



KEEP GOOD HEALTH *enjoy life!*

Toolkit for Community Dialogues



Developed and produced with support from **MALARIA CONSORTIUM**

What is Community Dialogue?

A Community Dialogue is when community members come together to discuss issues of concern for the community. It is grassroots based as it is already happening in most communities to discuss various topics during regular or ad hoc community meetings.

During Community Dialogue, members of the community discuss and make decisions to improve the well-being of their community.



Why should Leaders hold Community Dialogues about children's health under VHT programme?

To bring quality medical care to young children closer to people's homes, the Ministry of Health, has introduced the Village Health Teams (VHT).

VHTs are community members, who are trained to provide free testing and treatment for common ill health conditions, particularly malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoea among children under-five years of age, check on the health of mothers and new-borns and promote health among community members. This will reduce severe illness and death among young children, and benefit the whole community.

For this programme to effectively improve the health of the children, Leaders must engage members of their community in Dialogues in order to:

- **Increase awareness in the community on how to reduce** illness and nurture a healthy community.
- Encourage **community members to take action** to solve health issues using existing resources, at the individual, household and community levels.
- **Assist in referring** parents and care-givers to seek advice, more information or treatment from VHTs and health care facilities.

Who can facilitate a Dialogue?

Community leaders (whether administrative, or religious, or traditional) can chair a session, to ensure their full support to the programme, while a Village Health Team - VHT member should facilitate the discussions and answer technical questions that community members may raise during a session.



Where can a dialogue occur?

In any place where people can gather and feel comfortable to discuss openly, such as a school, community centers, under a tree, places of worship or health centres.

Who should participate?

- Family members, primarily parents (fathers and mothers) who both are responsible for the well-being of their children
- Village Health Team Members (VHTs) or facility-based Health Workers: can help respond to technical questions and concerns from the participants

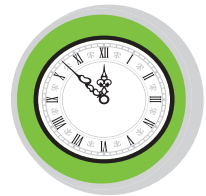


How many people should participate?

About 10 to 20 people

How long should a community dialogue last?

About 1 to 2 hours



How often should dialogues be held?

Ideally a dialogue should be held once every three months or as often as community members or community leaders feel there is a need for discussing a topic. Preferably on a fixed day at a fixed time, so it becomes a routine and helps people to plan their time and fix it into their schedules.



Ten Steps to Lead a Successful Community Dialogue

Planning for the community Dialogue

1. Read the “Frequently asked questions sheet” - FAQ sheet and your Community Dialogue Toolkit. Select one topic to be discussed at each meeting. It might be useful to review the FAQ sheet with a VHT or health worker to make sure you understand all the information fully and clarify difficult or unclear information.
2. Make sure at least 1 or 2 VHTs from the community will be able to attend. If possible, try to get a health worker from the nearest facility to participate in the Community Dialogue as well to help answer technical questions from community members.
3. Agree on the date, time, location and topic and invite community members to attend.



Opening of the community Dialogue

4. Each Dialogue starts according to the protocol which would normally be used at a community meeting. For example, it could start with a prayer, an introduction of the purpose of the meeting by the chairperson, and introductions from participants (if they don't already know each other).



During the community Dialogue

5. Exploring:
Explore the selected topic by asking open questions to community members, using examples listed in the Discussion Guides. Encourage everyone to share thoughts and speak out. One way to involve everyone is to ask each participant to share their thoughts on the issue. The VHTs or health workers present can answer technical questions and clarify misconceptions or myths that come out in the discussion.



6. Identifying Issues and Actions:

After participants have given their thoughts on the issue, try to identify three or four main challenges within the community that affect the topic you are discussing. Then ask participants to suggest ways they can work together to address the identified challenges. Encourage participants to focus on what they can do within their community, rather than focusing on what they want others (such as the government) to do for them.



7. Making Decisions:

Work with participants to agree on a few specific actions. Make sure to identify who is to do what, where and by when for each action. Try to involve everyone in the discussion in at least one action. The Village Health Team members and Health Workers can also support the community in developing plans and identifying resources to implement suggestions.



At the end of the community Dialogue

8. Summarize key information and discussion points. Remind everyone of the action plan developed, including the topic and timing for the next Community Dialogue.



9. Refer participants to VHT, health workers or health care facilities for more information, assistance, and services. .

10. Thank participants for coming, listening carefully, and sharing their views.



Community Dialogue – Examples of Discussion Guides

USER GUIDE

- The Discussion Guides are **only suggestions** with examples of questions that could be discussed with community members. It is not necessary to address all questions listed in the topic in each Community Dialogue.
- **Four discussion guides** are proposed:
 - Community-based and Facility-based Health Services
 - Malaria in Children
 - Diarrhea in Children
 - Pneumonia in children.
- For each topic, there are open questions to help you guide the discussion through the **3 steps**:
 - **Exploring**



- **Identifying Issues**



- **Action Planning**



- Each session should not last too long, otherwise community members will stop paying attention. Work with your VHT members beforehand to **select the key questions** of interest to your community to discuss during the Community Dialogue.
- Use the **Facts Sheet** to look for information; record the questions that cannot be answered during the Dialogue, and ask later to a professional health worker.



Tips for Leading Dialogue

- Help all participants feel comfortable to express their opinions and ask questions. Encourage all people in the meeting to participate. Try to make sure that everyone has a chance to talk. Try not to let one or two people do all the talking.
- Remain neutral, respect all community members' opinions and concerns.
- If some people remain silent, make time for them to speak up too. Encourage quieter people to contribute, but do not force them.
- Bring the group back to the key topic if the discussion goes off course. If the group expresses interest or concern in a different issue, consider discussing that issue at the next Dialogue. Telling participants they will have another opportunity to discuss that topic may help in bringing them back to the original topic for discussion.
- Remind everyone to listen when others are speaking and to be respectful of other's views.
- Help participants to identify at least one simple action they can do. Make sure each dialogue ends with a commitment to action.



Topic sheets

Topic 1: Community-based Health Services

Exploring

- What do we know about Village Health Teams (VHTs)?
- What is the difference between VHTs and Health Workers?
- How are VHTs connected to the health facility?
- Do we need more information on what VHTs can provide and not provide?
- Can we trust that the services provided by the VHTs are of good quality?
- How can we best benefit from the VHTs services?
- Why do VHT provide these services for free?



Identifying Actions

- When should we use the VHT's services?
- Why seek care immediately when a child falls sick? What are the benefits to seeking care quickly? Why do we delay in seeking care?
- When should we go to the VHTs? And when should we go to the health centre?

Have you used the services provided by the VHTs? What for?

- Do you know when and where to find VHTs?
- Do you have difficulties in accessing the VHT's services? Why?
- What can we do to make sure that members of our community know what services are offered by the VHT? What can we do to make sure that we can find the VHT when we need them? What should we do if we can't find the VHTs when we need them?



Do we follow the advice given by the VHTs? Why or why not?

- What can we do to ensure that our community members follow the advice given by VHT?

Action Planning

What actions can we take as individuals and as a community to reduce sickness and death among children in our community?



Topic 2: Malaria in Children

Exploring

What is malaria and what causes it?

- Is malaria a common disease in our community?
- How can we recognize malaria from other sicknesses? Are there mild and severe forms of malaria? What's the difference?
- What are the consequences of malaria in children? Is it dangerous?
- Do children die from malaria sometimes?
- What's the best treatment available?
- What are the danger signs during malaria that need immediate attention?



Identifying Actions

What do we usually do when we think our children have malaria?

- What type of treatment do we give to our children when we think they have malaria? Is that the best treatment?
- Why don't we visit a VHT as soon as we realize our children have a fever?
- Are we satisfied with VHTs' services? What is good and not good?

How do we prevent malaria?

- Do we always sleep under a mosquito net? Not all of us? Not all nights? Not at all times during the year? Why or why not?
- Why should we always sleep under a mosquito net?
- If not all the members of our household can fit under the mosquito net(s), who should sleep under the net(s)? What's the best way to hang and use a mosquito net? Can our mosquito nets be washed? How often?



Action Planning

What actions can we take as individuals and as a community to ensure our children will not get malaria as frequently?

- What can we do to make sure that all pregnant women and children under age 5 sleep under a mosquito net every night?
- What can we do to make sure that all members of our household and community sleep under a mosquito net every night?



What actions can we take as individuals and as a community to ensure that sick children will be tested for malaria and treated immediately?



Topic 3: Diarrhea in Children

Exploring

What is Diarrhoea and how is it caused?

- Are there different (mild and severe) forms of diarrhoea?
- Who is most at risk of getting diarrhoea?
- How do we know when a child has diarrhoea?
- What are the consequences of diarrhoea in children? Is it dangerous?
- Can a child die from diarrhoea?
- What's the best treatment available?
- What are the danger signs of diarrhoea that need immediate attention?



Identifying Actions

Identifying Issues

- What do we usually do when a child has diarrhoea?
- What should we do when a child has diarrhoea? Why should we visit a VHT or the health centre immediately when a child falls sick?
- What can we do to ensure that every child with diarrhoea is treated immediately?
- Are we satisfied with VHTs' services? What is good and not good?



How do we prevent diarrhoea?

- Do we always wash our hands with soap before we prepare food, eat, feed our children, or after we go to the toilet?
- Do our children wash their hands with soap before they eat and after going to the toilet?
- What makes it hard for us and our children to wash our hands with soap before we touch food and after we go to the toilet?
- What can we do to make sure that we and our children always wash our hands before we touch food and after we go to the toilet?



Making Decisions

What actions can we take as individuals and as a community to ensure our children will suffer less from diarrhoea?

What actions can we take as individuals and as a community to ensure that sick children will be treated immediately?



Topic 4: Pneumonia in children

Exploring

What is Pneumonia and what causes it?

- What are the symptoms of pneumonia? What is the difference between a cough and pneumonia?
- If my child is coughing does it mean that he has pneumonia? If my child is not coughing, could he still have pneumonia?
- What are the consequences of pneumonia in children? Is it dangerous? Can children die from pneumonia?
- Can the smoke from our cooking fire cause children to cough?
- What's the best treatment available for pneumonia?
- What are the danger signs of pneumonia that need immediate attention?



Identifying Actions

What do we usually do when a child is coughing or having difficulty breathing?

- Where do we get treatment for our children when we think they have pneumonia? Is that the best place to get treatment?

What should we do whenever a child has a serious cough or difficulty breathing? Why seek care immediately when a child falls sick?

- Why don't we visit a VHT as soon as we realize our children have difficulty breathing?
- Are we satisfied with VHTs' services? What is good and not good?



How do we prevent pneumonia and other coughs?

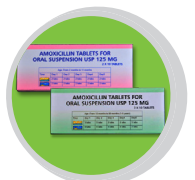
- Do mothers breastfeed their babies until they are six months old? Do they feed their babies other foods before the babies are six months old? What prevents us from exclusively breastfeeding our babies for six months?
- Do we cook or have fire where children play or sleep? Could we cook in another place so that children are not around the smoke?
- What can we do to keep children away from smoke?

Action Planning

What actions can we take as individuals and as a community to ensure our children will not get coughs or have difficulty breathing as frequently?



What actions can we take as individuals and as a community to ensure that sick children will be treated immediately?



Action plan and monitoring sheet

Community Dialogue - Monitoring Sheet

Don't forget to fill a Monitoring Sheet just AFTER each Community Dialogue. The monitoring sheet collects basic information on community dialogue proceedings.

1. Place of meeting:
2. Date & Time of meeting:
3. Approximate Number of Participants: Males: Females:
4. Who was/were the Facilitator(s)?.....
5. Was there any preliminary briefing between Community Leader & VHT or Health Worker before discussion? Yes No
6. Were some Village Health Teams present at the Dialogue?
Yes No
7. Did the Facility-Based Health Worker participate in the Dialogue?
Yes No
8. What was the topic for the Dialogue?
9. What were the main problems or challenges identified by community members?
10. What were the main Actions / Decisions reached?
.....
11. Did Community agree to meet again to hold another Dialogue?
Yes No
12. Record any technical question or issue that could not be answered during the dialogue.

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