

# MSF Urban Spaces

Tips on:

**Designing and Conducting a  
Focus Group Discussion**

from

**Facilitators' Workshop for  
MSF Urban Spaces**

**May 2018**

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## Higher Incubator Giving Growth and Sustainability

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MSF FGD Guide

Founding Donor / Ιδρυτικός Δωρητής



# A Handbook for Designing & Conducting a Focus Group Discussion

May 2018

## Main Topics

- What is a Focus Group Discussion?
- What is the main objective of a Focus Group Discussion (FGD)?
- What are the key principles and actions for successfully organizing a FGD?
- What is the role of the moderator / facilitator?

## FGD

- Qualitative research tool
- Get deeper into any given subject
- Usually it is even better to follow the completion of a quantitative research (questionnaires)
- Focus on the whys and not so much on the whats

## Step 1: Objective

- An idea of what happened in the cities under focus was provided by the questionnaires
- Get some further input on the “whats”
- Understand the “whys” and “hows” different MSF offices were successful in (a) mobilizing their members and (b) leading/participating in societal responses towards the refugee crisis

## Step 1: Objective

- What is the objective of the FGD?
  - Will define structure
  - Will define invitees
  - Will set the questions / roadmap

## Step 1: Objective

Understand the “whys” and “hows” different MSF entities were successful in

- (a) mobilizing their members, and friends of MSF and
- (b) leading/participating in societal responses towards the refugee crisis.

## Step 1: Objective

- ✓ Understand better the “hows” and “whys” MSF “associative members” were mobilized around the migration crisis response, what went well and what did not go well. Can it be improved?
- ✓ Explore deeper the “hows” of MSF connectivity with others, what worked well and what did not work well
- ✓ Get some insights on how MSF can overcome challenges it had, as they are described in lessons learnt

## Step 2: Invitees

- You need to bring 7-8 representatives of the reality you are researching

**Convenience sampling methodology:** non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher

We care more to get the people and make them talk than put too much effort on having the most calibrated sample

## Step 2: Invitees

- People may not come and you have invited just a few
- Make early arrangements – take note of invitees availability
- Make calls
- Reminders 2-3 days before FGD
- Some no-shows may occur

## Step 2: Invitees

Two FGDs both involving around 7-8 participants.

One “mixed” FGD consisted of 2-3 MSF Executive and Staff (MSF E&S), 2 MSF Associative Member (MSF AM), 3-4 “non-MSFers”

- ✓ The aim of this FGD is to explore interactions between MSF and non-MSF constituents of the migration/refugee crisis and get valuable insights of how the different stakeholders have understood (a) the crisis and (b) MSF relevant stance.
- ✓ Although not directly aimed at, it could be possible that it will reveal to what degree and why MSF Associative Member are found closer to non-MSFers as well as how the “MSF E&S” and “MSF AM” relationship has conditioned how non-MSFers understand MSF as a whole.

## Step 2: Invitees

One “focused” FGD consisted of 3-4 MSF Executive and Staff and 3-4 MSF Associative Members

- ✓ The aim of this FGD is to explore in a deeper way the relationship between “MSF E&S” and “MSF AM” and how this has conditioned the latter’s mobilization and the overall MSF approach to the migration/refugee crisis.

## Step 3: Timeline (indicative)

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Planning								
Participants' selection								
Facilitation								
Analysis/Reporting								

## Step 4: Facilitation

### Methodological things (facilitator's responsibility):

- ✓ Create a relaxing environment
  - ✓ Casual discussion with everybody before start, welcoming, mingling
- ✓ Prepare set of questions – not to be read!
- ✓ Prepare roadmap
- ✓ Checking on aim:
  - ✓ everybody to talk
  - ✓ none to capture the discussion
  - ✓ Go back to discussants for elaboration of points raised
  - ✓ Pass through main points – get what you are aiming at!

## Step 4: Facilitation

### Preliminary Tasks

1. Identify the Participants and create a list
2. Choose the Facilitator
3. Develop the Questions
4. Invite Participants
5. Verify Invitation to Participants by Phone
6. Finalize Room arrangements
7. Reminder Call to Participants
8. Organize all the appropriate material

## Step 4: Facilitation

### 1. Welcome the participants.

Thank you for coming today.

### 2. Introduce Facilitator.

### 3. Purpose of Discussion:

The purpose of today's discussion is to.....

### 4. Informed Consent (See Appendix I).

Inform the participants about the Informed Consent and give them a few minutes to read it.

- **PAUSE:** Are there any questions about the informed consent document?
- **COLLECT:** If there are no more questions about the informed consent document, please sign.

Ensure participants retain a copy.

## Step 4: Facilitation

- ❑ What is your opinion about the connection of MSF with wider civil society during the migration crisis response? How effective do you think MSF has been? (One needs to clarify that we refer to the way we mobilized our social resources and connected with others)
- ❑ As an active citizen and as a member of your NGO/organization how effective do you see yourself/your organization in the connection with other civil society initiatives during the refugee/migration response crisis? What worked well? What did not work well?
- ❑ Based on your experience, how would you describe the response of wider civil society to the refugee and migration crisis? What were the main elements? What worked well and what did not work?
- ❑ Regarding working with others, in what ways would you have overcome the difficulties on the cooperation?

## Step 4: Facilitation

- ❑ What is the role our volunteer members could have played? In what ways could they have been better connected as MSF members with other initiatives, teams of volunteers, etc?
- ❑ According to your questionnaires most of the activities that took place were one-off activities (not part of an overall strategy). Why do you think this happened? How could it have been better organised? What are the respective experiences of the participants that do not come from MSF?
- ❑ Take a bit of time to imagine how you would have designed an activity or certain activities, so as to have maximum impact. What would it be? What would the role of MSF associative members would be?

## Step 4: Facilitation

1. What is the connection between the activists (grassroots people) and the MSF, how were MSF “formalities” challenging connection with activists?
2. In many events, MSF people joined them without the official MSF banner. This led to other participants not “seeing” MSF supporting them. How could MSF (un)official presence in other events be better connected to MSF itself (both as organizer and participant)?
3. For Initiatives not connected to MSF (due to limitations of MSF), what could be done in order to connect them with MSF / who is the one who should undertake this initiative?
4. How can MSF intellectual resources be utilized?
5. In what way, if any, sustainability of actions was secured?

## Step 4: Facilitation

### Additional questions on “focused” FGD:

- Please describe the average MSF Associative Member
- How and how regularly MSF Executive & Staff connect/communicate with MSF Associative Members in general? In particular?
- How has media conditioned the response to refugee crisis?

## Step 4: Facilitation

### Horizontal Key Points

- Location of event/proximity to the city centre (will be geographically defined by each group)
- Networking through MSF Associative Members
- Cooperation with other NGOs in organizing events
- Tailor made approach for individuals to feel valued and recognized
- Motivations / expectations of people involved in events
- Bottom up approach / strategic planning sweet spot identification – leading also to follow ups.

## Step 4: Facilitation

Thank you for coming today.

Remember that the thoughts you shared with us today will be used to for the purposes of this project “.....”.

Remember that your identity will remain private. What was said should remain confidential.

Ensure documentation of attendees.

Reiterate contact information—if they have questions or concerns.

## Step 4: Facilitation - particularities

### FGD Main Rules

Everyone gets a fair hearing.

It's OK to disagree, but don't personalize it; stick to the issue.

No name-calling or stereotyping.

Speak for yourself, not for others.

Personal stories stay in the group, unless we all agree that we can share them.

#### *To encourage discussion (if none actually talks)*

Ask participants to think about an issue for a few minutes and write down their responses to the question.

Ask each participant to read - and elaborate on - one of their responses.

Note the responses on a flipchart/whiteboard (the recorder may also take notes, but if the group is not responsive, it might be helpful for them to see responses on a flip chart or board).

#### *Red flags*

If one participant tries to dominate the session, the facilitator should invite each person to speak in turn.

Avoid interviewing friends in the same group as they can form cliques. If cliques do form, suggest taking a break and changing seating positions upon returning from the break.

Avoid personal confrontation - allow the group to police itself (e.g. "do others in the group agree?").

Respect someone's right to be quiet, but do give him or her a chance to share their ideas

Use differences of opinion as a tonic of discussion - the facilitator must not take sides

## Step 4: Facilitation - particularities

### Caution 1

There needs to be a clearer explanation on what is **the role of MSF members/volunteers** and how they participate in the organization. In the introductory part, the facilitator needs to explain more the MSF structure and the role of members.

Another term that needs to be defined is whom to we refer to when we talk about **wider civil society**. In Athens, when referred to it we refer to both formal and informal initiatives, and we include in this volunteer groups, local NGOs, neighborhood initiatives, municipality initiatives, refugees and migrants groups. This needs to be defined according to each location's relevant environment.

## Step 4: Facilitation - particularities

### Caution 2

Some people tend to answer questions with limited words – this is because they are either shy or they prefer not to open up and say what they really feel on a subject. This is most often with people that have a negative opinion about something. The facilitator needs to decrease the room for escaping the question by politely going back to the respondent and asking him/her to elaborate.

## Step 4: Facilitation - particularities

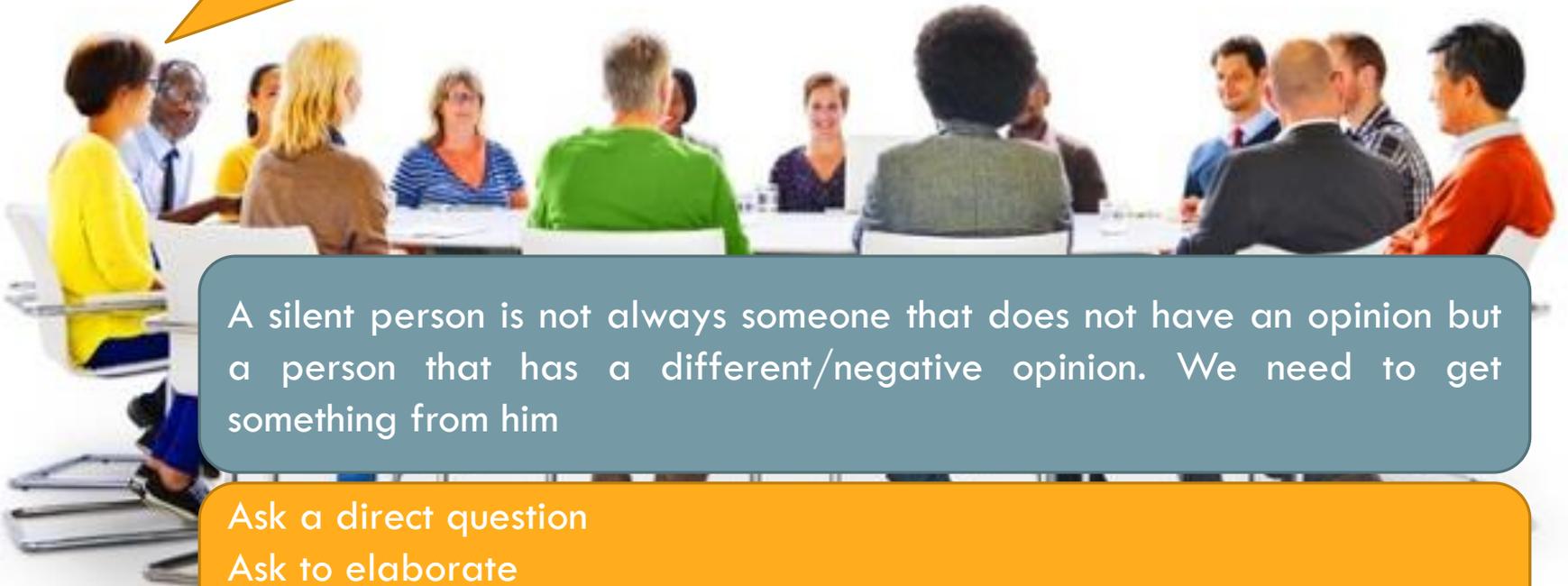
### Caution 3

It is important to take into consideration the background of people participating in the focus group. **Questions will be adapted according to the reality and the group of each city.**

Always look for building on constructive suggestions – sometimes there is no need to pose questions and literally stop the discussion but direct it where you want.

People take more time to speak and they can also complain. Facilitator needs to take this into consideration and allow some space for this but make sure he/she redirects them to the constructive part of the debate that is suggestions on the follow up, what they would find constructive etc.

## The “silent” person



A silent person is not always someone that does not have an opinion but a person that has a different/negative opinion. We need to get something from him

Ask a direct question

Ask to elaborate

Challenge mainstream position of the group for making him feel more comfortable to express himself/herself



The “superstar”

It is a usual situation in a FGD having a person that “dominates” the room. The problem is not only that this person does not leave enough time available for the others to express themselves but that he/she also “sets the agenda”.

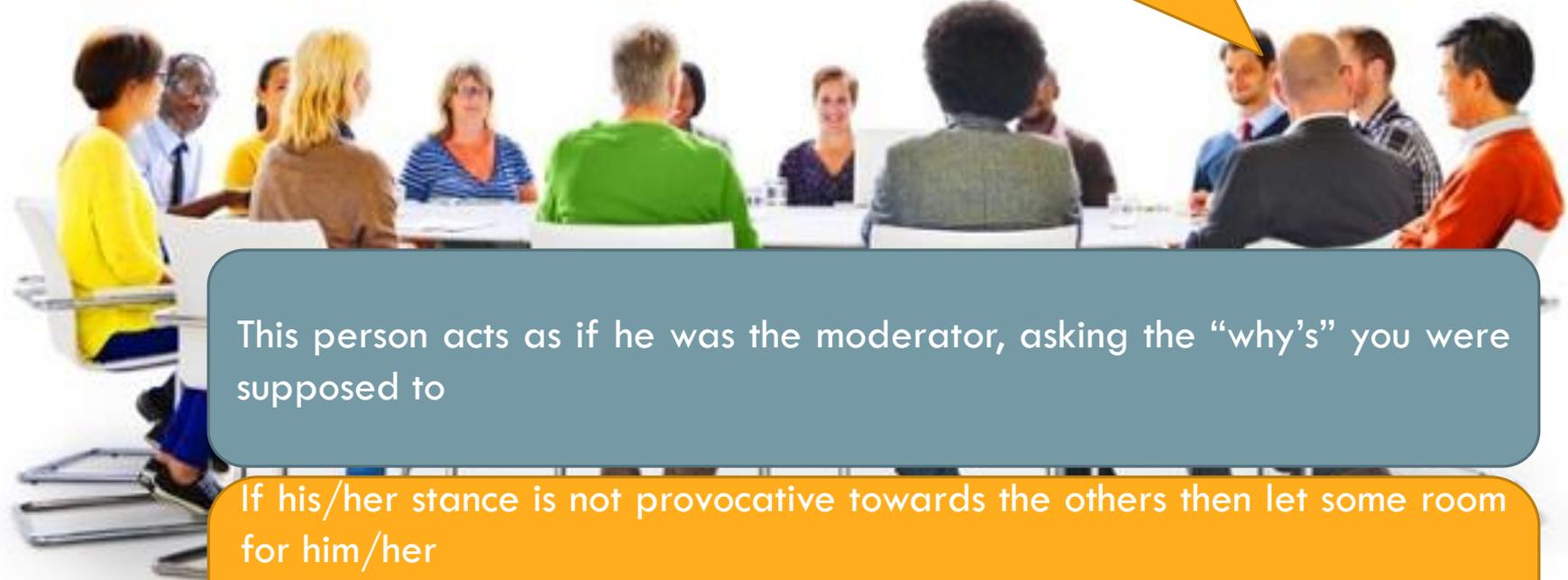
Tell him/her that his/her views are very important but let’s hear also what the others have to say  
In the next question/point try to first engage other participants



The “one big moment” person

This person usually speaks once and never again though the initial first comment gives the impression of a person who has things to say

Try to push him/her to participate in the next questions/points  
If he/she is “revealed” early in FGD try to involve him/her as often as possible  
If he/she is “revealed” near the end try to get more comments (even after the FGD)



The “moderator”

This person acts as if he was the moderator, asking the “why’s” you were supposed to

If his/her stance is not provocative towards the others then let some room for him/her

If his/her stance is more of the “devil’s advocate” type and others feel discomfort politely/humorously say “let me have my role, you may get me fired!” and then take control of the discussion not allowing him/her to pose questions until he/she minimizes his/her stance

## Step 5: Analysis

- Three sources of information:
  - Notes
  - Memory
  - Audio tape-recording
- Summarization of data:
  - Indexing
  - Management
  - Interpretation

## Step 6: Reporting

- Start immediately or very soon!
- Include:
  - Procedure
  - Participants
  - Answers to objective
  - How the discussion helped developing the knowledge presented



**Good Luck!**

**Any  
questions???**



Thank  
you!