

Building blocks for engagement and consultation

Below are the 12 steps required to establish a consultation and leadership group to provide feedback and support engagement.

The steps focus on an online group, but can equally apply to a real-life consultation or focus group.

Think about what model works best for the women, young women and/or adolescent girls you want to reach. An in-person group might be most appropriate in some cases, a WhatsApp group ideal for others, or a combination of the two approaches. Make sure you use the right tools for the community you are seeking to engage, and use the right language too – how does #WhatWomenWant translate into the language you are engaging in?

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HOW TO SET UP A #WHATWOMENWANT CONSULTATION GROUP

- 1. Identify and engage participants** from the community you seek to reach, ensuring diversity in membership using 'snowball recruitment', where existing contacts recruit more participants from among their peers. Invites can go to a broader group of women through existing WhatsApp organizing groups and other virtual platforms and list-servs. Use this to build a movement, not just for one-off engagement.
- 2. Moderate and facilitate the group** as an ongoing activity. Keep on topic and steer the dialogue. Ensure all members understand the purpose of the group.
- 3. Set 'ground rules'** that include principles of participation, at the beginning of the consultation process to set clear expectations, keep the process focused and maximize engagement. One of the first things you and your group should do is create and agree upon some ground rules to keep the process productive and respectful and foster ownership of the process.




***** Set the theme, for example: "We welcome ideas and posts from all young women in the group that are related to HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights".


***** Set the tone, affirm and validate: "Your ideas, comments, and topics are valuable" and encourage questions, openness and learning throughout the process.

***** Set boundaries: "This space is meant for adolescent girls and young women under 30. There are a number of other spaces for men, boys, older women, children, and all others." Articulate why it is important to your respective organization, goals or community to have specific focus and highlight the benefits.

4. Provide only factual, evidenced-based information. However, as the participants are sharing the majority of the content themselves, sometimes there may be inaccurate information shared. In these cases, the moderator can ask questions to clarify and provide information when necessary. When information is shared that is inaccurate, participants should be thanked and correct information should be shared by the moderator supported by infographics and/or links. Stay mindful that this is a learning process that participants engage in with varying knowledge levels and stay engaged to ensure the space is safe and collegial.

5. Provide ongoing encouragement.

 Thank everyone who has shared ideas, key messages and those who have raised important issues to the health and well-being of women and girls. Encourage participants that their contributions are valued and appreciated. Take interest in your group members and their ideas.

 Follow up one-to-one with members if they are reluctant to participate in the group, or if they seem to be struggling to contribute. A reassurance that their input is valued can be really important.

6. Moderate and steer the dialogue topic when necessary. It is important to ask the right kinds of questions, in the right way, to steer the dialogue. To generate and move along discussion, ask open-ended questions. At times, clarifying questions are useful to dig deeper and get more information.

7. Keep focused, but be accountable to the diversity of lives and experiences. Experiences are intersectional, so allow discussions to be broad and bring in topics that may not have originally been included. For example, menstrual health as well as initiatives to keep girls in school are both critical to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

8. Create space for different experiences and points of view. For example, adolescent girls may have different experiences or needs to young women, and participants with different identities and experiences might have different contributions to make. Ensure the group is diverse and welcoming, and if appropriate, create focused discussions or different side groups for different participants.

9. Encourage connections among the group, share information and opportunities related to the group topic.

10. Track responses, by developing a system to transfer comments from WhatsApp (or other tools you are using), so that the data can be used for further analysis and accountability purposes.

11. Create a feedback loop. When reports, strategies and other products are created based on the consultation, share drafts with the group for critical review, feedback and validation. This is critical in ensuring that their perspectives and engagement remains meaningful across all stages and throughout the process.

12. Share all outputs so that the girls and young women taking part have the tools and information to take into different spaces and use in their advocacy.

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