

# GROUP LEARNING & COUNSELING ORIENTATION GUIDE

Guide for Orienting Community Leaders



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Fertility Awareness  
for Community  
Transformation

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Acknowledgements. Save the Children and the Institute for Reproductive Health would like to thank the guide authors Dickens Ojamuge, Shannon Pryor and the reviewers Sophie Akera, Jeannette Cachan and Lauren DuComb. David Klemm designed the guide and worked on multiple iterations.

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This Leader's Orientation Guide was developed under the Fertility Awareness for Community Transformation (FACT) Project's Wake Ki Lago Nywal (WALAN) pilot intervention in partnership with Save the Children and the Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University in Northern Uganda. This guide and the FACT Project are made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the terms of the Cooperative Agreement No. AID-OAA-A-13-00083.

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# ORIENTATION GUIDE

Orientation for Community Leaders to support WALAN  
Group Learning and Counseling in Northern Uganda

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Steps in the Orientation of Community Leaders:

- **Step 1:** Preparation for Orientation..... 3
- **Step 2:** Orientation of Community Leaders ..... 5
- **Step 3:** Planning community mobilization  
activities by Community ..... 7

### Annexes

- **Annex 1:** Roles and Responsibilities of the Community  
Leaders Mobilization Team (CLMT) ..... 10
- **Annex 2:** Mini Drama Explaining the WALAN Activities... 12
- **Annex 3:** Project Overview ..... 13
- **Annex 4:** Poster ..... 14
- **Annex 5:** Planning Orientation for Community Leaders.... 15
- **Annex 6:** Key Messages on Fertility Awareness and  
Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancy ..... 16



# ORIENTATION GUIDE

## Orientation for Community Leaders to support WALAN Group Learning and Counseling in Northern Uganda

### Purpose

The purpose of this orientation guide is to introduce community leaders to the concepts of fertility awareness and fertility awareness-based methods.

The guide will familiarize readers with planned activities which have already been implemented by the WALAN Group Learning and Counseling Model to engage community leaders in sharing fertility awareness messages and information.

### Community Leaders

Before the orientation meeting takes place, Group Facilitators members must identify Community Leaders who have a say on how the community operates and are referred to here as “Gatekeepers.” Community Leaders may include cultural leaders, religious leaders, local council, opinion leaders, etc. The orientation meeting will include Community Leaders, intended to solicit input and support for the ongoing Group Learning and Counseling activities in the community to generate buy-in.

### Orientation Meeting

The orientation meeting should be initiated by a Project Officer and organized by the Community Development Officer (CDO) in conjunction with the Group Chairperson.

The meeting will be guided by the following objectives;

- Provide a brief introduction of WALAN, how it is implemented and the key actors involved.
- Update Community Leaders and obtain their feedback on project implementation with a specific focus on WALAN Group Learning and Counseling activities.
- Discuss the roles and responsibilities of the local leaders in supporting WALAN Group Learning and Counseling activities, specifically the activities of group facilitators.
- Share the family planning poster as a tool to support community mobilization activities.

**WALAN Group Learning and Counseling** works through youth groups and aims to increase fertility awareness and family planning education in communities, as well as providing counseling to couples on two fertility awareness-based methods.

In each community, a group facilitator pair conducts community learning sessions on fertility awareness and family planning (FP) topics. For interested couples, the facilitator pair provides referrals for FP services and conducts counseling sessions on either Standard Days Method with CycleBeads or TwoDay Method.

## Tools and Materials to be used during orientation:

Tools and materials required for use in orientation will include:

- An overview of WALAN Group Learning and Counseling
- A list of specific messages on fertility awareness and family planning
- A meeting preparation checklist
- A sample outline for a mini drama
- A poster

## Steps in the orientation of Community Leaders:

The following key steps will be followed during the orientation of the local leaders:

STEPS	LOCATION	DURATION
<b>Step 1:</b> Preparation for orientation	Group/ Parish	1 hour
<b>Step 2:</b> Conducting orientation	Village	2 hours
<b>Step 3:</b> Community Leaders planning of mobilization activities	Parish	1 hour
<b>Step 4:</b> Holding reflection meetings	Village	2 hours

# Step 1: Preparation for Orientation

## Preparation for Orientation

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Location:** Group/Parish

**Note:** It is important for the Project Officer and CDO to hold a preparation meeting with the Group Chairperson and the Executive Committee to prepare for the meeting. Whenever possible, the preparation meeting should be carried out alongside the ongoing activities of the group. The details of this meeting are described below.

Before going out to the community, the Project Officer will work closely with the CDO to plan and schedule meetings with the Chairman and Executive Committee members of the group to prepare for the orientation meetings. Specifically, the objectives of the preparation meeting are to agree on how to:

- Present and discuss objectives and rationale planned for the orientation meeting
- Map/generate a list of local leaders
- Define roles and describe responsibilities of the orientation team
- Create a schedule for orientation meetings with leaders

## Planning for the orientation meeting with community leaders

Before the orientation of Community Leaders, the Project Officer will hold a meeting with the CDO to plan for the meeting. The following key items will be discussed during the meeting:

- **Determine the roles of the moderators.**
  - Prepare to guide the discussion (Annex 1)
  - Plan orientation for relevant audiences (Annex 5)
  - The key roles include: Project Officer, CDO, and Group Facilitators
- **Map out** different categories of people who play leadership roles in the community. Consider who should be considered as community leaders and determine how many to include.
- **List** expected tasks for local leaders in the ongoing Group Learning and Counseling activities in the community.
- **Agree** on meeting dates and logistics, make invitations for the meeting participants.
- **Coordinate** with the Parish Chief and other Parish level authorities, prepare the venue in advance.
  - What is a suitable venue for the meeting - the subcounty, parish or village level?
  - How will the participants get to the venue?

- **Select** the agenda and assign roles (Annex 1)
- **Invite** guests of honor (Parish Chief, Chairperson LC I, or others) to welcome meeting participants (other options include Honorable Councilor representing the Parish to the Sub County, LCI of the venue or others as appropriate).
- **Prepare** for the mini-drama (Annex 2). The drama actors will be drawn from the Group Members led by the facilitators. Make sure actors have enough time to rehearse the drama skit.
- **Prepare** a brief project presentation that clearly defines the project objectives and the activities conducted by the Group Facilitators (Annex 3).
- **Review** the FACT Group Learning and Counseling overview (Annex 3). Anticipate some of the questions and concerns community members may have.
- **Secure** items that may be required for the meeting. This may include stationary, budget for refreshment expenses formats for attendance, branding and promotional materials such as banners, binders, camera, etc. or payment as needed.



**Note to the Facilitator:** A detailed description of family planning methods or specific details about the project are not necessary in the overview. Simply present an overview about the WALAN activities in Northern Uganda using the example in Annex 3.



# Step 2:

## Orientation of Community Leaders

The Project Officer and CDO should facilitate the meeting using the guidelines below:

**Duration:** 2 hours

### Method:

- Mini-drama
- Question and Answer
- Brief overview of the FACT WALAN Group Learning and Counseling Project

### Preparation

In advance of this meeting, make sure that the Group Facilitators have prepared a mini-drama (Annex 2).

At least two weeks in advance, invite the local leader who has been identified to officiate as guest of honour and provide a brief on the project details.

Ensure that the venue allows for participants to sit in a position that will allow them to freely interact and see the drama (ex. semi-circle).

### Materials

Gather materials identified during the preparation phase.



**Note:** During the meeting, be sure that both men and women contribute and offer observations. Remember that participants' diverse views will assist in shaping the roles of the community leaders in providing a supportive environment for the project.

### I. Introduction Activities (15 min)

- The CDO will act as the moderator for this meeting and s/he will direct the discussions.
- Welcome attendees to the meeting and ask the guest of honour to make opening remarks.
- Introduce yourself (name, surname and the institution for which you work) and your colleagues so that the meeting might continue with a relaxed mood.
- Invite the participants to introduce themselves in groups either according to ranks or according to Parishes.
- Thank the participants for their attendance.
- Introduce the purpose of the meeting and present its objectives and its context (which you have explained previously).
- Share the agenda and estimated duration of the meeting.

## II. Session Topic: Mini-Drama on Group Learning and Counseling (30 min)

The moderator will announce the mini-drama about healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies using fertility awareness methods then ask the prepared actors to go on stage to present the play.

At the end of the mini-drama (10 minutes maximum), the moderator will involve participants in a discussion using the questions below. The discussion is intended to transform issues seen in the mini-drama into reflection on those issues in the community. The moderator will emphasize the need for the participants to support the mobilization of the community for the Group Learning and Counseling sessions.

End the session by summarizing the points generated from the discussion. This could be written in bullet points on flip charts and hung on the wall for the rest of the meeting.

### QUESTIONS FOR THE MINI-DRAMA

- Now that we have all seen the drama, would someone summarize what took place in the play?
- Why is it important for the community learning activity to be conducted by the facilitator?
- What changes would you see in this community if this activity is successful? What would you see in the community if it fails?
- Do you think community members would be willing to participate in a group learning activity like this?
- What should be done to encourage community members to attend group learning sessions?
- What role can you play in mobilising the community to attend the community learning sessions?

Tip for moderators:

- Rephrase the questions every time the participants seem not to grasp or understand the questions. Always look for two to three different opinions for each question.

## III. Session Topic: FACT Project, FAM Programming Overview (20 min)

Provide an overview of the FACT Project, Group Learning and Counseling Intervention (Annex 3), this will take about 10 minutes. Make sure that the overview is delivered in language that is easy to understand. Whenever it is necessary, make sure that all the key concepts are translated into the local language.

Allot enough time to respond to participants' questions regarding Group Learning to ensure the overview was understood. The question and answer part of this activity can be handled by the Project Officer and the CDO.

If there is a question that team does not know the answer to, you can either ask if someone in the group knows or tell that you will find the answer and it will be shared later in a follow-up.

# Step 3:

## Planning community mobilization activities by community

### Objectives:

- Community Leaders will develop action points in providing supportive environment for the WALAN Group Learning and Counseling activities.
- CDO will introduce the WALAN Group Learning and Counseling community mobilization poster to the community leaders and how it should be used.

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Method:** Group discussion

**Preparation:** Prepare questions for Community Leaders to guide in generating action points.

**Materials:** Flip charts, markers, poster, masking tape



**Note:** After presenting the WALAN Group Learning and Counseling project overview and implementation strategy, Community Leaders will be guided to reflect on their roles in providing a supportive environment for the project activities.

Specific attention should be paid to how Community Leaders plan to mobilize communities for family planning learning sessions and couple counseling sessions.

### I. Session Topic: Planning to Mobilize the Community (20 min)

Introduce this session by inviting participants to reflect on their role in their communities and how they can contribute to:

- Creating a supportive environment for family planning
- Mobilizing communities for the group learning and counseling activities.

Kick-start the discussion by brainstorming in general terms what the team is considering their for roles as leaders. After gathering a few ideas, continue the discussion while implementing the following:

- Divide the community leaders into small groups according to type of leader and have them discuss ways they are planning to mobilize the communities.
- Provide each group with the guiding questions, flip charts and markers to jot down their answers.
- Have groups record plans for mobilization activities (using Annex 5). Each group will make a presentation at the end of this session.
- For each presentation, the Moderator will allow some discussion, clarification, and, where applicable, modification of the ideas.

## II. Session Topic: Key Messages used for Community Mobilization

Mobilization of communities for WALAN Group Learning and Counseling activities may be difficult, but can be easier once the right messages are used. The choice of message may vary, depending on the category of people to whom it is targeted. Some key messages have been developed for use by the community leaders (Annex 6).

### Introduce the WALAN Group Learning and Counseling Poster (10 mins)

Reinforce key messages by introducing the WALAN Group Learning and Counseling poster which has been designed to support different stakeholders in talking about the project. Remind the leaders that they are free to use other innovative ways for mobilizing the communities.



**Note to the Facilitator:** Participants should preferably be divided into small groups according to categories of leadership (i.e. cultural leaders, religious leaders, local council leaders etc). Each group will select a representative and rapporteur to capture the group's plans and points.

### Introduce bi-monthly (every two months) reflection meetings (10 mins)

Explain to participants that we will come together again every two months to reflect on activities that have been conducted and were discussed earlier in the Planning to Mobilize the Community session.

These meetings will provide an opportunity to discuss what people in the community think about the Group Learning and Counseling model, FAM and FP, to clarify any myths or misconceptions and identify additional opportunities for mobilization.

Identify a time and place for the reflection meetings and ask community leaders to commit to attending the meetings.

### Wrap Up the Session:

Inform participants that together we will invest time and skills to help identify opportunities to share information about fertility awareness and family planning, including fertility awareness methods, with young people and the significant adults in their lives. We will ultimately improve the health of women and children through healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies, and this will be done using existing community structures that we refer to as platforms.

Inform the participants that, as stated in the meeting objectives, communities have chosen to be part of the process. Request some volunteer participants who are willing to support the program in their Parishes to describe what they can do. Make sure that there are no false expectations raised at this point—explain the purpose of volunteers.

# Annexes



## Annex 1:

### Roles and Responsibilities of the Community Leaders Mobilization Team (CLMT)

Use this table to assign roles and tasks to the expanded FACT team members to prepare for the orientation of community leaders.

	Task/activities to be completed	Who leads the task/activity	When: (Date and Time)	Comments
1	Registration of participants			
2	Introduction and Welcome Remarks			
3	Expectations and ground rules			
4	Review of meeting Agenda/ Objectives			
5	Project overview: WALAN Solution			
6	Mini drama on WALAN activities			
7	Discussion on the Drama			
8	Questions and Answers: Frequently asked questions			
9	Planning how to mobilize the community for WALAN activities			
10	Introduction of poster for use in mobilization of community members for WALAN activities			
11	Evaluation and wrap-up Closing Remarks			

## Community Leaders Orientation Schedule

<b>Date and time of Orientation</b>	
<b>Venue:</b> Sub County Headquarters (Indicate the S/C Headquarters where the meeting is taking place)	
<b>Point Person:</b> CDO of the respective Sub county	
<b># of participants expected:</b>	
<b>Category of participants:</b>	

## Annex 2:

### Mini Drama Explaining the WALAN Activities

Communities like drama. This short drama, acted out by community members, will accurately depict the activities of Group Learning and Counseling facilitators. This is meant to trigger the minds of participants and establish how they will support the activities of Group Learning and Counseling.

**Scene 1:** The short drama skit will start with a group learning and counseling session. Couples are having concerns about how they can be assisted with spacing their children in a timely manner. Some already feel burdened by the children they have and others are just conscious of producing many children. The group learning facilitators will therefore conduct a session on the importance of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy (HTSP) by providing them information on how the human reproductive health system works in relation to pregnancy. Group learning facilitators will then provide general information on family planning and lactational amenorrhea method (LAM). The scene closes with the facilitator encouraging and inviting the couples to come for the fertility awareness method (FAM) session which will be arranged the following week.

**Scene 2:** The second scene starts with a session of at least 3-5 couples attending one of the FAM methods, which is describing the SDM (cycle beads). After receiving education on the method, the participants ask questions for clarification. Couples are then seen moving out of the session, happy and confident in applying the knowledge acquired.

#### After the drama skit, ask the questions below:

- Now that we have all seen the drama, would someone tell me what took place in the play?
- Why is it important that the activity is conducted by the facilitator?
- What changes would you see in this community if this activity is successful? How about if it fails?
- Do you think community members will be willing to participate in a group learning activity?
- What should be done to encourage all community members to attend group learning sessions?
- What role would you play in mobilizing the community for Group Learning and Counseling sessions?



## Annex 3:

### Project Overview

WALAN Group Learning and Counseling with Save the Children's YIELD Program, Gulu, Uganda

#### Introduction

WALAN stands for **"Wake ki Lago Nywal."** It is an acronym for a name that was vetted and agreed upon by the local community.

WALAN is an intervention implemented in Northern Uganda as part of the FACT project. The purpose of the activities is to foster an environment where women and men can take actions to protect their reproductive health throughout their life. WALAN is intended to increase fertility awareness (FA) and expand access to Fertility Awareness Methods (FAM) at the community level, with the goal of reducing unintended pregnancies and improving reproductive health outcomes. The Group Facilitators will help their community members learn about these topics in a group setting from non-health personnel.

WALAN is currently being implemented with youth (15-35 years of age) members of the Youth Initiative for Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods Development (YIELD) platform in Northern Uganda. YIELD is a program that promotes Livelihoods (Agriculture), Vocational Skills, Apprenticeship and Entrepreneurship skills with the goal of empowerment of vulnerable youth in Northern Uganda.

#### Audience

- The primary audience is men and women age 15-35. These are youths, post-partum mothers and couples who want to delay birth.
- The secondary audience includes health workers and all influential persons in the communities such as religious leaders, cultural leaders, community leaders, peers, and mothers- and fathers-in-law.

#### Intervention

A male and female are identified from the group to be facilitators for community education and group counseling of FAM sessions. The facilitator criteria includes members of the group who: (1) are available and willing to work as volunteers and are not VHTs; (2) have the ability to read and write in local language (Acholi); and (3) are trusted by the community. For the Pilot Phase of the intervention, a total of 30 facilitators have been identified in five sub counties: Anaka, Atiak, Bungatira, Pabbo, and Patiko. These facilitators, who will work in pairs (one male and female per pair) will receive training in facilitator skills as well content material, to enable them to deliver fertility awareness (FA) and FAM sessions to interested group members and the community.

Facilitator pairs then conduct community education sessions for men and women in the community that cover human fertility, healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy, family planning (FP), and the lactational amenorrhea method (LAM) and FP.

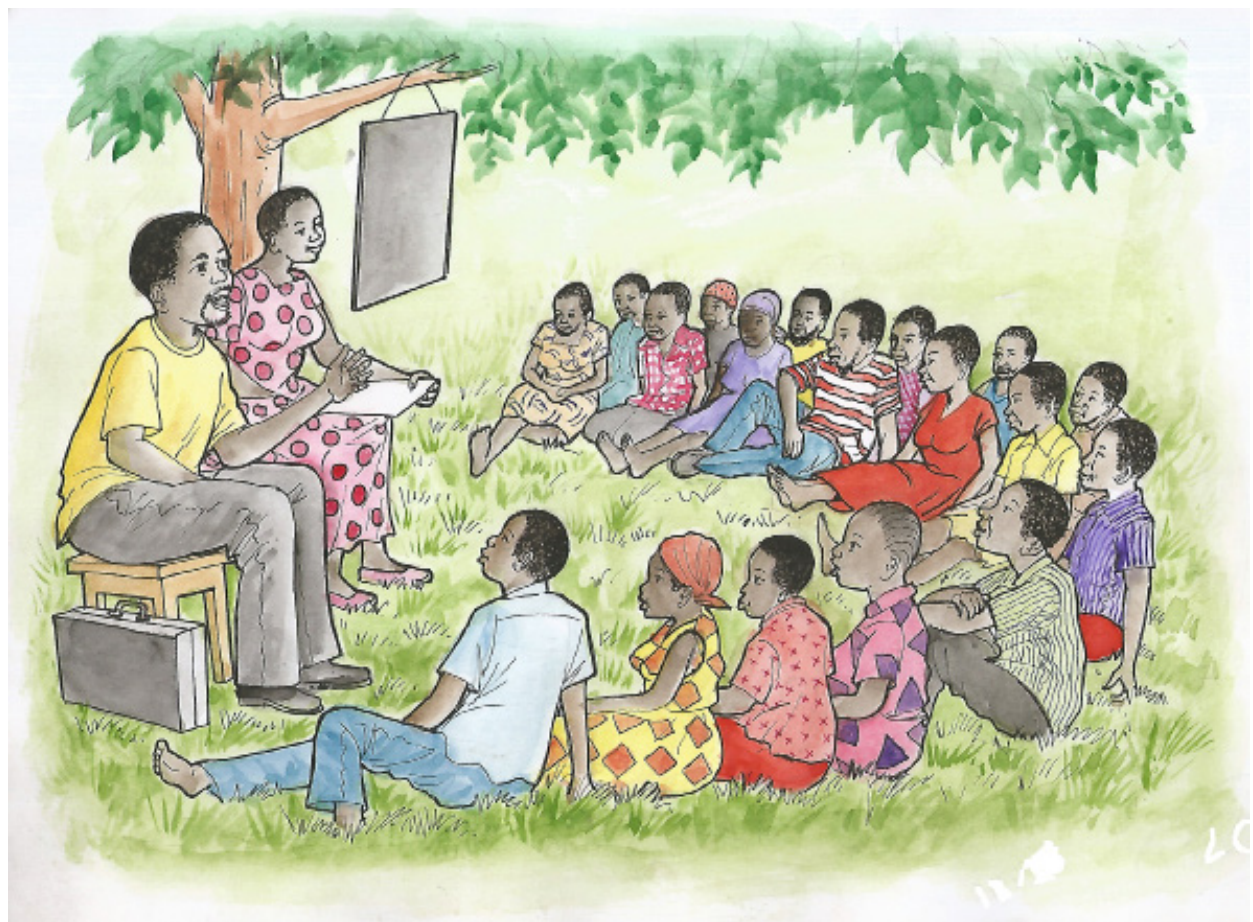
Youth groups or other interested community members are then invited to attend a group counseling session on the FAM method of their interest: Standard Days Method (SDM) or Two Day Method. Method support sessions are hosted for FAM users to help each other with couple support strategies and to share experiences using FAM. Group facilitators will also provide referrals to the health facility for other family planning methods using a family planning invitation card.

## Annex 4:

### Poster

**Be proud of good Health with child-spacing:**

(Bed Ki awaka pi yot kom ki (lago nywal). Kalo kin latino ni).



## Annex 5:

### Planning Orientation for Community Leaders

Community Leaders	Role of CL	CL's audience	When-Routine Events

## Annex 6:

### Key Messages on Fertility Awareness and Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancy

#### Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancy

- Spacing pregnancies helps to keep mothers and babies healthy. It also benefits the husband, the family and the overall health of the community.
- Messages about healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy highlight the importance of having pregnancies after a woman is 18 years of age and waiting 2 years after giving birth before getting pregnant again.

#### Human Fertility

- Beginning at puberty and up to the time when menstruation stops, a woman can get pregnant during a few days in the middle of her menstrual cycle, fertility awareness methods teach a woman how to track and manage her fertile days with her partner.
- The menstrual cycle and menstruation (period) are not the same. The menstrual cycle are all the days between one period and the next. Menstruation refers only to bleeding days.
- Men are fertile every day from puberty and all throughout their lives.
- Around the time of puberty, a girl's body changes. She gains the ability to become pregnant about two weeks before her first monthly bleeding begins.



