

3Ps power circles



To deepen analysis about how power relationships work at 3 different levels related to how we interact with the world: :

- **personal and intimate** - self confidence, awareness of rights, relationship to body, etc.
- **private** - relationships and roles in family, friends, sexual partnerships, marriage, etc.
- **public** - community, national, market, public life, legal rights and global spaces, etc.

This tool is useful to compare the past and present situations to understand how different interventions have facilitated shifts in power in each of these levels.

Given the highly personal nature of some topics related to the inner circle (e.g. FGM), using this tool in a mixed group may not be appropriate. Participants are likely to be more comfortable in single sex groups, possibly with people of a similar age or marital status, and in locations with some privacy.

Steps in the process

1. Introduce each other, the purpose of exercise and required time to the group. When discussing the purpose of the exercise the facilitator should be clear how the information gathered will be used (for example for community reflection, to feed into monitoring and reporting processes, to inform PRRPs, to develop new strategies for action as a group). Groups should be clear how they can use the information they will generate and how Action Aid intends to use it.

2. Start the exercise with quite a general question such as: What do we mean by personal, private and public?
3. Building on the responses, explore each of the three levels (Personal, Private and Public) with the group and discuss some examples to set the common grounds e.g.
 - Personal / Intimate: The self and individual space; For example: perception of self-worth, personal confidence, relationship to your body, beliefs about what you are entitled to e.g. ability to lead, sexual pleasure, choice etc;
 - Private: The family and collective space; For example: this includes relationships and roles in families, among friends, sexual partnerships, marriage, etc. This space is usually governed by culture and family traditions, despite legal provisions that protect women's human rights.
 - Public: The area outside the family, for example community, state, market, actors and institutions and collective space.
4. Draw three large concentric circles on the ground and split with a straight line. Title one side as past and other as present. Title the three layers as personal, private and public levels with personal level in inner circle, private in the centre circle and the public in the outer circle. The titles can be written or drawn (with symbols) based on the literacy level of the group.
5. Ask participants to take some time, think and reflect individually if they have experiences of changes in how power is claimed and used at each level. Ask them to think about what was the situation before and how is the situation different now.
6. Ask them to write/ or draw symbols on the ground or on cards and place in the relevant level of the circle in the past and present sections. Some cards/symbols can be linked to two different levels as the line between personal and private can be blurry.
7. Compare the responses for the situation now and before. Encourage further reflection using the guiding questions mentioned below to deepen the analysis of change and process.
8. Once the circles are populated, ask participants to have a look and if they want to add anything further.
9. Photograph the circles and conclude the discussion by thanking the group and discussing with them how this information and analysis could be used at community level and what are the next steps they want to take to continue to shift power at each level.

Guiding questions

During the process when groups map the changes in the three levels, use the following guiding questions to deepen analysis of the change and of the process. The questions are just for guidance and can always be adapted or new questions can be added according to the context and purpose for which the tool is being used.

Personal power:

- What kind of shifts in power have happened at the personal level? Why?
- How has decision making power of people living in poverty improved? Over what types of decisions do they feel more control?
- How have people living in poverty used this power to claim their rights?

Private power:

- What kind of shifts in power have happened at the private level? Why?
- What changes have occurred in the patriarchal patterns and perception?
- How has it enabled women to claim their rights, raise their concerns and voices?

Public power:

- What kind of shifts in power have happened at the public level? Why?
- How were duty bearers engaged? How did their behaviour change?
- How was the power of the most powerful challenged?

Reflection across levels:

- How have individual and collective power (groups, organizations, networks, alliances, movements, etc.) helped to change the rules at different levels?
- How are the changes at the three levels inter connected?
- What were the strategies used and how effective do you think they are?
- What challenges and obstacles have been overcome? What strategies have helped to overcome these difficulties, challenges and obstacles?

Additional power analysis questions can be added as desired.....

Documenting and reporting

The discussions and responses can be gathered and documented as people find most convenient and easy, but making sure that the critical words, example, metaphors, testimonies are captured and brought into the analysis.

The following simple template can be used to facilitate reporting and further analysis and can be adapted based on the focus of your analysis and discussions.

	Before	Now
Personal / intimate	What was the starting point?	Shifts in power identified: Explanations for shifts (why)? Examples of control over decisions:
Private	What was the starting point?	Shifts in power identified: Explanations for shifts (why)? Examples of rights claimed:
Public	What was the starting point?	Shifts in power identified: Explanations for shifts (why)? Examples of duty bearers responses:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategies / Challenges faced/Learning to do things differently?	Challenges faced:	Role of individual vs collective power: Strategies used:

Alternate use of this tool

The same tool can be adapted and used to deepen the analysis of power around three forms of power: visible, invisible and hidden: See also the Peeling the Onion Tool for more information on these forms of power.

Visible power (outer circle): is formal tangible power particularly related to the public or political level where formal decisions are taken - and involves the rules, structures, authorities, institutions and procedures of decision making. For example, this may concern local, district or national government or even the governance structure of large organisations.

- Who are the individuals, and what are the institutions that have the power to change the laws, policies, practice on the issue you are interested in?
- Who are the decision-makers?

Hidden Power (middle circle): the power that cannot be seen, for example vested interests of elites who dominate the agenda of decision making spaces

- Who sets the agenda?
- How are decisions being influenced from behind the scenes?
- Who is included or excluded from making decisions?
- Who may have an interest in the issue, but are influencing decisions outside of the public eye (e.g. role of business, banks, special interest groups, etc)

Invisible Power (inner circle): the norms and cultural constraints that we have internalised and which influence how we see and react to different issues, for example the subservience of women in patriarchal societies.

- To what extent are those with least power unable to address the issue, simply accepting the situation they find themselves in and why?
- How is their opinion of themselves and their ability to act shaped by society, education or the media?

Suggestions for use

- You could use a 3Ps power circle as part of a **research process** to analyse and build evidence on perspectives of power in a community. This might respond to exploratory research questions or may situate and provoke participants into a analytical response to other questions.
- You could use the 3Ps power circle to build rooted analysis to form the **basis of an advocacy or campaign strategy**.

References

- AAI's Framework for Gender Equality (p. 72-73 AAI Gender & RBA Resource Kit)
- [Critical webs of power and change](#), ActionAid International, 2005.
- www.powercube.net