



Women's Group Facilitation Manual: a snapshot

Women's group facilitators are provided with a tailored manual to help them take the women's groups through a participatory, learning and action cycle.

An important part of this is supporting the women to evaluate the work they have done in their groups. The manuals are tailored for each project's specific context and aims, and are translated into local languages. This resource has been adapted from the women's group facilitation manuals developed and used by partners in India and Bangladesh. For the complete manuals contact Women and Children First.



[Contents of Women's Group Meetings](#)

[The Role of the Women's Group Facilitators](#)

[A Women's Group Meeting Example](#)





Contents of Women's Group Meetings

Phase 1: Assessing the situation

Meeting 1 Establish the group and introduce the project

[Meeting 2](#) Find out what people think and do about maternal and newborn health

Meeting 3 Identify maternal health problems

Meeting 4 Identify newborn health problems

Meeting 5 Prioritise problems

Meeting 6 Identify the causes of problems

Phase 2: Deciding what to do

Meeting 7 Identify how problems can be prevented

Meeting 8 Identify how home and facility care can be improved

Meeting 9 Discuss strategies to address problems

Meeting 10 Prioritise strategies

Meeting 11 Plan and prepare for community meeting

Meeting 12 Community meeting

Phase 3: Taking action

Meeting 13 Plan actions in detail

Meeting 14 Decide how to monitor progress

Meeting 15 Review progress

Meeting 16 Community meeting

Phase 4: Measuring progress

Meeting 17 Prepare to evaluate impact

Meeting 18 Learn from others

Meeting 19 Review evaluation findings

Meeting 20 Plan for the future



The Role of the Women's Group Facilitator

Local women were selected as facilitators in India and Bangladesh. Another option that could be considered is to use community health workers or community health volunteers as facilitators. Facilitators are central to the success of working through women's groups and choosing the right facilitators is essential. Facilitators should:

- Be female.
- Be from the community or a 'daughter-in-law' of the village.
- Be able to speak the local language and understand the local culture.
- Be married, and preferably, a mother.
- Be able to read and write.
- Be able to move around freely and have the support of their family.
- Be committed to participatory learning and believe that this approach can work.
- Be able to manage a group and have some leadership qualities.



Preferably, facilitators should also have some understanding or experience of participatory methods and some knowledge of maternal and newborn health, but this is less important than having the right attitudes and skills. Training can help facilitators to develop their knowledge and to learn to use participatory methods, but cannot develop the attitudes or skills required.

Skills – a good facilitator can:

- Motivate people.
- Build trust and good relationships with women and the community.
- Communicate ideas and information.
- Listen to and learn from women and the community.
- Encourage discussion, use local words and ask questions in a sensitive way.
- Resolve disagreements and conflict.

Attitudes – a good facilitator is:

- Committed to community mobilisation and participatory approaches.
- Flexible and adapts to community priorities.
- Respectful and values the views of all group members equally.
- Non-judgmental and accepting.
- Positive and enthusiastic.





A Women's Group Meeting Example

Meeting 2: Find out what people think and do about maternal and newborn health

Purpose

1. To find out what women think about pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood
2. To find out about the group's perception of practices relating to pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood in their community
3. To familiarise the facilitator with the group's culture

Materials needed and time required

Record book, pen, picture cards of women before, during and after pregnancy
2 hours

Activities

In this meeting you want to learn as much about the practices of this community relating to maternal and newborn health as possible. You also want members of the group to listen and learn about the practices of other's in the group. Use some of the example questions [below](#).





A Women's Group Meeting Example

Marriage and Childbearing

- At what age do women in this community usually get married?
- Are most marriages arranged or do the couples themselves find their partners? Do people tend to marry someone from the same or nearby community? From further away? Within the same tribe or caste?

Pregnancy

- How do women in this community know when they are pregnant? At what stage of pregnancy do they usually realize they are pregnant?
- Show drawings of a woman before pregnancy, at three different stages of pregnancy, after pregnancy and ask the women to discuss how women's behaviour changes during the different stages of pregnancy – e.g. diet, work and rest.*

Diet *(prompt for alcohol consumption if not initially mentioned by the group)*

- In terms of what, how often and what quantity ...
- What is the usual diet of women in this community who are not pregnant?
- How does this compare to the men in this community?

Rest

- In terms of how often and for how long ...
- What is the usual amount of rest taken by women in this community who are not pregnant?
 - How does this compare to the men in this community?

Work

In terms of how often and for how long ...

- What is the usual amount of physical work done by women in this community who are not pregnant, including household chores?
- How does this compare to the men in this community?

Delivery

For each of the following prompt women to discuss why the following practices are done?

- Where do women in this community usually deliver?
 - Who usually delivers your babies?
- You can continue to discuss the issues verbally or you could ask them to act out what they do – e.g. one person could pretend to be a mother and you could use a doll for the infant.*

Support from Others

From who (prompt for mothers, mother-in-laws, husbands, friends, neighbours, health workers) and what type of support do women receive ...

- During pregnancy?
- During labour and childbirth?

Breastfeeding

- When do women usually first place their baby to the breast?
- What is the first thing given to the baby?

