

LEARNING BRIEF

Action Learning from application of the ENGAGE Programme's

COMMUNITY DIALOGUES TOOL



The **'Community Dialogues' Tool** is part of Norwegian Church Aid's (NCA) holistic programme, called **ENGAGE** – *Enhancing Girl's Agency and Gender Equality*, that aims for preventing, mitigating, and responding to child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).

The **'Community Dialogues' Tool** was piloted in Somalia and Iraq, with 73 community members (39 female/ 34 male) participated in the programme. Evaluations were conducted with both facilitators and beneficiaries after each of the 32 sessions. Additionally Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were facilitated with the staff and participants at the end of the programme.

Significant findings on how well the tool was working, include:

WHAT WORKED?



COMMUNITY MEMBERS

There were 32 community dialogues meetings for the participants to attend and it was hard for the community members to attend all of them. The female participants suggested to organise the sessions in the participants houses. This appeared to be more convenient for the participants, allowed to create a friendly atmosphere, which increased overall participation of women in the sessions (Iraq).

The sessions on unpacking the root causes and consequences of CEFM resonated well with the audience, allowing to understand how deep the harm from such a practice could be – not just for girls but also for wider community. Such sessions motivated people to more actively take actions and address the issue of CEFM.



NCA STAFF

WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED?



COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Some sessions were conducted by only one facilitator, which seemed difficult to manage. At least two facilitators need to be available to ensure smooth facilitation of the community dialogues.
- The community members shared that it was challenging to attend 32 sessions with all the other commitments they had, particularly related to income generation. They mentioned that small incentives for the participation could have eased the situation and encouraged people to complete the course.



COMMUNITY
MEMBERS

- Men's participation in the community dialogues was limited. More efforts are required to actively engage men.

“We can make an impact in our community, changing some of the harmful practices, starting with our own families, relatives and friends. We can influence other women, but it is still very difficult to influence men in our communities, especially if they haven't participated in similar sessions.” – Female community member from Iraq.



- Some sessions seemed repetitive and could be merged.
- The activities needed to be better adapted for the participants with low literacy.
- The facilitators emphasised the importance of local adaptations, particularly related to the use of terminology, referring to local definitions for various terms, such as “honour”.



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⚠ NOTE: *As the tool was finalised, the participants' and facilitators' observations were considered, and further adjustments were done to various sessions, as well as to the activities used in the curriculum, to better serve the participants' needs.*

IMPACT

- The participants of the community dialogues shared the information discussed with their neighbours, relatives and friends.
- Participated women started to discuss more openly with their husbands the opportunities for gender-balanced decision-making.
- All the participants who completed the sessions were committed and eager to take actions to address the harmful practice of CEFM in their communities and implement the action plans they have jointly developed.

“After participating in community dialogues, we pay more attention to preventing CEFM. We started to discuss more the negative consequences of CEFM with other women in the community.” – Female community member from Iraq.

“Coming together, gathering in one place to discuss various issues and share our opinions, share what we had gone through, was very interesting and uplifting.” – Female community member from Iraq.