

Guide 4 Annex 5: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different approaches to assess stigma?

The tables below summarise the methods and techniques used and list the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

Table 1. Qualitative methods

Methods	Short description	Advantage	Disadvantage
Interviews	<p>An interview is basically a conversation between an interviewer and interviewee. The interviewer coordinates the process of the conversation and asks questions to get information about a certain topic.</p> <p>There are 3 different types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured.</p> <p>A life history is a specific interview method in which interviewees are asked to document their life over a period of time.</p>	<p>Interviews are suitable to discuss sensitive topics, which makes them suitable for understanding causes, consequences and experiences with stigma and related aspects such as mental wellbeing.</p> <p>Interviewees often feel they are the centre of attention and might appreciate the interest in their personal life and experiences.</p> <p>Interviews lead to in-depth and detailed information about an individual experience.</p> <p>There is the possibility to clarify your questions, probe deeper and ask for more examples.</p> <p>Can reveal unsought, but significant, information.</p>	<p>Time consuming</p> <p>Costly</p> <p>Interviewers need good communication skills.</p> <p>The presence of the interviewer and way of questioning can influence what the respondents say or how they say it (e.g., Interviewers might give answers they think the interviewer wants to hear).</p> <p>Limitations with generalizability of the findings.</p>
Focus group discussion	<p>In a focus group, a group of persons are brought together to discuss specific issues under guidance of facilitator.</p> <p>The group is usually 6 to 12 persons with more or less the same characteristics – for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persons with leprosy or another health condition • only women who have children • only teenagers 	<p>You can use this method to learn relatively quickly about a range of perspectives on issues of interest.</p> <p>Ideas of others might serve as cues for people to express their own ideas.</p> <p>It becomes possible to discuss issues and generate solutions together.</p> <p>Relatively low cost.</p>	<p>People may not want to talk in each other's presence about certain sensitive topics.</p> <p>In a focus group you will have group norms, rather than individual ideas and practices.</p> <p>A small number of participants might give most of the comments and can influence the tone of the entire group.</p>



Methods	Short description	Advantage	Disadvantage
	<p>In a focus group, participants can express their feelings, opinions, beliefs, experiences etc. They have also the chance to react to each other.</p> <p>Different exercises can be part of the design such as participatory mappings (e.g., body map, village map), matrix.</p>		<p>Facilitators need good communication skills.</p> <p>Data analysis is difficult, because the interaction takes place in a social environment. What people say should be interpreted in this context.</p>
Observations	<p>Observation is a way of collecting information about behaviour and characteristics of people, objects or certain phenomena by watching and recording one's observations systematically.</p>	<p>People are normally observed in their 'natural' environment.</p> <p>Observations provide information about actual behaviour. This is unique, because often a researcher needs to rely on what people tell (or remember).</p> <p>Low cost.</p>	<p>The presence of the researcher can influence the way people usually behave. They may or may not do certain things.</p> <p>This method only provides you with information you can actually observe, and not the reasons for people acting, feeling or thinking as they do.</p> <p>The way you interpret the information may differ from how other persons experience the situation.</p> <p>Time consuming.</p>

Table 2. Quantitative methods

	Short description	Advantage	Disadvantage
Questionnaire	<p>An instrument consisting of a fixed series of questions. Together, these questions provide information on certain topics, such as a particular type of stigma.</p>	<p>The set of questions may have been previously used and developed according to a certain theory, found to be practical in use, and tested as to whether it provides information about what you want to know.</p> <p>A questionnaire interview requires less skill from the interviewer than qualitative measures (e.g., in conducting and assessing the interview).</p>	<p>Questionnaires give limited information and only on the questions included in the instrument.</p> <p>Questions might be interpreted differently across other cultures and countries. Also, sometimes people are not used to answering the type of questions used in questionnaires. This may</p>



			influence the validity of the responses.
Scale	<p>A questionnaire intended for measurement: a fixed series of questions that belong together. Responses are scored on a numerical scale (e.g. 0-4). The purpose is to quantify the information from respondents on a specific issue, such as stigma.</p>	<p>Scales give a numerical score. The score says something about the presence or absence of stigma, as well as the severity.</p> <p>Scale interviews can be conducted with much larger numbers of respondents than in-depth interviews, so that you can study a representative sample of the population.</p> <p>The scores can help in monitoring changes over time.</p>	<p>Scales give limited information, only on the questions included in the instrument.</p> <p>Scales do not tell you <i>why</i> a person gave a particular answer.</p> <p>People might not be used to answering the type of questions used in scales. This may influence the validity of the responses.</p>
Questionnaire or scale with vignette	<p>A short description or example of a person, event, or behaviour to which respondents are asked to react or give their opinion.</p> <p>You can use this only in combination with another method, for example a scale or a questionnaire.</p>	<p>By visualizing a situation, the respondents are better able to imagine how they would act.</p> <p>A vignette is less personal and therefore a good way of collecting information on sensitive topics.</p>	<p>A vignette is still a hypothetical situation; there is no guarantee that a respondent will react to a real-life situation in the same way as to a vignette.</p>