

How to Organize an Open Community Meeting

What is an open community meeting?

This is an approach used to enlist support for a new IPC program among community members.

Why an open community meeting?

The open community meeting is organized to:

- Mobilize community and/or target group member support and expose them to the goals of the program.
- Promote community involvement in and ownership of the entire program

Who should attend the open community meeting?

The participants of the open community meeting may include: community leaders, youth, women and men, appropriate target group members, and target group influencers.

Steps to organising an open community meeting:

1. Conduct a 'mini survey' about leaders in the community. Leadership as applied here may not be limited to traditional institutions only. These could include individuals or groups that have frequent contact with the target group and could potentially influence others to achieve set goals through community dialogue and action. Suggested questions to ask include:
 - Who are the main leaders in this community (check out for formal and informal leadership)?
 - Who are the leaders in this community with respect to the issue at hand?
 - To what extent are people given opportunity to lead in various aspects on this issue?
2. Arrange to meet and discuss the program with identified leaders, first on an individual level, and then as a group. Encourage their support and participation in the open-community meeting and in the program itself. At the group meeting, agree on date, roles and responsibility of all stakeholders, venue, time, agenda and other logistics for the open community meeting.
3. Conduct the open community meeting.

Benefits of Open Community Meeting

1. Partners, both program planners and community members have a shared understanding of the program
2. An action plan is developed to address the following:
 - ♦ roles and responsibilities shared (between whom?)
 - ♦ number of participants decided for the pilot program
 - ♦ meeting venues and time for various groups decided

Note for the convener of the meeting:

Be sensitive to community norms and values. For instance, where culture frowns at men and women sitting together, please ensure the sitting arrangement is appropriate. Sessions should be conducted in the local language whenever possible.