

## **TOOL 7: PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES**

### **Purpose of the tool**

Children with disabilities face a range of barriers when participating in PSS activities. This tool provides a description of the steps to a participatory activity with children with and without disabilities, which seeks to identify barriers to access and inclusion in PSS activities and their ideas to address these barriers. The process of identifying barriers to access and inclusion for children with disabilities can be undertaken when consulting with the wider community about the design of a PSS program, or throughout the delivery of PSS activities to identify ways to adapt activities already running. The participatory activity described in this tool is designed to provide different options for participation and/or communication on protection concerns, and to foster protective peer networking and agency among children with and without disabilities in the community.

### **Composition of groups**

These activities are designed for children and youth over the age of 6 years. Each group should have 8-12 children, half of which are children with disabilities. We recommend separating boys and girls, and perhaps children and younger adolescents, from older adolescents and youth. For example:

- Group 1: Girls (Ages 6-12 years) – 5 with disabilities & 5 without disabilities
- Group 2: Older girls (Ages 13-18 years) – 5 with disabilities & 5 without disabilities
- Group 3: Boys (Ages 6-12 years) – 5 with disabilities & 5 without disabilities
- Group 4: Older boys (Ages 13-18 years) – 5 with disabilities & 5 without disabilities

Some children and youth with disabilities may attend with siblings or other relatives without disabilities. These individuals should be kept in the same group regardless of age, but ideally, they should be of the same gender, so that girls and boys will feel more comfortable in discussing their specific concerns.

### **Timing of activities**

It is recommended that you conduct the activities with both girl groups (Groups 1 & 2) concurrently, and with both boy groups (Groups 3 & 4) concurrently. This will provide space and opportunity to explore the gender-related concerns of children of different ages, for younger people to share their perspectives with older people, and to foster opportunities for peer mentoring of children by the youth in the community.

The activities should be split across two separate days. This will provide time for the groups to document things at different times of the day, for the printing of photos taken by the children to use in discussions, and for further planning of presentations and contributions to a Community Workshop.

The following is an example schedule, which should be adapted according to your context and program:

### **Day 1 – Agenda (2 hours)**

- Getting to know each other and valuing difference
- Describe what you will be doing

- Introduce the “Communication Toolbox”
- Picking and mixing tools
- Support the groups to collect information

### **Day 2 – Agenda (2 hours)**

- Support the groups to collect information
- Discussion and documenting ideas
- Sharing with each other and formulating recommendations
- Contributing to program planning

### **Facilitation**

Ideally, activities with girls should be facilitated by women (this includes the people facilitating and note-taking) and activities with boys should be facilitated by men. In accordance with child protection minimum standards, there should be two people for each small group: one to supervise and assist children who may decide to withdraw from the activity at any point, and one person to observe and take notes.

### **INTRODUCING GROUP ACTIVITIES**

- Introduce all facilitators and translators, and the organizations involved.
- Explain that you will use this information to improve the activities that are already running in the community, so that children with disabilities can have more opportunity to participate with other children – together, not separately!
- The purpose of this activity is to identify what prevents children with disabilities from participating in PSS activities, and to get their idea on how to address this challenge.
- Participation is voluntary. Ask the group to describe what “voluntary” means to them. Some messages that you may like to use to explain or clarify are:
  - Everyone here today can choose for themselves whether they want to participate in the activities.
  - People can also choose which activities they want to participate in; they do not have to participate in all of them.
  - People can participate in any way they feel comfortable; even just listening to others and watching is ok.
  - Participants may stop at any time and go home. For those that need assistance to go home, they can talk to one of the facilitators.
- Explain that participants do not have to share any personal experiences that might upset them or other people. It is also important that the group not talk about the personal experiences of other children that they might know in your community. Instead, encourage the group to talk

more generally about the barriers that girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities face, and what we can do together to change this.

- Explain that if participants have personal experiences that they would like to share, you can arrange an individual meeting after this discussion, and provide referrals to other available services and support should they be interested.
- Explain that you will be taking notes throughout the activity and the discussion. You will be writing down your concerns and ideas, but not the names of participants, and will use this information in a report to improve programs for children here and in other countries.

#### ***Disclosure of Violence or Abuse***

Have information about additional support available and refer to designated case management agencies in accordance Standard Operating Procedures. All standard steps from the *Inter-Agency SOPs for SGBV Prevention and Response in Lebanon*, the *National Child Protection SOPs*, and *Law 422* should be followed.

#### ***Activity 1: Getting to know each other and valuing difference***

Script for facilitator: *“Everybody has differences – we are all different ages, sizes, shapes, and we all have different things that we like or dislike. In this group we also have people who move, think or communicate in a different way. But everyone here has different strengths and abilities. Let us see what we have in common, and what is different.”* Ask participants to move into groups according to:

- Who has long hair/short hair?
- Who is attending school/not attending school?
- Who likes sports/does not like sports?
- Who likes music/does not like music?
- Who can speak with her or his hands/who can speak with her or his voice?
- Who can move with his or her feet/who can move with other parts of his or her body?
- Similar ages groups

Note: Signs and symbols can also be used to identify which group someone would like to join. Some children may prefer to raise their hands or indicate with gestures in any way that they feel comfortable about which group they identify. This activity aims to develop an understanding and appreciation of human diversity, but also what children have in common. You can shape the activity to highlight the skills and capacities of different members of the group.

Finish with grouping by similar ages and split into the two smaller groups with two facilitators for each group.

### ***Activity 2: Describe what you will be doing***

Explain to the groups that you would like to talk today about the different activities running for girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities. You want to know about:

- The activities that girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities participate in, and the one they don't participate in.
- Things that make children and young people with disabilities feel welcome and unwelcome in an activity.
- Things that prevent children and young people with disabilities from accessing our activities, and things that might help them to access our activities.
- Ways we can improve our activities for children and youth with disabilities.

### ***Activity 3: Introduce the "Communication Toolbox"***

There are lots of ways to contribute to this discussion, and for children and young people to document or record their concerns and ideas. Let the participants decide what the best way is for the different people in the group. Introduce the activities in the Communication Toolbox that they can use. These include:

Drawing and artwork – Groups can make a poster using pens, paper and other materials. Include stickers of different shapes and textures, and/or tactile paint, so that children with vision impairments can recognize different parts of the poster.

The picture library – Images and photographs can be used to facilitate discussion. They can also be sorted into different groups under signs that you place on the wall. These signs can include symbols and facial expressions representing things that participants like/do not like, or feel safe/unsafe.

The sound library – A collection of short audio recordings of local sounds and interactions between people. They can listen to these recordings and pick those which they would like to use for the discussion.

Photography – The group can borrow a camera and take photos that will help them to share the concerns of girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities. They can take pictures of things that they like/do not like or feel safe/unsafe. They can also take pictures of people that they trust and know that can help.

A guided tour – The group can also walk around the community and your child friendly space documenting the things that they like/do not like, and the things that prevent or help their access to PSS activities. They can also take their own photos as they move around the community or child friendly space to help explain this.

Story in a bag – Give the children and youth a bag with familiar objects in it that they can use to tell a story. These should be everyday objects, like a drinking cup, a toy or ball, or a pen and a book. These objects can represent different places and/or activities that children like or do not like in the community and can help them to communicate about the topic. Children can also add their own objects to the bag.

**Table: Using tools with children with different types of impairments<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Physical impairment</b>	<b>Blindness and low vision</b>	<b>Deaf and hearing impairment</b>	<b>Intellectual impairment</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Drawing and artwork</b>	✓	✗Not suitable for children who are blind. ✓May suit some children with low vision.	✓	✓	Tactile paint and colorful stickers may help children with low vision to navigate a visual map.
<b>The picture library</b>	✓	✗Not suitable for children who are blind. ✓May suit some children with low vision.	✓	✓	This is especially useful with children with hearing disabilities, as well as those with intellectual disabilities.
<b>The sound library</b>	✓	✓	✗Not suitable for children who are Deaf ✓May suit some children who are hard of hearing, if	✓	This is particularly useful with children who are blind. They may also want to record their own voices and reflections on places where they feel safe/unsafe.

			used with a headset.		
<b>Photography</b>	✓	✗Not suitable for children who are blind.  ✓May suit some children with low vision, as photographs can be easily enlarged.	✓	✓	Photography is a great way to capture the lived experiences of children with disabilities, both at home and in the public sphere. It may not be immediately apparent why a child has taken a certain photograph. Explore this by looking for themes across photos, and asking questions of peers and siblings.
<b>A guided tour</b>	✓ Length of tour should be adapted to capacity of those in the group.	✓	✓	✓	All children have a right to move around their community. Even those who require assistance can be included in this activity, as it will highlight the interaction of individual, relationship and community level factors that affect their access and inclusion.
<b>Story in a bag</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	This is especially useful with children with more profound communication difficulties and for those with vision impairments who can use objects that they can feel to document their own experiences.

**Activity 4: Picking and mixing tools**

Ask the group to pick two activities from the Communication Toolbox. They should think about which tools will help everyone in their group to participate or contribute in some way to the activity. They may

want to identify different roles for people in their group based on the different skills that each person has. For example, some people may not feel very confident speaking, but they can take photos; others may need assistance to move their wheelchair around the community, but they can take good notes. Maybe some people know about an object or place that makes another person in their group happy; they can collect the object and put it in the Story in a Bag or visit the place in the Guided Tour.

Move away and give the group time to discuss and to engage with the different tools. Let them look at the tools, touch them and talk about them. Then ask them to explain what they have chosen and how they might like to adapt and/or combine the activities.

### ***Activity 5: Support the groups to collect information and document their ideas***

Remind each group that today's activity is meant to document the different concerns of girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities. You want to know about:

- The activities that girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities participate in, and the ones they don't participate in.
- Things that make children and young people with disabilities feel welcome and unwelcome in an activity.
- Things that prevent children and young people with disabilities from accessing our activities, and things that might help them to access our activities.
- Ways we can improve our activities for children and youth with disabilities.

Start the activity using the tools chosen by the group. The following Discussion Guide can help you to gather more information during the activity and facilitate the group's identification of their main concerns and ideas for change.

### **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

Prompting questions for discussion both during and after activities should include:

- The activities that girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities participate in, and the one they don't participate in.
  - Are girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities able to participate in these activities? Why/why not?
  - How is it different for girls, boys, young men and young women with disabilities and why?
  - Is it different for children and youth with different types of disabilities (e.g. intellectual disabilities)? If so, how?
  - Do girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities experience any concerns for their safety and security when participating these activities? If so, how?
- Things that make children with disabilities feel welcome or unwelcome in activities:
  - How do people treat children with disabilities? Ask about their parents, their peers, and then other community members.

- Is it different for girls and boys, and for those with intellectual disabilities? If so, how?
- Things that prevent children and young people with disabilities from accessing our activities, and things that might help them to access our activities:
  - What are some of the other things that prevent children with disabilities from coming to these activities? Think about things relating to transportation or the building itself?
  - How do children with disabilities learn about PSS activities? Is it different for girls and boys, and for those with intellectual disabilities? If so, how?
  - Where can girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities go if they are experiencing difficult emotions?
- Ways we can improve our activities for children and youth with disabilities:
  - How can we make these activities better for girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities?
  - What can we do as facilitators? What could groups of children do? How could we support you?

**Activity 6: Sharing with others and formulating recommendations**

Each group can then decide how they want to share their concerns and ideas with others. Bring the children and youth groups (e.g. the girls' and young women's groups) back together to share with each other what they learned. Ask each group to then:

- Identify one activity that children and youth with and without disabilities can do together in the future.
- Make one suggestion of how to improve the activities that are already running in the community for children and youth with disabilities.

Ask each group to identify two representatives that will come to the Community Workshop to share the opinions and ideas of the group.

**Activity 7: Contributing to program planning**

Children and youth with and without disabilities should be invited to attend a Community Workshop where they can share what they learned through the assessment, their recommendations, and ideas for activities that can be conducted and/or adapted. This is a critical step in the participatory action research cycle and over time strengthens both the capacity and agency of children. Children should be supported to participate in any way they feel comfortable. They may just want to listen, appoint an adult or a peer to speak for them, and/or make formal presentations and contributions. Create the space, and then encourage them to fill it!

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: Elena Jenkin et al, *Inclusive practice for research with children with disability: A guide* (Melbourne. Deakin University, 2015). <http://www.voicesofchildrenwithdisability.com/>