

Gender-based Violence against Children and Youth with Disabilities: A Toolkit for Child Protection Actors

CHILD- AND YOUTH-LED PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT ON GBV AND DISABILITY

TOOL 3: GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Purpose of this tool

This tool provides guidance on conducting group discussions and includes a set of discussion questions for parents and caregivers of children with disabilities.

Composition of groups

Group discussions should be conducted with men and women separately to gather in-depth information about their specific and different experiences. Each group discussion should have 8 – 10 people participating. Depending on time, potential parent and caregiver group discussions could include:

- Mothers of children and youth with disabilities
- Fathers of children and youth with disabilities
- Adolescent girls who are caring for persons with disabilities (these may be children or adults with disabilities)

Timing of group discussion

Group discussions should not be longer than 90 minutes. If groups take longer than this to complete all activities in the Group Discussion Guide, you may wish to conduct Activities 1 – 3 on one day, and Activities 4 and 5 another day, if participants are willing and able to return.

Facilitation

Facilitation of groups will require at least one person to lead the discussion and one person to take notes. As much as possible, group discussions with women and girls should be facilitated by women (this includes the person leading the discussion, the note-taker and the translator) and group discussions with men and boys should be facilitated by men. It is important that everyone in the group have the opportunity to speak. This may mean that the facilitator interrupts or redirects the discussion and encourages participation to make sure everyone has the chance to say what they want.

This tool includes participatory activities that can be used to facilitate discussion. While some adults may prefer to communicate through verbal discussion, this may sometimes be dominated by one person. Integrating participatory activities throughout will break up the discussion and provide opportunity for individuals who are less “vocal” to contribute.

Concurrent activities with children with disabilities

Many children with disabilities will not feel confident at first to be separated from their parent or caregiver. So it is important to create a space in these group discussions for children with disabilities to be present, interact and contribute in any way they feel most comfortable. Try to conduct group discussions in a space which is large enough to have a concurrent activity running for children, but still close enough that they can see and/or hear their parents. As is culturally appropriate, have mats, chairs and materials (such as pens and paper) for the children to use. An adult facilitator should be available to conduct a play-based activity with the children and to document how they interact with each other and the activities presented. Children should not be pressured by their parents or the facilitators to use this space, but rather invited at multiple points throughout the discussion. At the end of the discussion, space should be created for children to share with their parents what they did in the activity. The facilitator should try to also describe to parents how children with more profound disabilities participated, even if it is through their behaviors, emotions and body language. This way we promote recognition of the skills and capacities of all children.

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE¹

- Introduce all facilitators and translators, and the organizations involved.
- Explain that the purpose of the meeting is to understand the different types of violence that girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities are at risk of in the community, and ways in which we can reduce these risks and promote participation of children and youth with disabilities in our activities in the community.
- Explain that we 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 – not to set up new or separate services for children with disabilities.
- Remind participants that:
 - Participation is voluntary.
 - No one is obligated to respond to any questions if s/he does not wish.
 - Participants can leave the discussion at any time.
 - They should not share personal experiences, but can instead talk more generally about what they know happens in the wider community.
 - The information they provide will be used in a report, but we will not identify participants by name or other personal information about participants.
- If participants have personal experiences that they would like to share, we can arrange an individual meeting after this discussion and provide referrals to other available services and support should they be interested.
- Explain that we will be taking notes throughout the discussion. We will be writing down the information provided, but not the names of the people here. We will use this information in a report to improve programs for children here, as well as in other countries.



Group discussions with young women who are caregivers of persons with disabilities, and mothers of children with disabilities. © ChildFund Ethiopia

Participatory activities and questions for discussion

The discussion guide is broken down into four parts, representing key assessment areas. Each part comprises several questions that can be answered through activities or discussion.

¹ Adapted from: "I see it is possible": Gender-based violence and disability toolkit for GBV practitioners. https://womensrefugeecommission.org/?option=com_zdocs&view=document&id=1173

Activity 1: Who are we talking about? (15 minutes)

Purpose: This activity will help gather information about what disabilities exist in the community and whether there are differences between men and women.

Facilitation: Use pictures of persons with different types of disabilities and ask people to identify which ones are most common in their community. Ask the group to talk about persons who are isolated in their homes, or those with more “hidden” disabilities, like intellectual or mental disabilities. Ask the group: Do women and girls have disabilities that are different from the disabilities men and boys have?

Explain to the group that today we will be discussing the concerns of children with different types of disabilities, and how these concerns are different for girls and boys with disabilities at different stages in their lives.

See Annex 3: Pictures for group discussion²

Activity 2: Intersection of disability and gender across life stages (30 minutes)

Purpose: This activity will help identify how the community perceives women, girls, men and boys with disabilities and how this affects their roles, responsibilities and opportunities in the community. It will also help to understand the expectations of women, girls, men and boys with disabilities and the reality of their daily life, including the support they may or may not receive from others in the community.

Facilitation: You can use pictures of girls and boys, young women and young men with disabilities undertaking different activities to stimulate the discussion.

Questions for discussion:

- Is it expected that girls, boys, women and men with disabilities will undertake these tasks in this community? For example, are women with disabilities expected to be wives or mothers, and men with disabilities to be breadwinners in their families? Why/why not? How is it different for those with intellectual and/or mental disabilities?
- What might happen to girls and women with disabilities if they do not or cannot do the tasks expected of them? How do partners, parents, peers and other community members treat them?
- What might happen to boys and men with disabilities if they do not or cannot do the tasks expected of them? How do partners, parents, peers and other community members treat them?
- What happens when a baby is born with a disability? What happens when a child with a disability does not pass a milestone (e.g., crawling, walking, going to school) with his or her peers? How might the parents treat this child? How might this affect the relationships in a household (e.g., between the father and mother, or between siblings)? How might the community treat this child?

See Annex 3: Pictures for group discussion³

Activity 3: Violence against children and youth with disabilities (30 minutes)

Purpose: This activity will help identify different risks faced by girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities in the community and their access to social networks.

Facilitation:

Questions for discussion:

- Do girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities go to the same places as other children and youth? Why/Why not? What types of barriers do they experience? Are these barriers different depending on the type of disability (e.g., physical versus intellectual

² <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/disabilities/resources/1292-youth-disabilities-toolkit-pictures>

³ Ibid.

disability)? Are these barriers different depending on the age and gender of the child (e.g., an adolescent girl with disabilities versus a boy with disabilities)?

- Do mothers of children with disabilities go to the same places as other mothers are going? Why/Why not? What types of barriers do they experience?
- In this community, where do you think girls with disabilities feel most safe? Where do you think they feel most unsafe? What makes this place safe or unsafe? Repeat this question, asking about boys with disabilities, young men and young women with disabilities, as well as mothers and their babies with disabilities.
- Can you describe the kinds of violence that children with disabilities face? How does it differ for girls and boys with disabilities? How does it differ according to the type of disability (e.g., physical versus intellectual disability)?
- What about youth with disabilities – what kinds of risks do they face in their relationships, in their household and in their community? How does it differ for young men and young women with disabilities? How does it differ according to the type of disability (e.g., physical versus intellectual disability)?
- What about mothers of babies with disabilities – what kinds of risks do they face in their relationships, in their household and in their community? Do babies with disabilities receive the same kind of care and attention? How is it different for baby boys and baby girls with disabilities?
- Are there other children and young people in this community who are caring for family members with disabilities? What kinds of risks might they experience? Is this different for girls and boys?

Activity 4: Support for child survivors with disabilities (15 minutes)

Purpose: This activity will help to identify barriers and facilitators to accessing services for children and youth with disabilities who have experienced violence.

Preparation: Develop short, contextually appropriate case studies about gender-based violence committed against children and youth with disabilities. Use these case studies to guide the questions below. It is important that these case studies are not linked to a specific story or child from the community. A few sample case studies are provided here, but should be adapted to your context.

Sample Case Study 1: A young girl who is deaf and can't speak left her home during the night to use the latrine. When she exited the latrine, a man grabbed her, pulled her behind the latrines and raped her.

Sample Case Study 2: A girl with intellectual disabilities is being tied up at home by her parents. Her mother says this is to stop her from running outside, where she might be abused. She can be very affectionate to strangers, and will do whatever other people tell her.

Sample Case Study 3: A young man with physical disabilities is living with his sister and brother-in-law. His sister frequently tells him that he is "useless" and a burden on the family. He tries to help by doing household chores, but other men sometimes tease him when they see him doing these activities.

Sample Case Study 4: A young woman who is blind – she has a boyfriend who keeps her a secret from his friends and family. When they argue about this, he says that she is "lucky" to have him and threatens to leave her.

Facilitation: Begin by explaining to the group, "We would like to ask you some questions about the services and assistance available for girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities who experience violence. We are going to begin by sharing a fictional scenario with you, and we will ask you some questions." You may want to share more than one case study.

Questions for discussion:

- If the person with disabilities in the story reported that they experienced this type of violence, how do you think people would respond?
- Do children and youth with disabilities share experiences like this with other people? What makes it difficult for them to do so?
- Where could this person go to receive appropriate assistance? What kind of assistance and support could they receive?
- Is it likely that this survivor would seek such assistance? What might prevent them from seeking assistance?

Activity 5: Preventing violence against children and youth with disabilities (15 minutes)

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to identify barriers and facilitators to children with disabilities accessing gender-based violence activities in the community, and to define some strategies to improve activities that prevent violence against this group.

Facilitation:

Questions for discussion:

- What things do children, families and communities do to protect girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities from such violence?
- What activities are already running in your community to protect children and youth from violence?

Clarify and/or add any activities that your organization is undertaking to address GBV, and then ask the following questions:

- What are the things that prevent children and youth with disabilities from participating in these activities? Are these different between girls and boys with disabilities? Are these different for children with different types of disabilities?
- What could be done in this community to create a safe and protective environment for girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities?

Conclude the discussion

If children with and without disabilities attended with parents and participated in the play-based activity, then you can invite them to share with the parents what they liked and didn't like about the activity.

Explain to participants that there will be a Community Workshop to share the findings from this assessment and to develop actions to improve activities for girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities in the community. Invite the group to appoint two people to attend this workshop and share the concerns and ideas discussed in the meeting.

Share with participants the next steps in the assessment, including involving children and youth with disabilities in some participatory activities. These activities will provide a range of different ways that children and youth can identify protection concerns and risks in the community; how these are different for girls and for boys, and for those with and without disabilities; as well as their suggestions for ways to mitigate these risks. Give parents details about where and when children will be meeting to do this activity, and encourage them to share information with the parents of other children with disabilities.

Lastly, arrange a follow-up meeting for any participants who have personal concerns that they would like to discuss further, and provide follow-up support as appropriate.



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