

## A FACILITATOR'S GUIDE CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS WITH CHILDREN ON "STOP DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS"

**Never conducted a focus group before? Here is a brief 'ABC' on how to do it.**

*All in all you might need three full days to prepare, conduct and report on your focus group session. This includes agreeing with the invited focus group participants on a date, time and place, most likely one or more weeks ahead of the time of the focus group.*

### **A. To prepare yourself to conduct the focus group you need to:**

1. Familiarize yourself with and read through various times the Youth Friendly Version of the EGM report. Feel comfortable with the contents and the questions asked, try to respond to them yourself – think of the cultural context of the country you are in – think of the characteristics of the group you will do the focus group with.
2. If you find that any of the questions need more explanation than what is available in the text, organize that information in advance to help you explain the questions.
3. Define the criteria for the selection of the participants in your focus group. Do they come from a project, programme, do they all have the same background, same age? Do you need to arrange for any support adults to follow up with any of the group members that would like more information on topics discussed, who might encounter psychological reactions to the discussion – who would these helpers be?
4. We recommend that you carry out the focus group with young people who are between 10-18 years old, but divided into two age groups, 10-13 years and 14-17 years, so that the participants are at the same level.
5. You should also take note of the age and sex of each participant to be included in the final report.
6. Since some of the issues to be discussed can be seen as sensitive, it is recommended that girls and boys be separated into single sex groups.
7. If the group is conducted with girls it is recommended that the facilitator be female, and for a focus group with only boys the facilitator should be male.
8. You should prepare to conduct the focus group with between 6-10 young people; smaller groups are more manageable than bigger groups. Part of your job will be to engage and make sure that all focus group participants get an opportunity to express their views.
9. If the focus group includes very vulnerable girls, you may consider holding one-on-one discussions instead of bringing them together in a group. You may also want to invite another person who can provide additional support to the vulnerable girl before, during and after the consultation (e.g. programme or project officers who already are working with the girls).
10. Your job is to explain the contents of the document. Since we assume that you will conduct the focus group with young girls (and boys) from especially vulnerable situations you will most likely need to illustrate the text by giving examples that are easy for young people to understand

and to relate to. This may require presenting some drawings or using other youth friendly tools that will help them understand the topics.

11. Remember your job is to give confidence to the participants so that they express their views. You should try to remain as “neutral” as possible. Try not to be judgmental, or let differences in points of views come through. At the same time, you should try to make sure that all participants respect each other and feel safe to speak openly. Think through how you will explain and say things before you speak to avoid using emotionally loaded or judgmental words and expressions that may offend other participants. Remember you will have to plan in detail how you will spend your time with the focus group; that is you need to define how long an introduction you will make, how many question you will ask, how many interventions will you expect as a minimum, how to ensure that all participants get a chance to express their views, how to wrap up, what will the participants get in return from you? How will you register all the interventions? Who will take notes? How long do you need to draft the report of the focus group discussion?

#### **B. To carry out a focus group you need:**

1. Make sure that the local authorities (community leaders, parents, guardians, teachers, religious leaders, programme or project managers are informed and agree to let young people from their community or group participate) as this is crucial for the safety and integrity of the participants.
2. A quiet and undisturbed place to meet with the focus group participants. For example: a room where all can sit in a circle, under tree with shadow, away from noise or curious public.
3. A helper, that will help you take notes and register who would like to talk or if you oversee someone.
4. Find out if you can communicate directly (recommended) or if you have to use an interpreter, if so this person comes in addition to the helper. If you have to communicate via an interpreter you should rehearse with her or him and you must make it clear that he or she should not be judgmental, emotional or add their own opinion; this is very important in order to receive real information. Make sure your local interpreter is acceptable to your group (if you are a woman conducting a focus group with girls your interpreter also needs to be a woman or young girl).
5. Use a tape or voice recorder so you can register all interventions and concentrate on the young people you are interviewing.
6. You must explain in the beginning and at the end what the purpose of the focus group is, ensure all participants that personal data will be kept confidential, set the ground rules for the group with the participants, for example one has to raise his or her hand and get a signal from you that one can talk.
7. Remember your job is to explain and ask questions, not to have an opinion. You want to find different ways of explaining the same question to ensure that all participants will understand clearly.
8. Keep eye contact with the participants, make sure you shift your attention between all participants, and make sure you include everyone.

9. Prepare some ice breakers to use to make participants feel comfortable and feel that this is fun and interesting.
10. The focus group should last anywhere between 45 minutes to 1 hour – NEVER more than one and a half hour, no exceptions!
11. Make sure at the end you restate the intention and for what the information that the participants have provided will be used. Let them know if you will come back and share with them the outcomes, local, national and international results to which this focus group contributed. If you are not sure of how or what you will bring back, do NOT promise what you cannot keep.

**C. To make a report from the focus group you conducted you need:**

1. Record the first name, age and sex of each participant in your focus group.
2. As soon as possible after conducting the focus group write down your impressions (was it a good tone in the group, were there many contradictory opinions, did everyone agree, did all participate or did some of the people participate much more than others, was it an interesting or lively discussion or was it rather dull and hard to get going?). If a helper or interpreter was used, have them put down their impressions.
3. Have your helper finalize her or his notes from the focus group discussion.
4. Write out the notes from the tape or voice recorder.
5. Start with a brief introduction, giving the characteristics of your group, how many people participated, age, sex, level of education, living conditions, geographical location real or fiction, pseudonyms for the participants if it is necessary for security and integrity of the participants. (In any case **you will not** use their full names and address, just first names).
6. Explain the questions asked (write them out) and responses. Try to group the different responses and answers into the four sections of the youth friendly report, using quotations if they will help clarify what was expressed.
7. Write out any major findings and results in your conclusions.
8. Try to keep your report to no more than 5 pages maximum.
9. Please write your report in Arabic, English, French, Russian, Spanish or Swahili.
10. Send your report to us by **15 January 2007** in one of three ways:
  - **Online:** Log on to Voices of Youth (<http://www.unicef.org/voy/>) and click on “Stop discrimination and violence against girls” to fill in the online questionnaire.
  - **Email:** [voy@unicef.org](mailto:voy@unicef.org), with “Stop discrimination and violence against girls” in the subject line.
  - **Mail:** Voices of Youth, 3 UN Plaza, New York City, NY 10017, USA.

Now that you have gone through this ‘ABC’ you are ready to start:

**HAVE A SUCCESSFUL FOCUS GROUP SESSION!**