

Adapted excerpt from: A guide to assess barriers to key maternal, newborn and child health interventions from the perspective of beneficiaries and to involve them in identifying solutions

Focus group discussion (FGD) with caregivers of children under the age of 5 years to determine barriers to vitamin A supplementation

Objective: 1) To learn about barriers to vitamin A supplementation from the perspective of caregivers 2) To obtain caregivers' ideas about how to ensure all families get their children vitamin A supplements

Method: Focus group discussion with caregivers of children under the age of 5 years, key informant interviews with key stakeholders in the community

Key considerations

- Selection of participants should be purposive to include 10-20 caregivers of children under the age of 5 years (to be determined locally: whether or not it is appropriate to include a mix of some who used health services when their child was last ill and some who did not or whether it will be important to separate out these two types of participants)
- Facilitation team should work as one interviewer and one note taker. If possible, tape record discussion.
- Begin with standard introduction, including purpose of the assessment (see Annex). Encourage participants to share their honest opinions, even if they have different opinions to those being expressed by others in the group. Also encourage participants to be respectful of others' opinions, even when they differ from their own.
- Obtain consent for participation following locally approved guideline.
- Listen for (and document) any local terms used that might be important to inform the development of appropriate questions for the household survey.

Facilitation guide for FGD (to be modified for key informant interviews)

1. Have you heard of vitamin A supplements? *If at least some participants answer yes, ask:*
 - What are they and why are they given to children?
 - *If participants mention that supplements can prevent and/or treat disease, ask:* What kinds of diseases can be prevented/ treated with vitamin A supplements?
 - *Unless already mentioned, ask specifically whether or not participants have heard of "xerophthalmia" or "dry eye syndrome" (use locally appropriate term) and what causes it.*
2. Do you know how often it is recommended that young children receive vitamin A supplements? *After participants provide answers, confirm that children 5 years and younger should receive them every 6 months.*
3. What if anything, makes it difficult for families to get vitamin A supplements for their children every six months? *Probe: What are your ideas about how to ensure more families get vitamin A supplements for their children every six months? Probe until the full group provides ideas.*
4. Who in households is involved in deciding whether or not a child should or should not go for immunization, get vitamin A supplements or de-worming treatment? Is there anyone else that is usually involved as well?
5. Are there community-based workers (such as community health workers) who visit homes with children who talk about vitamin A supplementation? *If participants answer yes, probe to understand more about what the community workers do during these visits.*
6. Thank the participants for their time and remind them of the purpose of the assessment as well as whom to get in touch with if they would like more information about the assessment.

If, based on the responses to question 4, it is discovered that others within the household (e.g., husbands, mothers-in-law, etc) are responsible for making decisions about immunization, vitamin A supplementation and deworming treatment, conduct a focus group discussion/ key informant interviews with those types of participants using the above questions.

Annex: Sample consent for focus group discussions

(Can be modified for key informant interviews)

Hello, my name is _____ and these are my colleagues _____. We are here on behalf of [name of organization]. We are interested in hearing from you about barriers that affect the health of children and women in your community. Your viewpoints will be very helpful to us in getting a better understanding of the problems and difficulties people experience.

The information that you provide will be kept confidential so we hope you will feel comfortable giving your honest opinions about the problems families face. Even if you have a different opinion to those being shared by others in this group, please share it. We want to hear all your opinions. Please also be respectful of the others who share their thoughts today. If you do not agree with what they say, please feel free to let us know but you can do that in a respectful way.

Our team is working on behalf of the [District Health Management Team] but is also independent of them. We are here to learn from you. The issues you raise can help shape future health programmes and activities.

Are there any questions? *(Continue to answer any questions raised until there are no more and then proceed to the questions in the facilitation guide.)*

Please sign this form with your name or an X to signify that you agree to participate in this discussion.

Signature (or X) of participant

Date

Signature of witness

Date