

**SWEDD SERIES: OPERATIONAL BRIEF**

# GROUP LEADERS: SAFE SPACES AND HUSBANDS/FUTURE HUSBANDS CLUBS

The research informing this brief was led by the Population Council and Equipundo and is based on the SWEDD project. The information will guide the implementation of SWEDD+

This operational brief is part of a series that retrospectively documents the process of implementing the interventions of the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) project. It describes best practice, challenges and lessons learned through the involvement of mentors in Safe Spaces for adolescent girls and young women, and facilitators in Husbands' Clubs (known as CdM for the French name Clubs de Maris) and Future Husbands' Clubs (known as CdFM for the French name Clubs de Futurs Maris). It summarizes a literature review and conversations with key respondents in Mauritania, Niger (Safe Spaces and CdM/CdFM); Burkina Faso, Mali (CdM/CdFM); and Côte d'Ivoire (Safe Spaces), between January and June 2023 which is detailed in a guide of the same name. The involvement of leaders illustrates several key aspects of engaging youth to empower adolescent girls and young women.

**According to global best practice:**

- ▶ Group leaders should be mainly from the same community and slightly older than the participants.
- ▶ It is important to set up a referral system so that group leaders know when to ask for help from their supervisors or peers.
- ▶ To get parents on board, leaders can invite them to attend certain sessions.
- ▶ The performance of group leaders should be appraised in drop-in assessments.
- ▶ The "motivation" approach must be contextualized and must encourage community ownership.

Sources: Temin, Miriam and Roca. 2019; Promundo-US and Plan International Canada. 2020.

**Key aspects for leaders of Safe Spaces and CdM/CdFM**

**Phase 1: The role of group leaders: perceived importance and profiles**

- ▶ The main link between the programme's objectives and the participants, their families and the community.
- ▶ An integral component of the transformational gender approach promoted through SWEDD.
- ▶ They are responsible for creating a respectful environment, facilitating sessions, developing skills and changing young people's behaviour, interacting with the community, etc.

**Phase 2: Recruitment, motivation and training of group leaders**

- ▶ Community members and young people themselves have been involved in recruiting group leaders, but the exact process varied from country to country.
- ▶ Group leaders are not volunteers; the specific mechanisms for supporting leaders are mostly contextual and may include a salary and/or non-salary incentives.
- ▶ Training and capacity-building for group leaders is essential, and must be sufficient to cover all the teaching materials and techniques required; there is no "perfect" duration for such training.

**Phase 1: Roll-out, supervision and support, and monitoring and evaluation**

- ▶ Group leaders are tasked with forming groups of participants who are similar in age and living conditions.
- ▶ The standards for the number of leaders responsible for running the Safe Spaces and CdM/CdFM have varied between Safe Spaces and clubs, and by country; where there is only one group leader, it is important to provide alternates.
- ▶ The quality of the delivery of the sessions contributes to the interest and active involvement of the participants and to regular attendance at the Safe Spaces and CdM/CdFM.
- ▶ Leaders need adequate and consistent support.
- ▶ Leaders play an important role in monitoring by completing the monitoring forms, producing the required reports and describing any difficulties encountered.



*The choice of these people [the group leaders] was not random. Furthermore, they were selected in consultation with the community and regional leaders. They are more or less young leaders. These are people who have the ability to mobilise young people and convince them to continue their participation.*

**Programme manager, Mauritania**





...it is important to have a facilitator who will listen and model gender-equitable behaviour and attitudes that can motivate the group and encourage self-reflection whether the facilitator is male or female.

**Manual for facilitators of future husbands' clubs**



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The experiences described in this brief and the guide serve to inform the development of strategies to enhance the role of Safe Spaces mentors and CdM and CdFM facilitators. Through these experiences, the aim is to encourage those involved in implementing SWEDD+ and other young women’s empowerment programmes, as well as similar projects in countries in the global South, particularly in West and Central Africa, to engage and work with mentors and facilitators for these programmes.

## SUMMARY OF KEY LESSONS

Phase 1: Role of leaders	1	Choose group leaders who are natives of and live in the locality they will be serving.
	2	Be flexible about the selection criteria for group leaders.
Phase 2: Recruitment, motivation and training	3	Recruit the appropriate number of group leaders based on the demographic structure of the target community, and train a large number of them so that alternates are available.
	4	Offer reasonable salaries (and non-salary incentives) to group leaders based on the national context and align payments with those of other similar programmes in the area.
	5	Plan initial and refresher training of a duration sufficient to cover all sessions.
	6	Refresher training helps to overcome potential challenges in implementing the programme.
Phase 3: Safe Spaces and CdM/CdFM roll-out	7	Group leaders must use participatory, engaging and varied methods to retain participants in the programme.
	8	Group leaders need to work with parents and guardians to get them on board.
Phase 4: Supervision and support	9	Provide sufficient human resources for high-quality local monitoring.
	10	Provide a clear description of the role and tasks of those who will supervise the Safe Spaces and the CdM/CdFM.
Phase 5: Monitoring, evaluation and learning	11	Integrate a learning component into the monitoring and evaluation system from the outset.
	12	Involve programme participants and supervisors in evaluating the performance of group leaders.
	13	Build the capacity of group leaders to collect and use monitoring data.

Sources: Temin, Miriam and Eva Roca. 2019. “Leveraging the potential of mentors: recruiting, training and supporting mentors for programmes dedicated to teenage girls” New York: Population Council; Promundo-US and Plan International Canada. (2020). Role of Facilitation in Gender Transformative Programs That Engage Men and Boys. Washington, DC: Promundo.

This brief is based on a guide that sets out the process in detail. It was developed through a partnership between the Population Council and Equimundo, with the technical support of UNFPA and the World Bank.

For more information on the documentation of the processes involved in this intervention and on the SWEDD project, visit the SWEDD project’s virtual resource platform: <https://sweddknowledge.org/>