

MEASURING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OPIOID AGONIST THERAPY (OAT)

A GUIDE FOR ASSESSMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF DONOR TRANSITION

ANNEX 6: Focus Group Guide: OAT clients

Preparation

Preparation for focus group discussions should include the selection of the group of clients. You should seek 4–7 OAT clients, preferably from 2 or more sites and from at least one (in case of limited geography) or more locations. The group should ideally be balanced in terms of substance used, the site they attend (if there are different approaches and models), and gender, etc.

The space where the focus groups discussions will take place should be safe, quiet and comfortable, without other people in the room and with water and snacks available. People should be reimbursed for their travel and time as they are giving their expertise and are doing this, most likely, during their otherwise uncompensated time. In some settings with limited funding, fair compensation of people's time might be challenging, and this should be discussed in advance.

One should plan the timing of the focus group to accommodate people's needs of taking OAT, employment etc.

Guidance

The following document is a guide for conducting a focus group.

Please feel free to shorten the list of questions if you consider it necessary — exclude those for which you have sufficient information and leave those where you have information gaps.

Based on the *Annex 4* tools, you could extract the key unscored components and use them for surveying the participants of the focus group, either in writing (individual rating before or after) or use it for a collective focus group's response. In addition, you could prioritise 3–10 questions from the list below.

In case your desk review answered most of the questions about the current status, then you could focus the interview on: 1) the effects of transition, including which elements are at most risk; and, 2) key opportunities and ways forward to increase sustainability based on identified aspects under each Issue Area or under specific Indicators.

Template for the focus group

Cover page

Start time __: __ / End time __: __ / Total time ____ minutes

Date: __/ __/ ____

PARTICIPANT NAME	OAT SITE, CITY	CONTACT	NUMBER OF YEARS ON OAT	CONSENT RECEIVED
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

Introduction used at the beginning of the focus group:

Hello, my name is [Insert Name]. I am an assessor conducting an assessment to measure the sustainability of opioid agonist therapy in [Insert Country] in the context of donor transition. This assessment aims at understanding the current status of various aspects of sustainability — political, resources and access to services, including good practices and progress, challenges, and the impact of the transition process and opportunities to improve. We seek a range of perspectives, and I appreciate you speaking to me today. I will be using the information you provide today, along with information that I collect from key informant interviews and from a desk review, to develop a country report with the results of this sustainability assessment. We expect the report to be drafted by [Insert Month/Year] and presented to [Insert a Body or Meeting].

Before starting, I want to inform you that this focus group discussion will be confidential. However, I would also like to ask in advance for your oral permission to potentially use some of the information you provide during the conversation as direct quotes in the report that will be published. These quotes will be anonymised (i.e. indicated by the type of informant, e.g. focus group of OAT clients without indication of individual names). I will be recording and taking notes of our group discussion. If you have concerns over the quotes associated with your specific OAT site, please let me know; in this case, I will put measures in place to protect your anonymity.

A set of guiding questions for the focus group

Services

- 1 Is there a high **demand** for OAT from people who have opioid dependence? Why?
- 2 Have you — or any other OAT clients you know - been involved in **sensitisation trainings** or are you aware that such education is made available for health professionals and the police in your country?

Give an example.

- 3 Have you — or any other OAT clients you know — been **involved in an assessment and improvement** of OAT quality? If yes, how?
- 4 Overall, in terms of service development — their availability, coverage, accessibility, quality and integration or how they are organised — what would be **2 current aspects of services**, the improvement of which would have a major impact on advancing access in the country in the next 2 years? (i.e. demand and/or uptake for the service and the service supply) (try to get an agreement of the top 3 things).
- 5 How to **improve these priority aspects** specifically? Have there been attempts to improve those aspects in the past? Why has failed? How to do that differently?

Policy, governance, funding and transition

- 6 Do you feel that there is support for OAT from the country's leadership, the police, and society at large, i.e. there is a **political commitment** for OAT? Give examples?
- 7 Do you feel confident that there is **sustainable funding** secured for OAT based on what you know? Give examples?
- 8 How much are OAT clients involved in **governance** that develops OAT at a national level? Give examples of that involvement and its impact.
- 9 What could OAT clients do to be better, and more meaningfully, **involved**?
- 10 How does **transition** impact on OAT — the services, funding, policy, or sustainability in general? Any examples of positive impact/opportunities or negative influence that you have observed? Or how could OAT be better addressed in the donor transition planning processes?

General

- 14 If you could change one thing about OAT in your country, what would that be? How could that be achieved?

Closure

As you close the focus group, thank the participants for their valuable time and insights shared. Remind them how the focus group results will be used. You should leave your contacts with each participant in case they have additional thoughts. Agree on follow-up of data or documents to be provided if any were discussed during the focus group.