

Cob-Web Matrix

Introduction

This exercise helps participants visualize an issue, break it down into smaller pieces, and work on solutions together. Some gender and sexuality-related issues for the group to explore could include a woman's ability to negotiate safer sex with her partner, or a woman's ability to choose how the family's income is distributed. Community workers can use this tool to chart people's progress following an intervention on gender and sexuality.

Objective

■ Participants will discuss an issue, identify contributing factors, and weigh the importance of the contributing factors.

Timeframe: 1 ½ – 2 hours

Materials needed: large sheets of paper, pens, markers

Ideal workspace: enough space for participants to sit in a circle, see the drawing on a large sheet of paper, and add to the drawing

Number of participants: 10-15

STEP 1

If participants are not already acquainted, ask them to introduce themselves.

Describe the activity, its purpose, and how it will work.

Remind participants that this is a group learning exercise, and that it is not necessary for everyone to agree on everything. However, everyone in the group deserves respect. Participants should refrain from judging, interrupting or ridiculing others, and should respect the privacy of others by maintaining confidentiality.

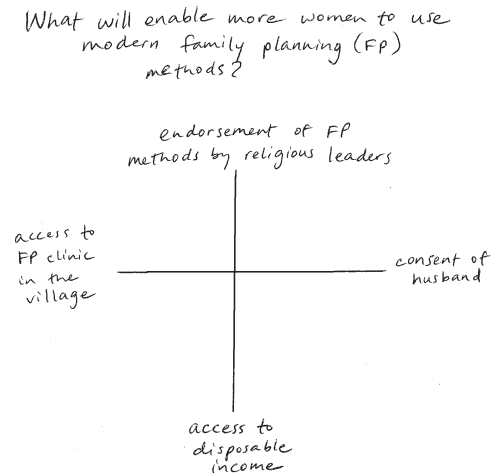
STEP 2

Ask the participants to identify an issue or subject that they would like to explore. If participants need help getting started, you can begin with an example, such as, "What will enable more women to use modern family planning methods?"

Ask participants to identify the factors they think contribute to the issue. In our example, participants would list what will help more women to use modern family planning methods, things such as access to a family planning clinic, or control over disposable income. This step is very similar to developing a problem tree. In this exercise, ask the participants to focus on the main 4-6 factors that contribute to the problem, rather than developing a long list.

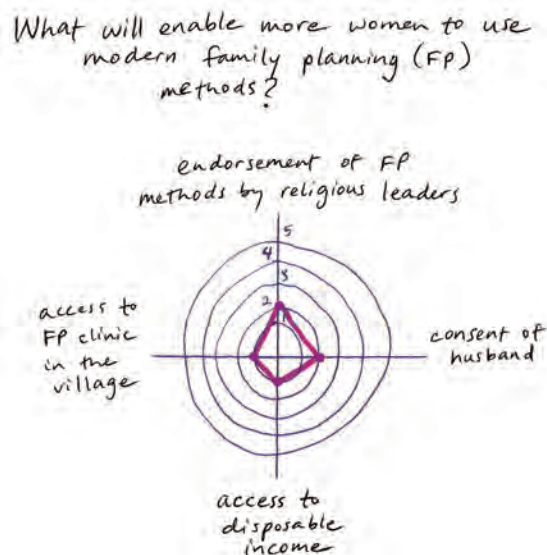
Once you have a list of 4-6 main factors, begin drawing a cob-web matrix on the flipchart paper. To create your cob-web matrix, write down all the factors in different corners of the page. In our family planning example, the group may come up with the a list that includes: (1) endorsement of family planning (FP) methods by religious leaders; (2) access to disposable income to pay for contraceptives; (3) consent of husband; and (4) access to a family planning clinic in the village.

Extend lines to point to each of the factors (see sample below).



Next, draw five 'webs' to indicate levels of support that exist in the community (you may add more levels if you choose), as expressed by the participants, with 1 being 'very little support' and 5 being 'the most support.' For instance, in our example, participants may feel that endorsement by religious leaders and the husband's consent are currently at a low level of support (level 2); religious leaders and husbands do not actively discourage use of family planning, nor do they enthusiastically endorse it. Participants may feel that access to disposable income to pay for contraceptives and access to a family planning clinic in the village are at the lowest level of support (level 4); women do not have access to a family planning clinic, and even if they did, they do not have the money to buy contraceptives.

Use a dot to indicate a level on the web for each of the factors. Use a different colored pen to connect the dots. (See the red connector in the picture below.)



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If participants have difficulty grasping the concept of levels, you could draw a grid on the ground and ask the participants to place stones in the squares corresponding to each of the identified enabling or opposing factors. The number of stones they use will vary depending on how strongly a factor is supported in the community (more stones for high level of support, and less stones for low level of support).

After completing an example, you can start again with a different issue or problem facing the community.

STEP 3

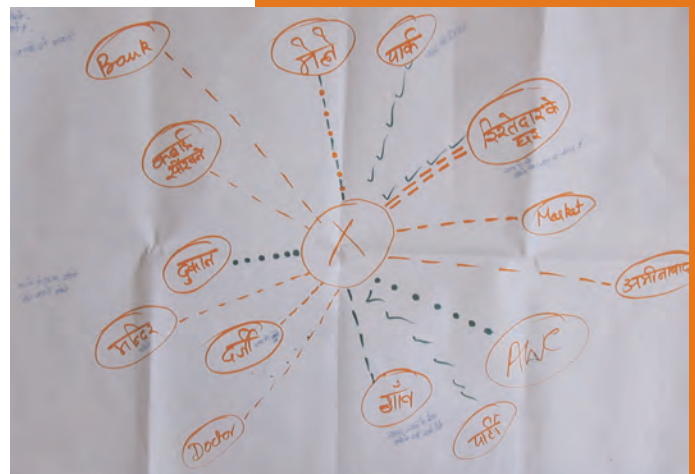
Once the drawing activity is over, initiate a group discussion about the diagram, what it shows, and what can be done with the knowledge gained in this exercise. Use the guiding questions below, or think of others that relate to the issue you are discussing.

STEP 4

If you save the results of the exercise, mark the date, location and participants for the exercise. Later, you can bring the matrix back to the same group in order to measure how the situation has changed for that community. In this case, show the original cob-web to the group and ask them to mark their opinions about how the situation has changed (has it improved or gotten worse?) since the last time. For example, has the level of endorsement by religious leaders improved? If so, then the new number is placed on the line, and the group can see the level of change growing bigger.

Guiding Questions

- What have we learned about the causes of the problem, or the factors contributing to the situation?
- What type of action could be taken to address the issue? Who should take the action? What would be the benefits of addressing this issue? Is this something your community feels is important to take action on?
- Which problems or opportunities are easier or harder to address?
- Are the problems/opportunities similar for women and men? What is the difference and what accounts for this difference?
- How can opportunities for women and men be made more equal? What needs to be done? Who needs to be involved?



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