

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 5: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Purpose of this tool¹

This tool provides guidance on how to gather information from children and youth with disabilities and their caregivers who may be isolated in their homes and unable to attend the other assessment activities. The tool includes questions to guide the interview and an observation checklist to help the interviewer get a sense of the environment in which the child lives and their preferred method of communication.

Composition of participants

Individual interviews are most suitable for children and youth with more complex disabilities or mental disabilities, who require more tailored and individualized communication approaches and/or feel more confident to communicate in familiar environments.

Location of the interview

The purpose of individual interviews is to reach those children, youth and caregivers who may not be able to participate in group discussions because they are isolated in their homes. You should ask the parents or caregivers about the most comfortable location in the home to interview them, but also to involve the child with disabilities in the process, bearing in mind what is culturally appropriate in your given context, and the age and gender of the child and caregivers involved.

Do no harm: Some children and caregivers may experience violence inside the home. It is important to check with those being interviewed where they would feel most comfortable and safe – This may be in their home or in another location. It is also critical to keep questions broad in nature, rather than asking about personal experiences of violence. You may also start with general topics relating to safety and security in the community and perhaps expand into more sensitive topics in follow-up visits.

Timing of activities

Individual interviews should not be longer than one hour, but will vary dramatically in length, depending on the age and attention span of the child involved, as well as how comfortable they are with you and how familiar you are with their communication preferences. Shorter interviews over multiple home visits can also help to establish trust and safely expand discussion into more sensitive topics over time.

Facilitation

Wherever possible, children and youth with disabilities should participate directly in the interview. It is possible to also use the [Communication Toolbox](#) during such interviews, which can help to foster the participation of individuals with more severe communication difficulties.

If an individual does not feel comfortable communicating with you on her or his own, or you cannot find an appropriate method of communication, you can also involve parents, caregivers and even siblings or friends of children with disabilities. In these situations, it is important to still include the child with disabilities in discussions, so they can listen and communicate in any way possible whether they agree or disagree with the statements being made. Parents, caregivers and siblings or friends can also help you to identify different communication approaches with the child with disabilities.

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

Interview guide

- Identify and approach the child or young person with a disability to introduce yourself. Greet them in the same way that you would greet other children in your community, considering social or cultural norms relating to age and gender.
- Talk directly to the child or young person to try to establish an optimal method of communication. If you are not sure about the best communication method, you can ask parents, caregivers and even siblings for advice about this.
- Ask if they would like to participate and whether they feel safe doing so. Give time for the individual to respond, and watch for signs that they do not want to or do not feel safe participating. For people with limited communication abilities, ask the caregiver (if present): How does [state the name of the person] tell you that she/he is unhappy or uncomfortable with something? What makes her/him happy or sad? Use this information to facilitate the interview if verbal communication is not possible and respect any indications that the participant is not comfortable or willing to continue.
- 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 the child and their caregivers that:
 - » Participation is voluntary.
 - » No one is obligated to respond to any questions if they do 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.
- 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.

Interview questions

The following interview questions are written to be directed to the individual with disabilities, but could also be used with women and girls who are caregivers of persons with disabilities to better understand their experiences, access and inclusion in the community.

1. Tell me a bit about yourself.
Additional prompts: What kind of things do you enjoy doing? How long have you been living here? Who lives in your household?
2. What kind of community activities do you participate in?
Additional prompts: Ask about education, children's and girl's groups, health, and livelihoods activities, as appropriate. What things do you like about these activities? What things do you find difficult about these activities?
3. Are there any places or activities in the community where you feel most comfortable or most safe? What makes these places comfortable or safe for you?
4. Do you have contact with other women/girls/men/boys your age? If so, who provides you support? Where do you go to meet them? If not, what are the challenges to meeting and socializing with other women/girls/men/boys your age?

- Are there any places or activities in the community where you feel uncomfortable or unsafe? What makes these places uncomfortable or unsafe for you?

Additional prompts: Are there places or activities where children and young people with disabilities may be at risk of different forms of violence, including sexual abuse or exploitation? Are some children and young people with certain types of disabilities (like intellectual disabilities) more at risk? Are girls, boys, young women and young men at risk of different forms of violence? How is it different?

- Where do you go or who do you talk to if you have problems and concerns?

Additional prompts: Have you heard about services for survivors who have experienced sexual violence? Do girls, boys, young women and young men with disabilities have difficulty accessing these services? If so, what are some of the barriers that they face in accessing these services?

- Are there any programs or activities for women/girls/men/boys in the community that you would like to access or participate in? What has prevented you from accessing these services or activities in the past? How could we help you to participate in this activity or access this service?

Additional prompts: Ask about different GBV prevention activities that are running in the community, such as adolescent girls' groups, awareness-raising, campaigns and trainings.

Observation checklist

During an individual interview, it can be useful to make some notes about what you observe about the individual and their environment. This can help to determine other things in the child's home life and relationships that may affect their health, safety and well-being. It can also help to identify additional needs, concerns, and ways to support the child with a disability to participate in your program and access your services. The questions below may be useful for guiding your observations.

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

COMMUNICATION

How does the person communicate? Watch other family members to see how they interact with the person. Do they use speech, writing or gestures?

PHYSICAL

Describe the person's personal appearance and hygiene. Are they dressed in an appropriate way compared with girls and boys of a similar age in the household or community (e.g., Are they naked or partially clothed when others are fully clothed)? If not, ask caregivers for a blanket and/or clothing before continuing with the interview. Do they appear to have good hygiene (e.g., Are they more clean or less clean than other women or men in the household)? How are they moving around the room?

EMOTIONAL

How does the child express that they are happy, sad, comfortable or angry? Has there been any recent change in their behavior (e.g., mood swings; agitation; fear of other people; sleep and eating disturbances; withdrawal; changes in their usual communication; self-injury or inappropriate sexual behaviors)?

ENVIRONMENTAL

What is the current state of the individual's home? Is the home of the same quality and/or standard as nearby homes? What is the current state of their surrounding community? How close are they to important facilities (e.g., health centers, schools and community meeting points)?

Conclude the interview

- Thank the child, their parents and other members of the family for their time and their contributions.
- Ask the child and caregivers if they have questions.
- Provide information to the child and their family about the services and activities available through your organization and facilitate referrals to psychosocial support or other assistance, as requested.



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