

Step 3

Listening and learning through consultations



Exercises for the development of a discussion guide for Community Consultations

1. Exploring the topic for the Generation Dialogue

Aim: This exercise will help the Dialogue team to build a shared understanding of the topic for the Generation Dialogue which the Community Consultations will start to explore. The Dialogue team will also gain a deeper understanding of the underlying values that are linked to the topic and that motivate people to continue practices which can have harmful effects.

What you need to do:

→ Explain that:

- The Generation Dialogue takes as its starting point that contentious community practices which to outsiders appear shocking and harmful are in some way connected to the community's identity and to values which the wider community holds dear.
- It will not be possible to support the community in changing these practices without first understanding and acknowledging these values and, if possible, finding their 'positive core'. In other words, the challenge is to look for aspects of these values that are positive and continue to be relevant and worth supporting in today's world. For example, while the harmful aspects of initiation practices should be abandoned, there continues to be a need for young girls and boys in Africa to learn e.g. about respect and altruism between the generations and positive relationships between men and women.
- Once this 'positive core' of the underlying values has been found, the Generation Dialogue can help the community find ways to realise these positive aspects in more constructive and non-harmful ways.

Examples of how harmful practices are linked to a broader topic that is 'lived' in the community:

Female circumcision in Guinea → Initiation rites and preparing young boys and girls for adulthood

Violence perpetrated by and against herdboys in Lesotho → Becoming a 'strong man' and being prepared for hardship

Sexual and gender-based violence in Zimbabwe → Family life: how men and women live together

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- It is therefore important that the facilitators do not focus too narrowly on the ‘issue’ or harmful practice in the Community Consultations. Instead, they should create a safe space for openly discussing the broader topic of which the harmful practice is part, and its underlying values.

→ Jointly discuss in plenary:

Framing the broader topic:

- What is the core issue or harmful practice that you want the Generation Dialogue to tackle?
- What is the broader context for this practice in your community? How is it part of community life?
- What are some of the reasons that this practice continues to exist?

Exploring underlying values:

- The fact that this practice persists shows that it continues to be important for some of the people in your community. What about it is important to them?
- Is there anything in the reasons why this practice matters to some people in your community that you can relate to in some way? Anything that you can identify with, if you try to look at it through their eyes?

Defining the topic of your Generation Dialogue:

- Try to find a short name or phrase that stands for the whole topic we just explored, from the practices which can have harmful effects to the underlying values and their positive core.
- This is the topic of your Generation Dialogue which will be introduced and discussed at the Community Consultations.

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→ Summarise the key points:

- The practices the Dialogue aims to tackle
- The underlying values – of the past and today
- Something about these values that you can relate to
- The chosen name for the topic

2. Developing a draft discussion guide

→ **Aim:** Develop a draft discussion guide for the Community Consultations by formulating respectful and non-judgmental questions related to the topic that encourage community members to share their concerns and ideas openly.

What you need to do:

→ Explain that:

- The way in which the questions are asked is very important for the success of the Community Consultations and the relationship you want to build with the community.
- You can use this template to structure the discussion guide and develop questions that are specifically tailored to your topic.
- The discussion guide should be developed in the local language. It is therefore important that the Dialogue team agree on a standard terminology for key words and concepts related to your topic in the local language.
- The questions should:
 - Be neutral, respectful and non-judgmental
 - Be easy to understand, including by community members with limited education
 - Elicit different points of view
 - Explore the practices and values related to the overarching topic

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→ Ask participants to formulate questions in pairs

- Discuss with the person sitting next to you and formulate two non-judgmental questions related to the topic of your Generation Dialogue.

→ Ask participants to present their questions in plenary:

- The other participants should to give constructive feedback to the pair presenting, starting with the positive points.
- Then discuss the different suggestions together as a group.

→ Ask participants to develop a discussion guide in smaller groups:

- In the groups, jointly read through the template for developing a discussion guide and make sure that everyone has understood the content of the different sections.
- Then, as a group, formulate questions in the local language for each section, following the structure of the template.
- Prepare to present your draft discussion guide in plenary.

→ Ask groups to present in plenary:

- Each group presents their draft discussion guide in plenary
- Ask the others participants to give feedback on the questions that each group has come up with:
 - Will these questions allow community members to share with us what they really think and believe?
 - Will these questions open up a space further reflection and discussion?
- The participants select the most appropriate questions, reach consensus on the formulation of each question and write them down.

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3. Test and finalise the discussion guide

Aim: To test whether the questions in the discussion guide are easily understood by community members and stimulate open discussion.

What you need to do:

→ **Explain that:**

- They should test the discussion guide with community members to make sure the questions are easily understood and encourage people to share what they think and believe.
- Each facilitator should test the discussion guide with two to three community members.
- It is important that the facilitators test the discussion guide with different types of community members (e.g. sex, age, social status etc.).

→ **Test the discussion guide off-site:**

- The facilitators test the discussion guide with community members and note down the feedback.

→ **Finalise the discussion guide:**

- One person in the Dialogue team should be designated to collect the feedback from the facilitators and to adapt and finalise the discussion guide.

This document is part of the Generation Dialogue toolkit which is available at health.bmz.de/generation_dialogue_toolkit