



Community Dialogue Guide

Men and Women Joining Hands to Prevent Violence and HIV/AIDS

Overview

Creating a forum for community members to gather and discuss their concerns about the issues can be a powerful mechanism for bringing people together. A dialogue is usually more informal than a meeting and can be held in the market, grounds of a school, or at the local leaders' offices. It is meant to be an open exchange of views and a way of involving community members in the process of communal problem-solving. Dialogues can be presented as consultative or problem-solving meetings or simply as an opportunity for people to speak their mind.

Recommendations

- If your organization has never run a community dialogue before, meet with a small group of community members and/or leaders to explain the concept of a community dialogue.
- Suggest the theme of male involvement in preventing violence against women and HIV/AIDS.
- For the dialogue, you may choose to have staff of your organization to facilitate the dialogue, otherwise, if you have strong connections in the community, you may decide to work with a community member or leader to facilitate the process.
- Make sure the facilitator understands and is comfortable with the talking points and is able to use the language that community members are most comfortable with.
- Identify a public space where people can gather for the meeting comfortably. Obtain necessary authorization to hold the meeting. If necessary, arrange for a sound amplification/public address system.
- Decide on the length of time for the dialogue in advance (usually no more than 2 hours) this will help the facilitator stay focused.
- Invite all members of the community to attend, especially men. This can be pre-arranged or can be done impromptu in busy places, decide what would work better for your organization and in your community.
- At the event, moderate questions and the discussions so that it remains positive, constructive, and focused on the issue. Guide and moderate the discussion giving time for people to share ideas, encourage brief explanations and try not to let only a few participants dominate.
- At the end, summarize the discussion and highlight key commitments and actions promised, if any.
- Decide with community members who will follow-up to ensure the promised actions are implemented. Plan how the results will be shared with others.
- Distribute communication materials.

Steps

1. Welcome community members and appreciate their attendance at this important event.

2. Briefly introduce yourself and other community leaders or members who are facilitating. Tell them a little bit about your organization.
3. Let participants know the length of time the dialogue is likely to take.
4. Introduce the topic of violence against women and HIV/AIDS in a brief introduction. You might consider including the following points:
 - a. Violence against women can happen in the home and community.
 - b. It includes physical violence, emotional abuse, sexual violence and economic abuse.
 - c. While some men are victims of violence, women experience violence far more frequently than men. For example, researchers estimate that one out of three women will experience violence in their lifetime (Heise et al 1999).
 - d. HIV/ AIDS is now affecting women disproportionately in sub-Saharan Africa as 23 million adults ages 15 – 49 are infected and fifty seven percent or 13.1 million of these are women (UNIFEM et al 2004).
 - e. Women are at higher risk for HIV infection as a result of violence.
5. To generate sharing and discussion ask community members:
 - a. How can violence cause HIV infection?
 - i. Women often cannot negotiate condom use or safe sex.
 - ii. Many women (married and single) are forced to have sex.
 - iii. Women, young women and girls are at risk of coercive or transactional sex (i.e., they are forced to submit to having sex due to their circumstances not because they want to).
 - iv. Rape and sexual assault by strangers.
 - v. Sexual abuse against girls and young women often by adults known to them.
 - vi. Early marriages or other practices such as FGM (circumcision), widow inheritance etc.
 - b. How can violence be a consequence of HIV/AIDS?
 - i. Women trying to access VCT can experience physical and emotional violence from their partner.
 - ii. If a woman is in a discordant (i.e. husband maybe HIV+ but she is not or vice versa) relationship she may not be able to protect herself against HIV infection.
 - iii. Many women are afraid to disclose their HIV status for fear of physical, emotional or economic violence.
 - iv. If women disclose their HIV status, they experience rejection, stigma, abandonment, etc.
 - v. Many times, if HIV positive, women are held responsible for infecting their husbands.
6. Ask community members how violence and HIV hurts families and the community.
 - a. Many women are infected with HIV.
 - b. Many women are dying from AIDS related diseases.

- c. Many women do not feel safe in their relationships.
 - d. Many men are worried about their HIV status.
 - e. Many men recognize that violence destroys love in relationships.
 - f. Many children are now orphans.
 - g. Children are negatively affected with they grow up with violence in their home, they are more likely to become violent themselves as children and as adults.
 - h. Families lose income due to violence and HIV/AIDS.
 - i. Families cannot properly develop when burdened with violence and HIV/AIDS.
 - j. When women are sick they are not able to contribute their ideas to the family or community effectively.
 - k. When women are sick they cannot be fully productive in the home or community.
 - l. Community services cannot cope with the number of women needing services.
 - m. Health care providers, local leaders, and the police are burdened with service delivery for women experiencing violence and HIV/AIDS.
7. After hearing community members ideas and stories, ask community members: What roles can men play to prevent violence and HIV/AIDS.
- Some ideas include, men can:
- a. commit to never using violence against any woman.
 - b. talk with their partner about how to resolve conflict without violence.
 - c. speak out to friends and relatives who they know are abusing women.
 - d. assist women (through listening, talking, providing shelter, etc) for women being abused.
 - e. take action when they hear or see violence happening.
 - f. form groups to talk about problems affecting men.
 - g. support and encourage other men trying to be non-violent.
 - h. raise their girl and boy children the same without discrimination.
 - i. speak out publicly against violence.
 - j. commit to never forcing a woman to have sex.
 - k. commit to being faithful in their intimate relationship.
 - l. commit to practice safe sex including always wearing a condom if they have more than one partner, and respecting the wishes of their partner.
 - m. go for VCT testing with their wife or girlfriend.
 - n. be faithful to their partners and show affection and willingness to communicate openly.
8. After this discussion you could ask community members to:
- a. Break up into small groups (of women, men, youth, elders, etc) to make commitments to how they will prevent violence and HIV/AIDS.
 - b. Write down on small pieces of paper their ideas for preventing violence and HIV/AIDS. (This won't be appropriate in every community – but if so, you'll need to bring paper and pens/pencils).
 - c. Volunteer or nominate others to form a small committee who will commit to further discussion with community members or a specific action (depending on what was raised in discussion).
 - d. Meet again the following week to further discuss the issue.

- e. Come to your organization / a community meeting place if they are interested in learning more and taking action against violence and HIV/AIDS.
9. Thank community members for participating in the dialogue. Remind the community members of commitments made and encourage them to take action to prevent violence and HIV/AIDS.
 10. If you are distributing communication materials (i.e., poster, sticker, ribbons, etc) briefly explain them and encourage community members to share and explain them to others.

References

Heise L.L., Ellesberg M, Gottemoeller, M., Ending violence against women, Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Center for Communications Programs, Populations Reports, Series L., No. 11, 1999.

UNIFEM, UNAIDS, UNFPA, Women and HIV/AIDS: Confronting the Crisis, 2004.