adaptation Agora

(Grant Agreement 101093921)

T2.1 Focus Group protocol for workers to identify enablers and barriers to climate adaptation and citizen engagement

HORIZON-MISS-2021-CLIMA-02-05 - Local engagement of citizens in the co-creation of societal transformational change for climate resilience

Coordinated by cmcc

ecsa European Citizen Science Association

cima RESEARCH FOUNDATION

International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis IIASA www.iiasa.ac.at

ATC ATHENS TECHNOLOGY CENTER

APRE Agenzia per la Promozione della Ricerca Europea

ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability EUROPE

ibercivis

UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE

BSC Barcelona Supercomputing Center Centro Nacional de Supercomputación

SEI Stockholm Environment Institute

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Actions under grant agreement No 101093921

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Background

The present document constitutes the protocol to be followed when carrying out focus group activities with multi-ethnic minorities within the framework of climate-change adaptation processes. The focus group is framed within a set of activities with stakeholders to empower and engage citizens in the co-design and co-production processes, which have as an overarching objective to establish plans and strategies to help cities, metropolitan areas and/or regions to adapt to climate change risks that may impact that geographical area.

This is a core part of the activities developed within the Horizon Europe AGORA project which supports the analysis of methodological tools for citizen-engagement and has tested diverse approaches that may be applicable in diverse settings. This protocol has been implemented with the specific target group in four diverse socio-economic frameworks, namely the metropolitan city of Rome, Italy; the city of Zaragoza and Community of Aragón, Spain; the city of Malmö, Sweden and the city of Dresden, Germany.

The type of climate risks each geographical area is exposed to is different, the sociodemographic reality is also unique. By testing the protocol in diverse frameworks, the methodology can confirm the reproducibility and validity of the processes involved. In the following sections, each protocol step is outlined for the in-person focus group sessions. They begin with an introductory session which includes the arrival/registration, consent, background and objective of the focus group, and then the methodologies implemented. In the next sections of this protocol, the outline and content will be explained, taking as an example the implementation in the Focus Group carried out within the AGORA project in the Rome Pilot.

Implementation of the methodology

Focus groups can provide valuable insights and allow individuals to express their views without specific limitations when compared to the implementation of other types of methodologies. It is recommended to have pens and paper at hand to allow participants to write down their ideas and thoughts during the different activities.

Targeted Stakeholders

This focus group targets female workers to obtain their perceptions of climate change and understand how its impacts affect their daily lives, and to create adaptation and engagement initiatives that are effective for this demographic. Potential stakeholders include individuals who hold state or government jobs, non-profit workers, corporate or private industry workers, etc.

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Location and challenges of face-to-face meetings

As focus group methods require the identification of individuals and their personal views, data protection becomes a key factor. Ensuring the face-to-face event will be carried out in a location that allows for the meeting to be developed in private and that all participants are respectful and aware of each other's privacy is crucial. Because of this, selecting an adequate venue and having an enclosed space dedicated to the meeting during a specific timeframe, without interruptions, is the first step to carrying out this workshop. Making sure participants are knowledgeable of the location is also highly important, particularly in large metropolitan areas such as the city of Rome, where there are large distances.

When choosing the physical space, it is also important to consider the implications that it may have for specific groups of people. Considering multi-ethnic target audiences, it is important that all individuals feel welcome. Which is why selecting a physical space that may only identify with one group or that may cause rejection from some members is not recommended. This is for instance the case of choosing physical spaces that can be identified with a particular religion. In this context, if the focus group is organized by an independent research organization, carrying it out within the premises of this institution can be a good alternative. Other options may include institutions that are not religious or a-politcal and may be associated with the topic at hand such as non-governmental organizations linked with climate adaptation, biosphere conservation, etc.

It can be evaluated whether translations into other languages are necessary, depending on the level of domain that participants have of the vehicular and/or official language spoken in the city/region where the event is taking place. This applies also to the potential need for interpreters or translators, which should be addressed prior to the day of the event. When sharing the information and selecting the participants, which will depend on the scope and objective of the research, this factor would be taken into consideration. This may also determine the location, depending on these language needs.

In the case of the AGORA Rome Pilot activities, the University of Roma Tre premises were deemed adequate for the focus group face-to-face encounters, as it has a central location, it is an independent institution, and individuals participating would feel welcome as well as it being accessible.

LOCATION: Uni Roma Tre, Via Ostiense, 133B, 00154 Roma RM, Italy

In this context, as individuals arrive, it is important that they feel well-received, and a good environment is created. In most cultures, a welcome coffee with some snacks can be recommended, or refreshment beverages and snacks. The combination of food and drink should be present

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independent of the event's timing. It is important to consider potential limitations and adequacy of the product offering, considering the audience.

For instance, it is important to consider potential food restrictions participants may have, such as intolerances, allergies, religious, or personal choices. Because of this, choosing alternatives that can be a good fit-for-all such as gluten, lactose-free and vegan, can be a good mix that ensures all participants will find suitable choices and feel welcome. This can be an initial subconscious first step that will make them feel welcome and willing to participate in good spirits.

Aside from the initial welcome refreshments, it is important that participants are aware of the implications of their participation, the usage of their personal data as well as how their views will be integrated into the research. As participants arrive, the registration process should include sharing the necessary documents and framework and signing the consent form which can be done digitally or physically.

In the event photos will be taken before, during or after the event, it is important to specify this information in the consent document, as well as how their personal data will be treated in alignment and respect with the European GDPR. It would be positive to also take an initial photo with participants of the event (provided they have granted their consent) as some may need to leave early or right when the focus group activity finishes and therefore may not be in the picture.

Lastly, materials to carry out the focus group will include visual or physical support with guidelines for each activity, key definitions and concepts and examples; pencils/pens, sheets of paper, canvas or pre-defined tables that participants will fill out (depending on the approach).

Focus Group Design and General Considerations

In this section, the focus group protocol will be outlined with the different sections including:

1. Introduction section
2. Activity 1
3. Activity 2
4. Activity 3
5. Follow-up survey

Introduction Session

The introductory session will include all activities carried out from the moment individuals arrive until the first activity of the focus group takes place. It will also comprise a brief presentation on the background of the focus group activity, sharing which is the purpose, who will be taking the lead, facilitators, total duration, step-by-step processes that will be carried out, how the data will be analyzed and stored and who will have access to it and for what purpose. Timing for this first phase

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has been estimated to be a total duration of 25-30 minutes, which also allows for latecomers to be present by the time the information-sharing phase starts.
The agenda for this introductory phase has been divided into three blocks, with an estimated duration included in the description below:

- **Welcome (10 minutes):** Initial arrival, registration (including signing consents) and refreshments. If all participants are present, during this phase it would be ideal to take a group photo.
- **Meet and greet (10 minutes):** Participants get to know one another; they should be seated in a circle or semi-circle (maintained throughout the entire duration of the event). All individuals can look at one another, generating greater trust.

Brief Round of Introduction
Self-introduction using the following questions:

- Name and surname
- Type of job (indoor or outdoor)
- Workplace location (city center, east side, suburbs, etc.)
- Commuting method (train, metro, bike, car, etc.)

These questions should be written, so that all participants can have a visual reference and the cards with this information should be placed in the middle of the circle. Depending on the group, a general timeframe for personal introduction can be established.

Introduction to the Event - 5-10 minutes:
Welcome message and overview of the session, where participants will also be able to ask any doubts or questions regarding the focus group, processes, objectives and/or follow-up. Here the main climate change-related issue will also be presented.

An "Introduction Narrative" sheet should be created; this can be in a physical or a digital (e.g. slides) format depending on the type of attendees and/or physical space available. The oral explanation should be accompanied by visual elements that can allow all attendees to follow and adequately understand the event, also considering the possibility of having the information in bilingual or multilingual formats if necessary.

Activity 1: Sharing Session

Estimated time: 20-25 minutes

Method: *Shared Experience*

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Once the introduction section is over, and participants have been able to introduce themselves and get to know one another a bit, the first activity to follow is an exchange of personal experiences around the topic at hand. During the introduction to the event phase, the main issue is presented (which can be comprised of sub-topics or derived challenges) and participants are encouraged to provide their insights on this matter.

Introduction to Activity 1 (5 minutes approx.)
To foster the exchange, guiding questions can be created and set in writing (either in physical or digital format, following the same principles as in the introductory section). These can also help individuals focus on more specific aspects, and it can be useful to either share pens and papers or a copy of a sheet with the questions for each participant so they can write down any ideas that come to their mind before, during or after they speak and before, during or after other members of the focus group share their experiences.

Development of Activity 1 (25-30 minutes)
Participants will take rounds and have time to share their personal experiences linked to the topic at hand, they may mix information from their city/country of origin and their experiences in the city/region where they currently live and which is the subject and focus of the activity. It is important that all participants have time to share their experiences and moderators have an important role in keeping track of time. Once individual views have been expressed, an open discussion to "connect the dots" and find a comprehensive common overview of the situation is established. There should be at least 5 minutes at the end to coordinate a joint approach and have a shared understanding of the problem being analyzed, with input from all participants.

Questions that the facilitators pose to the participants can include:

- Can you tell us an example of how climate change has directly affected your work environment or daily activities?
- When did you realize the impact of climate change in the context of your work?
- What challenges have you encountered?
- What strategies have you adopted to address them?

Facilitators need to promote openness and respect from all individuals, and the objective is to establish a unified view on the situation at the end of this first activity. This will be the basis of the remaining activities, which is why it is highly relevant that during this first activity all members can contribute and provide their input, so the final overview truly represents the sum of the individual perceptions, experiences, and approaches.

Activity 2: Co-creation of soft adaptation solutions

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Method: *Nominal Group Technique*

After the initial experience-sharing and taking the common understanding of the problem as the baseline information for this second phase, participants will be guided through a sequence of steps to co-create potential solutions. The placement of each person partaking in this activity should be in a circle or semicircle, and they can remain in the same place as during activity 1 or they may choose to move, always remaining in a round setting where all participants can see one another.

Introduction to Activity 2 (5 minutes approx.)

Facilitators will begin this second phase by explaining the framework of climate change adaptation, which should include the difference between **SOFT** and **HARD** adaptation measures (with examples). While conducting this oral presentation, the moderator should distribute an example sheet with specific actions, policies and strategies that have already been implemented within the same region or elsewhere. Participants should have at least 2-3 minutes to read, comprehend and ask any questions they may have.

The activity used the Nominal Group Technique, which begins with individual brainstorming followed by idea sharing and group discussion. After the group discussion, participants vote on the best ideas.

Execution of Activity 2 (35-40 minutes)

Once participants have understood the adaptation measures, the *Nominal Group* technique will be explained, with the sequential steps that will be followed. In this case, there will be an initial individual phase when each participant will ponder potential measures to propose, followed by idea sharing in which everyone will take turns to share their ideas with the group. Following idea sharing, there is a clarification session and a group-wide discussion will occur and an overall co-creation process will be developed based on the different proposals.

Moderators should emphasize the relevance in identifying, prioritizing, and discussing the implications of each adaptation measure to address the impacts of climate change. The explanation sheet that was used in activity 1 can also be helpful and a guidance, although facilitators may choose to avoid introducing that sheet at this stage to avoid participants having any baseline idea. This will depend on the effect that is intended, both being valid courses of action.

During activity 2 the sequence will be:

- Individual Reflection Activity (5 minutes): participants will work individually, writing on blank paper / using examples if necessary.

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- Sharing and clarification (10 minutes): Participants take turns sharing their ideas without any elaboration or discussion. Once each participant shares their idea or solution, there is time for clarification.
- General Discussion (10 minutes): This final phase allows for discussions of the shared ideas and solutions.
- Selecting an adaptation measure: Following this discussion, the participants should decide on the most effective soft adaptation measure as a group. To facilitate the selection process, the facilitator should write keywords of the concepts expressed by the participants on post-its while the discussion takes place. At the end of the discussion phase, participants can mark (2 at most) post-its to prioritize the solutions they find most effective. This can help to streamline the selection process.

COFFEE BREAK (10 min)

Facilitators should be aware that during coffee breaks it is very common to see participants continuing the discussion. It is important to allow this process to continue in an informal setting, and during or after the coffee break to enable the selection to be reviewed if needed.

Likewise in the event the group did not reach consensus by the time the coffee break arrives, it is also valid to enable the discussion to continue during the refreshment as for some individuals this can be a better option to allow discussions to reach consensus. There are many cultures in which agreements come during informal periods and they may feel more comfortable in this framework.

Moderators should be aware of this and consider the most important objective is not when the agreement and final list of most agreed upon adaptation measures is finalized, but to have this selection ready to begin the next activity. Hence, it can be during the coffee break that the last threads of the discussion are addressed and prior to starting the next activity, the list is finalized.

Activity 3: Co-Evaluation of engagement methodologies

Estimated time: 60 minutes

Method: *Think, Pair, and Share*

After the coffee break and the establishment of agreed-upon adaptation measures, participants will go through various steps to evaluate the most effective engagement methods for multicultural communities. Participants will stay in a circle where they can choose to stay in the same seat as the previous activity or to move.

Introduction to Activity 3 (3 minutes)

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This phase of the activity begins with facilitators outlining the activity, emphasizing that participants will identify, prioritize, and discuss engagement methodologies related to the selected soft adaptation solution that was chosen in the previous activity. Facilitators should also remind participants to evaluate the options based on their preferences. Examples of engagement methods should also be provided either in presentation format or on sheets to be handed out. Providing examples will help spark inspiration for participants to develop their own engagement techniques or identify methods that they feel are most effective.

Execution of Activity (45min – 1 hr.)

After the introduction of the activity, facilitators will explain the Think, Pair, and Share method and the sequential steps will be conducted. With this method, an initial individual brainstorming begins with each participant thinking engagement methods, followed by the pairing phase in which everyone will share their ideas with a partner using the, and, lastly, a sharing phase in which each pair will share their final thoughts on the engagement methods they identified.

Facilitators should emphasize the importance of identifying, prioritizing, and discussing the implications of each engagement methodology to promote the adaptation measure identified in the previous activity. Having an engagement methodology sheet that explains each methodology and its pros and cons could be helpful, although facilitators may decide not to share this with participants to avoid having baseline knowledge and bias. This will depend on the aim of the focus group, both being valid courses of action.

During activity 3, the sequence will be:

- **Individual Reflection (7 minutes):** participants will work individually, writing on blank paper or using examples if necessary to identify engagement techniques that are most effective for their target group and chosen adaptation measure. During this time, the facilitator(s) will identify and separate 5 cards (from 1 or 2 categories) based on the previously selected soft adaptation solution.
- **Prioritization of Cards or Emergent Input (10 minutes):** The facilitators distribute the 5 cards (which have been previously explained to the participants), ensuring that each participant reads and understands the set of cards. Any questions or clarifications will be addressed at this stage. Individually, participants then select 2 methodologies from the proposed cards that they believe their target group would be most willing to engage with. If feasible, it is interesting to explore why other methods were not chosen.
- **Pair Discussion and Prioritization (15 minutes):** The facilitators will divide participants into pairs and each pair will discuss how they believe the preferred engagement methodology should be applied, as well as the reasons for their preferences. The facilitator(s) can use these guiding questions:

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  - Why didn't you choose the other methodologies? What did you dislike/what are the disadvantages?
  - What challenges do you see with the other methods and how can they be overcome?
  - Why did you choose these 2 methods? Why do you find them attractive? What advantages facilitate your engagement with this method?
  - Do you have suggestions on how we can modify these 2 selected methods to better suit you and involve more people?
- **Sharing Discussion (10 minutes):** Participants then return to the plenary group to share their reflections, providing additional insights and feedback to the other groups. At the end of this phase, participants should be invited to raise the card or mention the methodology they prefer.

At the end of this session, participants should prioritize the card or mention the methodology they prefer and, if possible, explain HOW they believe it should be implemented (from the perspective of decision-makers).

Thank You and Way Forward

After the event, the facilitator(s) give closing remarks and ask participants to fill out a follow-up survey which can be done in person, online or via email. The facilitator(s) should re-emphasize the importance of the focus group and explain how the results will be implemented.

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