Planning Tool: Sample Focus Group Discussion Guide

The following set of questions has been designed as a draft Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide for a team exploring exclusive breastfeeding behaviours with mothers between 16 and 35 years of age. This guide is to support the FGD facilitator and note taker. The facilitator may change the order that the questions are asked and adjust the wording of the questions so that the FGD makes sense for participants and supports favourable group dynamics. *Note, this FGD discussion guide does not include individual demographic information, education, or socioeconomic status. This information should be gathered from participants before the FGDs begin.*

**General Information:**

*The General Information in this section is to be developed by your team when planning the FGDs. This information has been completed as an example supporting the sample FGD guide included below.*

**FGD Research Objectives:**

* Gather information from mothers about their thoughts and experiences with exclusive breastfeeding infants in the first six months of life.
* Identify gaps and deficiencies in capability, opportunity, and motivation that prevent exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life.
* Identify facilitators that promote and enable exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life.
* Explore mothers’ leisure activities, hobbies, routine media exposure, and favourite programming to identify possible avenues for campaign messaging.

**Meeting Record:**

**Location (Community, Village, or Neighbourhood Name):**

**State/District/Municipality:**

**Date (DD/MM/YYYY):**

**Facilitator Name:**

**Note Taker Name:**

**Other Staff/Leaders (Name, Role):**

**Group Description:** *Pregnant women and mothers of infants and young children (<2 years of age)*

**Number of Participants:**   **(**  **Male;**   **Female)**

**Ages Represented:**  *16-35*

**IYCF Behaviour/Topic:** *Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life*

**Focus Group Discussion:**

*The facilitator is the person communicating the information below, unless otherwise noted.*

**Introduction:**

Good morning/afternoon and thank you for joining us. My name is [your name], and I am here as a representative of [organisation name]. *Anyone in the room who is not a participant should introduce themselves and their role (e.g., facilitator, note taker). As part of the introduction, if it is contextually appropriate, participants should also be encouraged to introduce themselves by name. Other information, including number of children, village/community name, and more can also be considered where relevant and culturally appropriate.*

We are meeting today to talk about your thoughts, feelings, and experiences with exclusive breastfeeding. Exclusive breastfeeding is when you feed your infant with only breast milk for their first six months and give them no other liquids of food. We understand that breastfeeding can be difficult and some of what people believe about breastfeeding may or may not be true. We will use the information you share with us today to help mothers and people in the community to learn about how safe infant feeding is important to keep babies healthy. Please remember the following:

* Participation in the discussion is free. You do not have to respond to the questions being asked, and you can stop at any point.
* None of your personal information will be shared with others. Any information you share will be used confidentially.
* Your views and experiences are important, and they will help us communicate with other caregivers about safe infant feeding.

We will ask you questions so that we can learn from you. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers to anything we ask today, and we welcome different views. We hope that you will share your open and honest views.

* You do not need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully while they are speaking. Please do not have side conversations with others during the discussion.
* When you are speaking, you are addressing the whole group – not only the facilitator and note taker.
* Please turn off any cell phones or pagers during our conversation.

At the end of our discussion, we will answer your questions about exclusive breastfeeding and safe infant feeding. If we are unable to answer your questions, we will find a way to get the answer to you at a later date. Our discussion will last about [number] minutes. Do you have time to participate?

Do you have any questions? Are you willing to participate in the conversation?

Consent: Do you provide permission/consent for our team to document, use, store and share the information provided for reporting and communication purposes? *Each participant should answer yes/no. Anyone who answers “no” should be asked to leave before the FGD begins.*

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| **Key IYCF Behaviour of Interest: Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life** |
|  | **Behavioural Determinant**  | **What do we want to find out?** | **Sample FGD Questions** | **Explanation and Additional Information** |
| **Capability** | **Knowledge and Information**  | Does the group know about your selected IYCF behaviour? | * What do you know about exclusive breastfeeding?
* Do you believe that exclusive breastfeeding (for the first six months of life) is important? Why or why not?

**Additional Questions (Optional):*** Think back to when your baby was born. Did anyone talk to you about breastfeeding? What did they tell you?
* Did you know that exclusive breastfeeding is recommended (for the first six months of life) for all babies?
	+ If so, how did you learn about this recommendation?
	+ If so, why is it recommended?
 |   |
| **Skills and Confidence**  | Does the group have the skills and confidence to change their IYCF behaviour?  | * What skills, tools, or support do you need to breastfeed?
* Think back to when you began breastfeeding your baby. What would make breastfeeding easier for you?
 |   |
| **Personal Beliefs** | Does the group believe that a change in the IYCF behaviour is needed? | * Do you believe that mothers should exclusively breastfeed their babies (for the first six months of life)? Why or why not?
 |   |
| **Opportunity** | **Accessibility, Availability, and Convenience**  | Is the IYCF behaviour accessible, available, and convenient for the group? | * Is exclusive breastfeeding (for the first six months of life) convenient and easy for mothers? Why or why not?
* Can you think of anything that would make exclusive breastfeeding easier for mothers?

 **Additional Questions (Optional):*** What makes exclusive breastfeeding difficult or impossible for mothers?
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| **Affordability**  | Is the IYCF behaviour affordable for the group? | * What are the costs associated with exclusive breastfeeding?
* Is exclusive breastfeeding affordable for mothers?
 |   |
| **Social Support and Relationships** | Will family, friends, and other community members support the group in changing the IYCF behaviour? | * Who do you get advice from about breastfeeding? Do they encourage you to breastfeed?
* Would family and community members support mothers to practice exclusive breastfeeding (for the first six months of life)? Why or why not?
 |   |
| **Social Norms**  | Is the IYCF behaviour acceptable within the culture and social norms? | * Do women in your community exclusively breastfeed their babies? Why or why not?

**Additional Questions (Optional):*** Are there any actions that would make exclusive breastfeeding (for the first six months of life) more acceptable? If so, what are some examples?
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| **Motivation** | **Habits or Routines**  | Is the IYCF behaviour part of the group’s habits or routines?  | * Is exclusive breastfeeding (for the first six months of life) part of mother’s habits or routines? Why or why not?
 |   |
| **Outcome Expectations**  | Does the group perceive benefit in adopting the IYCF behaviour?  | * Do you believe that there is any benefit to practicing exclusive breastfeeding (for the first six months of life)? Why or why not?
	+ If not, is there anything that could make you change your mind?
 |   |
| **Emotions**  | Does the group experience positive/negative emotions that motivate or demotivate them to implement the IYCF behaviour? | * Close your eyes and imagine a friend of yours or your sister is exclusively breastfeeding their baby. How does this make you feel? Why do you feel that way?
* How does exclusively breastfeeding your baby make you feel?
* How do you feel when you see women breastfeeding their infants?
 |   |
| **Intention and Planning** | Does the group have the intent or plan to act on the IYCF behaviour? | * If or when you have another child, would you exclusively breastfeed the baby (for the first six months of life)? Why or why not?
	+ If not, what would it take to make exclusive breastfeeding possible for you?

 **Additional Questions (Optional):*** For grandparents: If or when you have a grandchild, would you support the mother to exclusively breastfeed the baby (for the first six months of life)? Why or why not?
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***Part 2: Learning about Leisure Activities, Media Exposure, and Programming in the FGD***

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| **Category** | **Key Questions** | **Insights** |
| **Hobbies, Social, & Leisure Activities** | * What kinds of activities do you participate in with friends, family, or other people in your community?
* What kinds of activities do you do for fun? What would you do if you had extra time one day?
 |   |
| **Media U**se and **Exposure**  | * Where do you get news or information?
* Do you regularly watch television? Listen to the radio?
	+ When? How often?
* Do you read magazines or newspapers?
	+ When? How often?
	+ What kinds of things to you read?
* Do you use social media? Which services do you use (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)?
	+ If so, what do you use it (or them) for?
* Do you use messaging/WhatsApp/SMS to communicate with friends? To learn about current events?
* Do you notice printed messaging (e.g., billboards, signs, posters) in your community?
	+ If so, what kind of messaging have you seen? How does it make you feel?
 | 1. TV
2. Radio
3. Print
4. Messaging/SMS
5. Social Media
6. Other:
 |
| **Favourite Programming** | * What kind of television or radio programming do you enjoy (e.g., radio drama)?
* What are your favourite shows/programmes?
	+ What do you like about them?
	+ Why are they your favourites?
 |   |

**Category descriptions**

**Hobbies, Social, & Leisure Activities:** Outside of work or household duties, it is important to consider how people spend time alone or with others in the community.Understanding how people spend time can help to inform where and how they may be best reached by communications.

**Media Exposure:** The pathways people use to gather and share information and news is dependent upon the group’s location, culture, and other factors. Media is shared via traditional methods (e.g., TV, print, radio) as well as network-based methods (e.g., messaging/SMS, social media). Media exposure can be used to understand the method of communication that the group uses regularly.

**Favourite Programming:** Programming (e.g., shows, dramas, current events) varies across media channels and can be used to understand the format that the group prefers for communications.

**Finishing the FGD:**

*In closing, it can be helpful to ask participants if there is anything about the topic that they have not been asked even though it is important for the research team to know. You may also choose to ask participants to reflect on what they believe was the most important part of the conversation, or you may choose to ask them to summarise the conversation.*

Many thanks for taking the time to meet and for participating in the conversation about exclusive breastfeeding today. Your thoughts and experiences have been very helpful for our team. Your discussion will help us come up with ways to communicate with caregivers about safe infant feeding.

We are happy to answer any questions you have about exclusive breastfeeding and safe infant feeding.

If you have further questions or feedback about your experience today, please contact [point of contact/Programme Manager], [your organisation] at [contact information].

***Learning from the Primary Audience (EXAMPLE)***

**Research aim:** Explore the mother/female caregiver knowledge, feelings, and intention around exclusive breastfeeding for infants between birth and 6 months of age.

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| **Key IYCF Behaviour of Interest: Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life** |
|  | **Behavioural Determinant**  | **What do we want to find out?** | **Sample FGD Questions** | **Responses Provided** |
| **Capability** | **Knowledge and Information**  | Does the group know about your selected IYCF behaviour? | * What do you know about exclusive breastfeeding?
* Do you believe that exclusive breastfeeding (for the first six months of life) is important? Why or why not?

**Additional Questions (Optional):*** Did you know that exclusive breastfeeding is recommended (for the first six months of life) for all babies?
	+ If so, how did you learn about this recommendation?
	+ If so, why is it recommended?
 | EBF means giving a baby only breastmilk – no other food or water.Breastfeeding is good for babies. Mothers have heard that EBF is recommended for the first 6 months, but it is not commonly practiced in the community. Many mothers believe that they do not make enough breastmilk for infants, especially boys, so it is important to give other foods/liquids to make sure that the baby grows. |
| **Skills and Confidence**  | Does the group have the skills and confidence to change their IYCF behaviour?  | * What skills, tools, or support do you need to breastfeed?
* What would make breastfeeding easier for you?
 | Mothers do not believe that women make enough breastmilk for babies to grow. Breastmilk will not give enough liquid when it is hot outside.No suggestions provided for what would make breastfeeding easier. |
| **Personal Beliefs** | Does the group believe that a change in the IYCF behaviour is needed? | * Do you believe that mothers should exclusively breastfeed their babies (for the first six months of life)? Why or why not?
 | Mothers believe that infants should be given water with sugar when it is hot outside. They also believe that infants should be fed porridge and fruit so that they continue to grow. Breastmilk is “not enough.” |
| **Opportunity** | **Accessibility, Availability, and Convenience**  | Is the IYCF behaviour accessible, available, and convenient for the group? | * Is exclusive breastfeeding (for the first six months of life) convenient and easy for mothers? Why or why not?
* Can you think of anything that would make exclusive breastfeeding easier for mothers?

 **Additional Questions (Optional):*** What makes exclusive breastfeeding difficult or impossible for mothers?
 | Continuing to breastfeed beyond one year of age is the norm in the community. They believe that it could be possible to exclusively breastfeed, only if they could be sure the infant was well fed. |
| **Affordability**  | Is the IYCF behaviour affordable for the group? | * What are the costs associated with exclusive breastfeeding?
* Is exclusive breastfeeding affordable for mothers?
 | There are no perceived costs. Cost is not a barrier to exclusive breastfeeding. |
| **Social Support and Relationships** | Will family, friends, and other community members support the group in changing the IYCF behaviour? | * Who do you get advice from about breastfeeding? Do they encourage you to breastfeed?
* Would family and community members support mothers to practice exclusive breastfeeding (for the first six months of life)? Why or why not?
 | Mothers are taught about breastfeeding by their mothers and aunties. These women also encourage mothers to give their babies water, animal milk, or other foods before six months of age. They also suggested that mothers cannot breastfeed if they are ill. |
| **Social Norms**  | Is the IYCF behaviour acceptable within the culture and social norms? | * Do women in your community exclusively breastfeed their babies? Why or why not?

**Additional Questions (Optional):*** Are there any actions that would make exclusive breastfeeding (for the first six months of life) more acceptable? If so, what are some examples?
 | Some mother’s may exclusively breastfeed, but they are not seen as good caregivers. Many believe that the exclusively breastfed infants are not well fed or may become too attached to their mothers. |
| **Motivation** | **Habits or Routines**  | Is the IYCF behaviour part of the group’s habits or routines?  | * Is exclusive breastfeeding (for the first six months of life) part of mother’s habits or routines? Why or why not?
 | No, EBF is not the norm in the community. |
| **Outcome Expectations**  | Does the group perceive benefit in adopting the IYCF behaviour?  | * Do you believe that there is any benefit to practicing exclusive breastfeeding (for the first six months of life)? Why or why not?
	+ If not, is there anything that could make you change your mind?
 | The mothers said that they would be worried that their infant was not eating enough with breastmilk alone. They believe that the infant should receive more than breastmilk before six months. |
| **Emotions**  | Does the group experience positive/negative emotions that motivate or demotivate them to implement the IYCF behaviour? | * Ask participants to close their eyes and tell them to imagine a friend of theirs of their sister is exclusively breastfeeding their baby. How does this make you feel? Why do you feel that way?
* How does exclusively breastfeeding your baby make you feel?
* How do you feel when you see women breastfeeding their infants?
 | Seeing mothers breastfeeding makes other mothers feel happy if the baby is small. Mothers want to be seen as good, caring mothers by community members. They worry that if they started refusing to feed their babies as aunties and others suggest, they may not be seen as good mothers. |
| **Intention and Planning** | Does the group have the intent or plan to act on the IYCF behaviour? | * If or when you have another child, would you exclusively breastfeed the baby (for the first six months of life)? Why or why not?
	+ If not, what would it take to make exclusive breastfeeding possible for you?

 **Additional Questions (Optional):*** For grandparents: If or when you have a grandchild, would you support the mother to exclusively breastfeed the baby (for the first six months of life)? Why or why not?
 | The group does not plan to make changes or begin EBF at this time. |

***Part 2: Learning About Leisure Activities, Media Exposure, and Programming in the FGD***

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| **Category** | **Key Questions** | **Insights** |
| **Group Description** | **Pregnant women, mothers, and female primary caregivers of infants and young children; age 16-35** |
| **Education Level & Socioeconomic Status** | * **Some primary education**
* **Work in domestic care, agriculture, homemaker**
* **Low to middle income**
 |
| **Hobbies, Social, & Leisure Activities** | * What kinds of activities do you participate in with friends, family, or other people in your community?
* What kinds of activities do you do for fun? What would you do if you had extra time one day?
 | **Meeting with friends, going to church activities, Mother’s Group** |
| **Media Exposure**  | * Where do you get news or information?
* Do you regularly watch television? Listen to the radio?
	+ When? How often?
* Do you read magazines or newspapers?
	+ When? How often?
	+ What kinds of things to you read?
* Do you use social media? Which services do you use (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)?
	+ If so, what do you use it (or them) for?
* Do you use messaging/WhatsApp/SMS to communicate with friends? To learn about current events?
* Do you notice printed messaging (e.g., billboards, signs, posters) in your community?
	+ If so, what kind of messaging have you seen? How does it make you feel?
 | 1. TV
2. Radio
3. Print
4. Messaging/SMS
5. Social Media
6. Other:No social media use noted; minimal print content available in the community unless it is a flyer or something shared
 |
| **Favourite Programming** | * What kind of television or radio programming do you enjoy (e.g., radio drama)?
* What are your favourite shows/programmes?
	+ What do you like about them?
	+ Why are they your favourites?
 | **Telenovelas, radio dramas** |