COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

A GUIDE FOR FOMWAN FACILITATORS
NIGERIA WAY LEARNING SERIES
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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AUDIENCE

This guide is for Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) and FOMWAN facilitators.

FOMWAN requested this guide to support their volunteer facilitators in running community dialogues.
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METHODOLOGY

In addition to drawing on the MEDA field team’s first-hand experience, two community dialogues were observed in January 2020. This Facilitator’s Guide was produced during a one-week workshop in Abuja with Chom Bagu, Lydia Ameh and Jennifer Denomy and was validated with facilitators.

During a set of three focus group discussions, FOMWAN facilitators requested support with:

- Communication and facilitation tools, techniques to bring messages to people
- Report writing skills
- How to make / adapt tools, visuals and stories to support discussions
- Confidence building
- How to give key information on Early Marriage, hawking, and women’s engagement in markets
- How to create action plans with communities

INTRODUCTION TO FOMWAN

The Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) is a faith-based umbrella organization that links Islamic women’s groups in Nigeria and promotes Muslim women’s viewpoints on the national stage. Since 1985, FOMWAN has worked on several different social objectives including promoting Muslim girls’ education. Through community and social dialogue, FOMWAN works to improve the status of Muslim women and children, to advance Nigerian development projects, and to promote positive gender norms for Muslim women. Embracing girls’ education to eradicating poverty, FOMWAN engages in programs to increase the retention rate of girls in school, continue education for married women, and integrate literacy and vocational training into established Qur’anic schools.

This requires gender-transformative actions through working with traditional/religious institutions, opinion leaders, women’s groups, community gatekeepers, community partners, relevant private sector organizations and Government organizations such as the Shariah Commission to address underlying causes of issues that affect women, girls and young boys.
Youth Entrepreneurship and Women’s Empowerment in Northern Nigeria – Nigeria WAY – supports women and youth agroprocessors in three value chains in Bauchi State: rice, soybean and groundnut. The project focuses particularly on women and youth-led businesses, with activities aimed at improving productivity, adopting environmentally sustainable business practices, and increasing access to markets, financial services, market information, business networks, and partnerships.

The Federation of Muslim Women Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) and the Association of AgroProducers in Nigeria (ASSAPIN), two member-based alliances operating in Bauchi State, mobilize clients for the project. The project operates in seven Local Government Areas (LGAs), specifically selected because of their importance in Bauchi’s economy, feeding two key markets in Bauchi State – Bauchi and Azare – which bring together buyers, sellers, and processors for soybean, groundnuts and rice, among other crops. Businesses in Bauchi are largely small and informal, and the market remains nascent, with government – not the private sector – as a primary driver.
In this socially conservative state, women and young people face many obstacles in achieving business success. Mobility is limited for many women, and gender norms restrict the roles available to them. At the same time, endemic poverty increases the need for their economic participation. With increased access to productive technologies and business services, greater financial inclusion and inclusive community dialogues, Nigeria WAY supports women and youth-led businesses to transform their contribution to their households and communities.

THE NIGERIA WAY LEARNING SERIES

The WAY Learning Series is an ongoing initiative to share lessons learned as the project is being implemented, with a particular focus on identifying and understanding factors that impact women’s business success and overall wellbeing in Bauchi State. Topics include women’s time use, girls’ self-perception after participating in skill-building opportunities, how cooperatives function as business platforms for women, and women’s perceptions of themselves as entrepreneurs.

The Learning Series is shared widely with the development community and with project stakeholders, including partners, clients, and government.

MODULE 1

KEY CONCEPTS

What are community dialogues?

A community dialogue is a structured discussion (or series of discussions) which is very targeted. People in a community talk together to identify issues or problems, and decide how to solve them together. Community dialogues include a diversity of voices – many different groups, perspectives and interests from the community are included. Decisions that are made in a dialogue come from the whole group, not just one or a small number of people. Consensus can be reached through community dialogues.

It is different from a regular conversation between two people, or even a large group of people. A regular conversation might exchange information, talk about issues or even plan for the future, but this is not a community dialogue.

In typical community conversations, discussions are hierarchical. Some people talk more, and their opinions are more powerful. Community dialogues create discussions where people can all express their opinions equally. People are brought together to work for the common good.
A community dialogue has the following elements:

- **Communities work together** to identify, anticipate and solve social problems.

- **It has a purpose.** Something sparks a community dialogue. The spark can be internal to the community or external (in this case, FOMWAN is sparking the dialogue). Sometimes the spark is an incident or a challenge in a community. For example, crime might be increasing in the community and people are concerned. A natural disaster might occur, and the community must respond. The goal is collective action to deal with a problem.

- **It includes many different voices from the community.** Different parts of the community are engaged, including women, youth, men and community leadership. Different opinions are represented. This should lead to better decisions and more effective collective action.

- **A community dialogue has a mandate.** A community dialogue is different from an ordinary conversation because key stakeholders in a community have decided to come together for the discussion. Community gatekeepers are there, but so are women, youth, girls, etc. The decision to hold a community dialogue is critical.

Traditional leaders and other decision makers in the community take decisions on a regular basis. But when something unusual happens, they may want to include the voice of the community in a decision. Collective action may be required to solve the problem. For example, if an epidemic breaks out, collective action must be taken.

As a facilitator, you are supporting the community to take this collective action. You are providing a process that communities can use to make good and effective decisions.
Benefits of community dialogues

Community dialogues bring many benefits:

- More inclusive decision making. More voices bring more insight into the issues and possible solutions. Ownership of the discussion and of the solutions is increased because more voices are involved. When previously excluded people are included in discussions and decision making, they can feel heard, sometimes for the first time. This is very empowering.

- Including a greater variety of voices in a discussion brings more and different perspectives on the issues being discussed. This can lead to greater creativity, especially when possible solutions are being discussed. For example, including young people in community dialogues may bring new perspectives around technology.

- More resources can be mobilized to address these needs. Resources can include finances, but also people’s time, ability and knowledge.

- Conflict and friction in the community is reduced and collective action is enhanced.

- Communities can respond more quickly to problems and emergencies because they have a method available to them – community dialogues.

- In the longer term, the dialogue opens space for discussion at different levels – the community, but also at the household level. In addition, dialogues build the skills of community members in negotiation. This can allow community members to engage externally with neighbouring communities, companies and even government institutions.

- They operate alongside other activities and can benefit from them. For example, on MEDA’s Youth Entrepreneurship and Women’s Empowerment in Northern Nigeria project, or Nigeria WAY, community dialogues are supported by WAY’s Life Skills for Girls Program.
Community Dialogues and Nigeria WAY Activities

The Nigeria WAY project is designed so that activities relate to each other. They do not happen in isolation. Women, girls and communities are supported by savings groups, Life Skills Program for Girls, women sales agents (WOSAs) and access to equipment such as rice parboilers and ecostoves. As the diagram below shows, these activities help build the confidence and communication skills of women and girls, which allows them to participate more effectively in community dialogues. Over time, these activities increase the economic and social empowerment of women and girls and the communities in which they live.

Figure 1: Nigeria WAY’s activities build on each other. Community dialogues and other initiatives contribute to social and economic development of women.

Goals for Community Dialogues

As FOMWAN community facilitators, you are using community dialogues to:

- Provide a way for more inclusive decision making in families and communities
- Give communities structured opportunities to discuss issues that concern them
- Give communities tools and a methodology to deal with these and other issues and problems.
Community issues on Nigeria WAY

On the Nigeria WAY project, four key issues were identified by communities. These four issues relate to each other. The sections that follow describe each key issue and how they relate to each other. The issues are:

Street hawking by girls

Many girls from low income families must earn money to help with family costs. Typically, they sell food and other goods on the street. Families usually don’t want daughters to be out in the dark, girls are in a difficult situation because they have to earn money, often a specific amount. To sell more effectively, some girls dress and wear make up to attract attention from men who will buy their goods.

While they are selling, girls come in contact with men and begin to develop relationships. These relationships are inherently unequal, and often become exploitative. Men may offer money or buy all the girl’s wares, with the implication that they have paid for her time and affection.

Families become concerned that she is spending time with men, and they arrange a marriage, often with older men who can pay a dowry. The girl may not be involved in the decision. She is married but has few skills – often she can’t cook or maintain a house, and many of these marriages break down. Often, she will run away or come back home, reinforcing the poverty of the family which must now support her and her children.

Women’s economic participation

Gender and social norms restrict women’s movement outside the home, which can make it difficult for them to engage with the market. Social norms also dictate that the man should provide for the family, and by implication, women should not work. However, in families where money is scarce, women may decide they need to earn an income. There is still pressure for them to confine their activities to the household, necessitating someone to take their products for sale. In recent years, there has been an increase in women wearing hijab, which allows them more mobility. Younger girls, boys and male relatives are often sent to the market to buy or sell goods on their behalf.
Early and forced girl child marriage

When girls get married, they immediately become adults, reducing their opportunity to develop the skills and capacities that will enable them to be successful wives, mothers, household managers and business women.

Early pregnancy can bring complications because of the girl’s age/developmental stage. This can result in long-term health problems. Because of the stigma of these health issues, girls are often hidden at home or sent to relatives, so the community does not see the results. This contributes to general ignorance about the health consequences of early marriage. Girls may be abandoned by their husbands, or they may leave their husband’s family to return home. Divorce is a frequent outcome. These factors contribute to girls’ increased vulnerability, and ultimately to the cycle of poverty.

Girls’ education

Education, hawking and early marriage are linked. Hawking or early marriage are frequent causes of school dropout for girls. Access to education is a significant barrier for girls. Secondary schools do not exist in all communities and travelling long distances to school is difficult for girls. Where schools exist, quality is an issue – materials and furniture are scarce, teachers’ attendance may be irregular and the quality of teaching is variable, so students may not be learning relevant content.

However, if girls can stay in school, it is a way to delay marriage. It is a good entry point for discussions in community for discussions on early marriage, including community dialogues, because school is considered acceptable for girls. If girls can finish secondary school, they will be 16 or 17 before they are married. With male allies, particularly religious leaders, girls’ education is an entry point that they are often comfortable with when talking about early marriage.
Community issues and community dialogues

As stated below, the issues of hawking, girls’ education, early marriage and women’s engagement in the market were all identified by communities. Community dialogues are a good way for different groups in the community to discuss and share experiences on these and other topics.

Dialogues shine a light on issues that have been in the darkness. Actions that come from the dialogues are important, but even having the dialogue can create change. Shining the light creates change.

Community dialogues can be a place where opportunities for women are discussed and a degree of acceptance gained. For example, a dialogue in one community included discussion on a nearby skills training centre that some women in the community had attended. They began earning money from economic activities they learned. This was raised in the dialogue and the group was very positive about the economic activities. Through this discussion, many men became more enthusiastic about their wives gaining similar skills and opportunities.

Figure 2: Multiple community issues contribute to increased rates of early marriage
Community dialogues: a tool for gender transformation

When women’s status changes, either through increased public recognition and/or increased income, there are implications at the family level. Some changes are positive. Many women have said they were invited into decision making more often. Some changes are negative, such as an increase in gender-based violence. Through the community dialogues, people can see contributions of women more clearly.

Dialogues contribute to the process of social change (see diagram below). Change affects individuals: women and girls feel more confident in their ability to speak openly and contribute to their families and communities. Change also affects the relationships between individuals within families and within communities. Ultimately, systems change and social norms shift, over time.

Figure 3: Change process

Changing Perception of Women

Recently, a bridge that connected a community and its neighboring village collapsed. Travel between the villages became very difficult and took a long time. The community began raising money to repair it and held a community dialogue to discuss the problem. Community members donated different amounts for the repair work, ranging from 1000 Naira to 5000 Naira.

One group of women had been running a business making juice from grain, and they were earning profits. They stepped forward and contributed 10,000 Naira. People were amazed that they had these resources and could contribute significantly to this public effort – more than many men. The whole community’s perception of these women changed immediately. People respect them. Not only did the women have money, but they used it to support the public good.
MODULE 2 – CONDUCTING A COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

This section will outline the steps in conducting a community dialogue. The diagram below shows an overview of the community dialogue. There are four main phases of a dialogue:

1. Preparation: meeting with LGA officials, community leaders and mobilizing community members
2. Facilitated discussions with groups of people who are typically excluded, such as women, girls and youth
3. Community Dialogue
4. Next steps and action plans

In this section of the guide, the steps will be described in more detail.
Steps for conducting a community dialogue

A more detailed description of the steps in a Community Dialogue can be seen below. Some steps will be done by FOMWAN (the dark/green boxes) and some by facilitators (light/purple boxes).

1. **Identify community**
2. **Stakeholder Identification & analysis**
3. **Advocacy meeting with LGA official**
4. **Enter community**
5. **Advocacy visit to community leaders**
6. **Identification of key stakeholders**
7. **Consultation with community leaders**
8. **Community mobilization**
9. **Facilitated conversations with excluded populations**
10. **Community dialogue**
11. **Next steps, action plan and follow-up**

**Identify community**

*Initial community selection*

FOMWAN will propose communities to conduct community dialogues in. They may choose communities in collaboration with other organizations or groups, such as Savings and Loan Groups. They have specific criteria to determine appropriate communities. They are looking for communities with high incidences of early marriage, street hawking, and school dropout. In addition to these, FOMWAN looks for communities with responsive leadership.

Communities selected for dialogues are influential and are considered ‘trend setters.’ Characteristics may include a strong leader, large markets, better developed services, such as mosques, churches, mills and schools or a large international project. People from neighbouring communities may visit this village to access services, or buy and sell goods. Visitors see and hear about new practices and carry the knowledge back to their own communities.

*Community validation*

Facilitators may be part of this initial identification process. After villages are selected, facilitators will be asked to validate the choice of community. FOMWAN will ask facilitators to write a short report to confirm whether or not the community meets the criteria.
Stakeholder identification & analysis

Stakeholders are diverse and understanding who you are working with is important. It is easy to assume we know who is in the community, but sometimes we don’t know the reasons and interests behind people’s behaviour.

It is important to do a stakeholder analysis to understand who should be in the discussion and characteristics of these people. FOMWAN will do the initial stakeholder identification.

Advocacy meeting with LGA official

Before entering a community to conduct dialogues, it is important to meet with LGA officials to inform them of the activity. If they are not informed, they may block the process. It is important to identify communities before this meeting, as LGA officials may wish to direct facilitators to locations that benefit them in some way, rather than locations that are best for the dialogue.

Steps for meeting with LGA official

- FOMWAN will send a letter to the LGA official requesting a meeting
- FOMWAN and facilitator meet with the LGA official and inform them about the project and the issues of early marriage and street hawking, and how community dialogues will address this. FOMWAN asks for collaboration and support. The LGA official may provide contacts (local chiefs), space for meetings or other support.
- It is good practice to follow up with the LGA official periodically, to provide information on the process and to get linkages to other activities happening in the community

Enter community

Entering the community involves understanding many features of the community. This checklist will help you decide if you are ready to enter the community and begin dialogues.

Quick Checklist: are you ready to enter the community?

- Do you have clear information to share with community leaders? Having a written document (Hausa) gives a degree of authority to the activity.
- Do you have local contacts, for example, with traditional leaders and women’s leaders? If not, do you need to identify a local facilitator who can help you make contacts?
- Do you have a co-facilitator and note-taker? Does everyone know their roles?
- Do you have an attendance list?

Please see Annex 1 for the Pre-Visit Checklist. This should be completed before you go to a community, and given to FOMWAN. After each meeting and dialogue, the Post-Visit Checklist should be completed and given to FOMWAN. Please see Annex 2 for Post-Visit Checklist.

**Advocacy visit to community leaders**

This visit is to get buy-in and support from the community leaders. These people will be critical to the success of the community dialogues. They can make mobilizing group members much easier and can offer logistical support, such as providing premises for holding the discussion. In advance, send a letter requesting a meeting, and follow up with the secretary to fix the meeting.

Recommendations for the meeting:
- Present the community dialogue in a clear and convincing way
- Clearly describe who should attend the community dialogues. You want a good cross section of the community (men, women, youth, leaders) and you want approximately 30-40 people. More than this can be difficult to manage. Explain that it is a discussion, not a lecture, and too large a group will not allow good participation.
- Describe the benefits to the community
- Be open to discussing the program, responding to concerns, and misconceptions or fears from the leaders
- Usually you will set next steps in this meeting, fixing a date and venue for the first meetings, which are the small group discussions with the women’s group, men’s group, youth group and girls’ group. Specific attendees will be selected at the Consultation with Community Leaders stage (#6).

**Identification of key stakeholders**

This stage will identify who should participate in the community dialogues. Facilitators should make a list of possible participants, which will be shared with FOMWAN for their approval. The list should have between 35 and 40 people.

The following questions can guide the selection process:
- Who has an important role to play in relation to the issues of school dropouts, Early Marriage, hawking and women’s engagement in the market?
- Who can support the dialogue? For example, in Bauchi, the Sharia Commission has provided important support because they see many misinterpretations of the Islamic position on Early Marriage.

- What authority figures should be included, such as traditional leaders, religious leaders, household heads, women leaders and role models, and youth leaders?

- Are there other organizations and initiatives in the community that can support? For example, community advocacy groups or development projects.

- How will you make sure to include stakeholders who may be excluded, such as women, girls and young men?

Authority figures are important to the success of community dialogues, but should not be the only participants. Make sure that the list includes stakeholders directly affected by these issues – especially women, boys and girls.

**Consultation with community leaders**

Community leaders who were identified in the previous stage (Identification of key stakeholders) are brought together to launch the community dialogues. These leaders will include chiefs and traditional leaders, religious leaders, women leaders and household heads. This meeting has two main purposes: gain support and buy-in, and to provide the leaders with sufficient information on the project that they become a conduit of information for the community.

At this meeting, the facilitator will give the purpose of the dialogues, describe the benefits to the community and talk about the process. Participants can ask questions and discuss any concerns they have. Dates for the dialogues will be discussed. The facilitator will share the invitation list with the leaders and explain why these people have been selected. Leaders will be requested to invite those on the list to participate in the dialogue.

At this stage, some flexibility may be needed on the invitation list. Leaders may want to include others for reasons not related to the dialogue (e.g., if transportation money is being given, or to give visibility to friends / family members).

**Strategies:**

- Explain the selection process and the rationale for people's inclusion on the invite list. Many perspectives are needed from different parts of the community, so the group cannot have too many members from one or two groups.
- Re-state that dialogues are discussions, and the group size must allow participation of everyone in the room (30 people means everyone can say something if they wish, but 100 means this is impossible)
- Remind participants that the venue allows only a limited number of people
- If participants want to add multiple people to the list, consider giving them ONE additional person to nominate for inclusion

Troubleshooting:

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<th>Strategies</th>
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| Community leaders may be resistant to the ideas for the community dialogue. | - Allow people to speak.  
- Listen to concerns and try to understand reasons for resistance.  
- If others in the group support the ideas (delaying marriage, etc.), let them speak.  
- Refer to your facts (for example, why early marriage is problematic for girls).  
- Before this meeting, consider doing some background research on the community and identifying people who will be in favour of the community dialogue goals. If possible, invite these people to the meeting. |
| Leaders may want money                                           | - Goals of the program should be clearly stated to avoid misconceptions.  
- Link the project to other activities that are happening – e.g., business training, skills training, savings and loan groups, etc. MEDA will not give cash, but is providing support that will benefit communities and households.  
- If practical, other project clients can talk about the benefits of the project on their households and communities.  
- If the leaders talk about grants being given through the project, the facilitator can confirm that these grants are not just giveaways. Recipients must apply in a competitive process and agree to very specific conditions. |
Community mobilization

There will be two levels of community mobilization. Before the dialogue, wide spread awareness raising should happen, spreading word of the dialogue and the goals. This may happen through radio, pamphlets, text messages, through groups like savings and loan groups and through word of mouth. This generates interest and enthusiasm.

At the same time, specific people are formally invited to the dialogue. This may be verbal, by text message or with a letter. In the invitation, the specifics should be made clear: what is the dialogue, what are the participants’ responsibilities, what support will they receive (e.g., transportation money or food) and time and location of the events. FOMWAN makes the invitations.

Facilitated conversations with excluded populations

**Purpose:** create ‘empowered participation’ in this small group and in the full community dialogue discussion

Before the community dialogue, hold smaller group discussions, one with women, another with girls and another with young people. When you bring together a group of people with different levels of power and ask them to talk, some people will have trouble participating. Some will continue to be excluded.

The small group discussions will build group power before they engage with the bigger group.

**Purposes**

- **Prepare groups with information** – on topics to be discussed. What does the data say about early marriage, health issues related to this, etc. When women and girls can bring this information to the bigger group, it is more powerful.

- **Give guidance** – what roles can they play in the dialogue? How can they find space to talk? What will the facilitator do to support their participation?

- **Build their confidence** – validate their experiences. Find out what are their fears for the discussion.

- **Gather their ideas for sharing** – the facilitator will summarize their ideas in the larger group discussion to make sure their voice is heard. Women may be shy in the larger group discussion, but the facilitator can summarize their input.
**Process of small group discussion**

These discussions are informal and don’t need to have a specific format. Ask questions about the participants’ experience of early marriage, girls’ hawking, school dropouts and women’s economic engagement. Some participants are more vocal than others. The facilitator should try to bring everyone into the discussion and get input from everyone.

**Community dialogue**

This stage is the larger group discussion. The dialogue is a mechanism where communities can ‘listen to themselves’ to discuss and make decisions. Typically, decisions are made in response to problems or emergencies. These deal with short term challenges.

A dialogue is a more systematic way for a community to make decisions in an inclusive way. More perspectives are reflected, and more people have ownership over decisions. Discussion is powerful.

**Introduction**

- **Set the stage**
  - Make sure logistics and seating arrangements are comfortable, not too formal and people in the group can see and hear each other
  - Welcome everyone, tell everyone we are here for a community dialogue
  - Introduce self and group members should introduce themselves
  - Tell people where the washrooms are (if any) and if you are providing transport money or refreshments, tell what it will be
  - Tell how long the meeting will last and if there are any outside speakers
  - Short icebreaker – see list of warmer
  - Give time for the chief to introduce himself and speak

- **Set the ground rules**
  - Everyone should feel free to speak
  - There is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ idea or answer
  - What people say here should stay here. Confidentiality is important.
  - Phones on silent
  - Have respect for everyone. Don’t interrupt, and listen to everyone.
  - Raise your hand when you want to speak
  - See if there are any ‘housekeeping’ questions

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**Figure 6: Structure of Community Dialogue discussion**
Introduce topics

- Short introduction to project and goals (“MEDA is doing a project in Bauchi State to empower women. There are some challenges, like early and forced marriage, environmental issues by supporting ecostoves and other equipment, and helping women in small business to realize their goals.”)

- Today we’re going to talk about early and forced girl child marriage. This is an issue that affects our communities. This relates to other issues as well - women in the market, girls dropping out of school and girl child street hawking. We want to have an open discussion and hear your experiences. Learn what the community experiences are in these areas.

Framing the discussion that will come, introducing it in a way that is non-judgemental, and relies on the community experience.

As facilitator, you need to decide the best way to introduce sensitive topics, such as early and forced marriage. In some communities, people may resist talking about ‘early marriage’ (for example, for religious reasons), but they may be open to discussing ‘forced marriage’. If you believe it will be more constructive to begin the discussion using the term ‘forced marriage,’ this is fine. It will eventually lead to a discussion of early marriage, but may be an easier entry point to the discussion.

**Introduction stage**

This is the most critical part of the dialogue. Setting the stage well is important to a successful dialogue. This is where you get people to focus on the topics, and create a feeling of trust.

Tips for success:

- Set the stage thoroughly – rules and information for participants are important.
  
- BUT – don’t spend too long on this stage. Don’t let people get bored.
  
- Establish your leadership from the beginning by being firm, organized and clear. You are setting the direction
Open Discussion

The key topics for the discussion are sensitive. It is important to raise them in a way that the group will be receptive and open to discussing them. It is also important to raise the topics in a way that shows you are not trying to impose external opinions or make judgement. You are opening the discussion so the community can share ideas and experiences.

Guided Question and Answer

Questions are your greatest tools!

Questions allow you to get answers from the group. You do not want to give answers. You want the answers and the next steps to come from the group.

- Pose open questions
  - For example: if you are talking about early marriage, a good question would be: “what is your experience with early marriage? Share a positive and a negative thing.”
- Once you have some ideas, give a short summary. “I’ve heard you say....”
- Ask a follow up question: “what do parents want for their married children?”
  - Want to get examples of social good, positive marriages
- How do we ensure that our daughters marry in a way that they will be happy?
  - Getting examples of how to have happy marriages and if early marriage can do this
- Ask group “what do you recommend in order to achieve this? What is our roadmap?”
  - Get ideas from the group on how community can have more successful marriages?
- End with something tangible for people to go away with
  - Concrete decisions

Come with some questions on early marriage, women in the market, girls hawking and school dropouts. Then you are prepared for the discussion to go in different directions. If your discussion is blocked on one topic, you can switch topics to keep things moving.

If necessary, have a few techniques to keep the discussion going, or to make sure everyone has a chance to speak. (see Module 3: Techniques and Tools)
Next steps, action plan and follow-up

The goal of the dialogues is to generate action. The final step in the discussion is for the group to decide on next steps and an action plan for the days and weeks to come. It is important for decisions and goals to come from the dialogue. Decisions may come up naturally in the course of the discussion. The notetaker should capture these.

If decisions do not naturally come up from the discussion, consider a tool or technique that will facilitate this, for example:

- Making smaller groups, which will allow more people to speak
- Using the challenge tree
- Force field analysis
- Voting on ideas (e.g., using rocks to choose favorite idea)

Decisions should come from the community and should be realistic.
MODULE 3: TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS

This section describes techniques and tools that may be useful in conducting dialogues.

Four techniques are described here:

- Warmers
- Storytelling
- Role Plays
- World Café

Warmers

When starting group work (large or small groups) a warmer can get people ready to talk openly and feel relaxed. They should only take a few minutes.

Good warmers can:

- Create a positive atmosphere and generate good rapport with the group
- Get everyone participating
- Break down barriers
- Gain trust of the participants
- Identify silent and talkative participants
- Help you to achieve something

Examples of warmers:

- “One word” – whole group or small groups – ask people to come up with one word that describes their community or one word to describe yourself.
- “Three things in common” – in small groups or pairs, find three things in common with your discussion partner. Try to find something beyond the obvious – e.g., gender, place of birth
“Eating Chicken:”
Story of a Tradition

There is a tradition in a village of Northern Nigeria that women are not supposed to eat chicken meat or eggs. People said if girls ate chicken, they would love it so much they would be tempted to steal it in future.

The tradition began during a time of famine, about 100 years ago, when there were food shortages because of locusts. Chickens were particularly valuable because they were easy to exchange for other types of food in markets. The local tradition grew that people should not eat eggs or chicken, because this would threaten the survival of the community.

But when the famine passed, the tradition changed so that it was only women who should not eat eggs or chicken. This became a strong social norm. The community believed that eating eggs and chicken would corrupt girls and women because they would steal to get more.

The tradition still exists on a more limited basis. Some women still do not eat chicken and some parents do not allow their daughters to eat chicken or eggs. But now chicken is no longer rare and precious, so the tradition is not universally followed in the village.

Stories about traditions

During a community dialogue, participants may say, “We do this because of tradition. This is how it has always been.” This attitude may create resistance to change. One way to handle this in a dialogue is to understand the story behind the tradition. Sometimes the tradition is a response to a specific situation or event in history, and became woven into the tradition of a people.

As a facilitator, it is good to understand the story behind a tradition. Try asking questions about WHY the tradition exists. Investigate the roots of the story – in a way that is sensitive and respectful of the tradition. This can generate a discussion around whether the tradition is still relevant and still helps the community to live better. Some traditions protect health or security, but others may be less relevant.

Instructions

- Tell the group the story “Eating Chicken,” in the sidebar.
- Ask how the tradition has created ‘rules of behaviour’ in the community.
- If you lived in this community, what would you do? Would you eat chicken and eggs?
- Would you let your daughter eat chicken and eggs? Why or why not?
- Ask the participants if they have a similar story in their community
- Did the tradition in this village change over time?

What do we learn from this story?

- Things that people claim as traditions are sometimes in response to a specific event. They made sense at a time in history, but sometimes the circumstances have changed.
- Traditions can change over time
- If you know the story behind a tradition, it is easier to understand why the tradition exists. Then it becomes possible for people to change the tradition to suit today’s needs if they wish.
- Hearing a story like this can de-mystify the tradition.
- The consequences of breaking the tradition – the sanctions – are no longer applicable when the tradition is not applicable.
- A community may decide they don’t need the tradition anymore. More often, individuals – especially younger people – will change their behaviour. In this way, traditions can change gradually.
World Café

The World Café is a discussion activity that can be used in a meeting when a topic is sensitive. It also helps ensure everyone has a chance to speak. Participants in the conversation switch groups from time to time to undertake a new round of discussions with different set of participants, creating an inclusive process.

World Café Method

A World Café methodology is a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group discussions. The following six components make up the model:

1. Setting: the location should have a group of small tables or enough space where a group of four to five people can sit together.

2. Content: The topic of the discussion is divided into four or five parts. Each discussion group gets one part.

3. Permanent Host: Each group has a permanent host – a person who reads the question or topic and guides the discussion.

4. Rotation of participants: Participants are divided into groups and each group sits with a permanent host. For 10-15 minutes, they discuss the topic in their group. Then, the facilitator asks everyone to move. The permanent host stays, and the group stands and goes to a new permanent host. The permanent host welcomes the new group and briefly fills them in on what happened in the previous round and then facilitate discussion. This process goes on till each member has participated in all the groups.

5. Questions: Each round of discussions begins with a question, asked by the permanent host. The same questions are used for all rounds by the group and the discussions build upon each other.

6. Sharing: After the small groups have concluded their discussions, the hosts are invited to share insights or summaries of their conversations with the rest of the larger group in a plenary.
MODULE 4: REFLECTION

After several meetings have been held, facilitators can reflect on the process, either alone or with other facilitators. The questionnaires that follow can be used to reflect on community dialogues.

What does success look like?

Signs that your community dialogues are going well

- Attendance – are people showing up for the dialogues? Is the diversity of the community reflected in the participation?
- Participation – Are people engaged? Are people animated and energized? Are people actively listening? Are they sharing ideas and information during the dialogue? Are people asking questions?
- Change over time – After several meetings, can you observe that some people who were quiet are now starting to speak?
- Concrete action – are participants thinking about concrete actions related to the problems they identified? Are participants making commitments related to solutions? Are participants volunteering resources (finances, time, knowledge)?

How to be a successful facilitator

There are many ways to facilitate well. Here are some common characteristics:

- Friendly and approachable
- Engaging participants and keeping their attention – possibly through humour, diverse activities
- Use ‘open body language’ to show you are paying attention to those who are speaking. This can include: facing the person who is speaking, maintaining eye contact, and using gestures to direct people’s attention to the speaker. As facilitator, you understand the context in communities where you are working. Use appropriate body language as you understand it.¹

Figure 7: The person on the left is using ‘open body language’ and the person on the right is using ‘closed body language.’

¹ Diagram from: http://stripshowcomicrevu.blogspot.com/2015/09/monthly-matinee-september-using-body.html
- Ability to guide discussion effectively but ALSO understanding when to stand back and let the group speak
- Let the discussion flow, but keep participants on track to avoid discussing things not relevant to the topic
- Good listener
- Good communicator
- Create an environment of trust and collaboration
- Set and keep ground rules with group – encourage respect, participation, openness among group
- Organized and prepared – make sure there is a facilitator and a note-taker
- Good time management
- Knowledgeable in issues being discussed

**Review, reflect, celebrate**

After each dialogue, take time to think about it and review how it went. Consider doing this with others. You could reflect with participants from the dialogue. If you co-facilitated or had a note-taker with you, you can reflect with them.

**After a difficult dialogue**

People’s responses during a discussion may not relate directly to the dialogue. People bring their outside experiences and relationships into these discussions, and sometimes dynamics in the discussion reflect external dynamics. In other words, a dialogue can be undermined by factors outside the dialogue itself. This is not necessarily the fault of the facilitation.

**What can you do next?**

Sometimes, helping the group to simply talk about areas of disagreement or conflict can reduce the negativity. People want to feel heard and allowing them to air their thoughts and feelings can bring relief, and allow them to focus on the dialogue. Identifying some of the underlying issues that create negativity can lead to more positive discussion later. This can reveal the underlying assumptions and hidden ideas that block discussion.

Sometimes it is important to allow the discomfort to happen. Difficult discussions are uncomfortable, but they are essential to move to the next stage, where solutions can be found. Once the conflict is resolved, new energy comes to the discussion. People’s commitment increases and the group feels invigorated.
Reflection
After a dialogue, whether it was positive or difficult, take some time to reflect. You may want to reflect with participants, or with other facilitators.

Reflecting with participants
At the end of a dialogue, if you want to reflect with the participants, you can ask questions like these:

- How did you feel about this discussion?
- Is the group dealing with something important?
- Is this a good use of time and resources?
- What specifically went well for you? What would you suggest changing in future discussions?
- Were there issues you were uncomfortable speaking about?
- You may get a range of answers when you ask these questions. Ask follow-up questions to respondents (if someone says they liked or didn’t like the session, ask why?).

Reflecting with another facilitator / management / partner organization

- What was effective and less effective in this discussion?
- Did the facilitator use clear language?
- Did the facilitator sustain and focus the interest of the participants on the dialogue?
- Did the facilitator take over the discussion or allow the participants to lead discussion?
- Did the facilitator manage the diversity of voices in the group?
- Was the pacing good – not too fast, not too slow? Was time management effective?
- Did the facilitator use any tools to manage the discussion? Were they relevant and effective?
- Were there clear conclusions next steps from the meeting?
Celebrating!

At every stage, find a reason to celebrate with the community dialogue group. You are helping them to look forward and solve problems constructively. You are invigorating them and putting energy into follow up actions.

Identify things that the group is doing successfully. Through your reflection process, identify key successes and share them with the group.

At key points in the process, you may observe significant change and success. Encourage your group to celebrate these. You may wish to organize (or help them to organize) a gathering where people come together.

Simple ideas to express gratitude:

- Lead the group in a ‘power clap’
- Appreciate the group with positive language and praise
- Consider giving tokens – sweets

In one example, a group put cards on the wall of the meeting venue with a group member’s name on each. Participants were invited to write messages of gratitude to the group members, and each person took their card home afterwards, covered with positive messages.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Pre-Visit Checklist for Facilitators
Annex 2: Post-Dialogue Checklist for Facilitators
ANNEX 1–FACILITATOR CHECKLIST 1: PRE-VISIT

Please complete this form before every visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venue:</td>
<td>Community:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA:</td>
<td>State:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Type:</td>
<td>Number of times activity held</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy ( )</td>
<td>(first, second, third etc.):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Mobilization ( )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting ( )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Dialogue ( )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Do you have clear information to share with community leaders (or target audience)?
   - Yes ( ) No ( )

2. If Yes, write it down (specify in what language it is written)
   - If No, give reasons

3. Do you have local contacts of key stakeholders (community leaders, religious leaders, women leader, youth leader etc.) or contact of local facilitator that can help you identify key stakeholders?
   - Yes ( ) No ( )

4. Do you have a Co-facilitator?
   - (Name): ____________________________
   - Do you have a note taker?
   - (Name): ____________________________
   - Yes ( ) No ( )
ANNEX 2–FACILITATOR CHECKLIST 2: POST-VISIT

Please complete this form after every visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venue:</td>
<td>Community:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA:</td>
<td>State:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Type:</td>
<td>Number of times activity held (first, second, third etc.):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy ( )</td>
<td>Community Mobilization ( )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you fill in the attendance form?</th>
<th>Yes ( ) No ( )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was the attendance what you expected?</td>
<td>Yes ( ) No ( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Total number of people, specific individuals you invited, representation from different groups in community)</td>
<td>Additional comments:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Were participants engaged in the discussion?</th>
<th>Yes ( ) No ( )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Did all / most of the participants speak? Did people ask questions? Did people share information and ideas?)</td>
<td>Additional comments:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Change over time: for later meetings (not first)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Was this the first meeting? (If so, go to Question 4)</th>
<th>Yes ( ) No ( )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If this was not the first meeting, are you able to see change in the community?</td>
<td>Yes ( ) No ( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Are there changes in people’s ideas, especially related to women’s economic engagement, early marriage, girls’ education, girls’ hawking? Are people participating more or differently than in earlier meetings? Do women, girls and youth have more confidence in sharing ideas? Other observations?)</td>
<td>Additional comments (list any changes you observe):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Decisions, next steps and actions</td>
<td>Were any decisions made during this meeting? If so, describe them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Were any next steps identified? Was an action plan developed? (Did participants demonstrate commitment by volunteering resources? If so, select from list below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finance ( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reflecting on the process</td>
<td>Did you observe anything you want to replicate in other community activities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Were there challenges during the dialogue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Facilitator follow-up</td>
<td>Are there any follow up issues for you for after the meeting? Are there people you need to contact to support the process of change? For example, LGA officials, traditional leader, other community partners?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature of Facilitator: _______________________________________________________________