
Discussion Guide: Respect for Survivors

Group discussions with community leaders about gender, power, and types of GBV can help leaders examine their attitudes and practices toward survivors, 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 gender, power, and types 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 community values and expressions of respect for others through group discussions. When discussing consequences of GBV and common community response to survivors of GBV, it will be useful to focus on a specific form or trend of violence. Prompts and questions below can be adapted to relate to different forms of GBV. Each sample cluster of prompts/ questions below could be adapted for a single group discussion.

- When someone has experienced a loss, or an awful event, how do we show that person that we care for them and empathize with their experience? Is the same support extended to women who survive [rape/ other form of GBV]? How could community members demonstrate support for a survivor?
- I wonder if we can all take a minute to silently think about a hard time in our lives. What helped us during that time? Think about the person or people who helped you to feel better—what they did or said. I won't ask you to share your own experiences, but I want us to keep those in mind as we talk today about women and girls who experience violence...
- Many people blame or think badly of a woman who experiences [rape/IPV/ other form of GBV]. I want to talk today about some of the consequences of that blame... How do you think most people in the community would think about someone who was [raped/beaten by her husband/other]? Discuss the consequences of stigma and mistreatment of survivors...
- What do women usually do after they have experienced [rape/IPV/other form of GBV]? Who would they tell? Would they tell their family members/friend/community leader/service provider? What might prevent a woman from telling someone or seeking help? What can be done to encourage survivors to seek help and support?
- I would like to talk about a type of violence that sometimes affects women/girls. I know this is a difficult conversation, and I don't want to talk about any specific individuals, but I think it's important to discuss the consequences of [rape/IPV/EFM/other] and how we might better support any women or girl who experiences this...

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 change. You can note your concern or disagreement without silencing discussion. Probe further. Ask how a survivor might feel. Ask other participants to share their thoughts.
- Be prepared to remind participants not to reference individuals or real cases.
- Be prepared to share information with leaders to help survivors access support.
- Note areas for learning and further discussion—for both leaders and the GBV team.