Briefing note: Conducting focus groups

A focus group is a way of exploring a subject with a small group of people, ideally made up of between **6-10 participants**. Focus groups differ from interviews in that they allow for a range of views and perspectives within a single session. They also reveal dynamics between people in the group which can be useful for understanding issues in the wider community.

However, a danger with focus groups is that **some participants may come to dominate** proceedings. Furthermore, the sorts of responses you get may not be as frank as they would be in an interview because **some people are not comfortable expressing their views openly in front of others in the group**.

It is the job of the researcher to facilitate the focus group in a way that encourages the various participants to express themselves without any one person coming to dominate, whilst at the same time guiding the discussion towards the themes the researcher is interested in. A good focus group is often one where the researcher does not have to speak much but rather is there to facilitate and encourage discussion whilst others do the talking.

The focus group discussion is the method you will be using that most directly explores the water management arrangement in the village. Therefore, it is important to ensure that you facilitate the discussion in such a way that it addresses the 8 different attributes of a functioning water management arrangement, as defined by the Hidden Crisis project. A useful approach is to ask <u>What? Who? How</u>? That is, for example, to ask **WHAT** management attribute, **WHO** is involved, and **HOW** they are involved. Please see the concept note on Exploring Water Management Arrangements for further details of this approach.