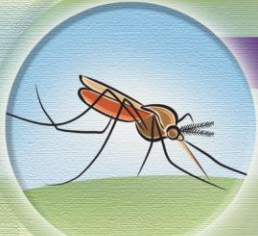




Part 4:

CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS IN FORMATIVE RESEARCH



Role of the moderator

- Guides the discussion
- Stimulates the interaction among participants
- Exerts subtle control over the group
- Encourages different opinions
- Encourages shy respondents
- Discourages dominant respondents
- Remains neutral



The moderator

- Is not a teacher
- Is not a judge
- Does not look down at participants
- Does not agree or disagree
- Does not put words in the mouths of participants
- Is an active listener



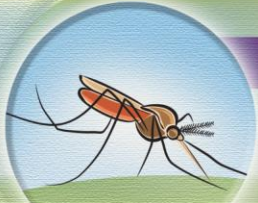
The moderator should be able to

- Question
- Probe
- Ask for clarification if a response is not understood
- Build rapport with the group
- Handle group influences
- Listen
- Control the group dynamics
- Read body language



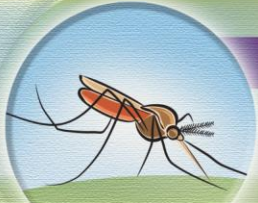
Asking questions

- Use open-ended questions
- Avoid Yes/No questions
- Start with “what” or “how,” not “why”
- Remain focused
- Pilot test the guide



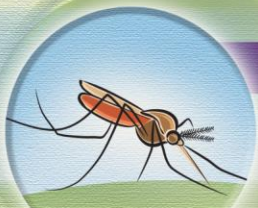
The focus group guide

- Based on your list of what you want to learn, think of six to eight major issues you want to cover (some researchers suggest no more than 10 questions)
- Write open-ended questions grouped around each of these issues
- Progress in a logical fashion
- Move from general to specific topics
- List possible probes under each discussion question that should clarify or deepen responses



Use of the focus group guide while moderating

- Keep to the discussion questions
- Listen carefully to what participants say and respond with probes to unexpected, but relevant information
- To help you decide when to probe, always keep in mind what you need to know
- Take care not to probe too much early in the discussion
- Wait to see if the group introduces a concept spontaneously before introducing it yourself



Use of the focus group guide while moderating

- Allow participants to complete sentences or thoughts without interruption
- Do not probe one person too aggressively or too long
- Address the whole group with your probes, looking around at each participant
- Reorder questions as needed to match the flow of the group discussion
- Save time for the discussion that may follow your summation—ask if there is anything else the group thinks you should know?



Stages of the FGD

1. Introduction

- The moderator explains a focus group
- The moderator and participants introduce themselves



Stages of the FGD

2. Set the stage

- Use a tone that is both inviting and serious
- Explain the general purpose of the study and your role in it
- Explain the reasons for audio/visual recording and the role of the observer/note taker
- Explain the importance of speaking one at a time
- Express your interest in hearing different points of view
- Explain there is no right or wrong answer



Stages of the FGD

3. Build Rapport:

The moderator puts participants at ease and initiates conversations

- Use one or more open-ended questions that everyone can comfortably answer and that will spark their involvement
- Encourage everyone to contribute by waiting for someone to speak
- Glance at specific individuals, but ask a general question—“Does anyone . . .”



Stages of the FGD

4. In-depth discussion:

- The participants share their thoughts on the discussion topic
- Follow your focus group discussion guide
- Remember . . .
 - Use open-ended questions
 - Probe to clarify or deepen responses
 - Avoid closed questions, leading questions, two questions in one
 - Ask questions in a logical order, progressing from general to specific



Stages of the FGD

5. Closure:

- The moderator summarizes the discussion and thanks the participants
- Plan one or two questions to obtain any final reactions, “Is there anything we did not discuss that seems relevant?”
- If participants asked you questions during the discussion, they can be answered at this time