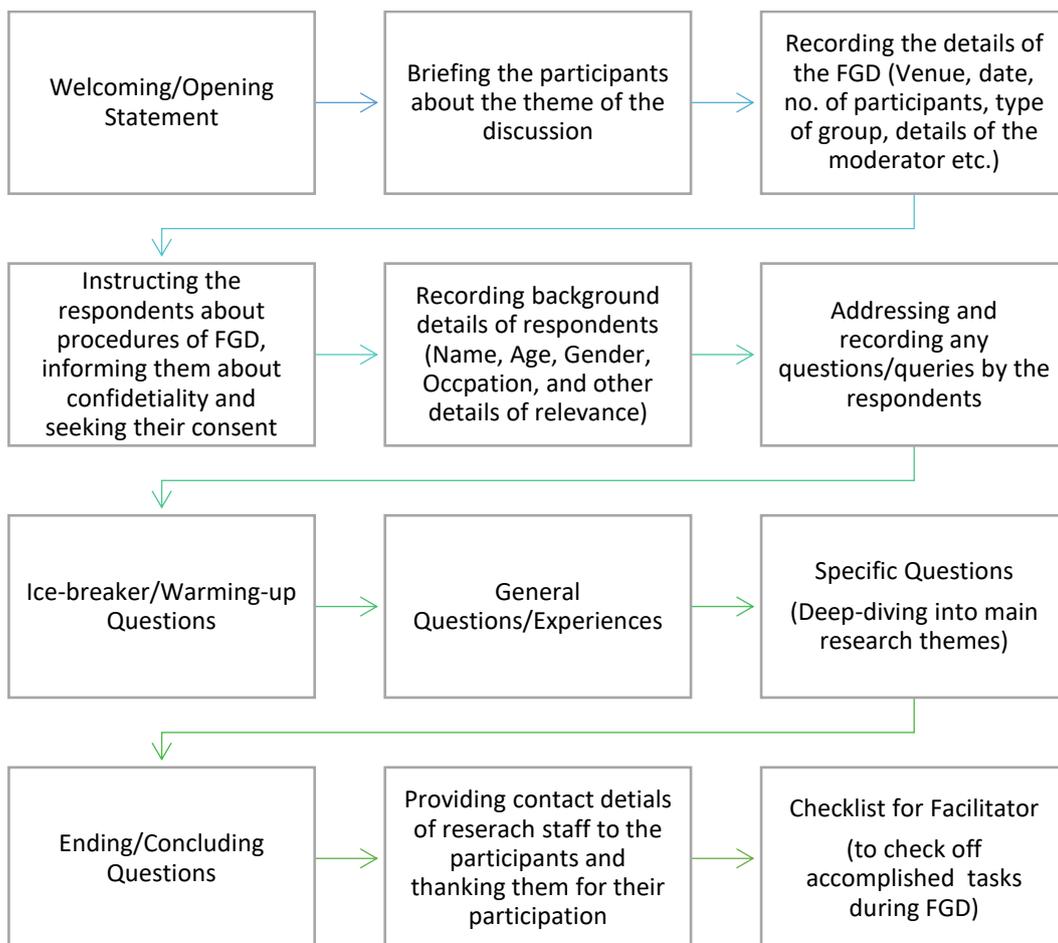


Figure 3: Designing a Discussion Guide for FGD

Once the guide has been drafted, sharing it with sector/industry experts and seeking their feedback will help the study staff in improving the instrument. Equally important is to pilot-test the instruments before finalising them for the research study. Learnings from the pilot-test will allow the researchers to include questions that might have been missed, identify loopholes in the questionnaire, re-frame the questions so as to make them more understandable for the relevant study group, and improve the structure and flow of the questionnaire. A qualitative research toolkit by World Bank Group (2020) has listed the following recommendations for planning and conducting a pilot test:

- Conduct pilot testing after training the research staff and preparing the final draft for the pilot.
- Make a list of the local linguistic terms related to the specific topic of the research.
- Selecting an appropriate location and respondents that are similar in demographics and characteristics but geographically distinct from the actual research location. This would allow the researcher to conduct the pilot in a similar setting while also ensuring that prospective respondents from the actual location are not aware of the study.
- Conduct pilot with people representing as many of the categories to be covered in the actual study, keeping in mind time and budget constraints.
- Modify instruments or processes based on the learnings and challenges faced during the pilot test.
- FGD session time neither should be too short (less than an hour) nor too long (more than one and half hour) for the sake of the subject material and the interest of the participant.

Template of a discussion guide for conducting FGDs with recipients/beneficiaries of a scheme/programme/service has been provided in Annexure-II. The template also includes a short structured questionnaire that can be administered to each of the respondents individually for collecting quantitative information, if required. Although such quantitative surveys are usually not part of an FGD, they can be incorporated for the purpose of validating the inputs received from the focus group discussions.

4. Planning, Conducting, and Recording Focus Group Discussions

4.1 Planning Focus Group Discussion

It is important to prepare a detailed field plan to manage the logistics before starting the fieldwork.

The field plan should include the following:

- ***Finalising number and qualification of resources to be deployed for fieldwork:*** It is crucial to estimate and recruit the required number of field staff (facilitators, note-takers, supervisors and field coordinators) for conducting the desired number of focus group discussions during the course of the fieldwork. Qualification and experience of the field resources that would be

recruited should be in alignment with the expertise that would be required for conducting the FGDs. The sensitivity of the study and the composition of the group would also be determining factors in selecting the field staff. For instance, female moderators with adequate experience and expertise must be recruited when FGDs are to be conducted with women respondents.

- ***Preparing the field manual and field kit:*** A field kit and manual should be prepared to be carried to the field. It generally includes instruments of discussion, instructions manual for field staff, a checklist, writing and visual materials, audio and video recording devices etc.
- ***Language skill and familiarity with the jargon:*** The field staff should have sufficient ability to speak and understand the language of the respondents. The moderator, as well as the note-taker, must know the language as they might lose the flow of the conversation and end up collecting wrong information if language skills do not support it.
- ***Recruitment and mobilisation of respondents to the venue:*** Once the sample size, requirement of the respondents, and geographical coverage of the study have been finalised, respondents must be recruited and informed of the date and venue of the focus group discussion in advance. In a rural setting, respondents who have given their consent to participate in the discussion can be mobilised to the venue with the help of local leaders, key persons in the community, frontline workers etc. The venue must be decided well in advance in consultation with the local authorities or someone who is familiar with the locality, and keeping in mind the requirement of the study as well as the comfort and privacy of the participants.
- ***Finalising data recording and data management system:*** A standardised system must be put in place for data collection and management that would ease the process of data analysis for the researchers. For instance, preparing and training the note-takers on taking abbreviated notes during the discussion as well as converting them into detailed notes in a pre-designed and structured manner would ensure that data recorded by different note takers can be synthesised, and compared and analysed easily.
- ***Preparing quality assurance/monitoring mechanism:*** Ensuring the authenticity and quality of data is a very important component of any data collection exercise. A mechanism for conducting surprise field visits, simultaneously reviewing the checklists and field notes and taking corrective measures in case of any discrepancies must be put in place.

4.2 Conducting and Recording Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussions are usually conducted and led by experienced research personnel, often termed moderator or facilitator. A facilitator is usually accompanied by a note-taker, who records all the observations and responses of the discussion in a structured manner.

Role of the Moderator

The moderator is primarily responsible for posing the questions as per the discussion guide, probing wherever necessary, maintaining the decorum of discussion, ensuring equitable participation from the participants, and avoiding digressions from the main topics of discussion. Some of the best practices for good moderation are listed below:

1. Moderators should be well versed in the research material and the discussion guide.
2. S/he should also have some linguistic knowledge, especially some colloquial terminology specific to the topic.
3. He/she should maximise the participation of all the respondents and should avoid asking questions in an interrogative manner.
4. Debriefing insights from previous discussions should be referred to improve future discussions
5. Before getting into the detailed discussion, the moderator should focus on building rapport and warming up with the participants. Unless some familiarity is established with the respondents, they would not feel comfortable freely participating in the discussion.
6. It is also important to establish the ground rules to avoid any conflict or arguments among the participants.
7. Moderator should pose questions such that they are easily understood by the participants. Only one question must be asked at a time. Moreover, sufficient time should be given for the participants to absorb and understand the question before probing or moving on to the next question.
8. The moderator should carefully ensure that participants are not diverting from the actual theme of the discussion.
9. The moderator should be neutral and must not let his/her personal views and opinions affect the responses of the participants.
10. Moderators should refrain from asking leading questions, i.e. questions that might have an influence on the respondent's answers.
11. The moderator should fully understand the purpose of the study and the key concepts to be measured (e.g. a study on unmet need for contraception should ask questions about the susceptible period and not when the husband has migrated to another city or during pregnancy).

Role of the Note-taker

The responsibility of the note-taker is to capture the responses and observations of the focus group discussions. It is usually advisable for the note-taker to plan out the note-taking exercise in advance to

ensure that the data is captured in a structured manner. While FGDs are usually audio and/or video recorded and later transcribed for analysis, note-taking allows for capturing certain nuances, observations, and group dynamics that cannot easily be captured in the audio recordings. Moreover, notes also serve as a backup in case of failure of the audio or video system.

The notes should be clear and succinct, which can be later expanded into a more detailed description of the discussion. The facilitator, note-taker and other research staff should work together to expand the notes, preferably soon after the discussion. This would allow them to document all the findings while it is fresh in their minds.

Taping the discussion forms an important tool for recording all the information. Since it is difficult to note everything down, an audio recording is useful to fill any important gaps in the information documented by the note-taker. The recorded data can be transcribed (and translated if it's different from the language in which analysis is to be conducted) and used for analysis. Similarly, video-recording can also be used to fill in gaps pertaining to any important observations that might have been missed by the note-taker or the facilitator. Audio/Video recordings also allow the researchers to verify and validate the notes taken during the course of the discussion. However, it is important to note that such recordings should not be made if they violate the ethical requirements of the study. Proper consent must be sought from all the participants before taping any discussion. The consent should inform the participants of the need of recording the discussion and for what purpose the recordings will be used.

The following two guides provide a good overview of best practices and dos and don'ts for moderators and note-takers:

1. **Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research by Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, 5th Edition.**
2. **Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide (2005) by Family Health International (FHI) 360**

5. Analysing and Reporting Focus Group Discussions

5.1 Analyzing FGDs

Once the field survey is completed, translated transcripts and structured field notes form the basis of the data analysis. Designing a pre-analysis plan that clearly stipulates the hypothesis, key areas of inquiries, and themes and variables to be explored allows the analysts and the researchers to look for

the answers to their research questions. Qualitative data analysis is usually a very rigorous exercise as the researchers are not only required to evaluate the data in detail but also present the findings in a coherent, structured and narrative manner. The researcher has to organise the information shared by the participants sequentially and categorise it in a thematic manner. The insights generated from analysing the qualitative data can be used for augmenting, triangulating and filling in the gaps identified through secondary and quantitative research for an existing theory or they can form the basis of generating new theories (grounded theory). There is also an increased focus on the use of “*crystallisation*”, which is a method of analysis in qualitative research that uses creative forms of representing and describing the findings, and brings forth multiple points of view rather than focus on achieving a single definitive truth (Ellingson,L. 2009; Richardson,L. 2000).

The analysis of FGD usually comprises analysing the transcription and the field notes, coding the data, analysing the content and synthesising the findings in a presentable and understandable format.

A coding system or a codebook can be developed in alignment with the discussion guide. Each theme can be given a code, and the responses in relation to that theme can be labelled and categorised further into sub-codes. The sub-code is allotted to a particular response if it contains the relevant word, text or phrase. For example, let us assume that one of the themes we want to analyse in a study is the challenges faced by beneficiaries in availing of a particular scheme. The theme and the responses can be coded as follows:

Question	Code	FGD 1 Response	Code	FGD 2 Response	Code
What challenges do you face in availing the scheme benefits?	<i>Avail_Challenge</i>	Application process is complicated ;	<i>Comp_Process</i>	Delay in benefits;	<i>Delay_Benefit</i>
		Delay in benefits ;	<i>Delay_Benefit</i>	not aware of the benefits;	<i>No_Aware</i>
		Received less than claimed benefits	<i>Less_Benefit</i>		

Qualitative data analysis software can aid the process of coding as well as extracting the coded texts for analysis. The **Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS)** networking project provides a review of information about various software packages, such as NVivo, Atlas.ti etc.

that are available for qualitative data analysis (<https://www.surrey.ac.uk/computer-assisted-qualitative-data-analysis/resources/choosing-appropriate-caqdas-package>).

Another important aspect of the analysis is to understand the variations in responses among different groups. Comparing the responses to the same questions by different population groups (based on geography, demographic, social and other characteristics) will shed light on how different people experience, behave and perceive a given situation. As noted in the toolkit by the World Bank Group (2020), coding can be done to highlight *experiences of discrimination or marginalisation*. Assigning specific codes to the responses received from a certain group or naming the transcripts properly in case the FGD is conducted with a group belonging to a particular category would help the researchers derive richer insights by comparing the experiences shared by different groups.

5.2 Reporting

A report should be compiled in a narrative manner, and findings should be presented in a succinct way. This should be supported by the use of visuals such as photographs, infographics, charts etc. The results should not be generalised or claimed to be representative of any population group. Results should be presented qualitatively (“almost all participants”, “roughly half participants”) instead of using quantitative figures like percentages. Verbatim and quotes by the participants can also be added to the report. A particular experience shared by a respondent which is relevant to the study can be presented in the form of a case study. While presenting the results, it is extremely crucial to maintain the confidentiality of the identity of the participants.

6. Challenges and Limitations

While focus group discussions provide an opportunity to gather a large amount of information economically, expeditiously and efficiently, they are limited in their scope because the results cannot be generalised and statistically analysed. They can provide interesting and valuable insights about the sample under consideration but cannot answer questions about the wider population.

Recruiting respondents and deciding on a common venue and time which is agreeable to all could be a very cumbersome and time-consuming task. Managing the discussion with a large number of respondents also poses several challenges for the facilitator. Unless properly moderated, discussions can often digress from the study topics. It could turn into a forum for participants to share their complaints and grievances, or participants can get into disputes and arguments.

FGDs may not be helpful when the topics to be discussed are sensitive or complex in nature, such as intimate partner violence. In such scenarios, in-depth interviews may be more relevant and useful.

Analysis of FGD data requires the researchers to go through each of the responses in detail and code them appropriately. Therefore, synthesising, analysing and presenting the data of focus group discussions can often be time-consuming and a challenging exercise.

7. Annexures

Annexure I: Key characteristics of Focus Group Discussions, In-Depth Interviews and Structured Interviews

Tool	Key Characteristics
Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather insights on a varied range of norms, opinions, knowledge etc. in a short time; • Group dynamic stimulates conversation, reactions; • Lower costs and time when compared to individual interviews; • Difficult to manage; • Difficult to mobilise participants at one place in one point; • It cannot be used for extracting in-depth or sensitive information; and • Data collected is not representative of the entire population.
In-depth Interviews (One-on-one)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate for gathering detailed information and deeper insights; • Gather insights on unique experiences • Time-consuming; • Address sensitive topics; • Data collected is not representative of the entire population; • It cannot cover a large sample; and • Involves complex analysis.
Structured Interviews (Quantitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can collect quantifiable indicators; • A sample can be selected to be representative of the population; • Results can be generalised; • Easier to administer and analyse; and • The limited scope of obtaining detailed experiences.

Source: Queirós, A., et al (2017), Mack (2005)

Annexure-II: Focus Group Discussion Guide Template**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGD) QUESTIONNAIRE TEMPLATE***<Name of the Research Study>*

<i>Date</i>	
<i>Start Time</i>	
<i>End Time</i>	
<i>State</i>	
<i>District</i>	
<i>Block</i>	
<i>Village</i>	
<i>Type of Respondents</i>	
<i>No. of Respondents</i>	
<i>Name/Code of the Moderator/Facilitator</i>	
<i>No. of Note-takers</i>	
<i>No. of Researchers</i>	
<i>No. of Enumerators (for CAPI Survey)</i>	

Introduction

An introduction should provide information on the following aspects:

- Who is organising the FGD
- Purpose of the study
- Topic of discussion
- Duration of the FGD
- Short Data-Oriented Survey (Nature and Duration of the Survey)
- Audio/Video recording of the discussion
- Personal Data Confidentiality

Consent

1. Kindly let us know if we have your permission to go ahead and conduct this discussion with you?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
2. Kindly let us know if you consent to participate in the short survey?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
3. Kindly let us know if we have your permission to audio record the information digitally?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
4. Kindly let us know if we have your permission to video record the information digitally?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
5. Kindly let us know if we have your permission to take photos of the group?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
6. Kindly let us know if we have your permission to analyse the information provided by you for the purpose of the evaluation study?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

Instructions for Facilitator

Please ensure the following while moderating the discussion:

1. Utmost sensitivity while asking questions since the discussion may involve confidential information
2. Be professional, compassionate and maintain a disposition of that of a respondent
3. Be attentive to finer nuances of the discussion, drive the conversation in the right direction and help the respondent to make it a rich and comprehensive discussion
4. Be intuitive and improvise the discussion provided it contributes to the larger ambition of the project and stays within the stipulated time limit
5. Ensure inclusivity so that all participants get a chance to participate in the discussion, thereby making the discussion richer and more diverse. However, it must be ensured that participation is voluntary, and no participant should be forced to contribute

6. Ensure a clear understanding of all the questions and discussion points among the participants
7. Commence audio and/or video recording if permission has been granted
8. <Please add more instructions specific to the study>

Questions by Participants

Do you have any questions?

1. Yes
2. No

[Instruction for the Moderator: Please ensure that all the questions relating to the group discussion, short survey and purpose of the study are addressed properly]

Roster of Participants

Sl. No.	Name	Gender	Age	Religion	Social Category	Educational Attainment (Completed)	Primary Occupation	In case of land ownership, please specify area in acre	Any other position held? Please specify (e.g. Gram Sabha Member, Union Leader)	Whether you are a beneficiary of any of the schemes for the sector/industry/programme? (Y/N)	If Y, then specify role of engagement	Annual income of the Household (in Rs)

Category Codes:

Gender - Male - 01, Female - 02, Transgender - 03

Religion: Hinduism - 01, Islam - 02, Christianity - 03, Sikhism - 04, Buddhism - 05, Jainism - 06, Others - 07

Social Category: General - 01, OBC - 02, SC - 03, ST - 04

Educational Attainment: Not literate - 01, Literate but did not attend any institution - 02, Upto Class V - 03, Upto Class X - 04, 10th Pass - 05, 12th Pass - 06, Graduate - 07, Post-graduate & above-08, Others - 09

Primary Occupation/Secondary Occupation: Self-employed in agriculture with ownership of land (small) - 01, Self-employed in agriculture with ownership of land (large) - 02, Cultivator/Farmer/Agricultural worker on others' land - 03, Self-employed in non-agriculture-04, Regular wage/salary earning in agriculture-05, Regular wage/salary earning in non-agriculture-06, Casual labour in agriculture-07, Casual labour in non-agriculture-08, others- 09. *(To be modified based on the requirement of the study)*

Discussion Questions

Icebreaker (Example: Introductory questions like: *First, we would like to know a little bit about you*)

Question	Answer
<p>Module A: General awareness of the <Sector/Industry and Allied activities/Programme> (This section is targeted to elicit awareness of the performance of the said sector/industry/programme from the perspective of the local stakeholders and beneficiaries)</p>	
<p>A. <Questions in Bold> <i><Instructions/Additional Information for moderator in Italics></i></p> <p>B. Probe Question 1 C. Probe Question 2 D. <Add as required></p> <p>Sample Questions:</p> <p>A. What, in your opinion, is the level of performance of the said sector/industry/programme in your region? <i>Please specify geographical spread, employment generation, and contribution to the local economy of the said sector/industry/programme. (Separate targeted questions may be asked to avoid lengthy responses)</i> Probe: If the perception about the program performance is poor, discuss the reasons for poor performance?</p> <p>B. Do you feel that you had sufficient information about the sector/industry/programme? Explain. <i>This question should check for sensitisation and communication about the programme (purposes, process and length).</i></p>	

C. What kind of synergies exists between the said sector/industry/programme related activities and local governance?

Please list an account of associations/meetings to comprehend existing levels of co-production

Module B: Pertaining to the Scheme Awareness, Targeting and Coverage *(This section evaluates level of awareness about the scheme among the participants)*

Sample Questions:

A. Are you aware of the existing scheme and its components in the said sector/industry?

Please specify any scheme components that you expect the local stakeholders to be aware of.

For example - tribal/scheduled caste sub-plans or education/skilling components of the scheme

S.No.	Name of Scheme	No. of Persons Aware of the Scheme/Components	Total No. of Persons in the FGD	% of people aware (to be computed after the FGD is completed)
(Overall awareness of the scheme)				
Components of the Scheme				
1.				
2.				
3.				

(Kindly ask answers to these questions by show of hands of the participants; the interviewer will count the number of persons raising their hand, implying they are aware of the program/components of the programme)

B. Aware and Availed Benefits under the program (the respondents might be beneficiary in one component but may not be in other components)

S.No.	Name of Scheme	No. of Persons Aware and also availed the benefits of the Scheme/Components	Total No. of Persons in the FGD	% of people aware and availed benefits (to be computed after the FGD is completed)
Components of the Scheme				
1.				
2.				
3.				

C. How many of you are satisfied with the program? Did you face any problem in availing the program/or its components? (All this to be done by show of hands, so that percentage could be computed).

S.No.	Name of Scheme	No. of Persons reporting 'Yes' (by show of hand)	Total No. of Persons in the FGD	% of people saying 'Yes' (to be computed after the FGD is completed)
(overall satisfaction from the program)				
(Faced problem in availing program/any components)				
Components of the Scheme				
1.				
2.				
3.				

D. If not availed any benefits from the scheme in the past year, why? Please list the reasons for not availing benefits from the participants who say no

E. In what form, have you received the benefits of the scheme?

Please list all the responses

F. How did you come to know of the benefits of the scheme? How much time did it take for availing the benefits under the scheme from the date of application?

G. Do you know how and why the beneficiaries of the programme were selected?

If people say they know how selection took place, they should give a brief explanation

H. Who was involved in the selection process?

This is a general and specific question: if some people of the group have participated in the process, how many of them did?

I. Do they feel that the people included in the programme deserve it?

This is checking for inclusion errors. They should explain why and to what extent they feel that they were errors.

J. Do they feel that some people/ households were excluded while they should have been included?

This is checking for exclusion errors. They should explain why and to what extent they feel that exclusion errors have occurred.

K. Do you think (in your opinion) the scheme/programme is covering (enough for) the development of stakeholders?

Capture views and perception on coverage- positive/negative & take a note. As per their knowledge and understanding on the coverage, ask them who all are the different categories of beneficiaries left out? List them out:

a) _____ b) _____ c) _____

What are the various aspects/areas that are left out by the scheme? Instruction: Allow them to talk and mention the top 3 areas in the blanks

a) _____ b) _____ c) _____

Module C: Impact of the <Scheme> *(This section considers how the beneficiaries have been impacted (both negatively and positively) by the scheme)>*

Sample Question

A. Have any of the specific scheme components benefitted/affected the region and/or the local residents in any way?

Please capture all the positive and negative experiences of the intervention. for example - generation of employment locally, influx of migrant labour, loss of traditional livelihoods, etc.

B. What changed in your community since.....?

That can be positive (e.g. the outcome of a project) or negative (e.g. tensions created between non-beneficiaries and beneficiaries).

C. What do people still need after receiving the benefit?**D. What were the effects of thein terms of social relationships within the community?**

Check for any tensions that may have occurred or usual social bonds that may have been impaired. Positive aspects like better recognition from society can be at stake.

E. On a scale of 5 to 0, how would you rank the functioning of for thescheme (Very good-5, good-4, neutral-3, bad-2, very bad-1, Can's Say=0)?

Any suggestions to improve (ask to group to discuss and come up with common suggestions from the group)?

F. Have you noticed any corruption within the process (during registration for the programme, before the distribution, during the distribution, at the delivery mechanism provider, after receiving the)?

Please explain

G. On a scale of 5 to 0, how would you rank the functioning of for thescheme (Very good-5, good-4, neutral-3, bad-2, very bad-1, Can's Say=0)?

Any suggestions to improve (ask to group to discuss and come up with common suggestions from the group)?

<p>H. Has the adoption of XYZ technology led to the improvement in production and productivity? If yes, how? If not, what could be the reasons behind it? <i>Please capture all the positive and negative experiences of the intervention</i></p>	
<p>Module D: <Challenges and Recommendations (<i>This section will discuss some of the challenges faced by beneficiaries in accessing, evaluate gaps and seek recommendations for improvement</i>) ></p>	
<p>Sample Question:</p> <p>A. Have you faced any challenges in accessing the XYZ component of the scheme? <i>Probe: during registration for the programme, before the distribution, during the distribution, at the delivery mechanism provider, after receiving</i></p> <p>B. What do you think are the best ways to spread the knowledge about the scheme in your community? <i>Probe for types of media; locations—school, church, mosque; through GP members, etc</i></p> <p>C. Are you aware of the Grievance Redressal mechanism under the scheme? What are the gaps/challenges faced? What according to you should be done for improvement?</p>	
<p><Add Modules as required></p>	

Checklist for Facilitator

- If the group was heterogeneous, did women participate in the discussion equally?
- Did participants from minority communities participate equally?
- Were any leaders present during the FGD?
- Did you observe any tensions/conflicts during the discussion?
- Did any one person or group of people dominate the conversation?
- Did any participant opt out of the discussion?
- Learning: Any recommendations of improvements for next time
- Photographs were taken during the conduction of the FGD

(Note to Facilitator - Please request all the beneficiaries of the scheme / programme being evaluated on for the CAPI session to stay back for responding to a short individual questionnaire)

CAPI Questionnaire Session (for identified employees of the sector/industry/programme)

Questions	Codes	Instructions
Block 1: Survey Area Details		
1.1 State	Codes in Annexure Table A.1	
1.2 District Name		
1.3 Block Name		
1.4 Village/Town Name		
Block 2: Individual Characteristics		
2.1 Name		
2.2 Are you a beneficiary of any of the	Yes - 01 No - 02	If no, end survey.

Questions	Codes	Instructions
sector/industry/programme's schemes		If yes, note the name of the scheme and continue.
2.3 Age	___	Specify number of years (Check on numbers entry only)
2.4 Gender	Male - 01, Female - 02, Transgender - 03	
2.4 Religion	Hinduism - 01, Islam - 02, Christianity - 03, Sikhism - 04, Buddhism - 05, Jainism - 06, Others - 07	Specify Others - _____
2.5 Social Category	General - 01, OBC - 02, SC - 03, ST - 04	
2.6 Educational Attainment	Not literate - 01, Literate but did not attend any institution - 02, Upto Class V - 03, Upto Class X - 04, 10th Pass - 05, 12th Pass - 06, Graduate - 07, Post-graduate & above - 08, Others - 09	Specify Others - _____
2.7 Primary occupation of respondent	Self-employed in agriculture with ownership of land (small) - 01, Self-employed in agriculture with ownership of land (large) - 02, Cultivator/Farmer/Agricultural worker on others' land - 03, Self- employed in non-agriculture-04, Regular wage/salary earning in agriculture-05, Regular	Specify Others - _____

Questions	Codes	Instructions
	wage/salary earning in non-agriculture-06, Casual labour in agriculture-07, Casual labour in non-agriculture-08, others- 09.	
2.8 Number of Household members (Including respondent)	___	Specify number of years (Check on numbers entry only)
2.9 Average Total Annual Income of the Household	___	Specify amount in Rupees (Check on numbers entry only)
Block 3: Engagement with Sector/Industry/Programme		
3.1 Please specify your role of engagement with the Sector/Industry/Programme	_____	Subjective Response to be elicited
3.2 Type of Institution	Public enterprise - 01, Private Enterprise - 02	
3.3 Number of months on the job	___	Specify number of months - Convert years to months (Check on numbers entry only)
3.4 Nature of employment	Regular/Salaried with written contract - 01, Regular/Salaried without written contract - 02, Short term contractual with written agreement - 03, Casual labour with no written contract - 04, Others - 05	Specify Others - _____
3.5 Please specify your annual income from this engagement	_____	Specify amount in Rupees (Check on numbers entry only)

Questions	Codes	Instructions
3.6 Are you a part of any scheme/Programme related association?	Regional Chamber of commerce/trade association (Public) - 01, Regional Chamber of commerce/trade association (Private) - 02 Formally instituted labour union - 03, Informal Labour Union - 04, No associations - 05, Others - 06	Multiple Response if applicable Specify Others - _____
Block 4: < scheme related (Sample Questions)>		
4.1 What all benefits have you received after your enrolment into the scheme? (<i>Select all that apply</i>)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Direct Cash Transfer 2. Subsidy on adoption of technology 3. Machines/Farm Equipment 4. Raw Input 5. Training/Capacity Building Sessions 6. Market Access 7. Other 	
Kindly share your feedback on the scheme/programme.		
In your opinion, did you receive timely benefits of the scheme (in Days/Months)?		
How much time did it take from applying to actually receiving the benefit from the scheme (in Days/Months)?		

Questions	Codes	Instructions
<Add Sections as required>		

Table A.1: State Codes

State	Code	State	Code
JAMMU & KASHMIR	01	WEST BENGAL	19
HIMACHAL PRADESH	02	JHARKHAND	20
PUNJAB	03	ODISHA	21
CHANDIGARH	04	CHHATTISGARH	22
UTTARAKHAND	05	MADHYA PRADESH	23
HARYANA	06	GUJARAT	24
DELHI	07	DAMAN & DIU	25
RAJASTHAN	08	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	26
UTTAR PRADESH	09	MAHARASHTRA	27
BIHAR	10	ANDHRA PRADESH	28
SIKKIM	11	KARNATAKA	29

State	Code	State	Code
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	12	GOA	30
NAGALAND	13	LAKSHADWEEP	31
MANIPUR	14	KERALA	32
MIZORAM	15	TAMIL NADU	33
TRIPURA	16	PUDUCHERRY	34
MEGHALAYA	17	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	35
ASSAM	18	TELENGANA	36

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FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION TOOLKIT

This toolkit provides a beginner's guide for designing and implementing focus group discussions as an instrument of enquiry, especially for government programmes and policies. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a widely used qualitative method of data collection wherein a group of respondents of interest, usually homogenous with similar socio-economic characteristics, participate in a discussion together.

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