

# FOUR CORNERS

## Facilitator guide

### SESSION OVERVIEW

The purpose of this activity is to help participants come to a deeper understanding about their own and others' beliefs about abortion; empathize with others' values that inform a range of beliefs; and consider how personal beliefs can create stigma and affect the provision of high-quality safe abortion care.

### OBJECTIVES

By the end of this activity, participants will be able to:

- Articulate their beliefs about abortion
- Defend and respectfully explain other, sometimes conflicting, points of view
- Explain different values underlying a range of beliefs on abortion
- Discuss ways to ensure a professional standard of high-quality safe abortion care regardless of personal beliefs

### MATERIALS

- "Four corners: Wall signs" or hand-written signs labeled 'Agree,' 'Strongly Agree,' 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'
- Tape (for attaching signs to the wall)
- Pens
- "Four corners: Participant handout Part A and Part B" (one per participant)

### TIMELINE

Total time: 45 minutes

### ADVANCE PREPARATION

- Prepare, print and tape four signs labeled 'Agree,' 'Strongly Agree,' 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' on the walls in four corners or areas of the room.
- Select the statements that will elicit the most important discussion for the audience and setting in case you are pressed for time during group discussion (see Step 13).

- If they exist, familiarize yourself with your agency's policies and practices (standard operating procedures, clinical protocols) related to safe abortion care.
- Print copies of the "Four corners: Participant handout Part A and Part B" (one per participant).

## INSTRUCTIONS

**STEP 1:** Inform participants that this is an activity where they will be speaking from a personal point of view, as well as defending others' views. Encourage them to be completely honest to get the most out of the activity.

**Suggested activity introduction:** *"Often, our beliefs about abortion are so engrained that we are not fully aware of them until we are confronted with situations and compelling rationale that challenge them. This activity helps us to identify our own beliefs about abortion, as well as understand the issues from other points of view."*

**STEP 2:** Hand each participant a copy of "Four corners: Participant handout Part A." Instruct them **not** to write their names on their worksheet. Ask them to complete the worksheet and then turn the sheet over.

**STEP 3:** Hand each participant a copy of "Four corners: Participant handout Part B." Instruct them **not** to write their names on their worksheet. Ask them to complete the worksheet and then turn the sheet over. Ask the men in the group to respond as if they were a woman in that situation. Ask participants to do the same if they are a non-medical staff member and the question is related to medical service provision.

**STEP 4:** Ask participants to turn handouts Part A and Part B face up and place them next to each other. Tell them that Part A asks about their beliefs for women in general, and Part B asks about their beliefs concerning themselves. Ask participants to take a few moments to compare their answers on Part A versus Part B.

**STEP 5:** Ask the following discussion questions:

- What similarities or differences do you see in the beliefs you hold for women in general versus yourself?
- If there are differences, why do you think that is?

**STEP 6:** Take a few moments for a brief discussion. Point out to participants that differences between responses on Part A and Part B worksheets can sometimes indicate a double standard. Some people believe that women in general should not be allowed to access safe abortion care, but that safe abortion care should be accessible to themselves or someone they know (such as a family member or friend). Gently encourage participants to consider whether they maintain a double standard for themselves versus women in general and ask them to reflect on this more deeply. Stress the negative impact such double standards can have on women's health outcomes (for example, death or injury from unsafe abortion).

**STEP 7:** Ask participants to stand in a circle and crumple their Part A worksheets into a ball and throw them into the middle of the circle. Ask participants to select a “ball” from the middle of the circle and open it. Explain that for the remainder of this activity, they will represent the responses on the worksheet they have in their hands, even if these responses differ greatly from their own.

**STEP 8:** Read the first statement out loud. Ask participants to move to the sign that corresponds to the response circled on the worksheet they are holding. Remind participants that they are representing the responses on their worksheets, even if those responses conflict with their personal beliefs.

**STEP 9:** Invite participants to look around the room and note the opinions held by the group. There may be different-sized groups in the four corners, and sometimes some of the corners may not be occupied. You can then ask some people to move to another group if the four are not evenly distributed.

**STEP 10:** Ask the group under each sign to discuss amongst themselves the strongest rationale for why people might hold that opinion. Let them know they will have two minutes to discuss and come up with reasons why they either ‘Strongly Agree,’ ‘Agree,’ ‘Strongly Disagree’ or ‘Disagree.’ Ask them to assign a spokesperson for the group.

- Encourage them to come up with more meaningful reasons that are based on underlying core values.
- The ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’ groups should make sure they can differentiate between merely ‘Agree’ or ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ or ‘Strongly Disagree.’

**STEP 11:** Start with the spokesperson under ‘Strongly Agree’ and proceed in order to ‘Strongly Disagree.’

- Remind participants that the designated spokespeople may or may not personally agree with the opinions they are presenting.
- Ask other groups not to comment at this time.

**STEP 12:** Read the next statement, and ask participants to move to the sign that corresponds to the response circled on their worksheet. Invite participants to note the opinions held by the group. Redistribute some people if groups are not evenly distributed. Ask groups to select someone who has not yet spoken to be their spokesperson. Reverse the order of the groups’ presentations.

**STEP 13:** Continue in the same manner for the remaining statements, noting the remaining time you have. If you are short on time, focus on discussing the statements you identified during preparation as likely to be the most important for this group.

**STEP 14:** Have participants return to their seats. Discuss the activity by asking some of the following questions:

- What was it like to represent beliefs about abortion that were different from your own?
- What was it like to hear your beliefs represented by others?
- What rationale for certain beliefs caused you to think differently?

- How might our beliefs affect the way we treat women who seek abortions in comparison to women who seek other health services?

**STEP 15:** Solicit and discuss any outstanding questions, comments or concerns with the participants. Thank the group for their participation.

**STEP 16:** Summarize the key points this activity is intended to convey:

- This activity helps us to examine what it is like to hold a perspective that is different from our own. When you argue a different point of view it can help strengthen your own point of view or help you better understand someone else's perspective.
- Sometimes we have a different standard for ourselves or someone we love versus women in general. This different standard can result in some women being able to access safe abortion care and others not being able to access it. Women can die from unsafe abortion or have permanent injuries if they are unable to access safe abortion care.
- Our personal beliefs and biases can impact the type of care that we provide. For example, we might treat a woman seeking an abortion because she has health complications more sensitively than a woman seeking an abortion because she didn't use contraception. Both women need an abortion service and we should treat each woman with the same level of respect and professionalism regardless of our personal beliefs about her circumstances.

# FOUR CORNERS

## Participant handout: Part A

### INSTRUCTIONS

Please read the following statements and put an "X" in the column that best reflects your personal beliefs. Please respond honestly and do not write your name on this sheet.

STATEMENT	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Women who are raped during conflicts should be offered safe abortion care if they need it, regardless of the legal context.				
Safe abortion care should be available to every woman or girl who needs it, regardless of her circumstances.				
Women who have an abortion are killing.				
A woman should be able to have a safe abortion even if her spouse or partner wants her to continue the pregnancy.				
Women who have had multiple abortions should be encouraged to undergo sterilization.				
Girls under 16 should not be allowed to have an abortion unless their parents agree with the decision.				
Clinicians working in sexual and reproductive health in humanitarian settings have the responsibility to perform abortions.				
All women living in another country due to displacement should have access to abortion during an acute emergency.				

## FOUR CORNERS

### Participant handout: Part B

#### INSTRUCTIONS

Please read the following statements and put an "X" in the column that best reflects your personal beliefs. Please respond honestly and do not write your name on this sheet.

STATEMENT	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
If I became pregnant as a result of rape I should be offered safe abortion care, regardless of the legal context.				
Safe abortion care should be available to me if I need it, regardless of my circumstances.				
If I had an abortion I would be killing.				
I should be able to have a safe abortion even if my spouse or partner wants me to continue the pregnancy.				
If I had multiple abortions I should be encouraged to undergo sterilization.				
If I am under 16 I should not be allowed to have an abortion without my parents agreeing with the decision.				
If I was a clinician working in sexual and reproductive health in a humanitarian setting, I would have a responsibility to perform abortions.				
If I was living in another country due to displacement I should have access to abortion during an acute emergency.				

# Agree

**Strongly  
Agree**



# Disagree

**Strongly  
Disagree**