Training on Socioeconomic Monitoring (SocMon) Methodology for Evaluation of Socioeconomics and Marine Resources Utilization at Selected Coastal Communities in Myanmar

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Session 16 : The Focus Group Discussion as a Data Gathering Tool

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Outline of Presentation

• What is a Focus Group?
• What is a Focus Group Discussion (FGD)?
• When do we conduct an FGD?
• Why is there a need to do FGD?
• Who forms part of an FGD?
• How does one conduct an FGD
What is a Focus Group?

Focus group is a small group of people brought together and guided by a moderator through an unstructured, spontaneous discussion about some topic.
What is a Focus Group?

It is called a focus group because a **moderator** serves to focus the discussion on a certain topic and does not let the group move onto off tangents or irrelevant points.

The goal of a focus group is to **draw out ideas, feelings, and experiences** about a certain issue that would be obscured or stifled by more structured methods of data collection (i.e., HHI or KII).
What is a Focus Group Discussion (FGD)?

FGs involve a *selected group of informants* (usually 4 to 10) who share *homogeneous characteristics* - *common background* or *knowledge* (e.g. use patterns, occupations, organization membership).
What is a Focus Group Discussion (FGD)?

FGDs are a type of semi-structured interview.

Like semi-structured interviews, FGDs are based on a set of open-ended questions or discussion points, and generate qualitative information.

This is a flexible method of interviewing allowing the moderator to probe for answers, follow-up the original questions and pursue new lines of questions during the interview.
When do we conduct an Focus Group Discussion (FGD)?

FGDs are usually done in the middle or end of the field data collection usually after the team has a strong understanding of the stakeholder groups, their priority concerns and internal dynamics.
Why is there a need to do FGD?

- It generates primarily qualitative information on a range of topics and on specific issues.
- It provides information on the views of a particular stakeholder group as a whole.
Why is there a need to do FGD?

• It identifies local terminology, language and priorities that may help the assessment team interpret other information received during the course of the assessment.

• It allows an exchange of information between the moderator and the participants.
Who forms part of an FGD?

**Composition**: A facilitator/ moderator; A documenter or note-taker; Participants

- The choice of participants depends on the topic of the focus group.
- Often, the people who are included are those knowledgeable about the topic.
What are the roles of the FGD facilitator/moderator?

• The FACILITATOR (a.k.a. MODERATOR) is the most crucial factor influencing the effectiveness and usefulness of a focus group.

• The moderator is a person who conducts the entire session and guides the flow of discussion across specific topics (questions) that are important to the research.
What are the roles of the FGD facilitator/moderator?

• Must strive for a balance between stimulating, natural discussions among all of the group members while ensuring that the focus of the discussion does not stray too far from the topic (question).
What are the roles of the FGD facilitator/moderator?

• The FGD’s success depends on the participants’ involvement in the discussion and their understanding of what is being asked of them.

• Productive involvement is largely a result of the moderator’s effectiveness, which in turn is dependent on the purpose and objectives of the interview.
How does one conduct an FGD?

- Are there guidelines to follow before conducting the FGD?
- Some Tips for FGD Facilitators/Moderator
Preparations in Organizing FGD

1. Remember that the FGD is an opportunity for the research team to listen and learn, and not to lecture or provide team members’ interpretation of the local biophysical and social system.

2. The team members agree on various task assignments including: a) facilitator/moderator, b) rapporteur, c) logistics in-charge.
Preparations in Organizing FGD

3. Each team member must have a copy of the FGD guide questions. The list of themes to be discussed may be written on the board to serve as guide for FGD participants on the scope and progress of the discussion.

4. Familiarize yourself with local terminologies/names to avoid misunderstanding of what participants will say.

4. Coordinate in advance with your selected FGD participants regarding the venue and time of the FGD.
Guidelines in conducting the FGD session

1. After a brief introduction, the purpose and scope of the discussion are explained. Specify the objectives and information needs of the focus group discussion.

2. Arrange the focus group in advance. Gather the informants in one comfortable, accessible location. Participants are asked to give their names and short background information about themselves.
Guidelines in conducting the FGD session

3. Begin the interview with the **broadest** questions on the interview guide. As the interview progresses, **probe** for details and ask questions in different ways to obtain further information.

   Ask **follow-up** questions to clarify answers and to ensure the original question is fully answered. The discussion is structured around the key themes using the probe questions prepared in advance.
Guidelines in conducting the FGD session

4. Start with simple questions that require descriptive answers and gradually add more complex questions. Do not ask more than one question at a time.

5. Adjust the questions, and the ordering of the questions, as needed during the interview to bring in new issues.

6. Encourage the informants to answer questions in their own words, to express opinions, experiences and memories, and to discuss issues as much as necessary.
Guidelines in conducting the FGD session

7. Use visualisation techniques (e.g. ranking, decision trees, maps, transects, etc) to help elicit information

(see GCRMN Manual Chapter 3 on Visualisation techniques; FFI Materials for Participatory Approaches and Tools).
Guidelines in conducting the FGD session

8. During the discussion, all participants are given the opportunity to participate. Encourage everyone to participate equitably. Use a variety of moderating tactics to facilitate the group. Among these tactics that the moderator can use include:

• Stimulate the participants to talk to each other, not necessarily to the moderator.
• Encourage shy participants to speak.
• Discourage dominant participants through verbal and nonverbal cues.
Guidelines in conducting the FGD session

9. Allow conflicting opinions to emerge and try to have these differences either resolved or accepted by the group.

10. Record the major points of the discussion on the selected media (i.e., flipchart, chalkboard, etc) so that the participants can see their responses and confirm they are being accurately recorded.
Guidelines in conducting the FGD session

11. Review the major points at the end of the discussion to confirm the accuracy of the record and to ensure all the topics have been fully addressed.

12. Allow for validation and correction of visualization diagrams by informants.
12. Write a summary of the FGD, including points on attitudes and interactions, as soon as possible after it is completed. Provide a copy or give a summary of the proceedings of the FGD to the participants soon after the meeting.
Tips for MODERATORS in conducting FGD

1. How to make the FGD active and great every time?
   - Be prepared
   - Be energized
   - Be nice but firm
   - Make sure everything about the experience is comfortable
Tips for MODERATORS in conducting FGD

2. How to build rapport with participants
   • Make meaningful eye contact during each person’s introduction
   • Learn and remember names
   • Welcome folks as they come into the room (area where FGD is conducted) and use small talk
Tips for MODERATORS in conducting FGD

3. How to bring a drifting group back into focus
   • Tell them the topic (question) is “for another group” and that they need to focus on the topic (question) for this group
   • Make a note and tell them they will come back to this topic if there is time.
   • Tell them the topic is “interesting” but not the subject at hand and refer to the next question
   • Suggest that they can talk about it on their own after the focus group is over.
Tips for MODERATORS in conducting FGD

4. How to get participant’s to talk about deeper things than top-of-the-mind answers
   • Play naive or dumb and ask them to help understand by letting them explain further
   • Use probes
   • Ask for specifics
Thank You