
Discussion Guide: Exploring Potential and Benefits of Women’s Leadership

Group discussions about the potential and benefits of women’s leadership can be organized with community leaders (male or female) or other community members. This discussion guide includes suggestions for arranging and leading any group discussion, followed by sample questions and important ideas for discussing women’s leadership.

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

- Do you recognize women leaders in the community?
 - Probe for informal leaders, particularly where women's leadership in formal structures is limited. Do you recognize trusted women in the community? Are there women leaders within religious institutions? Among midwives? Elders? Business owners?
- What do you think about women leaders?
- Does the community benefit from women's leadership? What are the advantages?
 - Probe for advantages women might have in leadership- for example, reaching certain populations, modeling leadership for girls, representing the needs of other women.
 - Share some benefits of women leaders and share global statistics to help spark conversation. (See **Talking Points: Women's Leadership** in Supporting Women Leaders Tools and Resources)
- What are the challenges to women's leadership? What might be done to address these challenges?
- What would be required for more women to participate in leadership?
- What can we do to better balance power between male and female community leaders?

Important Ideas for Discussion

- Questions and prompts can be tailored to different interests. During an assessment, you might want to simply capture information on people's feelings toward women leaders and the presence of women leaders. If you organize group discussions focused on strengthening the enabling environment for women's leadership, you will want to probe deeper into attitudes and barriers.
- Questions and prompts can be adapted to different groups. When discussing issues of women's leadership with existing or emerging women and girl leaders, you might focus on their experiences, and the specific challenges they face.
- 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 change. You can note your concern or disagreement without silencing discussion. Probe further. Ask other participants to share their thoughts.