

How to do a voting activity

Voting activities can be used to discuss preferences or practices within a community and explore options for taking action. Pocket charts (see below) can be used for voting activities. Alternatively you might like to use pots or jars on the ground. The voting should be done in secret so it's a good idea to use a screen or ask participants to wait outside the meeting place before coming in to vote.

- Prepare the voting tokens from paper or card or use bottle tops or small stones. It is a good idea to prepare different types of voting slips for different groups e.g. men and women or children or elderly if the group is mixed.
- Hang the pocket chart on a wall so that everyone can see it. Explain to the participants what the purpose of the activity is i.e. to find out about the frequency of various water and sanitation illnesses or of certain hygiene practices etc.
- The pictures along the top can denote hygiene practices, types of latrine, where people defecate, water sources or water and sanitation diseases. Down the side can be symbols representing 'sometimes', 'always' or 'never', pictures of men, women and children or pictures of water uses etc.
- Allow people to discuss the pictures first to ensure that everyone understands them in the same way. This discussion may also highlight other issues of concern. It is a good idea to try out a trial vote with two or three people to begin with.
- Hand out the voting tokens to each participant and explain that each person will vote in turn. If considering the most common diseases only one or two voting tokens need to be given out per person. If looking at hygiene practices hand out a token for each different practice. If several tokens are handed out it is a good idea to conduct each vote separately and count the votes before the next practice is considered.
- When each person has voted, count out the votes in front of the whole group. The voting chart could be placed on a table and the voting tokens lined up in front of each picture.
- The most important part of the exercise is the discussion about the findings and what will happen next.

