

Section 2: Note to Users

Effective training of facilitators is best done by or with people who have first-hand experience in using community-led approaches.

This section makes extensive use of participatory role-plays, with group reflection on the process and how to improve the facilitator's skills.

A useful approach, however, is to intermix these activities with the reflective activities promoted in Section 1. For example, if a person who is learning how to facilitate a community-led process shows during a role-play a need for additional practice regarding empathy or asking probing questions, one could have the participant complete that evening the relevant tools on empathy (FAC 4) and asking probing questions (FAC 6).

TRN 6. Role-play for Asking Probing Questions

The best way to learn to ask appropriate, well-timed probing questions is to practice with an observer looking on who can provide useful feedback for improvement. During a training workshop for facilitators, it is useful to have the observer be a mentor or someone who is well experienced in asking probing questions.

Below is a scenario and role-play that affords useful practice.

Scenario: Using a community-led process, the community is discussing which harm to children to address. The main harms that have surfaced in discussions thus far are child marriage, teenage pregnancy, children out of school, and children engaged in heavy work. However, you see that the views of teenage girls have not been explored fully, so you, the facilitator, seek to talk with a teenage girl about what she sees as the main harms to children. She has agreed to talk with you.

Tasks: Divide into sets of three people. One person plays the role of a teenage girl (participant); another person plays the role of a facilitator; and the third person plays the role of the observer. The girl should be a healthy young girl who is eager to talk and not burdened with heavy emotions. The facilitator is eager to learn the girl's views and should use a nonjudgmental manner and one or more probing questions to learn more deeply about the girl's views. The observer should watch quietly, without fidgeting or giving nonverbal cues about being happy, impatient, etc. The observer should notice the probing questions, how they were received by the girl, and whether they were well-timed and useful.

Role-play (10 mins): Eager to learn about the girl's views regarding the main harms to children, the facilitator will ask a variety of questions, including probing questions. The third person—the observer—sits and watches but does not intrude. The observer may be introduced to the participant as a co-learner. After 10 mins of discussion, the observer gently interrupts the interview as if they were a film producer by saying “Cut!” This begins the discussion.

Discussion: The discussion can be facilitated by the observer, though it can also be a general discussion by all three people in the triad. Key questions to reflect on include:

- What probing questions were asked?
- Why did the facilitator ask probing questions?
- Did the probing questions help to gather useful information? How?
- How were the probing questions seen by the participant (teenage girl)?
- Were the probing questions appropriate and well-timed?
- Could anything be done to improve the quality of the discussion and learning?

- What questions do we have about how and when to ask good probing questions? These could be shared with the wider group for discussion.

Repeat: Now redo the discussion, this time with the former facilitator playing the role of a teenage boy and the former teenage girl playing the role of facilitator. Repeat the procedure above, only this time asking about views of the boy rather than about views of the girl. At the end of the role-play, the observer can again facilitate the discussion of the questions above.

Variations: Useful variations of this practice process include:

- Repeat the roles above but have one of the hypothetical participants (the girl or the boy) be very excitable and talk nearly nonstop.
- To capture discussion at a different phase, adjust the scenario by assuming that the community has already selected child marriage as the harm to children to be addressed. The discussion that is about to occur is aimed at learning from the participant her (or his) views about how child marriage could be reduced or prevented. This could entail asking probing questions about what families could do and about what communities could do.
- Ask the participants whether in a community-led approach probing questions can be asked for different purposes. [Hint: In the learning phase, probing question help to illuminate the participant's views, the meanings of the words they use, etc. Later on, probing questions can be used for this purpose or for identifying complexities that warrant additional community discussion. For example, in a discussion of which harm(s) to children to address, a community member might blurt out "I just think it's wrong to teach children about contraceptives." By giving a probing response such as, "Thank you for sharing this view. How do you see it as being wrong?", it is possible for community members to understand the divergent views of different community members. Thus, probing questions are important for more than research purposes and can be used to enable deeper dialogues and problem-solving within the collective.]

Enjoy the practice and make it fun as well as illuminating!