

Gender and Quality of Care: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Female Clients

Vignette A: Antenatal Care

Imagine Claudine is a 24-year-old woman who lives in this community. She is not a real person who lives here; this is just an example.

Claudine would like to use FP and visited a provider for counseling so she can delay her pregnancy. But her husband Jean Marie objects.

- What could be some of the reasons why Claudine's husband objects?
- What should the provider do?

Claudine is now pregnant for the first time. She has been married for about 18 months, and she and her husband Jean Marie have a small plot of land that they farm, which has allowed them to purchase health insurance.

Let's think about Claudine's first visit to the antenatal clinic. Her husband joined her for this visit, as recommended.

- How do you think the health provider should interact with or behave towards Claudine? Toward Jean Marie?
 - Probe: introduce herself/himself; make eye contact; ask if she had any questions; listen to her questions or concerns; express care or sympathy; etc.
- Are there reasons why a health provider may interact with Claudine or behave the way you just described?
- Do you think the health provider would interact with or behave any differently toward Jean Marie than toward Claudine? If so, how? Why?
- What would have happened to Claudine at the health facility if Jean Marie were unable or unwilling to accompany Chantal to the first ANC visit?
- Would Claudine have been turned away?
- What would have happened if Chantal did not want her partner to be involved?
- Or if Chantal was unmarried and did not have a partner? How may she have been treated then?
- What do you think should happen in either of these situations?

During the next several months, Claudine attends three additional ANC visits. For all of these visits, Claudine goes alone to the health facility.

- Do you think Claudine's experiences at these visits would be any different if:
 - Her husband accompanied her? If yes, how and why?
 - It was her fourth, not her first pregnancy? If yes, how and why?
 - If she were 17 years old and unmarried? If yes, how and why?

- If she only attended 2 of the 4 recommended visits? If yes, how and why?

Vignette B: Labor and Delivery

Now think a few months ahead: Claudine started to experience intense labor pains, and decided to go to the facility for the birth. Her mother accompanied her to the health facility, where Claudine spent a long time in labor, with intense pain.

- How should health providers and staff at the facility interact or behave towards Claudine while she is in labor? How should health providers interact with Claudine's mother?
 - Probe: express care or sympathy; spend time with her; ask if she had any questions; listen to her questions or concerns; etc.
- During this time, do you think Claudine feels comfortable asking questions to the health providers? Why or why not?
 - If yes, do you think the health providers listens to her concerns or answer her questions? What about if her mother has questions?
- Do you think the health providers explain to Claudine what is happening, or consult her in decisions about her care?
- How do you think the health providers would have reacted if Claudine disagreed with the care they recommended or provided? What if her mother disagreed?
 - Would the health providers treat or behave differently toward Claudine after that? If so, how?
 - Do you think Claudine would have felt comfortable to disagree with the decisions of the health provider?
- Do you think Claudine's interactions with the health providers would be different in any way if her husband were present? If she was alone?

Eventually, Claudine was brought into the delivery room and gave birth to a baby boy. However, while she was lying on the table in the delivery room, one of the nurses slapped her and shouted at her to start pushing.

- Why do you think the health provider behaved in this way?
- How do you think Claudine felt about being slapped and shouted at?
- Does Claudine have any power to react or to do anything in this situation?
- Do you think this is a common experience for women?
- During the delivery, do you think Claudine was able to give birth in the way she prefers?
 - Would Claudine feel comfortable to tell the health providers her preferences?
 - Do you think the health providers would listen to her requests?
- In a typical facility, would Claudine have any privacy during the delivery?
- Do you think Claudine will have positive or negative memories from her birth experience?
- Would Claudine's experience or the treatment she received from the health providers be any different if she her husband had accompanied her?
 - Probe: would the care she received be better or worse?
 - If she were alone (unaccompanied)?

- If it were her fourth, not first child?
- If she was 17 and unmarried?
- What do you think would happen if Claudine were unable to pay the medical fees after giving birth?
- What do you think should happen in this situation?

Additional Discussion Questions

1. What are the relationships generally like between women and health providers at family planning, antenatal care, labor and delivery, and post-natal care services at health facilities in this district?
2. Do you think health providers treat women and men differently? If so, how? Why? Is there any difference if the health provider is a man or a woman?
3. Do you think that women have any fears about going to the health facility for family planning, antenatal care or for childbirth? Can you tell me about some of them?
 - Probe: interactions with health providers; insurance and fees; privacy; pain; bad outcomes for the baby; bad outcomes for the mother, etc.
4. Do you think that women's experiences and interactions with health providers differ between different types of services, such as family planning, antenatal care, delivery, or post-natal care services? Or other types of health services (e.g. malaria)?
5. Do you think that a husband's presence or attendance at reproductive and maternal health services impacts the quality of care that women receive at these services? Positively or negatively? If so, why?
6. In your opinion, do women's experiences of the quality of care, level of respect, and information and services they receive at family planning or services for pregnancy and childbirth impact their decisions to seek care at these services in the future? Why or why not?
 - Decisions to seek care for their children or other family members in the future?
7. What would make Claudine's and other women's experiences of accessing family planning or services for pregnancy and childbirth in local health facilities better?

We have now reached the end of our discussion. Thank you very much for your participation in this discussion. Your input is greatly appreciated. Please remember that your responses will be kept confidential. We ask that you not share the details of this discussion with anyone outside of this group. Thank you!