Module 3: The Build Step

Structure of the Module:

In the Assess step we described how a literature review and a consultation with experts could allow us to map what was known and unknown about the target behaviour. However, this process normally identifies many knowledge gaps. Formative research is required to help fill those gaps. In this module we describe the aim of formative research, suggest how to select formative research methods to answer your key research questions and provide guidelines for how to conduct these ethically and in a cost-effective manner. This module is broken into the following sections:

Key learning points:

- The Build step is all about adding to the information generated in the Assess step.
- The primary way of doing this is by conducting formative research. Formative research involves trying to understand more about the lives of people in our target site and does this by using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods.
- By the end the formative research the aim is to have generated rich insights into what determines your target behaviour. This means that you should have gained knowledge on all of the things mentioned on the BCD checklist.
- The first step in formative research is to identify what you don't know and form some preliminary research questions. The BCD formative research toolkit can then be used to identify research methods that are likely to help you find the answers.
- Formative research is generally short and cannot hope to learn everything about behaviour. However, it is still research and therefore it is still important to think about ethics, consent, and confidentiality.

Supporting Resources

- Example of an information sheet and consent form
- Formative research toolkit

Introduction
The Build step is designed to fill in the information gaps identified during the Assess stage. This involves a form of data collection called **formative research,** often abbreviated to FR. The objective of FR is to fill in key details about the target behaviour in its real world context, beyond what was generated from the literature and experts in the Assess step. It generally utilises qualitative methods, although some quantitative data may also be gathered. It allows the program design team to gather new insights about the drivers of behaviour, to understand the context and how it can be used to design the intervention. The findings of the FR provide the material for the detailed creative brief, which is explained in the next step - Create.

Why Formative research?
Effective programmes cannot be designed in an office, rather they must be built on understandings of the everyday reality of the target individuals in their homes and workplaces. For behaviours about which a lot is known it may be sufficient to spend only a short time checking up on what has been gathered during the Assess step. However, many behaviours (for example food hygiene, menstrual hygiene and safe faeces disposal) are still poorly understood and likely to need careful investigation.

How should formative research be conducted?
Formative research in BCD is different from that which is usually conducted in a number of ways. First of all, it is designed to carefully answer questions that will help us to construct a Theory of Change for behaviour. Hence it focuses on *behaviour* and not so much on what people say about their behaviour. This is because many of the drivers of behaviour are non-conscious and so cannot easily be explained by the people involved. This is why self-reported data from FGDs or in-depth interviews are not necessarily the best methods for understanding behaviour. This is particularly the case for hygiene behaviours, many of which occur at a sub-conscious level. Formative research 'the BCD way' uses in-depth interviews and FGDs not as methods in and of themselves, but as settings in which to conduct much more participatory activities with individuals on either a one-to-one basis or within a group.

Another difference in this approach is that BCD FR uses a flexible approach. Each team member contributes anecdotes, patterns they noticed or associations – anything which appeared to be significant or surprising. These items are then sorted into BCD checklist categories, and discussed. When there is agreement, the item becomes a finding. When people in the room continue to contest the item, they become questions for further exploration, or are set aside as irrelevant to the on-going investigation. When topic areas in the BCD checklist are under-represented, they are also marked as topics for further investigation.

What methods should I use for FR?
Methods should always be selected based on the research question you want to answer. We encourage you to branch out and think creatively in your FR. Focus hard on the questions you are trying to answer and then think, 'how best can I get some insight'? In BCD we have appropriated methods used by consumer researchers and designers, but also invented many of our own, depending on the behaviour in question and the answers we are seeking. Table 1 sets out a series of these methods and shows the sort of questions that they can be used to answer. In the supporting resources you will find each of these methods described in more detail.

It is also important to remember that no research methods are perfect, all have biases or weaknesses. By drawing together the findings from several methods we can often develop a better picture of the behaviour. This is what we call **triangulation**.

Table 1: BCD checklist with example research questions and potential methods to address them.

		Example Questions	FR Method
Behaviour	**Target behaviour**	What is the prevalence of the key risk behaviours? Who carries out the behaviours? When?	Observation (Unstructured, Structured, Participant, Video) behaviour trials, demonstrations, behaviour functions
Environment	**Physical**	How is water supplied? Are soap, potties and MHM materials available in local shops/kiosks? What is the state of toilet provision?	Transect walk, map drawing, site observation
	Biological	Are animals kept in kitchens? Is human and animal faecal material on the ground?	Rapid assessment surveys, measuring contamination
	Social	Do the target communities have active institutions (e.g. leadership, committees, WASH volunteers, trade associations?)	Social network mapping
Brains	**Executive**	Does the audience understand the need for handwashing? What do girls know about menstruation?	Prioritisation game, Worry Box, Free Listing, Clustering/Categorisation.
	Motivated	What could motivate handwashing, safe feaces disposal? (eg nurture, disgust, status, affiliation)	Superpowers game, Motive Mapping, Three Wishes, Drawing.
	Reactive	What cues target behaviour?	Word associations, demonstrations
Body	**Traits, Physiology, Senses**	Do elderly, infirm, young, pregnant, less able, etc have different needs?	Photovoice, I feel_______
Behaviour Setting	**Stage**	Where does the behaviour take place?	Observation
	Roles	What is the role played by the target audience and how does this relate to roles played by others?	Identity mapping, observation
	Routine and script	What are daily routines? What is the sequence of behaviours involved in handwashing/MHM according to the target audience?	Observation, Routine Scripting and diaries, change stories
	Norms	What handwashing/MHM behaviour is expected and approved of?	100 people, Norms vignettes, Norms testing (Bicchieri)
	Props and infrastructure	Is soap available in the house? What types? What implements are used for handwashing? What materials are available for MHM? Are potties in the house? Are there toilets? What state are they in? are they appropriate for MHM? Is there a handwashing place? Where is water stored?	Belongings inventory, Behaviour trials, Demonstrations, Attribute Ranking, Infrastructure monitoring.
Intervention	**Touchpoints**	What are the ways in which a programme can contact a target audience?	Touchpoint mapping
Context	**Programmatic, political, economic, social**	What programmes are active in region? (should be covered in Assess step)	Local Histories

When you are designing your formative research it is normally good practice to start with methods which will generate broad information first and then begin to narrow down on things of interest. Commonly this may mean starting with methods like observation as these are best for rapidly getting a snapshot of the behaviour, the setting and the roles people play within it. Often the next stage is see whether there are differences in the experiences of different types of people in the community. This is best done through methods which are conducted within one-to-one interviews. Lastly it is useful to confirm some of what you learned through methods conducted during group discussions as this will give you a better insight into norms. The table below provides a more detailed rationale for this.

Figure 1: Explanation of the order in which to do formative research methods

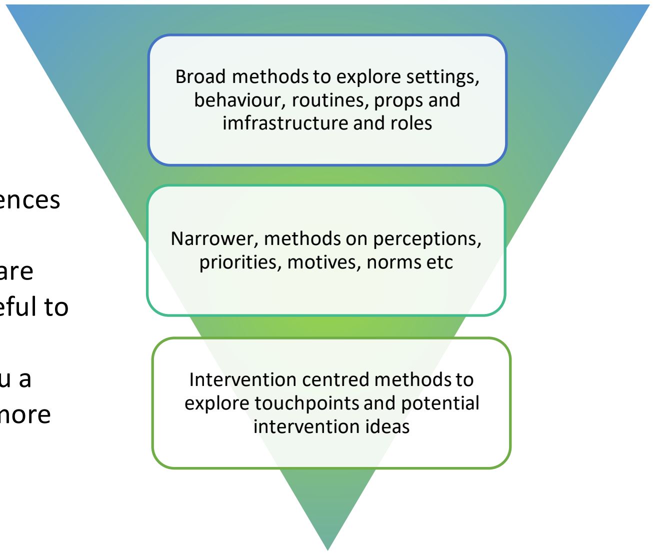

Table 2: A rationale for when to conduct different types of methods during formative research

Method	Explanation	What can be understood from this method	Limitations	When it works best in formative research
Observation and other Ethnographic approaches	The researcher observes the behaviour a participant. For the purposes of formative research this is normally done at the household and involves limited interaction with the participant/setting. We call this non-participant observation.	This is the best way of understanding behaviour in the natural setting in which it occurs. It can also help understand many of the elements of behavioural settings including routines, roles and objects.	Time consuming. Generates rich data that can take a long time to analyse. The behaviour of the participant can be affected by the observer.	Start
Methods that take place during one-to-one interviews	A range of methods – See Appendix 2. All involve the researcher interacting with one participant at a time in a private environment (often their household)	Good to explore the diversity of individual experience and attitudes. Good to explore topics that are personal or not easy to discuss in a group.	Poor at exploring actual behaviour as responses are self-reported and many participants may report what they think the researcher wants to hear.	Middle
Methods that take pace within Focus Group Discussions	A range of methods – See Appendix 2. The researcher interacts with a small group of people (3-10) at one time, in a central setting that is still private.	This method can help understand norms or confirm the generalizability of findings from other methods. You can learn from the interactions between researcher and the participants as well as the interactions between the research participants.	Poor for exploring sensitive/personal subjects. Can easily be dominated by strong personalities. Poor at exploring actual behaviour as responses are self-reported and many participants may report what they think the researcher wants to hear.	End

How rigorous should FR be?

Formative research is different from most academic qualitative research in that it is seeking insight, not a high level of certainty about findings. FR rather aims to provide an outline of all of the key factors influencing a behaviour in a particular context. However, any sort of research that is not rigorous is at best unhelpful, and at worst, misleading.

Formative research investigation can be as long or as short as time and resources allow. Just one day of immersion in the lives of your target audience is far better than no investigation, but a week to two weeks of intensive field work can provide real in-depth understanding. As a rough guide, it is normally worth spending 5-10% of the total budget for a behaviour change campaign on the Build step. Experience shows that most of what you will need to know to design an effective behaviour change campaign can be gathered in about two weeks of intensive field work carried out by a team of 2-4 people. The team should ideally comprise people with social science background, with good field work skills, and who can speak local languages.

Guiding principles for ethical FR

Formative research is still research and it is important that we think at all times about the effect our research could have on participants. Below we outline a few guiding principles of good research:

Ethics: Wherever appropriate it is good to submit your formative research proposal to a regional or national ethics committee. This may not always be possible but at the very least it should be shared with the local government, experts in the sector and WaterAid at a central level. Having lots of input into your research design will help you to think about things you may have overlooked.

Consent: As you are putting together your research proposal it is important that you develop an information document that you can share with participants. This should clearly explain what the 1) research aims to achieve, 2) what the participant will be asked to do if they agree to participate, 3) how much of their time it will take, 3) any harm or benefits that may come as a consequence of participation, 4) how the findings will be used and by whom and 5) that they will not be identifiable (their name and personal details will not be reported). In the information letter it is important to give as much information as possible. However sometimes telling the participant the exact behaviour you are exploring can bias their responses. This information should be translated in written form or read out to any participants who are illiterate. Written consent should be obtained for anyone over 18. Parents of children under 18 should give permission for them to be part of the research and these children should also be given the chance to give their approval. An example of an information and consent form is included in Appendix 1.

Confidentiality and data protection: It is important to anonymise data soon after collection. This can be done with an ID number or just by using socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. woman, aged 36). Data is precious so it should be stored safely in a locked/password protected location.

Documentation: We encourage the sensitive and appropriate use of photography and video footage during formative research. This must always be done with permission from the participant and it must be clear to them how this footage will be used. We recommend that wherever possible interactions with participants should be audio recorded, transcribed and translated. Taking notes while doing interviews, for example, is very hard. You will omit a lot of important detail and be unable to establish a good rapport with your participant.

Dissemination: Wherever possible it is good practice to attempt to feed results back to local government and communities so that they too can benefit from what is learned.