

# Discussions

## Suggested discussion procedures

Certain training events might involve facilitated discussion, either as a part of and/or instead of exercises. Here are a few examples of ways to get your audience to engage well in a discussion.

- Each trainee brainstorms individually on sticky notes, which are later posted to a large flipchart and discussed.
- Split the audience into “buzz groups” of two to three people. Most often used for introductory exercises, a buzz group is a small discussion group formed for a specific task, such as generating ideas or reaching a common viewpoint on a topic within a specific period of time. Hence, you would use the buzz group to discuss the chosen topic during a pre-defined timeframe and then have them report back to the plenary.
- Write four different answers to a question on four large sheets of paper and post one in each corner of the room. Each trainee is asked to go to the answer s/he most agrees with, and each group is asked to present their point of view most persuasively.
- Write four quotations that sum up particular aspects of the question you are discussing on large flipchart paper, and then post one in each corner of the room. Assign trainees numbers from one to four. Ask trainees to move to the flipchart paper on which their number is written. Have trainees discuss their group’s quotation and write down responses on the flipchart. Stop discussion after a few minutes. Ask trainees to move to the next piece of flipchart paper, so that each group will be facing a new quotation. Repeat the process until all groups have discussed and responded to all quotations –then have the groups move back to their original quotation. Ask each group to read the responses of the other groups and to compare those responses with their initial answers.
- List four to six statements relating to a theme you are discussing on a large sheet of paper or whiteboard. Pass out note cards to the trainees, on which they write ideas or reflections on each statement. Collect these cards and sort them according to the statement they relate to. Assign groups to each stack of cards. Request that trainees (a) make a presentation to the plenary, (b) organise the cards into challenges and opportunities, or (c) find another way of creatively reporting back on what the group read on the cards.
- “Annual fair”: Split trainees into groups of no more than six people. Assign the groups some time to work on a particular aspect of the question you are discussing, to write down their responses on a flipchart and to post their flipchart in a corner of the room. One or two (depending on group size) member(s) of each group then presents their group’s flipchart (aspect of the question, responses, arguments etc.) to trainees of other groups, who will be moving around the room. The rest of their group will be moving from one flipchart to another, listening to presentations of other groups. Every presentation should take an allocated short amount of time (e.g. three minutes), followed by questions. After one round of presentations is finished, instruct trainees to switch their tasks until each trainee has presented his/her group’s flipchart and listened to the presentations of other groups.

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### Topics for discussion

The following twenty suggested topics for discussion are loosely organised around key themes elaborated in the *Penal Reform and Gender Tool*.

1. Why must gender be integrated into penal reform?
2. What are the benefits of making penal policies gender-sensitive? For whom would there be advantages?
3. What actions can policy-makers take to ensure that penal reform is gender-sensitive?
4. What are the specific issues facing male and female prisoners? How do they differ?
5. What particular health issues arise for men and women in prison?
6. What can prison management do to effectively prevent, respond to and sanction gender-based violence in prisons?
7. How should the issues of incarcerating mothers who are breastfeeding or have young children be addressed?
8. What could be the role of women's organisations in exercising oversight with regard to gender issues in the penal system?
9. In what ways can civil society organisations support attention to gender issues in the penal system?
10. How should prison complaint mechanisms address gender-based violence?
11. How can those responsible for penal policy better link up with civil society organisations on gender issues?
12. Should women's prisons only have female staff and men's prisons only male staff? Debate.
13. What could be elements of a gender-sensitive, family-friendly recruitment and retention policy for penal staff?
14. What can parliament do to promote gender-sensitive penal reform?
15. What could be the role of media in promoting gender-sensitive penal reform?
16. Describe three key elements of a public awareness raising campaign on the penal system and human rights.
17. If you had to design gender training for prison staff in your country, what issues would you highlight?
18. What special challenges and opportunities could a post-conflict country face in (re) establishing a gender-sensitive penal system?
19. If you had to commission a research project on penal reform and gender, what would you focus on and why?