

Power Line



To help participants explore the unequal distribution of power amongst people.

It can evoke many negative emotions among participants such as anger, discouragement and sadness and must be used carefully in any community where people experience these power inequalities every day.

Objective

- To explore how people's multiple identities as a result of gender, age, class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion determine how much power they have to make choices in their lives. In particular, this tool will highlight how gender intersects with other identities to determine the amount and intensity of care work a person is expected to provide.

Steps in the Process

Tip for the facilitator: This tool is easier to manage in a homogenous group where there are not many power inequalities within the group itself. It may cause conflict in a group with people of a different gender, age, race, disability, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and religion and must be carefully facilitated to be effective and empowering.

1. The facilitator writes on a piece of paper the character each participant is expected to be in this role play. Below is a list of suggested characters, but the facilitator will have to adapt these so that they are relevant for the group. If participants have limited literacy skills, then the facilitator can draw each character or whisper to each participant their character for this role play. The participants must not tell anyone else the character they were given.

2. All the participants line up on in the middle of the space. The facilitator explains that participants must take steps forwards or backwards depending upon what they think their character is able to do or not do in response to each of the statements that will be read out (see below).
3. The facilitator reads out one statement at a time (see below) giving the participants enough time to step forward or backward. If the participants think that their character can do what the statement says, then they take one step forward. If the participants think that their character cannot do what the statement says, then they take one step backward.
4. After all the statements have been read out ask the people who have moved forward the most to reveal their characters and say how they feel. Then ask those who have taken the most steps backwards to reveal their characters and ask them how they feel.
5. Ask the participants at the back of the line what would need to change to move them forward?
6. Ask the participants at the front of the line how their characters could support those at the back of the line to move forward.
7. Ask participants to leave their positions and gather in a circle to discuss the tool.



Possible characters for the role play

- 16-year-old girl who is just married and is pregnant with her first child
- Grandmother who looks after her five grandchildren
- Male local government official who is responsible for the community's budget
- Married woman with three children who has an sick parent living with her
- Married man who has a sick parent living with him
- Farmer who owns the farm he works on and has four children at home
- Woman smallholder farmer who works on the family farm and has four children at home
- Male member of the water board committee
- Female member of the water board committee
- Woman who has not completed primary school and is a widow with three children
- Woman who has two children and her husband is a migrant labour and works abroad
- Elected leader of the women's group
- Religious leader from the minority religious group in the area
- Male migrant laborer who works as a factory worker in the capital city

The facilitator should adapt and add or remove roles based on the context and number of participants.

Possible Situations

- If you have studied up to class VII, please take two steps forward, if you have not then take a step back.
- You need 10 Dollars for some personal work, and you do not want to ask your partner for it. If you can arrange a loan from a bank take one step forward. If you cannot, take one step backward.

- You do not want a child. If you can convince your partner to use a contraceptive take one step forward, otherwise take one step back.
- You are tired after a long day working. If you can sit down and relax for one hour take one step forward, otherwise take one step back.
- There is a party/cultural programme at a friend's house tomorrow night. If you can go, take one step forward otherwise take one step back.
- The water in the area is polluted by the factory. If you can participate in a protest demanding that the factory stops polluting the water take one step forward, if you cannot take one step backwards.
- You are working in a factory and your child is sick at home. If you will have to take care of your child and not go to work take one step backwards, if you can still go to work because someone else can take of your child take one step forward.
- You do not like washing dishes, there is a pile of dishes to be washed. If you do not need to wash these dishes take one step forward otherwise take one step back.
- The local authorities have called a meeting to discuss how much to spend on the new road. If you can speak at this meeting take one step forward, if you cannot speak then take one step back. You had to go out of town/village on some work and the work has taken longer than you thought. If you think that you can stay out of the house at night take one step forward otherwise take one step back.
- If you ride a cycle/or any vehicle to work, or for daily errands take one step forward, if you do not, then take one step backwards.
- Nearby, there is a new textile factory. They are hiring personnel. If you think you can get a job, take one step forward, if not take one step backward.
- Your parents have died. If you think you are able to get a share in their property take a step forward, if not take one step back.
- The water board committee has called an urgent community meeting just before meal time because there is a water shortage. If you can participate in this meeting take one step forward, if you cannot take one step back.

The facilitator should adapt these statements based on the context.

Questions to deepen the analysis

- Why did the participants get distributed in this way even though they had started at the same place in the role play?
- What are the various bases of differences in the role play? How do these differences affect each character?
- Explain how individuals may be at an advantage on one account but at a disadvantage on another and how advantages along caste, class, religion, age, etc. are also a source of power.
- Discuss how care responsibilities affect people differently based on their gender, class, religion, age, caste, and disability.
 - Who had the most care responsibilities of the different characters and why?
 - How did care responsibilities prevent some characters from moving forward?
 - Why were care responsibilities more of a challenge for some characters and not for others?
- Discuss how individuals are discriminated against on the basis of their class, caste, race, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, work (sex worker/domestic worker), health/HIV status, educational levels, and physical abilities and so on. Power structures operate to keep discrimination in place.
- Establish the basic value of equality and how power inequalities can be made more equal. Leave participants with a feeling that these power structures are not fixed and can be changed.

References

- Taken from: Redistributing care work for gender equality and justice – a training curriculum, ActionAid, IDS & Oxfam, June 2015.
- Originally adapted from: Mukhia, Neelanjana and Kachingwe, Nancy. 2013. Women's Rights and HRBA Training Curriculum. ActionAid International, October 2013.
- Critical webs of power and change, ActionAid International, 2005.
- Power - Elite Capture and Hidden Influence, HRBA Governance Resources, ActionAid, 2012.