

## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTION ROUTE

### AFGHANISTAN

Moderator name or code		Note-taker name or code	
Date FGD conducted		District, Province	
Time FGD started at		Time FGD completed	

*\*Below section in italic are reminders and guidance for moderators/note-takers and should not be read out loud to participants.*

#### FGD Participant Demographic Data

No.	FGD participant age	FGD participant gender	District and province	Contact Details/Mobile Number: (optional, upon consent)
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

*[Note to moderator: Ensure that all participants are above the required age range as specified per assessment location (i.e., can remember the identified periods of high food insecurity); if any minors are present, i.e. they came with other participants who have childcare duties, they can stay physically present without participating in the FGD if that is the safest option]*

#### **MODERATOR'S OPENING COMMENTS: WELCOME, INTRODUCTION, INSTRUCTIONS, TO PARTICIPANTS** **[ 5 – 8 MINUTES]**

- Welcome and thank you for volunteering to take part in this focus group discussion on lived experience of severe and extreme food insecurity in Afghanistan. My name is [...] and I am the moderator. I am here assisted by [...]. We are both from [REACH], which is a part of ACTED that focuses on humanitarian information to inform the United Nations and the larger humanitarian community.
- You have been asked to share your point of view and experience about severe and extreme food insecurity in Afghanistan. With your participation, we are hoping to increase our understanding of how

different communities experience periods of severe hunger, the processes and events that lead to this period, and how communities cope with this distress. While we understand that this might differ based on context, we hope to develop a better understanding of how to anticipate periods of severe hunger in the future.

- **It is important to recognize and acknowledge that this FGD has no impact on whether you, your family, and your community will receive humanitarian assistance.**
- This FGD will be entirely **ANONYMOUS**. Neither yours or anyone else's names or personally identifiable information will be shared outside of this discussion by REACH. It is also important that **no participant shares the names or personally identifiable information of any other participant to anyone outside this group.**
- The discussion will take approximately 80 minutes. Any participant is free to decline answers to any questions or leave the FGD. However, given our focus on your experiences, we would encourage you to be as involved as possible.
- **Do all participants consent to participate in this focus group discussion?** Yes ☐ No ☐
- **Do all participants consent for this session to be recorded?** Yes ☐ No ☐
- Does anyone have any questions about the FGD process? If not, let's start.

## Section I: Calendar and Coping

1. We will start by describing and characterizing the past 2 years, in terms of food security.

*[Instruction: Prepare a 2-year calendar on a flip chart with hijri shamsi months and local events indicated (use [livelihood zone](#) to indicate seasons accurately per assessment location). Fill out food sources, livelihood activities.*

**Probes:** What are the typical livelihood and food sources for most households?

2. What do people in your community do if they do not have enough food or money to buy food during a typical lean season (fasli-ye gorosnegi/fasli loga)?

**Probes:** Think about what households in your community do to increase their income or food? How households in your community distribute food within their household? How households in your community change what they consume? Do Households resort to other less preferred sources of income?

*[Instructions: Draw a timeline of an increasingly food insecure period and discuss these with the participants to ensure a joint understanding (see example below). .*

*Ask participants to discuss the first actions they may take if they do not have enough food or money to buy food during a typical lean season . Write the answer on a post-it note and place it on the timeline. Follow-up to see if this answer can be broken down into more specific actions applied at different severity levels of food security. If yes, write each on a separate post-it note and place them in the appropriate category of the graph. Look at the four topics listed as probes in the box below (also color-coded) below as example but **ask about these only if addressed by participants first**. If possible, please use one color of post-it note or markers for each of the four topics (e.g., **selling of livestock**, **distress migration**, **food type consumption**, **selling of assets**).*

*If there are no further comments under category "1 Minimum/Stress", ask what they do if those actions are not enough and food security continues to worsen. Continue to write down discussed actions on post-its and would be categorized as "2 Severe".*

*Finally, ask what they would do as a last resort in case of extreme levels of food insecurity and write down additional actions on post-its and would be categorized in "3 Critical/Catastrophic".*

	1 (Minimal/Stress)	2 (Severe)	3 (Critical/Catastrophic)
Food Insecurity	Food insecurity is minimal or stressed, as what a community might experience during a typical lean season, resulting in some livelihood coping strategies over a short-term. Hunger may be a result for short periods.	Food insecurity is causing significant food consumption gaps and is a problem affecting health in the wider community, forcing households to do things beyond what they would do in the lean season. Hunger might be prominent.	Food insecurity is threatening lives, causing illness and death. Resulting hunger is likely at high levels.
Selling of Livestock	Selling of chicken as they are most easily recuperated	Selling of male goats and cattle as they provide fewer food resources.	Selling of female goats and cattle as they are more valuable for reproduction and to produce milk.  Selling of pack animals as they are needed for livestock and transportation.

*Note to moderator: Please allow participants to discuss any coping strategies but if any of the below categories of coping are noted by participants, ask the relevant probing questions.*

*Probe: **selling of livestock***

- Which livestock do households sell first and which ones do they sell last (e.g., small livestock like chicken/goats, cattle, pack animals, male livestock, female livestock)? Why?

*Probe: **distress migration***

- Who migrates first and who migrates last (e.g., split households with men/boys leaving first and women/girls later, the most vulnerable vs. less vulnerable households, etc.)? Why?
- Where do people migrate to first and where to at a later stage (e.g., migration to neighbouring districts, provincial capitals, rural areas, urban centres, etc.)? Why?

*Probe: **food type consumption***

- Which are the first types of foods that households consume to cope with food insecurity and which ones are the last (e.g. consume certain wild foods at the beginning, more risky wild foods at severe levels of hunger, dead animals, insects, etc...)? Why?

*Probe: **selling of assets***

- Which types of assets do households sell first and which ones do they sell last (e.g., kitchen equipment, seeds, ploughs, etc.)? Why?

Hamal	Sawr	Jawza	Saratan	Asad	Sunbula	Mizan	Aqrab	Qaws	Jaddi	Dalwa	Hout
Harvest											
							Lean Season				
			Seasonal Floods								
								Period of Food Insecurity			

**X Harvest**

Successful winter harvest

Had remaining seed inputs from past season and good shelter conditions to store them.

**X Flood**

Flood swept away seeds leading to a failed harvest

Limited access and functionality of nearby markets made it difficult to purchase food.

**X Pest**

Pest destroyed remaining harvest

1

2 – Hunger became prevalent and community members reduced physical movement

1

3 – Hunger affected the lives of many community members who became skinny, very weak, often sick, looked for medical assistance.

1. Sold female animals
2. Male family members migrated

## Section II: Severe Food Insecurity

1. When was the last time this community experienced extreme food insecurity, and how do you characterize it?

*Note to moderator: Using the calendar above, try to determine the months, years or distinct events when this period took place, e.g., Aqrab 1400 – Hamal 1401*

*[Instruction: If no specific period is identified, or only few participants have memory of them or are unwilling to share, skip to question 2.]*

- a. Do you have a specific name for how your community refers to this period, such as "qahty/loga"? *Note to moderator: Look for terms of life-threatening food insecurity in local languages/terminology Probe: Why was this period called "qahty/loga" [use local term]?*

*Highlight the period of extreme food insecurity identified under question 1 and ask them to describe it. Start asking the participants about the first event they perceive to have impacted this specific period of extreme food security. Mark the event in the calendar in **blue** and note down the perceived immediate impact in **black**. Ask the participants if they can think of any contextual factor (e.g., physical constraints, infrastructure, exhausted coping strategies, etc.) that reinforced the impact of the shock and add it in **green**, if any. Ask the participants to rate the level of hunger in that moment using the same scale as above from **1-3 [Minimum-Catastrophic]** and mark it in a separate timeline in **red**. Finally, ask what their communities did to cope with this period of food insecurity and write it underneath.*

*Repeat as many times for as many shocks leading to different periods of severe food insecurity as needed until participants cannot remember any additional events.*

*Finally, ask the participants when they perceived that the period of extreme food insecurity was over. Similarly to before, mark the moment on the calendar in **blue**, summarize in **black** what led to the end of this period and indicate the level of resulting hunger in **red (1-3)**.*

*[As much as possible draw symbols to support less literate participants in adding to the discussion.]*

2. What are the events in your community that cause higher levels of food insecurity than normal?

**Probes:** *How about events affecting cultivation? Livestock? Casual labour opportunities? Markets? The ability to get physical cash? Disease? Policies? What are the effects of these events on food insecurity? Did those events affect the availability of food or income? Their access? The frequency of meals? Did your coping strategies change, and how, after these shocks? In terms of food security, was it more difficult for some social groups? How did you chose one coping strategy over the other?*

- a. What are the effects of these events on food insecurity?

*Probe: Did those events affect the availability of food or income? Their access? The frequency of meals?*

- b. Which of these events do you feel most often affect your community in a single year?

- c. Of the events listed so far, are there any that commonly occur at the same time or are there any contributing factors that tend to worsen the effects of these events on food insecurity? If yes, can you explain which events and how they work together?

*[Example: A flood on its own can impact food insecurity. If the community is affected by a flood that spreads a specific pest, the impact on food insecurity may be even higher.]*