



EMPOWER ASSESSMENT TOOL Women centered participatory discussion guide

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Introduction

DATE OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION DISCUSSION:**SAMPLE INTRODUCTION SCRIPT**

Welcome and thank you for taking the time to join me for this discussion today.

My name is *[insert your name]*, and I work with *[insert the name of your organization and consider sharing what services you already have in place for women and girls, e.g., women and girl safe space]*.

NAME OF FACILITATOR:

I gathered you today to learn more about what it means to be a *[insert the focus group characteristic, e.g., displaced adolescent girls, refugee adult women, women who are older from the host community]* in *[insert community name]* and how violence affects the lives of women like you.

NAME OF NOTE TAKER:

We do not need you to share your specific experiences; we will speak about women's general experiences. Your participation is voluntary; there is no direct benefit from participating. However, your answers will help my team create programming which supports women's and girls' safety in this community.

IF INTERPRETER IS NECESSARY, NAME OF INTERPRETER:

I will be asking you questions through activities. I expect the discussion will take *[insert length of time based on activities selected]*. There is no right or wrong answer, and you do not have to respond to questions if you do not wish to, and you can leave the discussion at any time.

FEATURES OF THE GROUP (AGE GROUP, STATUS, ETC.):

All your answers will be treated confidentially. This means we will not identify who said what or use your names in any way in the notes so you can feel comfortable talking freely. The purpose of the notes is to ensure that the information collected is precise.

You each also have an essential role in ensuring confidentiality. During the discussion, when sharing examples or experiences, individual names should not be used. After the discussion, do not share the details of who was in the group or what was discussed. If someone asks, explain that you were speaking about health and safety issues for women and girls to help inform services.

Does anyone have any questions about the purpose or confidentiality of this discussion?

Do I have your agreement to maintain confidentiality? May we begin?

Part 1: Assessing the current environment

OPENING ACTIVITY

WHAT I LIKE ABOUT BEING A WOMAN³³

15 MINUTES

1. Ask the women to form a circle.

Think of one thing you enjoy about being a woman.

I will start to give an example and a minute to think.

2. Introduce yourself and act out what you like about being a woman. For example:

My name is Sara, and as a woman, I like my confidence.

3. Act out what you like about being a woman (in this example, being confident), then move on to the next participant.

4. Once all the women have had a chance to take part:

Thank you for sharing. I encourage you to continue to volunteer, participate, and enjoy your time together throughout these discussions

5. Remind the women:

We will explore through a set of participatory activities what it means to be a *[insert the focus group characteristic, e.g., displaced adolescent girls, refugee adult women, women who are older from the host community]* in *[insert community name]*.

Discussion includes speaking about violence against women and girls. This is a complex topic, especially if women in the room have experienced or witnessed violence.

We are not asking women to share their personal experiences but rather speak about women's general experiences. If any woman wishes to speak about her personal experiences and seek support, we are available after the workshop to connect you with someone trusted and safe to speak with.

³³ Adapted from International Rescue Committee (2013) Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls: Engaging Men Through Accountable Practice [https://gbvresponders.org/prevention/emap-tools-resources/#EngagingMenthroughAccountablePractice\(EMAP\)ResourcePackage](https://gbvresponders.org/prevention/emap-tools-resources/#EngagingMenthroughAccountablePractice(EMAP)ResourcePackage)

PARTICIPATORY DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

WHO HAS POWER AND WHO BELONGS?³⁴

15 MINUTES

1. Break participants off into pairs or small groups and either assign each group one or several of the terms
 - » Race
 - » Ethnicity
 - » Sexual orientation
 - » Religion
 - » Socio-economic status
 - » Ability status
 - » National origin
 - » First language
 - » Age
2. Give each group 5 minutes to identify in their community who are privileged women and who are the marginalized women within each term.
3. Let groups know at the end of the 5 minutes: they will have 1 minute to report their answers.
4. After each term is shared, ask:
 - » Are there any additions or thoughts from the rest of the room?

Continue this way until all groups have presented.
5. On a flipchart, draw a triangle divided horizontally by 6 lines representing the community's hierarchy.
 - » The triangle's top part represents those in positions of power and influence, those who are seen and heard most frequently and who others look up to and listen to, and those who are most well represented in the policies, media, etc.
6. Ask groups:
 - » Place the women you listed under each term with their hierarchy in the community. Those who would not be found at all are to be left outside the triangle.
7. Debrief:
 - » Which women does the community cater most to (relevant documents, language, resources, information, events, etc.), and which least to, or not at all? –
 - » Are there women in the community who are missing? If yes, which ones?
 - » Where would these women be situated?

³⁴ Adapted from Living History Forum and RFSL Ungdom(2009) Break the norm ! methods for studying norms in general and the heteronorm in particular Second edition <https://rm.coe.int/break-the-norm-second-edition-2009/168097fd43>

OPEN-ENDED STORY

IDENTIFYING ATTITUDES AND NORMS RELATED TO INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV)³⁵

60 MINUTES

WHEN TAILORING THIS ACTIVITY CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

The vignette for this activity focuses on IPV, given that it is the most prevalent form of violence women and girls face even in acute emergencies. Depending on the time and resources available you may also want to explore attitudes and norms associated with other types of VAWG. For example, a similar activity focused on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse can be found in Empowered Aid: Participatory Action Research Toolkit developed by the Global Women's Institute.

Prior to using the vignette, you should adjust the details (e.g. the names, ages, language, and the specific ways in which IPV is perpetrated) for a context tailored vignette which women can speak to in greater detail. Consider engaging for example peer staff providing case management services for survivors, staff from national and civil society women's organizations and women regularly participating in women girl safe space activities to support you with the tailoring.

Discussion questions are organized under headings reflecting seven dimensions of attitudes and norms related to IPV. During the FGD you should directly ask the questions you have selected to discuss with women. The headings are provided to support you in analyzing the findings to inform the design of your prevention strategy (see the [Getting Started: Step by Step](#) section and [Appendix B](#) in the EMPOWER framework document.

1. Tell the group:

I am about to read them a scenario that occurs in many different communities worldwide.

This is not one person's story but based on various real-life experiences, and I would like your help in filling in her story as if she were from their community through the questions asked after.

2. Read the story aloud:

Salma, who is 16 years old, and Yasser, who is 25 years old, got married out of love and had their parents' approval. Before marriage, they had a good relationship. He cared for Salma, bought her gifts, was protective of her, and looked out for her. After marriage, he became increasingly controlling and suspicious. One day, he was waiting for her after school and saw her talking to a boy from her class. He got so angry that he pushed her, hard enough that she fell over. He then started yelling at her: 'Why were you talking to him? What were you talking about?'. Salma had enough, so she said, 'Be quiet'. Yasser responded, 'What did you say?' and then grabbed Salma's hand and pulled her. Other people standing outside the school who saw this did not say anything, and Salma and Yasser went home.

The next day, Yasser yelled at Salma because the food was not ready when he got home. 'You do nothing around the house; you are worthless', he said. He picked up the nearest pan and threw it at her, hitting her hard on the shoulder. Yasser's older sister became aware of his behavior towards his wife but saw this as Salma's fault. Yasser's sister told Salma, 'You know what his temper is like, you don't want to go and provoke him, why do you provoke him like that?' Salma told a friend that she suffers from severe depression and long-lasting injuries because of her husband's behavior.

³⁵ Adapted from Pravez Butt, A., Valerio, K., Davies, I. (2020) Social Norms Diagnostic Tool: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights & Gender-based Violence, Oxfam. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/social-norms-diagnostic-tool-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights-and-gend-621097/>

3. Ask participants to reflect on the following:

A. Identifying norms around IPV

- » Would most people expect him to say these things?
- » Would most husbands get violent with Salma for talking to a boy and responding in the way that she did? For not doing her domestic chores well and responding in the way that she did?

B. Social sanctions

- » What are the expected reactions of people around Salma and her husband towards his behavior?
- » What kind of response might Yasser and Salma experience if the wider community finds out about their domestic conflict?

C. Situations triggering domestic violence

- » In your knowledge and experiences, are there any other situations relating to women's roles and or responsibilities where she may experience violence? Some examples include the following:
 - » If she refuses sex?
 - » If she disagrees with him on how household finances spent?
 - » If she visits a health worker without telling him?
 - » If she starts spending money that she has earned without asking him?

D. Access to GBV and sexual reproductive health support services/ information

- » Would most women in Salma's position seek help for mental and physical health? Why or why not?
- » Would they know where to go?
- » To whom would most women in Salma's position turn?
- » Would it be acceptable or for her to reach out to a professional health worker about it?
- » What kinds of support and or services does someone in Salma's position need from her family, service providers?
- » What kinds of support/services are available to her?

E. Social norm change

- » Have reactions to women studying and or taking on new work roles changed compared to before the emergency? If yes, provide examples and whether these are positive, negative, or neutral.

F. Key influencers

- » Who might be able to influence Yasser or his sister to act differently?

G. Exceptions

- » Are there any instances where people would not expect Yasser to yell at or hit Selma, according to age, social status, wealth, location, ethnicity, and or pregnancy status?
- » If I had identified Selma earlier as: *[an adolescent girl]*; *[an older woman]*, would any answers change to the previous questions? If yes, which ones and how?
- » If I had identified Selma as lesbian and IPV occurring between Selma and her female partner, would any answers change to the previous questions? If yes, which ones and how?
- » If I had identified Selma as belonging to *[insert ethnic group]*; *[insert religious affiliation]*; *[insert relevant identity group facing systemic oppression and discrimination in your context]* would any answers change to the previous questions? If yes, which ones and how?

STORY WITH A GAP

EXPLORING SPACES AND EXPRESSIONS OF POWER³⁶

60 MINUTES

WHEN TAILORING THIS ACTIVITY CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

You may want to explore other relevant spaces in the community which might have come up through the safety mapping for example. Consider dividing participants into four rather than two groups and have each group explore a space looking at both the conditions in which they feel they have and lack power.

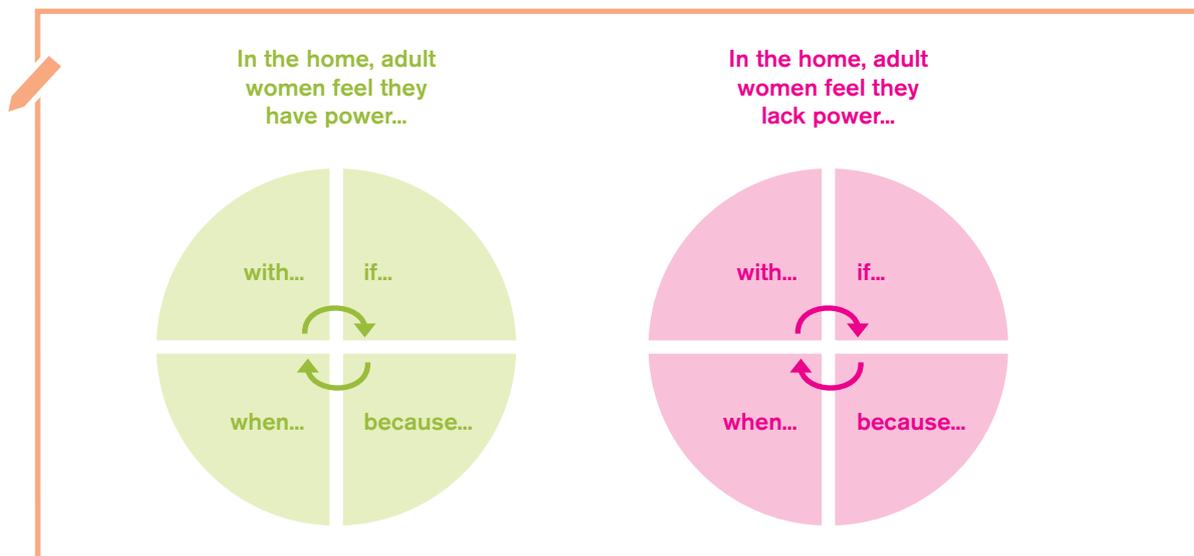
The discussion questions can be tailored based on the information you feel you need to gain a more nuanced understanding of factors influencing women's sense of power to identify prevention strategies relevant for your context.

1. We recommend two facilitators for this activity. Women must reflect on power as a group from the perspective of their shared identity used as a marker to gather them in the discussion groups (e.g., displaced adolescent girls, refugee adult women, women who are older from the host community).
2. Explain that:
 - ◀ As explored in the open story, violence against women and girls occurs because of the harmful beliefs about women and girls and the imbalance of power created in society between men and women.
 - ◀ Shortly, we are about to explore power through another participatory activity but that before jumping into the activity, I want to spend a few minutes [*maximum ten minutes*] grounding us in a collective understanding.
3. Ask a few participants to share in plenary a description of what power looks like for them. Explain:
 - ◀ Power is the ability to influence or control people, opportunities, or resources.
4. Mention:
 - ◀ Having power allows an individual to make decisions. In this sense, power can be used to make beneficial decisions, but it can also be abused, and ask participants to offer examples of beneficial and harmful power uses.
5. Follow up by defining the four types of power, including power within, power with, power to, and power over terms. VAWG is about the use and abuse of “power over” women and girls.
6. Transition to the activity, which might help clarify pending questions participants may have as they explore power.

³⁶ Adapted from: Raising Voices (2008) The SASA ! Activist Kit for Preventing Violence against Women and HIV Activist Toolkit https://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/downloads/Sasa/SASA_Activist_Kit/START/Training/Start.Training.DeepKnowModule.pdf

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7. As illustrated below, facilitators should introduce two flipcharts, each with a circle (preferably using two distinct colors). Circles identically divided into four equal parts, labeled as follows: [with... if... when... because...].



8. Explain:

◀ The circles stand for the space in the home.

9. Divide participants into two groups. Assign one group to think about the situations, decisions, and experiences they feel they [have power] in the home, while the other to think about the situations, decisions, and experiences they feel they [lack power] in the home.
10. During the first 15 minutes, each facilitator should support a group in finding at least two examples for each of the four conditions where they either [have or lack power].
11. When the time is up, one facilitator should transition the group focused on [have power] to answer the following sample questions:

- » Does having the power you identified as a group protect women from experiencing violence or increase women's sense of safety? In the home or experienced elsewhere? Is this different from before the emergency?
- » Does having the power you identified as a group increase women's risk of experiencing violence or decrease women's sense of safety? Which type of violence? Experienced In the home or experienced elsewhere? Is this different from before the emergency?
- » What resources, support, and strategies do women rely on to reduce their risk of experiencing violence in the home? Of experiencing violence outside the home?
- » Are there resources, support, and strategies women need to stay safe that they cannot access since the emergency?
- » If a program focused on balancing power between women and other family members to reduce women's domestic violence experiences, would the program target? What power would it support women in keeping or gaining, or what influence and control over women would it reduce?

12. While the other facilitator should transition the group focused on [lack power] to answer the following sample questions:

- » Does the lack of power you identified as a group increase women's risk of experiencing violence and decrease their sense of safety? In the home or elsewhere? Is this different from before the emergency?
- » What resources, support, and strategies do women rely on to reduce their risk of experiencing violence in the home?
- » Are there resources, support, and strategies women need to stay safe that they cannot access since the emergency?
- » If a program focused on balancing power between women and other family members to reduce women's domestic violence experiences, would the program target? What power would it support women in maintaining or gaining, or what influence and control over women would it reduce?

13. Aim for a 10-minute plenary feedback session. Have the group focused on [have power] share with...if...when...because... they feel women have power in the home followed by the second group sharing with...if...when...because... they feel women lack power in the home.
14. Lacking enough time to fully debrief activities in the plenary offer an opportunity for facilitators to transition to the closing reflections and conclusion, where the next steps for engagement of women in sharing back the findings and initial design strategies.

BODY MAPPING

MAPPING WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN THE EMERGENCY³⁷

45 MINUTES

1. Create a large body map that represents women.
2. The body image (and body parts) is used as a focus to explore and record participants' views regarding the different ways in which living in an emergency context has affected their lives. For example, key questions relating to the body map include:
 - » (Head) How has the emergency affected their mind, the way they think, and/or their learning? (explore both positive and negative examples)
 - » (Eyes) How has the context affected the way people see women? How has the context affected their perceptions of the world?
 - » (Ears) How has the context affected how people listen to women?
 - » (Mouth) How has the context affected the way men and women communicate? How has it affected the way women communicate with one another?
 - » (Main Body) How has the emergency context affected their health? What forms of abuse have women been subjected to?
 - » (Heart) How has the emergency context affected the feelings people have for different groups of people in their community? How has it affected their feelings and people's feelings towards them? Who did they get support from in times of need?
 - » (Arms/ Hands) As a result of the emergency context, what kinds of activities are they more or less involved in? (for example, forced work, caretaking)?
 - » (Legs/ Feet) As a result of the emergency context are there any changes in where women do or do not / can or cannot go?
3. Enable general discussion on the body:
 - » Do you think the impacts described here are similar for all groups of women in the community?
 - » How do these various impacts of living in emergency contexts influence women's risk of experiencing violence?

³⁷ Adapted from Save The Children Norway (2008) A Kit of Tools for Participatory Research with Children, Young People and Adults: A compilation of tools used during a Thematic Evaluation and Documentation on Children's Participation in Armed Conflict, Post Conflict and Peace Building, 2006-2008 https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/7814/pdf/kit-of-tools_1.pdf

FLOWER MAPPING

MAPPING WOMEN'S SUPPORT³⁸

45 MINUTES

1. Women can either work in pairs or individually:

◀ Draw the center of a flower that represents them.

2. Ask women:

◀ Draw petals to go around the center of the flower to represent which people they seek support during difficult or distressing times.

The petals should be drawn bigger for the people they most often seek support from and/or the people who support them most.

The name/characteristic of the people (for example, family, friends, neighbors etc) should be written inside.

The petals should be drawn smaller for people they occasionally seek support from and/or for people who provide less support – again ensure that the names/characteristics of the people are written inside the petal.

3. Ask women:

◀ Share your flowers, explaining which people provide the most support to you during difficult times and the kinds of support they provide.

4. Facilitate a discussion on:

- » The characteristics of people that enable them to be most helpful or supportive (as well as negative characteristics that make it harder for some people to provide support to women)
- » The kinds of support most sought by women like them during times of difficulty or distress
- » Any kinds of support that are lacking
- » The role that women play in supporting their peers, siblings etc.

³⁸ Adapted from Save The Children Norway (2008) A Kit of Tools for Participatory Research with Children, Young People and Adults: A compilation of tools used during a Thematic Evaluation and Documentation on Children's Participation in Armed Conflict, Post Conflict and Peace Building, 2006-2008 https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/7814/pdf/kit-of-tools_1.pdf

CLOSING

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

15 MINUTES

1. Thank participants and ask participants if they have urgent questions.
2. Remind the group:

It is hard to talk about violence. We are available to connect you with the GBV caseworker. You should come see us after the meeting.

3. Share your expected timeline and share:

We hope to engage with you all again to discuss overall findings and facilitate program design discussions.

Come and see us at the close of the activity to discuss how to reach you for the second phase if you are interested in participating.

Part 2: Facilitating program design discussions

These discussions require your careful thought and design because their focus will depend on the findings collected through discussions using [Part 1](#) of this tool and findings from other assessment tools you will have used, among other factors. You can use the outline presented in the [Getting Started: Step by Step](#) section of the guidance document, [Appendix B](#), and the participatory methodologies below to design participatory discussions with women and girls, which will best support the design of your prevention strategy.

PAIR WISE PREFERENCE RANKING

DESIGNING PREVENTION STRATEGIES BASED ON WOMEN'S PREFERENCES

60 MINUTES

You can use of preference ranking participatory tool to explore, for instance, women's preference among:

- » Risk factors prevention programming should actively aim to mitigate
- » Protective factors prevention programming should enhance / support
- » Methods for disseminating information about prevention programming in the community
- » Stakeholders the program should engage
- » Community leaders the program should inform
- » Humanitarian sector, the prevention program should liaise with and influence.

Brainstorm issues that require ranking. Consolidate into concise themes/ issues for ranking and develop symbols or visual representations of each so that all women will be able to identify the options.

Avoid at all costs preference ranking discussions turning into a prioritization of types of violence and carefully address comments from participants which qualify certain types of violence as 'worse' than others.

1. Preparations:
 - » Draw symbols on a flip chart paper that represent the options related to the component women will voice their preference for.
 - » Draw a matrix (see next page) to analyze the preferences with women in real time.
 - » Draw the corresponding symbol and write each of the options along the matrix's top and down the matrix's side (in opposite order).
2. Introduce the preference ranking activity to groups of women.

◀ This is a tool that enables you to explore which component (e.g., protective factors) you most prefer the prevention program to focus on and why.
3. Explain the options and show the related symbol to make sure everyone understands what they will be voting on. Once you are done explaining, check their understanding by asking volunteers to paraphrase the symbols.

4. Ask participants:

Compare, for example, two factors at any one time, indicating which factor (out of the two) you prefer (for whatever reasons).

Factors	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Factor 4	Discuss Factor 1 and Factor 4	Discuss Factor 2 and Factor 4	Discuss Factor 3 and Factor 4	
Factor 3	Discuss Factor 1 and Factor 3	Discuss Factor 2 and Factor 3		Discuss Factor 4 and Factor 3
Factor 2	Discuss Factor 1 and Factor 2		Discuss Factor 3 and Factor 2	Discuss Factor 4 and Factor 2
Factor 1		Discuss Factor 2 and Factor 1	Discuss Factor 3 and Factor 1	Discuss Factor 4 and Factor 1

5. Ensure that all the participants are involved in the discussion. Before moving on to another comparison ask the women:

Indicate your preference between the two factors (e.g. **Factor 1** and **Factor 4**).

Note down the factor which was voted for as shown in the example below:

Factors	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Factor 4	Overall preference for Factor 1	Overall preference for Factor 4	Overall preference for Factor 3	
Factor 3	Overall preference for Factor 3	Overall preference for Factor 3		Overall preference for Factor 3
Factor 2	Overall preference for Factor 1		Overall preference for Factor 2	Overall preference for Factor 2
Factor 1		Overall preference for Factor 1	Overall preference for Factor 3	Overall preference for Factor 1

- Count the scores.
(Example: Most Preferred: **Factor 3** (5 times preferred), 2nd = **Factor 1** (4 times preferred); 3rd = **Factor 2** (2 times preferred); least = **Factor 4** (1 time preferred).

- Enable quality discussions on the reasons for their preferences.

Which factors are most and least preferred by the group? Why? For what reasons?

Record the various views discussed.

- Enable discussion on what would be necessary to ensure support for the most preferred factors by distinct groups of women and girls.

As you will be doing this with distinct groups of women make sure you keep a master of the matrix using a different color to record the preference of different groups of women and girls. This way you can analyze whether there are significant differences among groups which will inform your implementation. (e.g., all women preferred life skills, older women preferred age specific support groups, etc.)

STRATEGIC PLANNING

ANTICIPATING RISKS, OBSTACLES, AND RESISTANCE

90 MINUTES

Use this activity once you have determined the key approaches, strategies, and activities of the prevention program to predict risks, obstacles and resistance that may arise and prepare strategies for addressing them in advance.

The description of the activity below focuses on risks, but the same could be done to explore obstacles women may face in participating / benefiting from the prevention strategies, as well as identifying forms of resistance men and other privileged groups may express towards each strategy using the example of risks.

While risks in relation to your prevention strategy includes the risk that the project implemented based on the strategy will not be able to meet its goals, this activity should primarily focus on risks from the perspective of the prevention program (in meeting the objectives or through the process) of unintentionally causing harm to women or to specific groups of women within the program.

1. Divide participants into small groups according to the specific strategies your prevention program will use. Each participant first spends 15 minutes identifying risks on the way to implementing the groups' assigned strategy using the following questions as a guide.

◀ Are there potential risks to women resulting from this strategy such as:

- » Exacerbating or initiating conflict in the community by making power relations explicit or by unknowingly directing benefits to specific individuals or social groups?
- » Further marginalizing certain social groups by not recognizing them as important stakeholders to include in the process?
- » Accidentally aiding elite members of the community in increasing their power, access and rights over resources through legitimizing their claims through "participatory" activities?

2. Tell each group:

◀ Choose one person to stay and share their thoughts while the rest of the group rotates through each strategy every 5 minutes.

◀ Reflect on risks not previously mentioned to those already identified.

3. In a plenary, ask for volunteers to share their impressions:

- » What stands out?
- » What are the implications of these risks for women?

4. Ask groups:

◀ Spend 30 minutes reflecting on the specific risks to women each obstacle has and outline ideas for overcoming these obstacles or addressing resistance, keeping women's safety at the forefront.

5. Have each group present key strategies in plenary discussions.