



**FEED THE FUTURE**

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

# Community Discussion Guide

Fostering Agribusiness for Resilient Markets (FARM) Zimbabwe



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# Introduction

Community participation in solving community issues is a key behavior change implementation tool to achieve desired outcomes whether in agriculture, economic development, health, food- and nutrition-security, or democracy and governance, and gender. In addition to talking or making decisions that affect households, smallholder farmers, businesses, and the general community, community participation and engagement helps leaders and citizens better understand the audiences and populations they need to reach, and the issues that are important to these communities.

Community dialogues are participatory meetings where providers and community members share knowledge about issues that are critical to the community as a whole, and to segments of the population. The dialogues bring opinions and experiences from a broad range of people from different walks of life, and collectively develop action plans to address these issues.

Community dialogues require actors who can commit to participatory change. One dialogue usually does not lead to commitment and change. It takes time to gain the trust and support of the community, and to work out how to create the necessary change.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

This guide provides a step-by-step process to plan, organize, and facilitate community dialogues. It can be used for any issue in any sector; i.e., agriculture, economic, health, education, and humanitarian.

Dialogues allow community members to:

- collectively discuss their concerns
- exchange ideas and solutions
- identify barriers or challenges
- promote understanding of specific issues
- develop actions to address these issues
- be involved in decision-making

## WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is designed for community leaders, agriculture extension officers, community-based organizations, private sector representatives, faith-based and traditional leaders, chiefs and elders, and program staff of community organizations that implement relevant programs, i.e., agriculture, nutrition and food security, gender issues, health, and education in the communities.

## HOW CAN THIS GUIDE BE USED?

Community dialogues are effective in gaining trust, support, and participation of the community. The guide can be used for a variety of critical issues.

Community dialogues are especially useful for:

- Introducing specific programs and services to the community
- Identifying and addressing barriers that prevent communities and its citizens from engaging in the programs and services
- Addressing sensitive issues that impact the community such as domestic violence, adolescent pregnancy, food insecurity, economic disadvantage, or gender and social exclusion
- Seeking solutions and recommendations from the community on how to implement a program, address discrepancies, and funding activities
- Empowering the community to address the identified issues through collective action

# Organizing a Dialogue

## MEETING PREPARATIONS

Before holding a dialogue session project staff, organizers and facilitators need to:

- Identify the issue(s) to be the focus of the community dialogue
- Organize your information on the topic for discussion
- Localize the data and other information you will present - make it relevant to the community and easy to understand
  - » *For example*, if there is an increase in domestic violence and child marriages, be familiar with and able to discuss the social and cultural norms for child marriage as well as the economic effects that child marriage and domestic violence will have on the household and the community
- Select one topic to be discussed per community dialogue meeting. Do not try to cover too many topics in one meeting
- Develop a short list of talking points and questions to facilitate the dialogue
- Present your information in a visual form: illustrations, photos, posters, other materials. Avoid complicated data statistics and charts
- Practice your presentation and anticipation other positions that differ from your position
- Invite a credible and well-respected community leader to present his or her experience related to this issue to share with the group
- Facilitate the dialogues in the language of the community

## BUILDING COMMUNITY BUY-IN

Prior to holding the community dialogue, meet individually with key community leaders or stakeholders whose support is important to the program.

These meetings will help determine:

- Who in the community will support the program?
- Will there be any resistance, and if so, in what form and what will it be?
- What previous programs were implemented in the community, and what was the experience?
- Who from the community should participate in the dialogues?

## IDENTIFYING EXPERTS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Identify your community members who should participate:

- |                                      |                                    |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • religious leaders                  | leaders (agro-                     |
| • elected officials from all sectors | business, wholesalers, processors) |
| • educators                          | • women's organizations,           |
| • health workers                     | • elders                           |
| • community-based organizations      | • traditional leaders,             |
| • private sector                     | • media                            |

*\*Local smallholder farmers (men and women and youth) should be represented at all of the dialogues.*

Make sure an expert on the issues (agriculture leader if agriculture or food-security; health worker if healthcare; educator if education) attends the community dialogues to answer technical questions from the community participants.

The facilitator should be from the local community. If the organizers are from outside the community, there should be a local community worker or other local person to help plan the meeting and lead the community dialogue.

## MEETING LOGISTICS

- Determine a time, date and location
- Formally invite community members to attend
- Manage the time of the meeting and keep the discussion under one to two hours
- Hold dialogues in local halls or public spaces such as a school classroom, *boma* or a church
- Provide refreshments and a light snack
- Keep the group to a manageable size to allow for an exchange of information. The group should include between 10-15 people and should not be smaller than five
- Try to invite an equal mix of male and female community members
- Post the agenda on the wall
- Make a list of existing services in your community, including: legal, safe houses, psycho-social and social support services, so that you can refer dialogue participants to them if necessary

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Flipchart paper
- Markers/pens
- Sheet of flipchart paper with objectives and local community statistics/data on theme/ topic

## WHAT IS-AND IS NOT-A DIALOGUE?

A dialogue is:

- An open conversation based on mutual respect
- Learning the perspectives of others
- Uniting communities through respectful, informed sharing
- Aiming for a change of heart and mind
- A move towards solutions

A dialogue is not:

- A lecture
- A debate, negotiation or deliberation
- A presentation on what a program will be doing in the community
- Defending positions through persuasion
- Seeking to defeat others

## Role of a Facilitator



GUIDES  
THE PROCESS



CONTRIBUTES STRUCTURE  
& PROCESS TO THE GROUPS



ENSURES THAT ALL VOICES  
IN THE GROUP ARE HEARD



LISTENS ACTIVELY AND  
ENCOURAGES ALL MEMBERS  
TO DO THE SAME



CONSTRUCTIVELY  
MANAGES CONFLICT



ACCEPTS AND SUMMARIZES  
EXPRESSED OPINIONS



KEEPS THE  
DIALOGUE GOING

Attributions: Map by Adrien Coquet. Dialogue by ProSymbols. Voice by Gregor Cresnar. Listening by Warunk Icon. Conflict by Wisnu Khayzen. Speech by Deivid Sáenz. Dialogue by ProSymbols. From NounProject.com

# Conducting a Dialogue

## WELCOME, INTRODUCTION, AND OVERVIEW

Each dialogue starts according to the protocol that is normally used at a community meeting. For example, it may start with a blessing or a call to order:

- The facilitator should introduce him/herself and describe your role as the dialogue facilitator
- Explain the purpose of the dialogue and the format
- Discuss, clarify, and set meeting rules
- Ask participants to briefly introduce themselves
- Give an overview of the session



## THE FACILITATOR SAYS

*"My role is to guide our discussion as we learn from each other. I want to hear from you about the issues in your community and I will share information too. Together we will discuss what is important to you and know and do."*

## IDENTIFYING ISSUES

- An effective way to get people to share information on issues in the community is to have them draw a map and identify where there are issues in the community (Mapping Exercise)
- Ask participants to tell their story about the topic being address using small cards, and then placing them on the large poster
- Ask the participants to identify two to three challenges within the community that affect the topic you are discussing
- Ask participants to suggest ways these issues can be addressed by the community
- Ask the participants how they can work together to address the identified challenges

## EXPLORING THE FOCUS OF THE MEETING

- Present information about the main agriculture issue to be addressed and explored
- Explore the topic by asking open questions:
  - » How does this affect the families in your community?
  - » Are solutions or services available to address this?
- As issues are discussed be careful to clarify and correct misconceptions about the topic
- The community expert can answer technical questions that are raised in the discussion
- If the organizers are from outside the community, there should be a local community worker or other local person to help plan the meeting and lead the community dialogue



## PREPARING AN ACTION PLAN

Ask participants to examine the priorities set during the previous step before designing an appropriate Action Plan. The plan will include the following elements:

- Specific activity that will be done
- A reasonable time to do the activity
- Assign tasks to specific participants
- What resources, e.g., financial, human, equipment, are already available in the community?
- What resources are required
- Identify sources for the different resources
- How to measure success

## WORKING TOGETHER

After collectively developing an action plan, implementation of the plan should be conducted in a participatory manner, with each member recognizing her/his role in the activity.

It is important to build commitment of the various community members and stakeholders in order to ensure the success of the Action Plan.

## ENDING THE DIALOGUE

### *Action Plan Monitoring*

- Discuss ways to monitor progress of the actions in the community
- Explore with the group ways the community can help show progress toward a stronger community.
- Have one member of the group help monitor the Action Plan

### *Summarize Key Discussion Points*

- Repeat the issue and its relationship to the key points raised in the discussions
- Remind everyone of the Action Plan developed.
- Ask everyone if they are comfortable with the developed plan

### *Referral and Linkage*

- Refer and link participants to community organizations or faith-based organizations or government services for more information, assistance and services
- Provide a list of services available to the community with information about where they are and when the services are available

### *Preparation for the Next Dialogue*

- Remind participants of the date and time of the next community dialogue
- Close the session by thanking everyone for their participation

## MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND FEEDBACK

Monitoring, evaluation and feedback provide insight into what is working, what is not working and helps to identify ways of reviewing strategies that are being utilized to implement the action plan.

A good monitoring tool will help answer the following questions:

- Are the planned activities being implemented?
- Are the activities being implemented correctly and according to schedule?
- Are messages and services reaching the intended audience?
- Are resources being utilized effectively or do resources need to be reallocated?



The monitoring and evaluation process is dynamic, and results should be shared regularly with community members. This ensures that everyone is involved in the project implementation and how it is proceeding. If changes are needed, regular meetings allow changes during the implementation phase.

Individual and community behaviors also can be measured over time. These include:

#### *Individual*

- New relationships
- Changes in trust and perceptions
- New understanding of the issues
- Increased likelihood to use collaborative problem-solving
- Changes in behaviors related to the agriculture or livestock issues
- Support for community members who are affected by the health issue

#### *Community*

- Formation of networks and affinity groups
- Collaborations and partnerships to address these issue(s)
- Changes to community practices and policies
- Changes in social, religious and gender norms
- Support for community members who are affected by these issues

## **CONCLUSION**

Engaging in community dialogues often results in a commitment to change.

Through the community dialogue process, action can be taken at the individual and community levels. Participants who are directly impacted by these community issues also gain valuable insights on how to address these issues at the local level, and find practical ways to address the needs of their communities and populations.



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# Templates



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# Session Agenda

Session	Instruction to Facilitator	Specific Activities	Main Points for Facilitator
<b>Welcome &amp; Introduction of Participants</b>	<p>Facilitator introduces him/herself.</p> <p>Facilitator asks participants to introduce themselves (name, organization) to the group.</p> <p>Facilitator explains the difference between a dialogue and a presentation.</p> <p>Facilitator tells the group the topics that will be discussed and how the dialogue is structured.</p>	<p>Purpose of dialogue</p> <p>Introductions</p> <p>Community dialogue's operation rules and function</p> <p>Dialogue topics of discussion</p>	<p><b>What Dialogue IS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An open conversation based on mutual respect</li> <li>• Learning the perspectives of others</li> <li>• Uniting communities through a respectful, informed sharing</li> <li>• Aiming for a change of heart and mind</li> <li>• A move towards solutions</li> </ul> <p><b>What Dialogue IS NOT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lecture</li> <li>• A debate, negotiation or deliberation</li> <li>• A presentation on what a program will be doing in the community</li> <li>• Defending positions through persuasion</li> <li>• Seeking to defeat others</li> </ul> <p><b>Dialogue Topics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dialogue #1</i> – Inequities and Gender Norms, Power Imbalance, Violence</li> <li>• <i>Dialogue #2</i> – Power Dynamics (Mapping Exercise)</li> <li>• <i>Dialogue #3</i> – Examples of Power Imbalance (in Agriculture)</li> <li>• <i>Dialogue #4</i> – Root Causes of Violence</li> </ul>

# Session Agenda (cont'd)

Session	Instruction to Facilitator	Specific Activities	Main Points for Facilitator
<p><b>Dialogue Overview, Definitions &amp; Experiences</b></p>	<p>Take a card and write a few words capturing the points the participants are making in their experiences and in answer to these questions.</p> <p><b>Observe:</b> During the dialogue session, moderate discussions and questions so that the exchange remains positive, constructive, and focused on the issue.</p> <p>Guide and moderate the discussion giving time for people to share ideas, encourage brief explanations, and try not to let only a few participants dominate.</p> <p>Pay attention to participants' reactions during dialogues. It may remind some people of experiences in their own lives—when they were a target of violence or when they were a bystander and did not do enough to stop the violence.</p> <p>Have at these sessions an expert on violence and inequities, and a counseling who can provide guidance and support.</p>		<p><b>Questions for Discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you understand the issue?</li> <li>• How does it affect the well-being of the community overall, or affects specific members of the community?</li> <li>• Is there anyone who has experience with violence that feels comfortable in sharing their story?</li> <li>• What do you think stops people from taking positive action against violence and power inequities?</li> <li>• Are there services available to address these problems?</li> </ul> <p><b>Talking Points for the Dialogues</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Not to blame men or anyone who has perpetuated violence</li> <li>2. Look to the future (Look Forward)</li> <li>3. Identify what we can change to stop violence in our communities</li> <li>4. Gender violence is a result of women's status in society.</li> <li>5. Gender violence is a result of a power imbalance in society.</li> <li>6. Zimbabwe has laws to protect women and children from domestic violence and early marriage.</li> <li>7. Community-based organization like Msasa Project and the Department of social welfare Provide protection and counseling to victims of violence.</li> </ol>

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# Session Agenda (cont'd)

Session	Instruction to Facilitator	Specific Activities	Main Points for Facilitator
<b>Action Plan</b>		<p>Begin to draft an action plan.</p> <p>Plan next meeting to continue the discussion and planning.</p>	<p>Where do we start to address the issue?</p> <p>Do we need additional information to take action?</p> <p>Is there anything community members can do to help change the situation?</p> <p>Do we understand why the problem exists?</p> <p>Do we need more information to guide us?</p> <p>Who needs to be involved from outside the community?</p> <p>What is our first step?</p> <p>Who at this meeting is willing to help with these actions?</p>

# Session Agenda (cont'd)

Session	Instruction to Facilitator	Specific Activities	Main Points for Facilitator
<b>Closing &amp; Next Steps</b>	<p>Review talking points.</p> <p>The facilitator should always have clear closing/take away points prepared, preferably as a hand-out for participants to take with them and as a reference.</p> <p>Always summarize the discussion and highlight key commitments and actions promised.</p> <p>Offer to stay behind in case someone needs further information or support.</p>		







# Identifying Experts & Community Leaders

Note for facilitators: Make a list of experts and leaders within the community that you might invite to your workshop. We have included some categories below to help you get started.

Categories	Potential guests
<b>Religious Leaders</b>	
<b>Elected officials from all sectors</b>	
<b>Educators</b>	
<b>Health workers</b>	
<b>Community-based organizations</b>	



# Identifying Experts & Community Leaders (cont'd)

Categories	Potential guests
<b>Private Sector Leaders</b> (agro-business, wholesalers, processors)	
<b>Women's organizations</b>	
<b>Elders</b>	
<b>Traditional Leaders</b>	
<b>Media</b>	



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