

## **Focus Group Discussion Tip Sheet**

This tip sheet was in June 2011 created by youth from Mercy Corps Kenya's Yes Youth Can! program.

### **General Tips**

- Smaller groups are better. Aim for a maximum of 15 per FGD.
- Participants may provide more honest dialogue when groups are gender exclusive.
- Ensure that you have appropriate permission to conduct the FGD (elders, parents, caretakers, etc.)
- Explain that the goal of the FGD is to collect information. Be clear and transparent regarding the PRIME program. Be careful of promising activities, resources, jobs, etc.
- The FGD should not exceed 90 minutes.

### **Tips for Facilitators**

Before the FGD:

- Practice! Practice! Practice asking the questions in a natural way to create a conversational flow so it feels informal and comfortable for the participants. If necessary you can find more indirect ways of asking the questions. You can also add in preliminary questions if necessary.
- Master all of the questions. Have back-up questions prepared so you'll be ready to provide clarity should any youth be confused by a question.
- Practice translating technical words into the local language.
- Practice for worst-case scenarios.

During the FGD:

- Be friendly... but take charge.
- At the beginning, clearly state the purpose of the FGD and discuss some rules for the discussion.
- Make sure the note taker is keeping up with the conversation and slow the pace if necessary.
- Keep track of time and keep the conversation focused. Don't spend too long on a single question.
- People ask questions you aren't prepared for... You'll need to have some response.
- Sometimes you may feel like you are losing control....Don't panic! Be confident in your leadership skills.
- Always tell participants the truth. Their expectations are very high but you cannot indulge them.
- Be patient and allow participants to feel comfortable. If the questions are too direct and the participants appear uncomfortable, use indirect questions or preliminary questions to get the answers you need.
- Make sure the participants have fully understood the question.
- It is easy to have misunderstandings, so try repeating back answers to check if the information is clear.
- You don't need to use the exact words in the question or translate everything equally. Use language and words which are most comfortable for you but make sure the point of the question is clear.

- Even when asked directly, avoid joining in the discussion or expressing your personal opinions. Ask probing questions to clarify participants' answers but don't judge their answers.
- Try to keep the group and conversation contained to the intended participants, even if other individuals show up and want to share their opinions.
- Stay cool at all times! Use your body language to support your words.

### **Tips for Note Takers**

- It is very hard to take notes fast enough to follow the conversation. Prepare a short-code for some words and names to make the note taking easier.
- Create a code with the facilitator so you can ask him/her to slow down or wait for you to finish writing and so you can tell him/her it is ok to move forward. Try to sit within view of one another.
- Watch the time and keep the facilitator on track
- WRITE NEATLY! Make sure your notes are legible and are easy to follow.

### **CONTACT**

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