

Community Led Dialogues Facilitators' Guide

Empowering communities

**to eliminate FGM and Child
Marriage**

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1. INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY LED DIALOGUE APPROACH

Violence against women and children is preventable. Its roots lie in unequal power relations between women and men, adults and children. In addition to pervasive gender inequality, violence against women and children happens because of shared beliefs and expectations in a community about gender, sex and violence. These shared beliefs and expectations are unspoken rules for behaviour.

In 2014 UNICEF developed the Communities Care: Transforming Lives and Preventing Violence Programme (CC Programme¹) based on evidence and experience² that show that changing collective beliefs and unspoken rules in communities can lead to change in collective practices and behaviours. Within the framework of the Communities Care (CC) programme, the community led dialogue approach was launched to prevent gender-based violence in conflict-affected areas in both Somalia and South Sudan by UNICEF, it was tested by CISP in Somalia and evaluated by JHU³. Since 2016, CISP has adapted the community led dialogue guide also to the Kenyan context to prevent violence against children and gender-based violence.

The main strategy for catalysing change in harmful community norms is to

1. Communities Care toolkit, UNICEF 2014 www.unicef.org/documents/communities-care.

2. For more information about a social norms perspective to end FGM/C, see “The Dynamics of Social Change: Towards the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Five African Countries,” Innocenti Insight Paper, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, (Florence, 2010), www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/fgm_insight_eng.pdf.

3. Glass et al. Conflict and Health (2018) 12:5, Evaluating the communities care program: best practice for rigorous research to evaluate gender-based violence prevention and response programs in humanitarian settings.



facilitate dialogue among key groups in the community. Dialogue stimulates reflection on human rights principles and ideals and on shared community values and beliefs, debate about beliefs and norms that are harmful for women and girls, and deliberation about alternatives. It localizes human rights concepts and situates them in a culturally and contextually appropriate way. Once community members identify the benefits of change and decide on alternative norms, the programme will support them to take collective action to make these changes.

The approach consists of involving communities in a 4-step process: **Step 1. reflect on harmful norms that foster GBV; Step 2. explore and choose alternative positive practices; Step 3. come up with an action plan to promote positive values; Step 4. communicate the change.**

This process of change entails several activities: i. the identification and training of group facilitators, who are recognised community models in protection; ii. the establishment of community led dialogue groups, 4-8 in each community, comprising of about 20 members each. The groups should include all community representatives (men, women, youth, elders, religious leaders, community leaders, service providers); iii. 30 guided bi-weekly dialogues among the group members discussing root causes of gender inequality and gender-based violence occurring in their communities, protective measures that could replace harmful beliefs and practices in the community, as well as action plans to promote change; iv. declaration events carried out jointly by all groups in the community; v. implementation of an action plan led by the groups to promote change in their community. This process of change entails the involvement and buy-in of key decision makers, stakeholders, and agents of change of both genders.

This document is to be used as a guide by implementing partners training selected CLD facilitators on the CLD methodology and by the trained facilitator to conduct the CLD group meetings. It will help the facilitator ensure that key information is understood and passed to the group members in a systematic way.