Phase 4: On-site assessment

Step 4.1: Conducting consultations

How to conduct focus group discussions?

A focus group consists of a small group of people who share some common characteristics and are brought together to explore opinions and experiences about certain issues. Focus group interviews are a valuable tool for obtaining missing information on a specific topic or examining sensitive issues and giving marginalized groups the opportunity to express their personal views and feelings on specific issues.

Moderating a focus group discussion

The group sessions usually revolve around a specific question that the moderator introduces to discuss in the group. The interaction between the different members of the group is given a particular focus, instead of just gathering opinions from participants. When selecting focus group participants, it is important to be gender- and age-sensitive.

The moderator of a focus group is particularly important and must meet certain requirements:

- Not judge the participants' statements
- Have sufficient knowledge of the local tourism industry and potential human rights issues as well as the cultural context
- Show patience and flexibility with the participants
- Be sensitive to the participants' needs

The use of moderation techniques can help to steer the focus group discussion in the desired direction. The moderator can, for example, summarize what he or she has heard about the tourism industry in the local context and ask if the group agrees with the statements. In order to keep the conversation going, the moderator may summarize and repeat participants' statements. Another technique to further develop the conversation is to record the results and ideas of the discussion on a wall or pinboard. Also try to involve those that have spoken yet.

A popular method for focus group discussions is to "generate ideas", collect potential human rights issues and potential solutions.[1] Here, participants first collect ideas for themselves and write them on small cards or post-it notes. The more ideas the better – quantity over quality. Next, the issues described by the participants are collected on a wall or pinboard, and organised, combined and expanded. Together, the group then prioritizes the ideas and works on potential solutions strategies. Various workshop materials are needed for this method, such as a pinboard, pens, sticky notes, a projector and laptop.

Preparation of the focus group discussion

Invite the selected participants with the help of local organisations in advance, informing both parties of the objective of the interview. Contact the participants the day before the discussion to remind them and re-confirm their participation. The time and location of the meeting should be determined a few days in advance.

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[1] Ludewig, Elske (2016): Neudenken, Querdenken, Umdenken: Das Ideen-Storming als kreative Methode für Fokusgruppen, in: Usabilityblog, https://www.usabilityblog.de/neudenken-querdenken-umdenken-das-ideen-storming-als-kreative-methode-fur-fokusgruppen/.

Select a location that is convenient and comfortable for the participants. On average, focus group interviews last at least 90 minutes.

Participants should share some common characteristics so that interaction can take place at an optimum level, and situations in which people dominate or withdraw from discussion can be reduced. The group size should range from five to ten participants, and certain criteria (e.g. gender, age, hierarchy) should be taken into account when selecting the participants.

Making sure of the basics

Create a warm and friendly atmosphere upon arrival, for example by serving refreshments and engaging the participants in small talk. Start the formal group session by thanking the participants for coming and briefly stating the purpose of the interview, then facilitate a short introduction round. If appropriate, the discussion can be conducted on a first name basis.

Inform the participants why they were selected for the interview and emphasize the rules of confidentiality. Invite the participants to ask questions when they occur, and stress that there are no wrong and right answers. Where appropriate, use a bilingual translator who speaks the local language. Also define the basic rules of the group discussion, such as respect for the views of others in the group, even if you disagree with them, and that only one person should speak at a time. Use open questions (Why? What? How? Where?) to get more detailed information and avoid dichotomous questions which can be answered with "yes" or "no".

If you intend to take written notes, ask the participants for their consent first.

Wrap-up of the focus group discussion

At the end of the discussion, list the most important issues and conclusions of the discussion and thank the participants for their valuable contributions. Inform the participants that they can file a complaint with an independent third party, e.g. an NGO, regarding the discussed topics if they are dissatisfied with the course of the group discussion. Create a business card with relevant contact details ready for this purpose.

Ideally, the coding and analysing of data should start immediately after the group session. When summarizing the results, it is important to find a balance between detail and conciseness. Also try to record participants' non-verbal reactions. After finalizing your assessment report, inform the focus group participants about the results.[2]

Guidance for focus group discussion

The template below provides you general guidance for focus group discussions. Different guidance materials provide you with further information how to consult with the most vulnerable groups, such as workers, community members and children.

Guidance for focus group discussion	
Date and time of the focus group discussion	
Number of participants	
Location	
Participants' characteristics (gender, age, job position, role within the community etc.)	

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[2] Dilshad & Latif (2013): Focus group interview as a tool for qualitative research: An analysis, in: Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. 33, No. 1, https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/e13a/0f7a5a455c31454df3d8d99e92097a10a947.pdf, pp. 191-198; Krueger (2002): Designing and Conducting Focus group Interviews, https://www.eiu.edu/ihec/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf.

Human rights impact assessment

Welcome	• Objectives of the discussion • Anonymity
Ground rules	• Only one person speaks at a time • No wrong or right answers • Important to hear everyone's view in the group • You do not need to agree with the views of other people in the group but you should listen respectfully
Warm up	• Short introduction round
Introductory question	Think about your experience with/in …
Guiding questions	What is your relationship to the tourism industry?
	What is your knowledge of the tourism sector and the local context?
	What are your major concerns regarding the tourism sector in the country?
	What opportunities exist for members of your community to apply for jobs in the tourism sector?
	Has the security situation changed since the beginning of tourism in the area?
	How do you feel about the tourists that come to the area?
Concluding questions	Of all the things we've discussed today, what would you say are the most important issues you would like to improve …?
Conclusion	• Thank you for participating • If there is anything you are unhappy with or wish to complain about, please contact ***** or speak to me later