Yemen Food Security and Agriculture Cluster

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR POST DISTRIBUTION MONITORING OF UNCONDITIONAL CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE THROUGH FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

This technical note outlines Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) standards for unconditional cash/voucher assistance under the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC). Aligned with global frameworks like the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) principles, PDM ensures programs effectively address household food insecurity, reduce harmful coping strategies, and align with local market dynamics. It verifies equitable access by assessing adherence to FSAC vulnerability criteria (e.g., female-headed households, marginalized groups,.....) and identifies barriers such as documentation gaps. PDM also evaluates market impacts (e.g., price stability, availability of goods) and strengthens accountability through beneficiary feedback to improve transparency and responsiveness.

2. WHAT AND WHY POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING (PDM) - FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)?

2.1 WHAT IS POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING - FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS?

Post-distribution monitoring (PDM) is a systematic process used by humanitarian actors to gather feedback from aid recipients after the assistance is delivered. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are a qualitative method used in Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) to gather in-depth insights from beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of unconditional cash/ voucher assistance.

2.2 WHY FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS?

PDM (FGD) is critical to:

Evaluate community perceptions of the program's implementation (e.g., efficiency, effectiveness, satisfaction, appropriateness, accountability).
Understand how cash/vouchers were utilized and their impact on household food security.

Identify barriers faced by marginalized groups (e.g., women, disabled individuals) in accessing or using assistance and adequate of gender equity.
Assess market effects (e.g., price fluctuations, vendor readiness).

2.3 WHO TO INCLUDE?

Access to and benefits from unconditional cash/voucher assistance can vary significantly based on gender, age, ethnicity, disability, displacement status, and social marginalization. To ensure inclusive programming aligned with FSAC vulnerability criteria, PDM - FGD processes should capture insights on patterns of inclusion/exclusion and differing perceptions across groups, focusing on whether assistance reaches those prioritized by FSAC's context-specific criteria (e.g., displaced populations, female-headed households, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities).

Key groups to include in FGD sampling:

The group should be as representative of the local community as possible (men and women, people of different age, wealth and activity groups, beneficiaries and non- beneficiaries of the programme).

Non-recipients: Identify exclusion errors (e.g., households meeting FSAC criteria but not receiving aid) and community perceptions of targeting fairness

2.4 SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS.

Strategic Resource Allocation: PDM (FGD) requires dedicated time, technical expertise, and funding. For cash/voucher programs, this includes resources for monitoring digital platforms (e.g., mobile money systems), market analyses, and beneficiary consultations.

Separation from Feedback Response Mechanisms: PDM is not a substitute for response and feedback channels (FRMs). FSAC partners must link PDM with FRM.

3. DESIGNING THE UCT/VOUCHERS POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING - FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS?

3.1 COLLABORATION & CAPACITY BUILDING

InvolveFSL program teams, M&E staff, and local partners to tailor FGD questions to the operational context (e.g., digital payment barriers, cultural norms).

Adapt tools to align with FSAC vulnerability criteria (e.g., displaced populations, female-headed households).

3.2 TIMING OF POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING (PDM) - FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS?

Conduct surveys 2–4 weeks post-distribution to allow beneficiaries time to access markets, redeem vouchers, and assess the adequacy of cash transfers in meeting food security needs.

In contexts with high population mobility (e.g., displacement crises) or rapidly shifting market conditions, conduct on-site FGD during distributions. Note that this limits insights into post-purchase usage or longer-term impacts on household resilience.

3.3 METHODOLOGY & TOOL DESIGN

DATA COLLECTION APPROACHES

Group Composition:

8–10 participants per session to ensure manageable discussions.

Separate groups by gender, age, or vulnerability status (e.g., female-only FGDs to discuss intra-household decision-making).

Include both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries to capture exclusion errors and community perceptions.

Duration: Limit to 1 hour to avoid respondent fatigue.

FGD Tools: FGD tools should combine multiple-choice questions (for quantitative analysis) with open-ended probes (for qualitative depth). This hybrid design:
Standardizes responses for efficient data aggregation.

Enables trend identification (e.g., 70% cited "food" as primary cash use).

facilitate analyzing the collected data.

KEY DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR CASH/VOUCHER PDMS (FGD)

ALIGNMENT WITH FSAC OBJECTIVES

Include indicators such as dietary diversity, reduction in negative coping strategies, and equitable access for FSAC-prioritized groups (e.g., displaced households, female-headed families).

Tailor tools to capture context-specific challenges (e.g., digital literacy gaps, mobile network coverage).

FOCUS AREAS.

Transfer Effectiveness

Program Perception: Satisfaction, communication clarity, challenges.

Targeting & Coverage: Fairness of beneficiary selection, exclusion errors.

Cash Utilization: Spending patterns (food, debt, healthcare), gender dynamics.

Accountability: Awareness of feedback channels (e.g., hotlines).

Market Impact: Price changes, vendor capacity.

Gender equity: assessing female direct involvement in assistance utilization.

ETHICAL & PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Avoid Sensitive Disclosures: Do not design tools to solicit reports of fraud, exploitation, or protection incidents. Direct beneficiaries to dedicated Feedback mechanisms (FRMs) for grievances.

Limit Respondent Burden: Keep surveys under 20 minutes and focus groups to 1 hour. Prioritize concise, actionable questions.

Contextual Adaptability.

3.4 SAMPLING & INCLUSION

Prioritize FSAC Vulnerability Criteria: Ensure representation of households selected under FSAC targeting frameworks (e.g., malnourished children, displaced populations, ethnic minorities, female-headed households, etc.).

Sampling Method: For household interviews, use purposive sampling to ensure inclusion of diverse vulnerability profiles. This method allows for intentional selection of participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the objectives of the PDM.

Data Collection Method: This tool refers specifically to qualitative data collection through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). FGDs are designed to gather in-depth insights into beneficiary experiences, perceptions, and preferences.

Group Size: The discussion group should be kept small (up to 10 participants, including beneficiaries or non-beneficiaries) to facilitate effective moderation and meaningful participation.

Community Consultation: Always consult with communities or beneficiary groups to ensure that the selected specifications and approaches are aligned with their preferences and needs.

3.5 FOCUS GROUPS & KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

For targeted distributions, focus groups should deliberately seek to include vulnerable individuals (recipients and non-recipients). Depending on resources available for PDM, multiple focus group sessions should be held to ensure that different community sub-groups are represented and given the opportunity to express their opinion.

For PDM (FGD), The group should be as representative of the local community as possible (men and women, people of different age, wealth and activity groups, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the programme). As a good practice, focus groups should include from 8 to 10 individuals maximum for an optimal discussion.

3.6 DATA UTILIZATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

Linking to Program Adjustments: Use findings to refine transfer values, delivery mechanisms (e.g., switching to mobile money in cash-lite economies), or complementary interventions (e.g., nutrition education).

Integrate with FRMs: Ensure beneficiaries know how to report issues (e.g., via hotlines, community committees) beyond the PDM process.

4. PLANNING FOR POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING

4.1 FORMING A DATA COLLECTION TEAM

Diverse Representation: An FGD requires a facilitator and a notetaker. Ideally the facilitator should have previous experience of facilitating FGDs, ensure the facilitator and notetaker can either speak the community language fluently or are able to work with an interpreter.

Contextual Sensitivity: Avoid teams that could inadvertently heighten tensions (e.g., hiring Facilitiators/notetakers from rival clans in conflict zones). Prioritize candidates with experience in cash/voucher programming or digital payment systems (e.g., mobile money agents).

Inclusion of Marginalized Groups: Partner with local organizations representing persons with disabilities or minorities (e.g., Muhamasheen communities) to recruit members of the team who understand their unique barriers to accessing cash/vouchers.

4.2 TRAINING AND PREPARING FACILITATOR'S/ NOTETAKERS

Core Training Modules:

CASH/VOUCHER-SPECIFIC SKILLS

Understanding cash transfer mechanisms (e.g., mobile money, paper vouchers) and redemption processes.

Navigating market-related questions

METHODOLOGY PRACTICE

Conduct mock surveys on cash utilization and focus groups on intra-household decision-making.

Train pairs to alternate roles (facilitator/note-taker) for qualitative discussions, emphasizing probing without leading (e.g., avoiding assumptions about spending choices).

ETHICS AND SAFEGUARDING

Data Protection: Secure handling of financial data

Safe Referrals: Train collecting data team to direct disclosures of fraud, exploitation, or protection risks (e.g., aid diversion) to established complaints mechanisms (CFMs).

DISABILITY INCLUSION

Collaborate with organizations like the Yemeni Association for the Blind to train Facilitiators/notetakers in accessible communication (e.g., Braille surveys, sign language).

CONTEXTUAL ADAPTATIONS

Address challenges specific to Yemen (e.g., inflation, liquidity crises) by training the teams to recognize market instability indicators during interviews.

4.3 VALIDATION

Prior to implementation, all tools and protocols should be validated through small-scale pilot tests to ensure that they are culturally, socially and context appropriate

Facilitators/notetakers must adhere to mandatory reporting protocols for suspected misconduct (e.g., fraud, exploitation, SEA) during cash/voucher activities. Prior to deployment:

PSEA Reporting

Provide contact details for their agency's PSEA focal point.

Train facilitators/notetakers to report disclosures immediately without investigating or soliciting details.
Complaints Mechanisms (CFMs): Share CFM contacts (e.g., hotlines, SMS, WhatsApp number) with respondents wishing to raise concerns about distributions, redemption issues, or aid-related grievances.

Key considerations:

Never use PDM tools to collect sensitive allegations—direct beneficiaries to CFMs.

Respond neutrally to disclosures (e.g., "Let me connect you with our support team.").

5. IMPLEMENTING THE UCT/VOUCHERS POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING - FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

5.1 WHO IMPLEMENTS THE PDM (FGD)?

To ensure objectivity, data should be collected by trained, independent team members not involved in cash/voucher distributions. Ideal implementation teams include:

M&E teams.

Dedicated PDM teams (if M&E team has limited human resources), composed of staff unrelated to the distribution process (e.g., finance or logistics personnel).

5.2 MANAGING FACILITATORS/NOTETAKERS

Supervision: Assign supervisors to oversee Facilitators/Notetakers, verify data quality, and monitor daily/weekly targets (e.g., 15–20 surveys/day).

Plan with the local branch where and when the FGD should take place and who should participate, so they can plan this with the community. Try to avoid participants being selected by community leaders if this could lead to bias

Data Quality Checks: Supervisors must review forms for consistency (e.g., ensuring responses on cash usage, programme satisfaction, ...).

Accountability: Enforce strict adherence to data protection protocols (e.g., anonymizing mobile money transaction details).

5.3 ADMINISTRATION PROTOCOLS

Location: Private, accessible spaces (e.g., community centers).

Informed Consent: Explain purpose, anonymity, and voluntary participation.

Documentation: Assign a note-taker; record sessions (with consent).

Limit use due to safety risks (e.g., targeting female-headed households in conservative areas). Always coordinate with community leaders.

REACHING MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Collaborate with relevant organizations (e.g., disability NGOs, women's groups) to access groups like Muhamasheen communities or disabled beneficiaries in hard-to-reach areas.

6. ANALYZING AND UTILIZING POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING (PDM) DATA

6.1 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The analysis of PDM (FGD) data for unconditional cash/voucher assistance should be led by Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) teams to ensure objectivity. Where M&E capacity is limited, FSAC partners can seek technical support from cluster coordination bodies, Cash Working Groups, or external experts familiar with cash-based programming. The analysis should focus on key themes such as the adequacy of transfer values (e.g., whether amounts met household food needs), market accessibility (e.g., challenges redeeming

vouchers or using mobile money), and equity (e.g., inclusion of FSAC-targeted groups like displaced populations or female-headed households).

Data must be disaggregated by sex, age, disability, and displacement status to uncover disparities. For example, analysis might reveal lower satisfaction among elderly recipients struggling with digital payments or lower voucher redemption rates in conflict-affected areas. Patterns such as non-responses to sensitive questions (e.g., intra-household decision-making) should be flagged, as they may indicate cultural barriers or protection concerns. The goal is to prioritize actionable insights.

Quantitative inputs should be calculated as response frequencies (e.g., *"80% reported price increases post-distribution"*).

Disaggregate by beneficiary status/gender (e.g., *"Female-headed households: 60% used cash for debt vs. 40% for food"*).

Qualitative data as thematically code open-ended responses (e.g., "Debt repayment linked to medical emergencies").

Compare multiple-choice trends with qualitative explanations to validate findings.

6.2 REPORTING & UTILIZATION

Findings should be synthesized into concise reports that highlight actionable recommendations, such as switching to mobile money in regions with high voucher fraud risks or partnering with local vendors to improve redemption processes. These reports should be shared internally with FSAC program teams to guide adaptive measures (e.g., revising targeting criteria) and externally with clusters, NGOs, and financial service providers to harmonize approaches across the response.

Lessons learned, such as the impact of cash transfers on dietary diversity or challenges in mobile network coverage, should be documented in institutional knowledge repositories to inform future programs. Crucially, FSAC partners must communicate summarized results back to affected communities through accessible channels (e.g., community meetings) to validate findings, demonstrate accountability, and build trust. For instance, sharing data showing improved market access for displaced households in in any displacement area can reinforce transparency and community engagement.

7. DATA PROTECTION

Privacy & Confidentiality: Conduct interviews in a private location. Politely request others leave to ensure confidentiality.

Verify Respondent Identity: Confirm the respondent is the cash/voucher recipient or head of household. If collected by a proxy, ensure both are present.

Introduction (Script): "Good morning/afternoon, my/our name is/ are_____. We work for the [.....]. Do you know the [ ]? [If no, explain. We are here today to discuss _____. The information provided will be used by the [ ] (and potentially other responders - Government, UN agencies, NGOs) to_____.."

Voluntary Participation: Participation is optional, with no rewards. Responses are confidential and will not affect future eligibility for aid.

Respondent Rights: They may skip any question or stop the interview at any time.

Consent: "Do you consent to proceed?". The interview should start only if the beneficiary agreed to proceed.

If declined: Thank them and share CFM (Complaint Feedback Mechanism) details for future feedback.