
Discussion Guide: Equitable Norms, Attitudes, and Behaviors

Group discussions with community leaders about equitable norms, attitudes, and behaviors can help leaders explore their own beliefs and practices, as well as those common within the community. This discussion guide includes suggestions for arranging and leading any group discussion, followed by sample questions and important ideas for discussing norms, attitudes, and behaviors relevant to prevention of GBV.

Arranging Discussion Groups (ahead of discussion)

- Identify a comfortable and quiet locations for discussions.
- Limit groups to 15 participants
- Complete discussions within 1.5 hours.
- Ensure lead facilitator has experience and/or training in facilitation. The facilitator must be able to ask probing and clarifying questions, demonstrate comfort and patience when talking about sensitive issues, positively manage negative or harmful comments, and respond appropriately to disclosures of GBV.
- Have a referral list of available services in case of GBV disclosure.
- Where possible, arrange same-sex facilitators for all male or all female discussion groups.

Introduction (5-10 minutes)

- Greet everyone, share introductions, pleasantries, and gratitude for any recent positive actions.
- Share general information about your organization and program (with any new participants).
- Present the purpose of the discussion.
- Agree to not share stories that identify individuals.

Discussion (30-45 minutes)

- Introduce topic of discussion and begin with a question or other prompts.
- Be sure to review questions/prompts and adapt them for context.
- Avoid “teaching”, talking too much, or arguing. Use prompts to keep conversation going and remember the discussion is also a learning opportunity for you.
- Do not feel pressure to use all questions/prompts.

Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

- Summarize key takeaways or ideas from discussion.
- Agree on any points for further discussion and make plans as appropriate.
- Thank all participants.

Prompts/Questions

GBV teams can explore a range of issues related to norms attitudes and practices. Discussions might focus on how norms, attitudes, and practices relate to specific forms of GBV, such as early/forced marriage, or discussions might focus more generally on power dynamics and the benefits of equal partnerships and nonviolence. Each sample cluster of questions below could be adapted for a single group discussion.

- Why are women vulnerable to violence? (When the question is answered probe further—keep asking why this is true.)
- People often talk about the man as head of the household. Do you know any situations where a man and a woman share responsibilities as heads of household? What do you think about this? Are there any benefits to sharing household responsibilities and decision-making?
- What does a happy marriage look like? Is the couple the same age or different ages? How did they meet? How did they decide to marry? Can you describe the roles of the husband and wife at home and in the community? Is he working? Is she working? Who is taking care of the children? Who is cooking? Who is making decisions? Are there children going to school? What are their children learning at home?
- Some families experience violence within the home. Children who witness their father beating their mother are more likely to perpetrate or experience the same kind of violence themselves. How do we break this cycle? What is required for women to be safe in their homes? What could lead a man who beats his wife to change his behavior?
- I'm concerned that some girls in the community are marrying before they are adults. Are you also concerned about this? For what reasons would a family want their daughter to marry young? Are you familiar with the health consequences of girls having children young? What are other consequences of early marriage? How do girls feel when they are forced to marry? Are girls who marry young likely to stay in those marriages? Will they be happy marriages? Will they raise happy children? If a girl's husband begins to beat her, could the girl find help anywhere? Would she be able to move out on her own? Would her family take her in?
- Can you think of a time when you felt powerless? How does it feel when someone else has power over you? Who do you have power over? Is power a good or a bad thing, or does it depend? Can you describe a good use of power? Does the community give more power to men than women? Is that fair? How are some men abusing that power? What changes would have to happen for women to have the same power as men?
- Share a brief fact related to a form of GBV (See **Fact Sheets** in *GBV Response Tools and Resources*). Focus on a global statistic, or a consequence. Ask what the group thinks about this. Is it a problem for this community? Why does this problem exist? Is anyone benefiting? Who is being hurt? What could be done to stop this from happening?

Important Ideas for Discussion

- Be familiar with consequences of GBV, including important points of global evidence. Information can be useful to open a conversation, to explain your concern and reason for raising issues, or to answer direct questions. Group discussions should not focus, though, on memorizing information but rather exploring topics. Make sure you listen more than you speak, and don't silence discussion with your knowledge of the topic.
- Remember not to be alarmed if someone raises a problematic point of view. This is likely a positive sign that you've created a safe space to air ideas, and exposing ideas is an important part of the process of behavior change. You can note your concern or disagreement without silencing discussion. Probe further. Ask others about their views.