**Rwanda AGI**

**Program Participants Focus Group Discussion Guidelines**

The general goals of the focus group discussions are to understand how adolescent girls are disadvantaged (or not), and the effects of the program. The discussions should last approximately two hours. They will be conducted with a random selection of program participants from each of the eight VTCs.

These discussions are to be held in a private setting, so that participants are able to feel comfortable expressing their views and not worried that non-participants will overhear the conversation. Successful focus groups will resemble discussions where participants react to each other’s statements, adding their own experiences to provide additional detail or contrasting evidence. The moderator’s role is to encourage the participants to keep talking and to steer the conversation toward topics of interest. The discussion should NOT be a series of questions from the moderator followed by short responses from the girls. The information gathered from these focus group discussions – a specific form of qualitative inquiry – is valuable because we can learn from the discussion among the girls about key topics in which they compare and contrast their experiences. Moderators should repeatedly use open-ended probes, such as:

* Will you please tell me more about that?
* Can you give an example that will illustrate what you mean?
* Has anyone else had a similar experience that they are willing to share?
* Has anyone else had a different experience? How was it different?
* How was that different from what you expected?

The specific objectives of these focus group discussions are:

* To capture a profile of vulnerability. In what ways are these girls disadvantaged?
* Learn more about the content of the program follow-up period
  + What activities did the school managers and school trainers do during this period?
  + How did the girls interact with the school personnel during this period?
  + How were cooperatives formed? How were cooperatives supported?
  + How was VSLA participation facilitated?
* Investigate effects of the program
  + If/how did the program help girls transition to (better) employment? Capture stories!
  + How did the program affect other, non-economic, outcomes?
  + How are the program-initiated cooperatives functioning?
  + How was participation in VSLAs facilitated and are the girls benefiting from that activity?
  + How could the program be improved?

INSERT PROPER INTRODUCTION

1. **We would like to start by doing an activity to learn about what challenges girls in your community face. You are the experts on this topic. There are no wrong answers. We would like you to work in pairs to make a list of all of the challenges that girls like you face. You will have 3 minutes. The goal is to make as long of a list as you can. After the 3 minutes, we will ask each group to report 1 challenge that girls face. We will continue with the reporting until no one can think of another challenge that has not been listed. We will record what you say on this flipchart so that we can remember what each group has reported.**

\*\*Moderator: Divide girls into pairs. If there are an odd number of girls, make one group of 3 girls. It might be helpful to give each pair a pen and pad of paper to record their list. Once everyone is in pairs and is ready for the activity, provide the following instructions and ask if there are any questions.

**Please make a list of the challenges that girls in your community face. Make the list as long as you can. Remember, there are no wrong answers. These can be challenges that girls have with in the types of activities / business/ job that she does to earn money; in her livelihood, wellbeing, quality of life; in how she feels about herself; in her relationships with others. Anything! We want to hear about ALL of the challenges that girls face.**

*\*\*Moderator: After 3 minutes, stop the activity. Give each group a chance to report 1 challenge, ask them not to repeat something that has already been said. After each group has reported 1 thing, ask for a second suggestion from each group, starting with the group that reported last the first time. Record all suggestions on a flipchart. To finish the activity, review the list on the flipchart and ask if there is anything that has been forgotten.*

*Then, refer to the list generated by the group and ask these follow-up questions:*

1. **Which of these challenges do you think are the hardest and more important challenges that girls face?**

Probes: Why are these the biggest challenges? What about the challenges earning money--What makes it hard for girls to earn money? Do girls get bad jobs? Like what?

1. **Now we are going to do another activity in our groups again. This time I want you to list all of the things that help girls overcome their challenges. Just like before, the goal is to make as long of a list as you can. Remember, there are no wrong answers. Think about all of different types of challenges that you listed before, and all of the ways that girls overcome and deal with these challenges. After the 3 minutes, we will ask each group to report 1 . We will continue with the reporting until no one can think of another challenge that has not been listed. We will record what you say on this flipchart so that we can remember what each group has reported.**

*\*\*Moderator: Thank the girls for their participation so far. Tell them we will now switch topics and will talk about the AGI program.*

1. **Now I want you to think about the AGI program. Which of the challenges that you talked about before has the program helped you overcome? How did the program help you overcome these challenges?**

Probes: How did the AGI help you overcome challenges with your job or earning money? What were you doing before the program to earn money and what are you doing now?

1. **Now we would like to collect some stories from you in your own words to describe what has change in your life because of the AGI program. We would like you to select two stories from this group that we can record. We can then share them with other Rwandan young women, and the Government of Rwanda.**

\*\*Moderator: *Ask the following question to the whole group:*

**What has been the most important change that has happened in your life because of your participation in the AGI program?**

*Explain that changes might be:*

* In the types of activities / business/ job that she does to earn money
* In her livelihood, wellbeing, quality of life
* In how she feels about herself
* In her relationship with others

\*\*Moderator: *Allow a brief moment for the participants to think about their own lives, and in order to decide the particular change story they wish to talk about.*

**Ask each participate in turn to briefly state in one sentence the nature of the change.** On the flipchart, the note-taker writes a few words against each name to describe the change. (For example: my family respects me now; I know how to use my time wisely).

**Ask each participant to come up to the front and select the two stories (by putting check mark against) which she thinks:**

* + Show the biggest change individually as a result of the program
  + Together illustrate the different types of change that have happened for the young women

**Count the number of times each story was selected; the two stories with the highest “votes” are the ones that will be recorded.**

**Assemble participants into two equal-sized groups with one of the two selected story-tellers in each. Find a place for each group to sit so they can talk without interruption.**

**Ask each group to spend 15 minutes helping the woman to formulate / narrate her story by asking questions such as:**

* What was your situation before the AGI program? What problems did you face?
* Since you participated in the AGI program, in what ways has your life changed? Can you describe the events?
* Why do you think this change is very important?

**REMEMBER: THE STORY IS BASED ON WHAT WAS VOTED FOR!!**

**While the participants are discussing in groups, the facilitator and note-taker circulate around, supporting if needed, but letting the participants run the discussions. At the end of the 15 minutes, the story should be ready for recording.**

**The facilitator and note-taker then go to each group and ask the story-teller to tell her story in her own words, prompting only if and when necessary.**

* Ask the participant to introduce herself by her first name only (or an invented name if she prefers) and to explain who she is (e.g. market trader, worker in a store), her age and where she lives.
* Prompt her if needed to help her with her story; encourage her to be relaxed and take her time to explain her story – she knows it best.
* Ensure other group members are silent, and do not interrupt the storyteller.
* Record her story on the voice recorder.
* Check that the recorder is switched on and recording the information.

**Thank all participants for their contribution to the story documentation exercise. Now we are going to re-convene as a group and have a few more discussions.**

1. **Now we want to discuss specifically what you have been doing since the AGI classroom training ended in July. We would like to learn more about what you have been doing and in what ways you have been supported by the AGI project since the classroom training ended?**

*\*\*Moderator: Make a list of activities on the flipchart.*

Probes: Did you come back to the VTC? If yes, what for? Did the school or the teachers contact you? What for? Did anyone provide coaching or mentoring? Who—trainers? Mentors? Both? How? Do they help you find jobs? How? Do they visit you at your jobs? How often? Do they help you access loans for your businesses? Are you satisfied that you get enough support from mentors?

What about your teachers from Frontiers? Have they visited you at all since the classroom training ended? Would you like them to be providing your businesses with more mentoring? Why or why not? What about psycho-social counseling—has anyone come back to the VTC for counseling? What was this like and did it help you? Please tell me more.

Is there anyone who has not interacted with the school or trainers at all since the classroom training ended? Why not? Do you meet with friends that you made during the classroom training? What do you do with these friends?

1. **Next we would like to talk about cooperatives. Did the program help students to join or start a cooperative?**

Probes about group formation: How did the program help? How were the groups formed? Were the teachers or mentors involved or did the students choose their own groups? How many girls are in a cooperative?

Probes about group management: How was cooperative management decided? Did teachers or mentors give guidance on cooperative management? Did they give general guidance to all students? Did they give specific guidance to each cooperative? Specifically, what guidance did the teachers or mentors provide on how to make important decisions as a group?

Probes about cooperative success: For students who are in cooperatives, is the cooperative active now? How often does it meet? Where does it meet? What kinds of businesses are cooperatives running? Is the cooperative profitable? How do you know? Is the cooperative registered? How do you know? Are some cooperatives not successful in their businesses? Why not? What are some of the business problems faced by cooperatives?

Probes about group functioning: How does your cooperative make decisions about how to spend or borrow money? Who within the cooperative makes decisions—everyone or only some people? Do cooperatives share their profits equally? Do some girls benefit more from the cooperatives than others? What are some of the problems within the cooperatives? Do any girls have problems participating in their cooperative because their husbands or families are not supportive? Please explain.

Probes about program support to the cooperatives after the classroom training: Has the program helped your cooperative since the classroom training ended? How? Do trainers or mentors from the program visit your cooperative? How often? What do they do?

Probes about joining in the future: For girls who are in cooperatives, would you recommend to a friend that she join a cooperative? Why or why not? For students who are not working in a cooperative, would you ever consider joining a cooperative? Why or why not? What is best—working in a cooperative or working in your own business? Please explain.

*\*\*Moderator: For each of these topics of discussion, when someone volunteers an experience, ask the group how their experiences were similar or different.*

1. **Now we want to talk specifically about your membership in the SACCO (Savings and Credit Co-Operative). What did the teachers explain about your membership in the SACCO?**

Probes: Did teachers explain what it means to be a member of a SACCO? Was any of this new information? What are some good things about being a member of the SACO? What are some things that are not so good about being a member of a SACCO? Did you discuss these benefits and challenges with the teachers? When did girls learn about the SACCO—during the classroom training or afterwards?

*\*\*Moderator: For each description of how the teachers explained the SACCO, ask the group how their experiences were similar or different.*

1. **How did the program help students to join the SACCO?**

Probes: Did all students join, or only some students? Which students joined the SACCO? When did they join—during the classroom training or afterwards? Did they join as individuals or as a cooperative? How was the school or the teachers involved after the student joined? Did the school help students attend SACCO meetings? Contribute money to the SACCO? Borrow money from the SACCO? Save money in the SACCO?

*\*\*Moderator: For each description of how the program helped students join SACCOs, ask the group how their experiences were similar or different.*

1. **Have girls been participating in SACCOs since the classroom training ended?**

Probes: If yes, why? As cooperatives or as individuals? If not, why not? How often do girls borrow money from the SACCO? What do girls borrow money from the SACCO for? How often do girls save money in the SACCO? What do girls save money in the SACCO for? How often do girls meet with their SACCO?

*\*\*Moderator: For each description of how the program helped students join SACCOs, ask the group how their experiences were similar or different.*

1. **Next we would like to hear your feedback about the program so that we can make it more useful for students in the future.** **If you could change something about this part of the program—THE PART AFTER THE CLASSROOM TRAINING—what would you change?**

Probes: What were the main challenges to participating in the follow-up part of the program? How could the program have been more helpful to girls after the training ended?

1. **We understand that some girls were unable to make money during the classroom part of the training because they came to the training and could not work. That is one example of a bad consequence of the program. Even when programs are helpful, they can also have bad consequences.** **What are some of the bad consequences that you experienced because of participating in this program (during the classroom training or the follow-up period)?**

Probes: Did the program cause some students to lose income? Did the program cost money for some students because of transportation or needing to buy uniforms or something else? Are some students doing income generating activities now that are not as good as the ones they were doing before? Did participation in the program have negative effects on some students’ relationships with others? Did participation in the program cause some students to feel bad about themselves?

1. **Now let’s talk about the good things about the program. What is the most important new knowledge or skill that you learned from this program?**

Probe: Please tell a story about how you have used that new knowledge or skill in your life. Has anyone else had a similar experience? What happened? How about someone who benefited from different skills or knowledge learned in the program? Will you please tell a story about how you used those new skills?

*\*\*Moderator: Continue probing until you have stories about at least 3 different ways in which girls have benefited from the program. After each story, ask the group if they have had similar or different experiences. How have their experiences been different?*

1. **Given everything that we have talked about, what else do we need to know to help make this program more useful for girls in the future?**

Probe: Do you have any final thoughts that you would like to share before we end our session?

*\*\*Moderator: Be sure to thank each of the girls for their time and for their participation. Encourage them to work hard and let them know that the program is very proud of them.*