



RIVER OF RISK:
Exploring Women's Sexual
Relationships and Decision-Making
TOOLS FOR THE COMMUNITY

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CBO	Community-Based Organization
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
SAKSHAM	Strengthening Awareness, Knowledge and Skills for HIV and AIDS Management Project
SBSW	Street-Based Sex Worker
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TB	Tuberculosis
VCT	Voluntary Counseling and Testing for HIV

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1. INTRODUCTION

This guide was created in response to findings from CARE's Gender, Sex and Power research study, conducted in 2007-8. One of the findings that emerged across our six country study is that while women generally had good knowledge of the relationship between sexual risk and HIV transmission, they practiced protective sex with some partners, but not with their intimate partners (e.g. husbands, boyfriends). Our program with sex workers in India best illustrates this: 97% of sex workers who participated in CARE's program reported consistent condom use with clients. However, when asked about condom use with intimate partners, only 16% of sex workers in CARE's programs reported using condoms consistently with intimate partners. It is important to note that compared to sex workers who were not part of CARE's programs, reported condom use with clients, and with intimate partners was lower (74% and 0% respectively). While women who had participated in our programs had overall higher rates of condom use than those who did not participate, the uneven impact across types of sexual partners warrants attention.

Although CARE's work in women's empowerment has given greater focus and impetus to our programming, CARE has tended to focus on women in their "public sphere" – women as employees, women as members of community projects, women as consumers of health and education services, women as community leaders. This has sometimes caused us to neglect women in their private lives, in their totality as partners, mothers, daughter-in-laws, wives, lovers. In the example of condom use with intimate partners, women explained that they seek love and trust – both of which they feel are undermined by the use of condoms. They simultaneously commented on abuse and infidelity in these intimate relationships, factors which increase vulnerabilities and risk of contracting HIV. The differential use of condoms shines light on blind spots in our own approach and those of others to HIV prevention: the need to recognize, understand and work with the "whole woman" and the multiple relationships of power that she negotiates.

In order to address this blind spot, CARE developed a set of tools and processes to help development workers and the women they work with discuss intimate relationships and the factors that influence choices within these often complex unions. Through dialogue, CARE sought to increase understanding and critical reflection on risk, trust, need, desire and love.

The tools presented in this guide were developed through a participatory tool development workshop with sex workers from one of the study's projects, SAKSHAM, in India. While the field work in which the tools were developed and tested was undertaken with sex workers, these tools are equally applicable to other contexts where HIV is fueled by sexual transmission. These tools can be used with women who are mothers, daughters, migrants, mobile, married, or single. We encourage development workers to use this toolkit, and adapt it to their own contexts. To enable this, there is ample space for notes and additions.

CARE's Gender, Sex and Power research study was an 18 month participatory research study assessing our women-focused HIV prevention projects in six different countries. The study explored how women's empowerment approaches link to changes in women's vulnerability to HIV. The projects under this study included those working with sex workers in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India and Peru; garment factory workers in Lesotho; and rural women in post-conflict Burundi.

2. ABOUT THIS GUIDE

2.1 AIMS OF THE GUIDE

Over the years, CARE's staff in India have developed many participatory tools and exercises designed to help staff and project participants to explore various aspects of HIV and AIDS programmes and the impact they have on people's lives. Many other manuals exist which describe common visual tools and techniques. However, most of these guides tend to focus on exploring the current context. Relatively few tools have been documented which specifically help staff and project participants to make decisions and revise current or plan new project strategies and activities. With this gap in mind, CARE sought to develop a toolkit which will:

- Present examples of tools and methods that can be used to analyze the key decision points, risk factors and relationships in women's lives that shape their ability to reduce their vulnerability to HIV transmission;
- Help staff and project participants to deepen their understanding and to think more reflectively about the decisions and choices women make and the support they need to make different choices;
- Introduce a sample of participatory tools specifically aimed at deepening analysis and assisting project-level decision-making in these areas;
- Provide facilitators with a simple "how to" guide for using these tools within a project context.

2.2 WHO WILL USE THIS GUIDE?

This toolkit is intended as a resource for staff of civil society organizations or development facilitators, who have a knowledge of basic participatory techniques and some experience in undertaking participatory analysis or community based planning.

However, as with all participatory methods, it is critical to know why an exercise is being carried out in the first place. Participatory tools can be great fun to use and sometimes they are used without the facilitator or the participants understanding the reasons behind the exercise. Tools can also be used in a mechanical way which yields superficial or stereo typical responses. Thus, it is important to remember that the exercises described in this toolkit are merely a guide, providing general directions for a process of self analysis to encourage autonomous, locally driven community development. The effective facilitation of these exercises requires empathy, creativity and good social skills, not just a checklist of steps to follow.

2.3 HOW THE GUIDE IS STRUCTURED

This toolkit provides guidelines for conducting a sample of participatory tools. The description of each tool includes the aim of the exercise, materials required to conduct the exercises, uses for community participants and uses for project staff as well as the steps involved in facilitation and examples of diagrams and outputs. Tips for the facilitator regarding key ideas to convey during the process and a list of other complementary tools are also provided.

Although these tools can be used on their own, it is recommended that they be used in conjunction with each other as well as with other participatory techniques, as they are each designed to analyze different aspects of women's sexual decision-making and relationships. These tools will generate intimate discussions and require an existing trusting relationship with project participants, or should be used after a series of introductory and trust-building exercises. It must also be noted that these tools do not represent a comprehensive set. Depending on the context and requirements

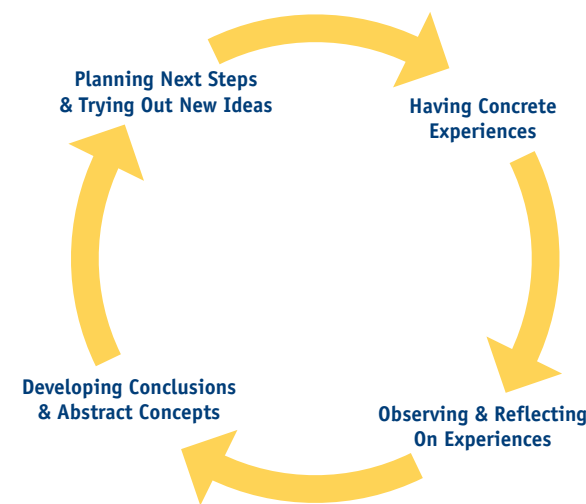
of the development project concerned, other processes may need to be designed to explore issues in more depth with different types and age groups of participants.

3. PREPARING TO USE THESE TOOLS

3.1 THE KOLB MODEL

Participatory tools are particularly useful in helping us to understand each other's perceptions and lives as well as the context in which we live and work. However, it is also important to understand how people learn or absorb these new insights. In this respect, David Kolb's model¹ regarding learning stages helps to meet this need.

Kolb's model identifies four distinct steps in the learning cycle. These four stages include: (i) having concrete experiences, which provide the basis for (ii) reflecting on the experiences, and (iii) developing conclusions and abstract concepts, which are used to produce new implications for action and (iv) plan next steps in order to try out new ideas, which will lead to new experiences.



According to this model, an ideal learning process involves all four stages to an equal extent and uses approaches which encourage experiential learning.

Certain tools tend to focus on and to be more appropriate at different stages in the learning cycle. For example:

- “Exploring” tools focus on considering the current situation (observing and reflecting on experiences) as it is at present e.g. resource maps; historical timelines; body maps; Venn diagrams; transect walks and calendars;
- “Analyzing” tools focus on identifying linkages, perceptions and relationships between things (developing conclusions and abstract concepts) e.g. flow diagrams; systems maps; risk analysis; pile sorting and evaluation wheel. Analysing tools also help to assimilate information; identifying roots causes of issues and drawing conclusions e.g. changeability matrices/continuum; decision-making matrix; well being ranking; SWOT analysis and cause and effect diagrams;
- “Deciding” tools also help to develop conclusions, and focus on identifying priorities for action e.g. preference ranking; vision diagramming; and changeability matrix/continuum;
- “Planning” tools are used to determine the sequences of actions (planning next steps & trying out new ideas) – e.g. changeability matrix/continuum, action planning.

Thus, in order to understand a situation, community or project in more depth, it is important to ensure that exercises and methods adequately cover each of the four stages of the learning cycle. Most common participatory tools tend to emphasise the “exploring” and “analyzing” stage of the cycle, thus more attention needs to be paid to using or developing new exercises that cover the analyzing and deciding steps, as these areas are often left out of many participatory assessment and research processes. With this in mind, three sets of exercises have been included in this toolkit:

- Having Concrete Experiences stage – evaluation wheel;
- Observing and Reflecting stage – body map; evaluation wheel;

- Developing Conclusions stage – changeability continuum; decision-making matrix; two faces diagram; body map;
- Planning Next Steps stage – changeability continuum.

3.2 SOME FACILITATION GUIDELINES

As mentioned above, the tools and exercises in this guide are not a comprehensive set of tools that cover all aspects of HIV and AIDS programmes. They need to be used in conjunction with other tools depending on the nature of the assessment or evaluation process required. Thus, the following are recommendations regarding how to use these tools to guide effective learning processes in the field:

- Discuss and clarify the objective of the assessment, planning or evaluation process to be conducted. For example, consider why you need to do this exercise; who is going to be involved as well as what are the overall aims of the process.
- Based on the aims of the exercise, it will be possible to identify potential fieldwork team members required. Generally, effective fieldwork teams consist of at least 2 – 3 people. The more participants involved in the exercise, the more fieldwork teams will be required. Other considerations in selecting team members include appropriate language skills, gender balance, experience and knowledge of participatory methods, knowledge of the project area and personality.
- Time also needs to be spent orienting the team regarding the exercise and determining people's roles and responsibilities.
- Spend time discussing and developing the questions that will be focused on during the fieldwork. It is important to identify these questions first before choosing the tools, as this will ensure the appropriate tools get chosen to address the question(s). This can also help to avoid using tools mechanically. If the reason for an exercise is clearly understood, it is easier to facilitate in a more conscious and sensitive way.
- Also consider from whom information will need to be collected– what age groups, gender, backgrounds, and locations will be targeted? How will tools need to be adapted for these different groups? What type of facilitator will be needed to collect this information?
- Fieldwork should have a strong emphasis on analysis and decision-making, with as much of these activities taking place in the field at community level as possible. If challenges and strategies are discussed at community level, project participants can use the fieldwork as a way to strengthen their own programmes. Thus, it will be important to check that tools selected for the fieldwork exercises cover all four stages of the learning cycle, preferably with more than one tool contributing to each stage.
- Do not try to conduct all the exercises in one session. Fieldwork should be iterative, so that the team and participants can analyze results in detail, report back findings to each other and feed insights into subsequent exercises in order to deepen learning and understanding of the context as the fieldwork progresses.
- It is also important to devote significant time to debriefing exercises and reflecting on the results of the fieldwork each day with the team and the community. This helps to deepen analysis and confirm trends and insights that emerge during exercises. Sharing experiences also helps to further develop analytical and planning skills of the team and project participants, ensuring that they play a more active role in determining the direction of the overall programme as well as its relevance.
- Logistical and administrative arrangements for conducting the fieldwork also need to be made. Having the right people and resources in the right place is essential for effective fieldwork which generates useful results.
- Finally, the results of the fieldwork need to be analyzed and fed back in to programme activities to further improve its effectiveness and impact over time.

The following sections contain detailed guidelines regarding the various participatory tools and exercises.

¹ Kolb, David (1984) *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

² Participatory Evaluation for Land Care and Catchment Groups: A Guide for Facilitators; Tim Woodhill & Lisa Robbins; Greening Australia, 1998.

THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES ON ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES WERE SUGGESTED BY SAKSHAM WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS³:

THE FACILITATOR:

- Plans how the exercise will be conducted;
- Makes sure all materials needed are present;
- Introduces self and topic clearly to the group by explaining the purpose of the exercise;
- Maintains confidentiality of discussions;
- Respects everyone's opinion and does not act as expert or teacher;
- Is unbiased and non-judgmental;
- Builds rapport with the group and checks that all the participants are comfortable;
- Encourages discussion and asks extra, probing questions (using the "Six Helpers"⁴);
- Involves all the participants – does not let only one or two people dominate;
- Listens more than talks;
- Able to leave room for changes and can deal with the unexpected;
- Keeps the exercise focused and on track;
- Paces the exercise and keeps to time;
- Summarises key points and concludes the exercise.

THE CO-FACILITATOR:

- Helps the facilitator plan the exercise;
- Listens more than talks - observes and monitors how the exercise is being conducted;
- Adds missing points (through the facilitator);
- Can act as a reminder when needed;
- Makes sure all the materials needed are present.

THE RECORDER/DOCUMENTER:

- Takes notes of how the exercise was conducted;
- Records the place, time and date of exercise;
- Notes the name and purpose of the exercise and names of facilitator and recorder;
- Records the number of people present, their age and gender;
- Describes the process and tools used during the exercise;
- Records discussion and direct quotations, but does not embellish information;
- Makes copies of any diagrams produced by participants;
- Writes clearly and neatly.

THE OBSERVER:

- Does not talk;
- Listens to and observes the participants - what they say, body language and reactions;
- Monitors how the tool is conducted;
- Gives feedback to the facilitator about the process of the exercise afterwards.

THE TRANSLATOR:

- Helps everyone to follow what is being said;
- Verbally translates discussions and questions;
- Does not embellish information or change the meaning of what is said.

³ Workshop to field test tools in this guide (CARE & NARISAKSHAM, Rajahmundry 1 – 7 September 2009).

⁴ The Six Helpers are asking: who, what, when, where, how and why.

4. Gender Roles & Power in Sexual Decision-Making: Evaluation Wheel & Decision-Making Matrix



4.1 AIMS OF THE EXERCISE

To explore the different types of sexual decisions that individuals, different partners and couples make. To explore the power dynamics and roles of men and women in making these decisions.

A. MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Flip chart
- 12 crayons of different colors
- Objects for counting (e.g. stones, paperclips)

B. USES TO "PARTICIPANTS"

- To provide a visual comparison between different aspects of women's relationships.
- To identify key differences for further exploration.
- To share effective decision-making strategies and build solidarity.
- To provide feedback on project activities and progress.

C. USES TO "PROJECT STAFF"

- To present information in an easy to understand manner that can stimulate discussion.

- To track changes in aspects of a project over time.
- To help understand power dynamics influencing sexual decision-making.
- This information can be used to identify changes or plan new activities with participants.

D. ESSENTIAL IDEAS TO CONVEY

- Gender roles are the set of socially or culturally defined attitudes, behaviors and expectations which are considered appropriate for men and women. Gender stereotypes are often internalized and thought of as "normal", however they are not fixed and can change over time. Gender roles also vary according to class, culture and socio-economic status.
- It is important to understand how gender role expectations influence women's decision-making and sexual behaviors and their ability to protect themselves in different contexts.
- The phrasing of questions asked can generate certain responses unintentionally. Be careful not to treat women as passive victims. In all exercises conducted to test this tool, women noted that they had some form of power over decision-making. Spend time exploring how this power is demonstrated and what strategies are most effective and when.

E. WHAT OTHER TOOLS CAN HELP?

- Changeability matrix
- Risk mapping

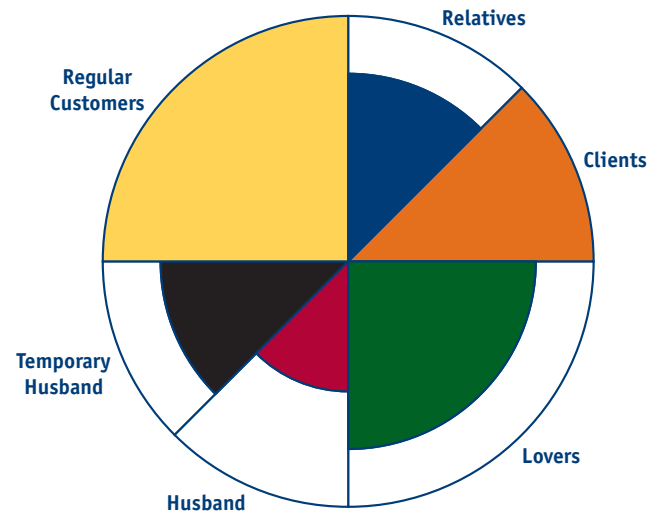
4.2 STEPS TO FOLLOW

A. INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE

Explain purpose of exercise as stated in the aim.

B. IDENTIFYING DIFFERENT SEXUAL PARTNERS

- Ask participants to brainstorm the different types of sexual partners that women have in this community. Ask them to briefly define and name each type of partner. Clarify any confusions or different opinions about the definitions of partners.
- Allocate each different sexual partner a different crayon or color (e.g. red = husband, green = lover). Draw a large circle (called a wheel) on a flip chart and divide it into as many sections as there are partners.
- Label each segment of the circle with the corresponding color or symbol to denote type of partner.
- Note that we all know that condom use is an important component of HIV prevention, but despite this knowledge many women struggle to use condoms consistently.
- Ask the group to indicate the extent to which condoms are used with each different type of partner e.g. for each partner shade in the section of the segment on the wheel to indicate the extent of condom use practiced by this partner. Start shading from the center of the wheel and move outwards. For very occasional condom use only shade a small section of the segment; for regular/habitual condom use, shade in the entire segment etc. Note that it is not necessary to be exact, encourage the group to agree on the general level of condom use for each partner.
- Discuss possible reasons behind the level of condom use shown in each case.
- Once the wheel has been completed, discuss the results of the diagram and what it shows.



C. FACTORS INFLUENCING SEXUAL DECISION MAKING BETWEEN DIFFERENT COUPLES

- Using the wheel, ask participants to choose two high condom use relationships and two low condom use relationships.
- Identify one of these partners and create the following decision-making matrix:

Partner involved	To have sex or not	Type of sex	Condom use	Location of sexual activity	Cost
Partner # 1 e.g. regular client					
Sex worker					

- Give the participants ten objects. Ask them to use the stones to indicate the extent of power and influence that the man and woman has in making each decision. Go through each decision one at a time. Use the stones to indicate who has more or less power in each sexual decision.

- Probe people's responses to understand the power dynamics involved in each decision and the reasons why the man or woman has more or less power in each instance.
- On the matrix record the number of 'votes' given to each person for each decision.
- Create a different matrix and repeat the exercise for each of the four selected partners. For example:



Partner involved	To have sex or not	Type of sex	Condom use	Location of sexual activity	Cost
Partner #1 e.g. husband	7	8	8	N/A Usually in the same place	N/A
Sex worker	3	2	2	–	–

Partner involved	To have sex or not	Type of sex	Condom use	Location of sexual activity	Cost
Partner #2 e.g. regular client	7	7	8	4	2
Sex worker	3	3	2	6	8

D. DISCUSSION

Once the various matrices have been completed, discuss the following questions with the participants:

- Overall, who appears to have the most power in decision-making? Why?
- Women do appear to have some power in decision-making – how do they exert their influence when making decisions?
- In which decisions do they have the most power and why?
- Which decisions would you like to have more influence in making?
- What strategies can women use to have more control of the sexual decision-making?
- From your own experience, which strategies are most effective and why?

	To Have Sex or Not	Type of Sex	Condom Use
Regular Customer 	6	3	4
Sex Worker 	4	7	6

E. CONCLUSION

To conclude ask the group the following questions:

- What have you learned from this exercise?
- How will you use this information in your own lives?
- Explain what the project hopes to do with this information e.g. to inform a new project activities.

End the exercise with a clap and thank the participants for their time.

6. INFLUENCING RELATIONSHIPS AND CONDOM NEGOTIATION: THE TWO FACES DIAGRAM AND CHANGEABILITY CONTINUUM



6.1 AIMS OF THE EXERCISE

To explore the dynamics of power, control, love and trust within a sexual relationship and how these affect condom use. Discussions should reveal factors influencing a woman's vulnerability in different types of relationships.

A. MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Flip chart
- Markers
- Small cards

B. USES TO "PARTICIPANTS"

- Method for discussing & analyzing relationships & behaviors;
- Creates opportunities for counseling/ discussing a range of behaviors (alcohol use, financial dependency) in a safe space;
- Action-oriented (tool moves from analysis to planning) so new behaviors can be discussed & supported.

C. USES TO "PROJECT STAFF"

- An opportunity for dialogue about an important facet of women's lives (their sexual relationships) & the extent to which factors influencing these relationships are being taken into consideration in programming aimed at improving women's lives.
- Develop an understanding of how social & economic factors influence decision-making in different sexual relationships for improved planning, monitoring & programming;
- Develop an understanding of potential changes (effect- or outcome-level changes) that projects should achieve to support safer sexual relationships for women & men;
- Develop ideas for interventions based on an analysis of both barriers to and opportunities for change, as well as a sense of the sequencing and complexity of potential outcomes and associated project activities.

D. ESSENTIAL IDEAS TO CONVEY

- People engage in sex and sexual relationships for a number of reasons – transactional, for security, for belonging, for love – and often multiple reasons are at play in any one relationship, at any one time.
- Understanding how people use and benefit from different types of relationships helps to understand how those relationships can be influenced in ways that enable less risky behaviors within them.

- No single action is likely to change the way people engage in relationships, but there are actions projects can take which will enable and support changes – even in intimate relationships.
- Development interventions can concern themselves with both the private and public spheres of people's lives, if done so with respect, dignity, consideration and in ways that are

consistent (that is, a consistent set of values or actions is reflected in both private and public spheres).

E. WHAT OTHER TOOLS CAN HELP?

- Body mapping
- Decision-making matrix
- Action planning

6.2 STEPS TO FOLLOW

A. INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE

Explain the topic of discussion as in the aim. Note that we all know that condom use is an important component of HIV prevention, but despite this knowledge we (many women) struggle to use condoms consistently. When you think about your sexual partners are there partners, that it is easier to use a condom with?

B. IDENTIFYING KEY PARTNER TYPES

- Identify the kinds of sexual relationships that women have and the different types of sexual relationships.
- Identify a key type of partner that women have difficulty negotiating condom use with – use this information to clarify the type/nature of the "risky relationship" (likely to be an intimate or regular partner, but may be others, as well).
- Clarify what this type of relationship – or the man – is called.
- Briefly clarify the characteristics of this relationship.
- Ask a volunteer to draw two pictures: a man and a woman (can draw just two faces – or whole bodies). Explain that these two people are involved in the relationship described above. Be specific, and continue to remind the group, that they are, for example, a woman and her lover (not simply a woman and a man). Ask what holds the two together (e.g. "their love for each other") and ask a volunteer to draw a symbol for that "glue" on the flipchart, between the man and woman.

C. IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO CONDOM USE

- Note that, as discussed earlier, the woman has difficulty negotiating a condom, and ask what motivates the man to refuse/ hesitate using condoms. For each idea mentioned, ask participants to draw a symbol next to or around the picture of the man. After getting a few responses for the man, switch to the picture of the woman and ask the group to identify why the woman may – or may not – want to use a condom. Ask participants what the factors are that block her from using a condom (e.g. "she wants to have a baby," "she wants to be seen as trustworthy"). Ask participants to draw symbols representing each factor.
- Continue identifying factors and drawing symbols until people feel the picture is complete. During the discussion probe for economic, cultural, social and emotional factors.



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