

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

One must talk little and listen much.

-- Mauritania

Overview

Focus group discussions (FGDs) are one useful technique for gathering qualitative information on a given topic. This technique, taken from marketing, has been widely used by public health campaigns to gather information on people's receptivity to products and concepts and preferences for packaging and messages.

FGD methodology relies on the group setting to stimulate an exchange of ideas and raise issues that would not otherwise be uncovered in surveys or individual interviews. It is especially useful as a "rapid assessment" research method because it obtains the input of several people simultaneously and does not involve highly technical statistical analysis.

FGDs offer an advantage over in-depth interviews in eliciting the responses of more than one person at a time. Some researchers find that the FGD setting may inhibit disclosure on highly personal topics and that FGDs are more useful for gathering "normative" data (general information on what people over all say people in their communities think and do) than information about the specific practices of individuals. This may vary from group to group--adolescents, for example, being especially susceptible to peer opinion--and may depend also on the anonymity people feel. FGDs are ideally conducted with groups of individuals who do not know each other, but this is a difficult condition to achieve in community research.

Objectives

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Describe the principles of using focus group discussions in qualitative formative research.
- Demonstrate skill in "on-site" analysis—probing for further information—during an FGD.
- Prepare an FGD guide.
- Explain the principles of FGD note-taking.
- Demonstrate skills in FGD moderating.
- Organize an FGD.
- Analyze data from focus group research.
- Write an FGD report.

Activities

Introduction to Focus Group Research	90 minutes
FGD Techniques: Probing for Meaning	40 minutes
FGD Techniques: Preparation of the Topic Guide	90 minutes
FGD Techniques: Note-taking	15-20 minutes
FGD Techniques: Role-play Practice	90 minutes
Setting up FGDs	40 minutes
FGD Analysis: Didactic	40-60 minutes
FGD Field Practice	2-3 hours

Module VI: Focus Group Discussion

FGD Analysis and Report Writing: Practical (evening)

3-4 hours

FGD Report Presentations and Discussion

1-2 hours

Estimated Module Length*

12.5-16 hours

Materials

Tape recorders

Blank tapes

Batteries

Notebooks and pens, pencils

Handouts

- HO VI.1 *PATH Developing Health and Family Planning Materials for Low-Literate Audiences: A Guide*, "Audience Research" p.17-22
- HO VI.2 Guidelines for Developing the Topic Guide
- HO VI.3 Sample FGD preparation checklist
- HO VI.4 Main Steps in Analysis
- HO VI.5 Sample Format and Process in Data Analysis
- HO VI.6 Data Analysis Worksheet
- HO VI.7 Key Points Summary, Module VI

Training Aids

- TA VI.1 Demonstration FGD Guide
- TA VI.2 Gender Statements
- TA VI.3a Sample Topic Guide for FGM
- TA VI.3b Examples of How to Tailor Basic Topic Guide to Specific Audiences
- TA VI.4 The Members of the Group as the Facilitator Sees Them

Reference Material:

The Handbook for Excellence in Focus Group Research, Section 7, "Moderating a Focus Group"

Activity
INTRODUCTION TO FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

Purpose: Participants will be able to describe the principles of using group discussions in qualitative formative research.

Format: Demonstration, mini-lecture, discussion

Suggested Time: 90 minutes (1 ½ hours)

Materials: Workshop kit: Note pads, Pens/pencils, erasers, highlighter pens
Tape recorder, blank tapes, batteries
HO VI.1, PATH Materials Development Guide, "Audience Research," p.17-22

TA VI.1, Sample Topic Guide for Demonstration FGD

Reference Material: *The Handbook for Excellence in Focus Group Research*, Section 7, "Moderating a Focus Group"

Preparation: If you are not a skilled or experienced FGD facilitator, engage a resource person who has this skill to conduct this activity.

****** A day in advance, review the attached FGD guide (TA VI.1) or prepare your own mock FGD guide for use in the demonstration FGD.
Review the tips for facilitator and note-taker (found in HO VI.1), as well as the steps in an FGD (RM) the day before.
Check the tape recorder to make sure it is working.

Procedure:

- Begin by explaining that focus group discussion (FGD) is a good research method to gather data for:
 - Identifying perceptions or beliefs about a product or practice
 - Planning a communication project strategy
 - Developing appropriate messages for materials, media, or activities
 - Evaluating existing materials or drafts of materials
 - Designing survey questionnaires.
- Explain that you are going to conduct a "mock FGD." If there are 20 participants or fewer, organize the group into two groups of equal size. (If the group is larger, limit the size of the mock-FGD participants to 10.) Explain that one group will observe and the other will participate in the FGD. Ask all observers to take notes about what they see and hear. The session facilitator will moderate the FGD. The purpose of this exercise is to model a good FGD and use the experience as a means of explaining the different components of an FGD.
- Conduct a short FGD (about 30 minutes), working from TA VI.1 or another guide you have prepared. Incorporate all phases of a standard FGD, including opening, warm-up, topic introduction, probing and follow-up, and closure. Be sure to demonstrate facilitation techniques by trying to draw in participants, using open-ended and follow-up questioning, responding without judgment and deflecting responses to other participants, and reflecting and clarifying non-verbal signals from participants.

- Following the FGD, spend about 20 minutes processing the exercise by asking the participants to talk about their experience as participants or observers.

Questions for discussion:

1. What form did the discussion take?
 2. Who controlled the discussion, and how?
 3. Was the number of people conducive to the discussion?
 4. Was there a structure or flow to the discussion?
 5. What kinds of questions did the moderator ask?
 6. Ask note-takers to share observations from their notes.
- Present HO VI.1 and review group composition, setting, introductions, tips for the moderator and note-taker, and FGD flow.

Key Points:

- FGDs are guided, in-depth explorations of about 1-2 hours in length, facilitated by a moderator and recorded by a note taker, in which members of the interest group discuss their feelings, beliefs, and behaviors related to a specific topic.
- FGDs are conducted with people who share attributes that are likely to influence their views or behaviors relative to the topic under discussion (for example, young mothers of uncircumcised girls; elder men; doctors; circumcisers; secondary school-age boys). FGDs should include no more than 6-10 people to allow individuals to voice their views in a pressure-free atmosphere.
- Conducting at least two FGDs with different representatives of each stakeholder or interest group helps ensure more accurate and complete information.
- FGDs require good interpersonal skills on the part of the moderator and good observation skills on the part of the note-taker.
- In FGDs, and in qualitative research in general, the communicator seeks to extract, rather than give, information. Effective moderators extract information by creating a situation where participants discuss the topic with each other and by guiding the discussion gently rather than pursuing a straight question-answer format.
- FGDs involve an "opening," when the moderator sets the tone and gives the "ground rules" and three main stages:
 - Stage I: Warm-up: Introductions, development of group participation and interaction
 - Stage II: The body of the in-depth, focused discussion: Exploration of key issues.
 - Stage III: Closure: Summary and recap of themes, differences, final clarification.

**Sample Topic Guide for Demonstration FGD
(Generic Example)**

Purpose of FGD: To elicit information that will contribute to the development of a better support program for FGM community workers.

Opening: Introduce all researchers (self, note-taker, any observers) and participants
All responses are confidential, all opinions valuable

Stage I: Warm-up: How long in community work, what was motivation

Stage II: Body of FGD:
Things you like about community work

Things that make you uncomfortable

Views on FGM

Personal philosophies related to work with the community on the topic of FGM

Needs for carrying out work:

Probe for: What has prepared for working on FGM issues?
Further education needed? --in what areas?
Supervision?
Logistical support?

Models for successful work

Probe: What organizations or programs work and why?
What community worker networks exist?

Models for successful leadership

Probe for Whom people trust, look up to
Whose opinion is respected and on what issues
Within/outside community

Information channels

Wrap up

Stage III: Closure

Tie up loose ends, answer participant questions about purpose, offer to provide feedback in form of project.

Thank everyone for participating, distribute refreshments if not done.

Activity
FGD TECHNIQUES: PROBING FOR MEANING

Purpose: Participants will be able to demonstrate skill in "on-site" analysis—probing for further information—during an FGD.

Format: Exercise

Suggested Time: 40 minutes

Materials: TA VI.2, "Gender Statements"

Preparation: None

Procedure:

- Begin by stating the following: "I must not drink milk." Ask participants what comes to mind in the way of questions when they hear that statement? Is there anything they would want to know? Examples of follow-up questions:

Why must you not drink milk?
 What will happen if you drink milk?
 How do you know you must not drink milk?
 Has someone told you not to drink milk?
 Does your culture have a taboo against drinking milk?
 Are you taking a medication that interacts with milk?
 Do you dislike milk?

- Discuss the questions they come up with. Note that some are very general and some very specific; some deal with personal preference and others with outside influence. Ask: do the questions tell you anything about the person asking? In some cases, the questions may reflect the questioner's own experience and perceptions. Are some of these leading questions?
- Explain that we often take statements from people at their face value. We do not always probe for their reasons. This may be because it is socially impolite to challenge every statement with a question, or because we may assume we share an understanding of what they mean. On the other hand, an outsider may question a statement or practice because the difference in belief or custom jumps out at him.
- Ask participants to define the words "context" and "motivation."

Context: (from "om together, weave, plait": That which leads up to and follows and often specifies the meaning of a particular expression; the circumstances in which a particular event occurs.

Motivation: An incentive, inducement, or impulse...for an act. Such impulses include emotion, desire, physiological need.

- Ask participants to break into small groups. Give each a statement contained in TA VI.2, "Gender Statements," and give each group 5 minutes to come up with at least 5 follow-up questions that they might want to ask to learn more about the statement. This can also be done as a pairs role-play.
- Reconvene the group and ask them to determine which questions would be appropriate and which need rewording to avoid leading the response according to the questioner's preconceived expectations.

Key Points:

- Probing for meaning requires several communication skills: active listening and questioning techniques, effective interpersonal behavior, attention to verbal and non-verbal cues, as well as analytical thinking,.
- Statements relating to beliefs or behaviors around a social custom are rooted in the cultural context of the person who makes the statement and are interpreted in the cultural context of the person who hears the statement. Often, the information we get from a simple question requires clarification in order to understand its real significance.
- In research, it is important to understand the context and motivation for a statement relating to belief or behavior so that we understand the values that underlie these beliefs and behaviors.
- Context and motivation give meaning to a statement—what is the importance of this to the person stating it? What is the broader meaning of this practice or belief for people in this culture?

Gender Statements

1. A woman's first responsibility is to her children.
2. Men are more interested in sex than women are.
3. The most important feminine virtue is purity (virginity/chastity).
4. It is better to be a man than a woman.
5. It is the woman's exclusive right to control her own fertility.
6. Family planning should be made available to sexually active teenage girls.
7. Circumcised girls require less discipline than those who are not circumcised.
8. Women are more emotional than men.
9. Modesty is a positive value.
10. A man should be able to discipline his wife.
11. Women should be virgins when they marry.
12. Men should be virgins when they marry.
13. Women hold most of the responsibility for how children turn out.
14. There is not much that a woman can do about her role in society.
15. Men should be older than their wives.

Activity
FGD TECHNIQUES: PREPARATION OF THE TOPIC GUIDE

Purpose:	Participants will be able to demonstrate skill in preparing FGD guides.
Format:	Mini-lecture and team task
Suggested Time:	90 minutes
Materials:	HO VI.2, "Guidelines for Developing the Topic Guide" TA VI.3a, Sample Topic Guide for FGM TA VI.3b, Examples of How to Tailor Basic Topic Guide to Specific Groups
Preparation:	Identify stakeholder groups for use in the team task Review TA VI.3.

Procedure:

- Explain that the FGD topic guide serves as a summary statement of issues that will be covered during the FGD. It helps the moderator remember key issues and serves as a map of how the discussion should flow, roughly. An FGD topic guide should:
 - Be designed with a research objective in mind
 - Have a central topic
 - Build on what is already known about the topic
 - Cover only a few issues
 - Focus on issues specific to the stakeholder group
 - Follow the natural flow of discussion—from general to specific
 - Include introductions, warm-up, body of the FGD, wrap-up and closure
 - Include "probing questions" for issues that may take time to uncover
- Ask the group to:
 - name some specific "stakeholder" groups with whom they might conduct separate FGDs (i.e., elder males, rural mothers, girls approaching circumcision age)
 - break into teams of three to four and select a stakeholder group from their community for their FGD
- Write the stakeholder groups and their relevant characteristics on newsprint. Give some specific variables and variety (for example, elders with no formal education, in-school girls youths aged 16-20; out-of-school girls aged 16-20). Advise each group to take into account what they have already heard or learned about this group and FGM from other research, including informal discussions in the community when developing the guide.
- Review stages in TA VI.3 with participants. Pass out HO VI.2, "Guidelines for Developing the Topic Guides" and review.
- Allow each group 30-45 minutes to develop a guide. When the guides are completed, ask the teams to swap guides for an outside critique. Allow 15-20 minutes for revision.

➤ Review in large group.

Key Points:

- The FGD guide should serve as a reminder to moderators to lead the discussion so that it covers certain topics. It should not be constructed as a questionnaire and it should not be used for leading a question-and-answer session.
- Topics do not need to be covered in a specific order. The discussion should proceed as much like a natural conversation as possible, with the guide serving to help the moderator keep it on track.
- Avoid assumptions and leading questions when using previously gathered information to formulate research questions.

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING THE TOPIC GUIDE

An FGD topic guide should:

Be designed with a research objective in mind:

What is it that you hope to learn by conducting this FGD?

Have a central topic:

Project goals and objectives will determine the central topic. Specifically, if the project goal is to eliminate FGM, the topic guide will focus on FGM, rather than a broader health or social topic. (Related topics may emerge as important, but should not dominate the guide).

Build on what is already known about specific FGM practice and beliefs in the area:

Review data from KAP surveys, earlier programs, or other sources for the region or community in question.

Cover only a few issues:

In-depth discussion cannot cover every possible question but should focus on developing the contextual and motivational explanation of what is known about local practice.

Focus on issues specific to the interest group:

How does the central topic affect different groups? Issues will vary according to whether members of given group make decisions about the topic and are directly or indirectly affected by the topic.

Follow the natural flow of discussion—from general to specific:

This ensures that you capture the big picture and know which details are important to investigate.

Include introductions, warm-up, body of the FGD, wrap-up and closure:

A sentence or two will help remind moderator to include particular steps.

Include “probing questions” for issues that may take time to uncover:

Plot out some areas to probe ahead of time, but be open to the need to probe unanticipated areas. If you ask a Maasai why the Maasai wear red and you receive the answer, “Maasai like red,” what are you going to ask next?

SAMPLE TOPIC GUIDE FOR FGM
(Generic Example)

Research objective: Learn X group's perception of the importance FGM has in their lives and where they are in the process of awareness about FGM options.

Opening: Introductions of all researchers (self, note-taker, any observers) and participants, general purpose
All responses are confidential, all opinions valuable

Stage I: Warm-up: Valued traditions and change

Stage II: Body of FGM:

Age at which children are initiated into adulthood
Steps or rites of passage practiced in this community
Type of FGM practiced
Who decides about FGM
Other practices surrounding or related to FGM

Reasons for practicing

Probe for: Advantages to the girl who is circumcised
Consequences to the girl who is not circumcised
Advantages to society of circumcising
Consequences to society of not circumcising

Known drawbacks or risks of FGM

Knowledge or observation of health or emotional problems?

Trends in FGM

Probe for changes in practice
perception about need
age at which FGM performed
who performs
characteristics of people who are discontinuing

Leadership

Probe for Whom people trust, look up to
Whose opinion is respected and on what issues
Within/outside community

Information channels

Wrap up

Stage III: Closure:

Tie up loose ends, clarify unresolved issues, note differences
Answer participant questions about purpose, offer to provide feedback in form of project.

Thank everyone for participating, distribute refreshments if not already done.

Examples Of How To Tailor Basic Topic Guide To Specific Groups:

For circumcised girls and women: add questions about personal experience, sexuality, intentions for their own daughters, advice to women considering FGM, perceptions of their body, perceptions of pain (avoided or endured, meaning of pain)

For uncircumcised girls: add questions about expectations of how FGM will change them, what influence they have over FGM decision, knowledge about sexuality, body image

For boys: who do they think FGM is important to, how did they learn about it, ideal characteristics of a wife, of a woman's body

For elders: How has circumcision changed since they were young? (Probe for better, worse; actual procedure; who does it; ceremonies; importance, etc.)

Activity
FGD TECHNIQUES: NOTE-TAKING

Purpose: Participants will be able to explain the principles of FGD note-taking.

Format: Mini-lecture

Time: 15-20 minutes

Materials: HO VI.1, "Audience Research"

Preparation: Review HO VI.1

Procedure:

- Review "Tips for the FGD Note-taker," found in HO VI.1, "Audience Research," page 21, with the group. Tips include:
 - Follow the discussion flow
 - Capture the key points, not every detail
 - Highlight key words and phrases that people use to describe an object or practice
 - Indicate majority vs. minority opinions
 - Abbreviate commonly used words
 - Use checks to indicate the repetition of an idea or agreement with something already expressed
 - Write quotations which summarize key points (or note their location on the audiotape)
 - Report important nonverbal behavior
- Clarify questions participants may have.

Key Points:

- Note-taking is an essential part of the FGD methodology. Without accurate and thorough documentation, information gathered during the discussion is easily lost or distorted.
- Tape recordings are very helpful supplements to note taking, but should not be used exclusively. Aside from technical problems that may arise in trying to tape an FGD, it requires time and funds to transcribe tapes.

Activity
FGD TECHNIQUES: ROLE-PLAY PRACTICE

Purpose: Participants will be able to demonstrate skill in moderating an FGD.

Format: Role-play and follow-up discussion

Suggested Time: 90 minutes

Materials: Notebooks and paper,
Tape recorder and blank tapes
FGD guides developed by groups
TA VI.4, "The Members of the Group as the Facilitator Sees Them"

Preparation: Review group topic guides; make an overhead of TA VI.4.

Procedure:

- Ask participants to form groups of four. Ask each group member to choose a topic of discussion—it can be anything. Briefly review types of questions, focusing on open-ended and probing (follow-up) questions, and ask each member practice asking the other three members open-ended and probing questions about their topic. Give them 10 minutes.
- Next ask the group to break into two groups. Using the FGD guides developed and critiqued earlier in this module, assign each group a set of stakeholder characteristics. Ask members of each group to:
 - Pair off in teams of two: a moderator and a note-taker.
 - Conduct an FGD using the guide you assign.
 - Rotate the moderator and note-taker roles, with each team picking up on the guide where the previous team left off. They have a total of 40 minutes to do this. If time permits, have each of the teams practice the introductions, warm-up, main section, and concluding portions of the FGD.
- After each team has a turn, reconvene the group. Discuss the problems encountered by the moderators and let the other participants identify solutions. Ask the note-takers about their experiences. Have the group give tips for better note-taking and moderating. Share TA VI.4 with participants (this is meant as a humorous analysis).

Questions for discussion with "moderators":

1. Is there anything you wish you had asked as a follow-up to a comment or response you heard?
2. Why do you think you should have probed further?
3. How would you go about probing for further information?

Key Point:

- Moderating and note-taking are **SKILLS** that develop and improve with practice. Interpersonal skills, observation, and an open, inquiring mind are key to conducting good FGDs.

Activity
SETTING UP FGDS

Purpose: Participants will be able to organize an FGD.

Format: Mini-lecture and group discussion

Suggested Time: 40 minutes

Materials: HO VI.1, PATH Guide, 17-22
HO VI.3, FGD preparation checklist

Preparation: Prior to the start of the workshop, initiate the steps of setting up the practice FGDS in the area. Ideally, this involves lining up at least two different stakeholder groups for workshop participants to “practice” on. You may want to develop specific FGD guides for the groups you have identified or use guides (modified as necessary) developed by your workshop participants, if they apply. If possible, include some “auto-diagnosis” tools or stimuli that moderators can use to facilitate discussion.

Procedure:

- Explain to participants that now they are almost fully prepared to conduct focus group research. Ask participants what steps they need to pursue to prepare for FGD research in their community. Refer to HO VI.3, “FGD Preparation Checklist” and make sure all points are covered. Explain what you have done to organize the field practice FGD that they will be attending.
- Point out that it is sometimes necessary to adapt as you go along, depending on the circumstances. It is a good idea to be prepared for anything. Give them this example and ask them to brainstorm solutions:
 - If they arrive at the site of the FGD to find 30 people waiting to participate, what are some steps they could take?

Examples:

- Divide up moderator duties, secure separate places for discussion, and divide the group for three FGDS of 10 participants.
- If there are not enough moderators and note-takers to handle everyone, invite those who came without an invitation to attend another FGD session at a later time or to participate in another activity.
- If there is no way to involve them in FGD research, give them a few minutes to say how they heard about the event, thank them for their time and interest, and if they want to leave their names and addresses, keep them on a list for future project activities.

Key Point:

- Organization and flexibility are the two keys to setting up successful FGDS.

**SAMPLE
FGD Preparation Checklist**

TASK	NOTES	DONE	BY
Identify and prioritize stakeholders.			
Develop FGD guides and other research instruments.			
Obtain access/authority for FGD.			
Select FGD participants.			
Engage a note-taker, moderator, and observer.			
Identify an appropriate location that allows privacy and comfort.			
Specify a time for the FGD.			
Issue invitations to participants.			
Obtain a tape recorder, tapes, writing materials.			
Buy refreshments.			
If participants are being reimbursed for travel costs or otherwise compensated for their time, make arrangements for funds.			
Arrive early enough to check facilities, equipment, and make other last-minute arrangements.			
Notes:			

Activity
FGD ANALYSIS: DIDACTIC

Purpose:	Participants will be able explain the steps in analyzing data from focus group research.
Format:	Mini-lecture and small group task
Suggested Time:	40-60 minutes
Materials:	HO VI.4, "Main Steps of Analysis" HO VI.5, "Sample Data Analysis Worksheet"
Preparation:	If your group will be conducting FGD field practice in the afternoon and will not have a session immediately following the FGD, give out HO VI.5 prior to the field trip and ask them to review it while the FGD is fresh in their minds that evening.

Procedure:

- [If time is short and the FGD field visit requires travel to another location, conduct this session at that location if possible.] Using HO VI.4, cover the steps involved in data analysis:
 - For each topic area covered, review research data for each interest group identified (**classification**): elder men and women; youth; mothers...and group information by issue uncovered. Note minority vs. majority points of view.
 - Identify related statements (**inter-relation**):
Look for ways in which key findings revealed in statements from different stakeholder groups fit together or correspond. Note minority vs. majority statements by stakeholder groups.
 - Establish the context (**insights**):
Look at other information (gained by probing) that supports the statement you have recorded and relate it to the facts that you know about the topic from a range of sources.
 - Infer the underlying **cause(s)** that drive(s) the belief or behavior.
Ask yourself, "Based on the research results and context: What is the meaning of this custom for its followers in this community? What social structures does it support? What images or perceptions does it rely on? What relationships does it influence? What perceptions and beliefs would need to change for this practice to change?"
 - Develop a **hypothesis** about what is needed to bring about change (solve the problem, move different groups in the community to the next stage of change).
- Explain that as a tool for conducting their analysis, participants can also use a grid like that presented in HO VI.5, "Sample Data Analysis Worksheet." Take a few moments to go through the steps and discuss the process, possibly filling in one of the blank rows.

Key Points:

- Analysis ideally begins during the FGD and should continue as soon as possible after the FGD is completed, while the observer's, note-taker's, and moderators memories are fresh.
- The steps of observation, classification, inter-relation, insight, inference of cause, and hypothesis, are applied to FGD analysis.

MAIN STEPS OF ANALYSIS

- Observation:** What did we see? Summarize briefly what occurred in each FGD.
- Classification:** For each area covered, review research data for each interest group identified: elder men and women; youth; mothers...and group information by issue uncovered.
Can we organize our findings in some logical way, such as:
- Economics/coping strategies
 - Patterns of decision-making or politics
 - Values and beliefs/culture/meaning
- Or
- Informational needs
 - Enablers of/barriers to change
 - Others?
- Inter-relation:** Identify related statements corresponding to each issue:
- Look for ways in which some ideas from different interest groups fit together or correspond, or differ.
- Insight:** We see interrelationships: Establish the context:
- Look at other information (gained by probing) that supports the statements you have identified and relate it to the facts that you know about the topic from a range of sources. In this example, we have heard that uncircumcised girls are not treated as full adult members of society.
- Causes** Here we examine why things interrelate; structures, cause, situations. Situations and people also change structures. Infer the underlying cause(s) that drive(s) the statements.
- Ask yourself, "Based on the research results, What is the meaning of this custom for its followers in this community? What social structures does it support? What images or perceptions does it rely on? What relationships does it influence?"
- Hypothesis** We draw up a hypothesis as to how to bring about change. The verification or refutation of our hypothesis is the answer to the question: Does it work? For example: What perceptions or beliefs would need to change for this practice to change?"

- Adapted from *Training for Transformation 3*

Activity
FGD FIELD PRACTICE

Purpose: Participants will be able to demonstrate skill in writing an FGD report.

Format: Team task

Suggested Time: 2-3 hours

Materials: FGD Guides
Notebooks and pens/pencils
Tape recorders
Blank tapes (at least 2)
Working batteries

Preparation: See HO VI.3
Arrange transport to the FGD sites
Ask participants to review their notes and guides in advance.

Procedure:

- If possible, arrange FGDs in a locality where the project will be carried out. All preparations should be made in advance for field practice. If possible, involve participants in the actual preparations. If possible, arrange for two FGDs per group.
- If two or more groups will be conducting FGDs, cover each group with a facilitator as an observer.
- Reconvene the group for processing following the FGD field work. If the FGD is carried out in the afternoon, assign teams the evening task of analyzing their data and writing reports. Proceed to the next section for details.

Activity
FGD ANALYSIS AND REPORT WRITING

Purpose: Participants will be able to demonstrate skill in analyzing and writing up their research findings.

Format: Team task

Suggested Time: 3-4 hours

Materials: Tapes and notes from FGDs
HO VI.4, "Main Steps in Analysis"
HO VI.5, "Sample Data Analysis Worksheet"
HO VI.6, Blank Data Analysis Worksheet

Preparation: Conduct FGDs

Procedure:

- Ask the group to break into their FGD teams and spend about 90 minutes organizing and analyzing their key findings. They can refer to HO VI. 4, presented earlier, and may wish to use a grid format like that found in HO VI.6 (hand out copies at this time). At the end of 90 minutes, ask each group to give a 15-minute oral report of key findings, patterns, and underlying causes they have inferred. Ask for critiques from the group.
- The group should then write up its results, first noting key findings by stakeholder group, and then linking the findings of different groups and discussing context and motivation. Each team may appoint one volunteer to transcribe the report, but all should participate in analysis and review. The group will need to finish this report in the evening.
- The report may include sections such as introduction, research question; methodology (including details of group identity, characteristics, numbers of respondents), discussion of key findings classified by group and topic, interrelationships, hypothesis/conclusion, or may follow another.
- Explain that the groups will have a chance to present their reports before beginning the next section.

Key Point:

- In order for data to be useful, it should be organized in a clear, concise report. This report should follow a report similar to the following: introduction, research question, methodology (including details of group identity, characteristics, numbers of respondents), discussion of key findings classified by group and topic, interrelationships, hypothesis/conclusion.

Data Analysis Worksheet

RESEARCH DATA ORGANIZED BY ISSUE	SUPPORTING DATA PATTERNS AND CONTEXT	INFERENCES ABOUT MEANING

path

SAMPLE DATA ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

RESEARCH DATA ORGANIZED BY ISSUE	SUPPORTING DATA PATTERNS AND CONTEXT	INFERENCES ABOUT MEANING
<p>Reasons people practice FGM (include findings from different stakeholder groups): All: Religion, tradition Men: physical and spiritual purity Women: It's required by our elders. Boys: subdue women's sexual urges; "she'll be too much like a man" Girls: So we can marry, be grown-ups</p>	<p>Reasons: There is general agreement across all groups about why FGM is practiced, with more emphasis on purity and sexuality by men/boys; social acceptability by women/girls"</p>	<p>Men value "spiritual purity" and use it as a rationale for keeping the practice in place. More information is needed about other forms of spiritual purity (alternatives). Women fear loss of acceptability above religion, purity, all other considerations. Rely on marriage for economic security, identity.</p>
<p>Findings on body image (appearance, odor, cleanliness...) Men/boys: the clitoris is unclean (minority: doesn't matter, both are clean) Women: the smooth part is beautiful after circumcision Findings on perceived function of genitals: Men: clitoris is like foreskin, unclean, "extra." Makes a woman "sexy" Boys: clitoris is like penis-girls shouldn't have it, it will cover the vagina, makes them want sex Girls: Clitoris is not useful Women: Don't know why there is a clitoris, it might give women pleasure.</p>	<p>Findings on body image: All believe the clitoris is in some way "unclean" or ugly, but a minority of men say purity/cleanliness doesn't depend on it.</p> <p>Perceived function Men/boys focus on male characteristics, analogy with male anatomy, and see it interfering with childbirth, encouraging sex. Girls see no use, while women have an idea about its giving pleasure.</p>	<p>Deeply entrenched notion of acceptable vs. unacceptable genitalia. Males fear anything that makes a woman seem more manly; overt sexuality is not a valued womanly trait. Girls are not raised to value sexual selves; women are beginning to have an idea that they might be missing pleasure as a consequence of the practice, but don't have a sense of this as a right.</p>
<p>Findings on perceived consequences of circumcision: Physical: Men: bleed to death, pain; infections. Women: pain, urine retention, bleeding. Girls: urine retention, pain</p>	<p>Consequences of FGM: Everyone cites some consequences; men name more physical consequences than women; men and boys again focus on improved behavior, while women and girls focus on acceptance. Women are more</p>	<p>In general, community is attuned to some negative physical consequences but does not have a strongly developed sense of danger or long-term consequences. Women feel loss but this seems to be</p>

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<p>Social: Men: can marry, will be respectable, well-behaved Women: Will be accepted, will be married Girls: Marriage; high status; friends will respect Boys: Will be subdued, well thought-of, "I will marry her!"</p>	likely to focus on some negative psychological consequences.	outweighed in their minds by the need for financial and social security. They do not see options.
<p>Psychological: Women: At first, she is happy, content, proud, "like a woman". "Can't think of anything but the pain." Betrayed; Good food, she's spoiled. Later: may be sad, feel betrayed. Men: Better behaved, less craving for sex. Boys: "Nicer," more mature Girls: "Proud, happy" "Scared." Consequences for not circumcising: Men: prostitution, bad behavior, "acts too free" Boys: same as men, "can't have baby," clitoris will grow, smell. Girls: "My friends will laugh," rejected, unloved, "no one will marry." No gifts, parties Women: No one will marry her, she'll be alone, she'll have trouble in childbirth.</p>	<p>Consequences of NO FGM: Men say prostitution, but women don't mention it. Women are more likely to mention psychological consequences than men, girls, or boys</p>	<p>Women need help moving to another stage of awareness—they don't have the same associations as men between expressed sexuality and prostitution. Men need to understand women's physiology and the importance of upbringing in forming women's sexual behavior; need assurance to move beyond the rationalization based on fear of women's sexuality.</p>
<p>Decision-making patterns: Findings on primary decision-makers Mother's role: The mother decides when; grandmother may give advice. Father's role: It's up to the mother; father arranges payment. "It's woman's work." Some women: "If I don't do it, the father will ask when I'm going to have it done"</p>	<p>Decision-making patterns: Women say that men want the practice, but most men say they only go along with it because women want it; however, fathers notice if their daughter is of circumcision age and it hasn't been done. Little girls are asking for it because they hear about it in school—a girl may decide</p>	<p>Women are the nominal decision-makers but there is subtle and not-so-subtle pressure from peers, men, elders to ensure that girls are circumcised. School-age girls are especially susceptible to peer pressure, but even</p>

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Module VI: Focus Group Discussion

<p>Girl's role: Girl may ask for it when she hears about it from other girls.</p> <p>Other: mothers discuss together</p>	<p>the time, but can't refuse it.</p>	<p>if they weren't, their elders would ensure that the practice continues.</p>
<p>Findings on communication between men and women</p> <p>Woman: "It isn't done, to talk about the body parts and sex" "If I am ready, I cook a special meal for him, and he knows."</p> <p>Most women don't discuss sex, personal preference, with any male, a few talk with husband about child-spacing (2 women with secondary plus education).</p> <p>Men: "If a woman talks to me about such things, I know she is dirty." Women must go through "channels" to discuss such topics. Men listen to their elders, both male and female, but no one has ever been approached about FGM.</p>	<p>Communication: It is uncommon for men and women to discuss anything about the practice except to decide when their daughter will be circumcised and who will do it.</p> <p>Sex may not be discussed between men and women.</p> <p>Women/girls learn about sex from their mothers.</p>	<p>Men and women must be approached separately at first.</p> <p>Using a mediator between men and women on sensitive topics (sexuality) is acceptable.</p>
<p>Options for uncircumcised women</p> <p>Women: no options in that community, she must submit</p> <p>Men: She can be a prostitute</p> <p>Boys: She must leave; she will be a laughingstock</p> <p>Girls: Know of girls in other communities who aren't circumcised, but don't know if they can marry</p>		

Activity
FGD REPORT PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Purpose: Participants will be able to share their findings.

Format: Team task

Suggested Time: 30 minutes per team

Materials: Research reports

Preparation: Complete analysis and reports

Procedure:

- Ask each group to give a presentation on their findings, briefly summarizing their report. Encourage participants to ask questions and discuss similarities or differences in findings among the different teams.

KEY POINTS SUMMARY, MODULE VI

INTRODUCTION TO FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD)

- FGDs are guided, in-depth explorations of about 1-2 hours in length, facilitated by a moderator and recorded by a note taker, in which members of the interest group discuss their feelings, beliefs, and behaviors related to a specific topic.
- FGDs are conducted with people who share attributes that are likely to influence their views or behaviors relative to the topic under discussion (for example, young mothers of uncircumcised girls; elder men; doctors; circumcisers; secondary school-age boys). FGDs should include no more than 6-10 people to allow individuals to voice their views in a pressure-free atmosphere.
- Conducting at least two FGDs with different representatives of each stakeholder or interest group helps ensure more accurate and complete information.
- FGDs require good interpersonal skills on the part of the moderator and good observation skills on the part of the note-taker.
- In FGDs, and in qualitative research in general, the communicator seeks to extract, rather than give, information. Effective moderators extract information by creating a situation where participants discuss the topic with each other and by guiding the discussion gently rather than pursuing a straight question-answer format.
- FGDs involve an "opening," when the moderator sets the tone and gives the "ground rules" and three main stages:

Stage I: Warm-up: Introductions, development of group participation and interaction

Stage II: The body of the in-depth, focused discussion: Exploration of key issues.

Stage III: Closure: Summary and recap of themes, differences, final clarification.

FGD TECHNIQUES: PROBING FOR MEANING

- Probing for meaning requires several communication skills: active listening and questioning techniques, effective interpersonal behavior, attention to verbal and non-verbal cues, as well as analytical thinking.
- Statements relating to beliefs or behaviors around a social custom are rooted in the cultural context of the person who makes the statement and are interpreted in the cultural context of the person who hears the statement. Often, the information we get from a simple question requires clarification in order to understand its real significance.
- In research, it is important to understand the context and motivation for a statement relating to belief or behavior so that we understand the values that underlie these beliefs and behaviors.

- Context and motivation give meaning to a statement—what is the importance of this to the person stating it? What is the broader meaning of this practice or belief for people in this culture?

FGD TECHNIQUES: PREPARATION OF THE TOPIC GUIDE

- The FGD guide should serve as a reminder to moderators to lead the discussion so that it covers certain topics. It should not be constructed as a questionnaire and it should not be used for leading a question-and-answer session.
- Topics do not need to be covered in a specific order. The discussion should proceed as much like a natural conversation as possible, with the guide serving to help the moderator keep it on track.
- Avoid assumptions and leading questions when using previously gathered information to formulate research questions.

FGD TECHNIQUES: NOTE-TAKING

- Note-taking is an essential part of the FGD methodology. Without accurate and thorough documentation, information gathered during the discussion is easily lost or distorted.
- Tape recordings are very helpful supplements to note taking, but should not be used exclusively. Aside from technical problems that may arise in trying to tape an FGD, it requires time and funds to transcribe tapes.

FGD TECHNIQUES: ROLEPLAY PRACTICE

- Moderating and note-taking are SKILLS that develop and improve with practice. Interpersonal skills, observation, and an open, inquiring mind are key to conducting good FGDs.

SETTING UP FGDS

- Organization and flexibility are the two keys to setting up successful FGDs.

FGD ANALYSIS AND REPORT WRITING: DIDACTIC

- Analysis ideally begins during the FGD and should continue as soon as possible after the FGD is completed, while the observer's, note-taker's, and moderators memories are fresh.
- The steps of observation, classification, inter-relation, insight, inference of cause, and hypothesis, are applied to FGD analysis.

FGD FIELD PRACTICE

FGD ANALYSIS AND REPORT WRITING

- In order for data to be useful, it should be organized in a clear, concise report. This report should follow a report similar to the following: introduction, research question, methodology (including details of group identity, characteristics, numbers of respondents), discussion of key findings classified by group and topic, interrelationships, hypothesis/conclusion.

FGD REPORT PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION