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# Tip Sheet: Identifying Women Leaders

- **Remember that not all leaders hold the title of “leader.”** Your purpose is to identify people who influence and serve other members of the community. These individuals are not always formal leaders, or people elected to leadership positions. Women leaders may be teachers, health workers, heads of church or other religious groups, or other members of communities who dedicate themselves to community affairs or service. Wives of male community leaders may also be regarded as de facto leaders and may be key allies of GBV programs (though wives of leaders, and other women leader, may also reinforce interests/perspectives of male leadership structures).
- **Ask women and girls!** Ask diverse groups of women and girls within the community who they look up to and trust. Which women and girls do people go to for support or advice? Whose opinions are most valued and respected?
- **Consider the diversity of the population.** Many leaders will represent or influence specific populations within the community more than others. Be sure to consult with diverse groups of women and girls, accounting for different experiences related to age, language, ethnicity, race, religion, legal status, and other factors, with the aim of identifying a diverse group of women leaders.
- **Use accessible language.** Rather than simply asking about “women leaders” think about how to describe the qualities and roles you would like to identify. For example, a GBV practitioner in Kordofan, Sudan struggled to identify women when she asked for help locating “female traditional leaders.” But during a chance conversation, one woman advised her to meet with the *hakamats*. She learned that *hakamats* are influential female singers and poets who highly regarded, respected, and sometimes feared. Her program began engaging *hakamats* with great success.
- **Consult with women’s associations and community-based organizations.** Organizations and informal associations that operate within communities are often engaged with at least some elements of community leadership. Women members of community-based organizations, particularly members of women-led organizations and women’s rights organizations, are frequently regarded as women leaders.
- **Identify active training participants.** When GBV programs offer trainings to community members, they can remain attentive to women and girls who demonstrate personal qualities and characteristics of leadership, as well as positive values, attitudes, and beliefs.
- **Be attentive to women and girls who demonstrate leadership during program interventions.** Through the course of GBV programming, members of women and girl safe spaces, and participants of different activities, including livelihoods or learning activities, group psychosocial support activities, or community development projects, will emerge as natural leaders who are interested in helping others and fostering positive change.