Tool for Focus Group discussions (with male and female parents)

Focus group discussions can be held in each ‘community’: one with male and one with female parents or caregivers. Each group will have about 8 participants and two facilitators (same sex facilitators for same sex groups if possible or desirable depending on cultural context).

Objectives:
The objectives are the same for each focus group:
1. Understanding experienced and perceived barriers– for example, why is it difficult for girls to start or to complete secondary school.
2. Understanding why certain things do happen – for example, why are some girls able to complete secondary school, although there are certain barriers. :
3. Understand different attitudes/perceptions on for example girls’ and boys’ access to secondary education – or other issues that your research is focused on

Methods:
Exercises, and open questions that require probing. Yes and no answers are not sufficient!

The following key questions are based on a research assessing access to primary and secondary school for girls and boys

Key Questions:
I. Barriers to send girls and boys to go to secondary school
What makes it difficult for parents to send sons and/or daughters (age 10-19) to lower secondary school?
What helps parents to send children, particularly girls, to school and to keep them there? What is the trend (sending girls more or less often to school than in the past)?

II. Attitudes towards girls’ education:
What do parents generally think about sending girls to secondary school? Do mothers and fathers have different views? What are they?
Do you think that children have a right to go to secondary school? Is this the same for girls and boys? What do you see as your responsibility as a parent?
What do you think about the conditions in the secondary schools in your community? Do you feel your girls are secure going to school? (Ask separately for boys and girls). Please explain.
What do parents think about sex education and confidential access to health services of their adolescent children?

III. How can change happen?
What would help you as male/female parents most to keep your boys and girls in school?

Procedure:
Step 1. Introduction
The facilitators introduce themselves, the new program and the baseline study. Then the purpose of the focus group discussion is explained, what is going to happen and how long it will take. This introduction must generate curiosity and a feeling of doing something important for the community.

Step 2. Index card for each participant
Each participant is asked to tell his or her name, the name of the school and the teaching subjects. Then each participant is asked to fill out an index card.
Step 3. Discuss first topic: [for example: the barriers for going to lower secondary school (Question 1 and 2)]

What makes it difficult for parents to send sons and/or daughters (age 10-19) to lower secondary school?

What helps parents to send children, particularly girls, to school and to keep them there? What is the trend (sending girls more or less often to school than in the past)

a. Matrix scoring [based on the example]

The exercise starts with jointly listing what factors make it difficult for parents to send their children to lower secondary school, and let them finish it. The facilitator writes each factor on a coloured card and puts it on a flipchart. (It is allowed for the facilitator to mention a factor that has emerged during previous FDGs but that is not yet mentioned here.) The participants can then decide if they find it relevant or not. If at least one person finds it relevant, it should be added. There will probably be around 10 factors mentioned. Then write the factors down on a flip chart that already has a matrix and put it down on the ground or on a table.

Then give each person in the group a number of pebbles or other small items (same number of pebbles as factors are listed) and ask them to divide them over the factors that apply most to them.

Count the pebbles and discuss one by one the three factors that have received most pebbles. Why are they important? What happens exactly? Then focus on the minority opinions and ask each person who has selected a factor that others have not selected to explain why she/he considers this an important factor.

Then give each participant another set of pebbles (of the same number) and ask them to show which factors are most important for girls and which for boys.

Count the pebbles and take the score of top 3 factors for girls and top 3 for boys

Discuss what the differences are and why?
1. Factors keeping adolescents from going to school or finishing school

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<th>Important for me</th>
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Then repeat the whole exercise for the second question:

Question 2: What are the different factors that help your children to enrol in lower secondary school and to complete it?

2. Factors helping girls and boys to go to school

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Step 4. Discuss second topic: Attitudes of parents towards girls’ education (question 3, 4, 5 and 6):

Ask the group the following questions and sub-questions. First try to get the different views and then try to arrive at some sort of common viewpoint if possible.

Question 3: How are decisions about schooling in the household? Who pays for girls going to lower secondary school and from what source?

Question 4: What do parents think about sending their daughters to lower secondary school? (Probe for men and women and afterwards ask if there are differences and why)

Discuss this question. Let people give their views and discuss but it is not necessary to come to a consensus.

Question 5: Do you think that children have a ‘right’ to go to school? Is this the same for girls and boys? What is your responsibility as a parent?

Discuss this question. Let people give their views and discuss but it is not necessary to come to a consensus.

Question 6: What do you think about the conditions in the secondary schools in your community? Do you feel your girls are secure going to school? (Ask separately for boys and girls). Please explain.

Discuss this question. Let people give their views and discuss but it is not necessary to come to a consensus.

After having discussed this question, do a blind voting exercise on the issue of use of physical discipline by teachers. Make pockets with the options a, b, and c. and ask the participants one by one to drop a vote in a way that others cannot see it.

Opinion on the use of physical discipline by teachers

1. It is OK
2. It is OK under certain circumstances
3. I am against it

Step 4. Discussion on theme 3: How can change happen?

Finally discuss the following question.
Question 8: What would help you as male/female parents most to keep your boys and girls in lower secondary school?

Step 5. Finalise and thanks
Thank the participants for their time and effort, and explain once more that their answers will help us know what both boys and girls in this community need in order to be able to stay in school and finish lower secondary schooling. Also explain that there will be a report back to the community later on when all information has been gathered and analyzed.