FOCUS GROUP ON HEALTH CARE EXPERIENCES

Moderator’s Guidelines

Background

The main purpose of the focus group is to understand what concrete experiences constitute a person’s encounter with a health care provider or the health system. In order to do this we will be asking people for open-ended descriptions of experiences they have had when seeking medical care.

Selection of Focus Groups

We have requested that you run 2 focus groups, 1 group with middle class, educated people and another group with lower class, less-educated rural people. However, should you feel that any sub-group within these two groups would be marginalised during the focus group discussion (e.g. would women speak less?), then please indicate this too us so that another group may be added. Your budget would be adjusted accordingly. Within each focus group there should be no more than 8 people.

Minimum Staff

1. Facilitator or Moderator
2. A person responsible for the taping, and making notes on how well the focus group is running, commenting whether there are any people who seem uncomfortable.
3. Someone responsible for general organisational issues.

The Focus Group Agenda

1) The moderator starts off by introducing him/herself, and explaining why the focus group has been gathered. The moderator should give a brief outline of how the focus group will be run. The explanation should read as follows:

   We are meeting to discuss your experiences when seeking health care. What we discuss here will remain confidential. I will start by asking you to describe very briefly an experience you have had seeking health care. We will then go on to discuss some of your experiences in more detail. The entire session will probably take about 1 and a half hours. During this time we will provide you with something to drink. We will tape the sessions but nothing you say on tape will be linked to you. We are taping the sessions because we need to have an accurate record of the discussions. The work we are doing today is part of a large multi-country study.

   The moderator goes on to introduce the team.
2) The moderator invites the members of the focus group to introduce themselves and say a short word on.
   a) who they are
   b) what is their working or studying background
   c) the name and the town they are from.

3) The moderator then starts the discussion with the following opening sentence:

   Now, very briefly, would each of you please describe a situation when you went to consult a health care provider? Who would like to start?
   (expected time: about 20 minutes)

The moderator needs to make short notes on each story as they go through, to help him decide who will be selected for the more detailed story-telling.

4) After everyone has completed their stories, indicate that you would like to focus on a few more stories in more detail. The moderator will need to select about 5 stories to focus on. The selection of stories should be made according to the following principles: the stories should be diverse with respect to the different types of health services used and how good or bad the experiences were. This part of the focus group is the longest part and should take about an hour.

   The stories that you have told are very interesting. I would now like us to focus on the details of a few of these stories. I would like start with X’s story. X, could you please describe your experience again in a little more detail. While X is describing the experience, I would like everyone else in the group to think about what happened to X and how they would have felt in X’s situation. After X has retold the story, I will ask some questions for clarification. I would then like to open up the discussion for the whole group to ask questions and make any comments on their reaction to X’s experience. Once we have finished discussing X’s experience, we will go on to discuss another story. I would like us to cover four to five of the stories told here today in a similar way. Now, X, would you please start.

5) After completion of the first story the moderator should prompt the respondent for more information using the following questions, if necessary and not covered by the respondent:
   a) Please tell me more about the place where you saw the health care provider? For example, was it a government or private service?
   b) Was this your usual place of care?
   c) How long ago was the incident you are describing?
   d) How were you treated by the doctors/nurses?
   e) What did you think of the place where you received care?
   f) If you wanted to change anything about the experience, apart from whether you got better or not, what would you change?

The moderator then needs to open the discussion to the rest of the group by saying:
Now, please would the rest of the group like to discuss their reaction to X’s story.

The moderator should move on to the next story, once no more comments are forthcoming from the group.

6) This is the final session of the focus group.

This is the final part of our focus group. Many of you have told stories about health care experiences, but we were wondering whether any of you here have been ill but then chose not to seek any health care. If any of you have had that experience, would you please spend a little time telling us about it

   a) Make sure their description answers the question:
      (1) why did you not seek any health care?

7) The moderator should close the session by thanking everyone for their participation in the focus group:

   a) E.g., Your stories have been very insightful and interesting. I would like to thank you all for participation.

   The 1 and a half hour time limit should be not followed strictly. If the moderator sees that participants are enjoying the discussion, she/he let it run for longer. In closing, the moderator should also ask if the group were satisfied with the way the discussion ran and if everyone felt that they were able to say what they had wanted, bearing in mind that they could not keep going for much longer than an hour and a half.

Reporting on the Focus Group

The materials returned to WHO should include the following:

1) The moderator’s guidelines:
   a) Translations (into English),
   b) A back-translation,
   c) Any amendments made to the guidelines’s translation on the basis of the back-translation (to be included in the report mentioned in 3).

   The above documents should be submitted to WHO for approval prior to the commencement of the focus groups. WHO will not be responsible for any costs incurred if the focus groups go ahead without WHO approval.

2) The transcript of the focus group session:
   a) In the original language,
   b) Translations (into English),
   c) A back-translation.
   d) A list of any amendments made to the translation as a result of the back-translation (to be included in the report mentioned in 3).

   Please number participants 1 to 8 and refer to them as such in the transcript. A hard and an electronic copy of these items should be sent to WHO. The electronic
versions of the transcriptions should be captured using any MS Word compatible software and files labelled as described below.

3) The session audiotapes.

4) A report compiled from the debriefing session after the focus group, as well as using any notes made by the meeting note-taker on what aspects of the focus group ran well and which didn’t, and any notes made during translation. Please try to cover answers to the following questions;
   a) How could we have improved the instructions to the participants?
   b) How could we have improved the instructions to the moderator?
   c) How well did all the members of the group participate in the discussion?
   d) If you could have improved any aspect of the focus group, what would that have been and how would you have improved it?

Anticipated Dates of Delivery and Key Reminders

- Remember to send translations of Moderator Guidelines for approval before running focus groups
- We would very much like to have the focus group results by 10 September 2001

Note: all translations should take into account the local relevance of any terms used.

Naming of Electronic Files

For uniformity and clarity, please could all electronic files follow the following:

Moderator materials/guidelines translation: (Country code)-Mod-Guide-T01
Moderator materials/guidelines backtranslation: (Country code)-Mod-Guide-BT01
Moderator materials/guidelines final translation: (Country code)-Mod-Guide-T02
Notes on translation issues for moderator materials: (Country code)-Mod-Guide-Notes-01

For educated, urban:
Focus group transcript in original language: (Country code)-Transcript-Edurb-O
Focus group transcript backtranslation: (Country code)-Transcript-Edurb-BT01
Focus group transcript translation: (Country code)-Transcript-Edurb-T01
Focus group final translation: (Country code)-Transcript-Edurb-T02
Focus group report: (Country code)-Report-Edurb-T02

For uneducated, rural:
Focus group transcript in original language: (Country code)-Transcript-Rur-O
Focus group transcript backtranslation: (Country code)-Transcript-Rur-BT01
Focus group transcript translation: (Country code)-Transcript-Rur-T01
Focus group final translation: (Country code)-Transcript-Rur-T02
Focus group report: (Country code)-Report-Rur-T02

For country codes, please see the second attachment.
Other Resource Material

1) A copy of a WHO Focus Group Manual (sent to you by courier).
2) Focus group translation guidelines (attachment).
3) List of country codes (attachment)