



TE | SF

Transforming Education
for Sustainable Futures

iihs[®]

INDIAN INSTITUTE FOR
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Exploring Self, Building Resilience

A Training Manual for Youth Educators



Authors:

Roshen Chandran and Rajkumari Nimbale, Visthar
Dr. Savitha Suresh Babu, Kanaja-Samvada

Co-Authors:

Dr. Shalini R and Charumathi Mohan, Kanaja-Samvada

*We are thankful to staff and educators at Baduku Centre for Livelihoods
Learning, Samvada and Visthar for sharing their experiences
of teaching and learning*

Contents

Introduction	3
Guidelines for Facilitators	6
1.Life Skills, Social Inequality and Self Worth.....	8
2.Understanding Gender	16
3.Understanding Caste Today	22
4.Disability Justice – An Introduction.....	27
5.Intersectionality: an overview.....	32

Introduction

“The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy”
— bell hooks, Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom (p.12)

This belief in the radical potentialities of the classroom is the premise for this manual for youth educators. The classroom here is not confined to the formal school/college, but extends to any space of learning in or beyond the academy- a space where communities of learning take shape. It aims to enable youth educators to build life-skills and resilience among young people they work with.

Life skills have been defined as “abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (WHO, 1994, p.1). Ten specific skills such as decision making, problem solving, creative and critical thinking, effective communication, self awareness, empathy, coping with emotions, and interpersonal relationship skills are listed. These skills are presented as particularly important to young people at-risk, as important adaptation strategies to difficult circumstances. Within the life skills discourse, ‘*everyday challenges*’ are presented as a ‘problem of individual adaptation that can be addressed through the right set of skills’ (Maithreyi, 2021, p.49). By foregrounding individual adaptation strategies as a solution for young people at-risk across contexts, this framing reduces complex socio-political challenges and vulnerabilities into individual psychologised abilities to navigate environments, and cope. Structural social inequities of class, caste, gender, disability and other axes of inequality are usually absent, or presented only as the specific environments individuals navigate.

This framing does not recognise the deep interconnections between the ‘self’ and the social, and that individual biographies and social histories intersect. Effective communication or decision making as ‘skills’ are not only a product of getting the right life-skills education, but are related to who we are, where we come from, what opportunities we have been able to access- these in turn are linked to our socio-economic locations. This does not mean individuals have no agency, of course. We are not determined by our class, or caste. But recognising structural inequities and their consequences is important to developing ‘life-skills’, and the overall wellbeing and resilience of youth. Contemporary understandings of mental health and wellbeing have moved beyond a biomedical lens to a socio-political lens that ‘allows us to situate mental health within people's lives, experiences and contexts’ (Mariwala and Rizwan, 2021, p.14). How can we bring this understanding into the building of resilience amongst young people? By resilience, we mean abilities to cope with difficult personal-social circumstances, and offer empathy and solidarity to each other.

Often, young people on social margins face humiliation and hardships that make them see themselves as ‘less than’ others. The first step in building life-skills for such youth involves building a

sense of worth, rooted in their social histories and circumstances. For their more privileged peers too, it is important to facilitate learning that helps them see themselves and their skills as a product of resources and opportunities and not solely individual achievement. The motivation for this manual for youth educators is to enable a life-skills education to support both privileged and dis-privileged youth to see themselves as a product of social circumstances, and over time, begin to challenge inequities in the interests of building a harmonious social world for all.

The manual is a product of a set of collaborative conversations, between critical educators in two institutions- Baduku Centre for Livelihoods Learning, Samvada and Visthar, as part of a research project. Supported by Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures, the research project set out to map the educational designs of the two institutions, to think about how socio-ecological¹ justice translates into everyday pedagogic practices. In the course of conducting interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations, we noted a common strand across the institutions was to create engaged pedagogic environments. By this, we mean that educators were keen to use teaching strategies that could ‘restore students’ will to think, and their will to be fully self-actualized’(hooks, 2021). Engaged pedagogy emphasises an interactive relationship between teachers and learners. Recognition that every student has a valuable contribution to make to learning processes, and learning occurs in moments of interaction and dialogue, are central to the endeavour of engaged pedagogy. What is also important to engaged pedagogy is a sense of excitement and fun (hooks,1994). Such excitement can co-exist with serious intellectual engagement, and a deep investment and interest in each member of a learning community. In fact, this co-existence is crucial to critical education or ‘education as the practice of freedom’.

Educators in both Baduku Centre for Livelihoods Learning, Samvada and Visthar worked to create engaging pedagogic sessions for their learners to reflect on questions of caste, class, gender, disability, and to see individuals as located at the interstices of these axes of difference and inequality. In collectively reflecting upon our practices as educators, and the challenges we have faced, we felt bringing together this manual will enable the larger community of youth educators engage with critical social issues that impact the life-skills and resilience of young people. What also motivated us to bring this manual was conversations with young learners, who often recalled specific methods used in classrooms as having had a long-lasting impact on how they saw themselves and their social worlds.

¹The hyphenation of social and ecological justice as socio-ecological justice, reflects the interconnectedness of the two -- a key learning from the research project

This manual can be used as a whole, or in parts, by educators, depending on their need. The fundamental premise of this manual is that we must equip youth to think about themselves and their peers, as shaped by socio-political realities—to understand the linkages between selves and society. The first module in this training manual is called ‘Life Skills, Social Inequality and Self Worth’. Through the stories of two young women, the module will enable learners to understand the connections between an individual’s present behaviours, to their socio-cultural backgrounds and experiences. The chapter sets the stage for the remainder of the modules in the manual that will support them to understand how social inequalities shape everyday realities. Subsequently, the module on gender will help learners understand how our gender-ed identities are socially constructed, and that we have unequal access to resources and opportunities because of our genders. The module on caste compels learners to think about the relevance of caste in contemporary India, and understand how opportunities and resources shape ideas of ‘merit’. The module on disability is meant to help learners see disability as a question of inclusion, rather than impairment or defect alone. Finally, the intersectionality module is to show how all of us are located at the intersection of a range of social identities that shape access to resources, opportunities and possibilities. The overall intent of these modules, collectively, is to recognise the linkages between ourselves and the social worlds we inhabit.

For those who will be facilitating these modules, we ask that you read the guidelines to facilitators closely. The resource book can be seen as suggestive, and various activities/questions can be adapted, depending on the audience you work with. We hope the resource book can facilitate a dialogic pedagogy, in our shared journeys of social justice for all.

References

- hooks, b. (2014). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Maithreyi, R. (2021). *Educating youth: regulation through psychosocial skilling in India*. New Delhi: Sage Publishing India.
- Mariwala, R. and Rizwan, S. (2021). Addressing Inequalities: Structural Competency and Collective Action in Mental Health: Dismantling systems of power. *Reframe Mariwala Health Initiative Journal*, Issue 4.
- World Health Organization. (1994). Life skills education for children and adolescents in schools. (No. WHO/MNH/PSF/93.7 A. Rev. 2). Retrieved from <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/63552/WHO?sequence=1>

Guidelines for Facilitators

Our Approach to Facilitation

1. As facilitators, we are supporting our participants **to think and analyse their own work lives**, attitudes, and worldviews.
2. So, we **ask open-ended questions**. These questions enable participants to think and analyse. Examples of such questions could be:
 - a. What do you think about this?
 - b. What are the consequences of this happening?
 - c. Why is this happening?
 - d. What can we do to change this?
3. We are **not teaching our participants** what is right and what is wrong – they arrive at that themselves based on the analysis we facilitate.
4. We are trying to kindle a **sense of justice** among our participants. Let us enable them to recognize and express the injustice they see and experience.
5. Traditionally, teachers use power and authority to teach; we are challenging that. Let us meet our participants as equals and invite them to think along with us.
 - a. Let us talk less and listen more.
 - b. Let us use simple language, with minimum technical words

Our Method of Facilitation⁶

6. As far as possible, arrange the seating so everyone **sits in a circle**
 - a. That way everyone can see each other, and are equidistant from the “center”
 - b. There is no “head” of the circle, we are all equals in the circle
7. Please **sit as part of the circle** in a place where everyone can see your face. Do not sit/stand in the center of the circle – the participants behind you will not be able to see your face.
8. Speak **slowly, clearly, and gently**. We are not giving a public speech; we are inviting our friends to reflect on their own lives.
9. Having two facilitators can help the process
 - a. The facilitators can take turns leading the facilitation for different activities
 - b. When one of us is leading the facilitation, the other can support her/him
 - c. The supporting facilitator can help with writing on the whiteboard, arranging materials, etc.
10. **Listen politely** when a person shares their experience; acknowledge their feelings

- a. Please thank them for sharing and affirm their story. It takes courage to share personal stories in a group.
11. **Do not ignore a person** who is talking; listen to them.
12. As far as possible, **do not interrupt or cut off** a person who is talking. Their views matter.
 - a. If they are taking more time to explain their point, request them to be brief so others can also share.
13. Pay **attention to the dynamics in a group**, and whether some individuals are not speaking, and gently urge them to participate
14. After we ask a question, there might be silence from the group. **Do not panic by the silence!** People might need time to think and frame a response. Count slowly till 10. You almost certainly will get responses.
15. Give **enough time for group work**; do not hurry your friends. Group work enables each person to think and is important for their growth.
16. Sometimes you can turn around questions that come to you. You can ask the group itself to respond to questions that arise from the group.
17. Try to be reflexive about your own social positionality, with respect to caste, class, gender, religion and other axes of social inequality, while conducting the sessions.

Facilitation and the Content

18. Be thorough with the lesson plan you are facilitating. Mentally rehearse all the questions and possible answers.
19. When we ask questions, we are not 'testing' our friends; we are inviting them to think. Since our experiences will differ, there is no "right answer".
20. If we get a response which we never thought of, acknowledge that viewpoint and respond in a way that you think is most appropriate.
21. When a person's answer does not fit with our view, do not force them to see it our way. Gently ask a few more questions that enable them to think more deeply.
22. Please avoid statements like "I want to teach you...", "I want you to know...", etc. As a facilitator, we are not "teaching" or "telling" our participants; we are inviting them to rethink some of their beliefs and assumptions.

1. Life Skills, Social Inequality and Self Worth

Overview

This session sets up the upcoming sessions for this training program. It deconstructs how the life skills we possess and the self worth we enjoy are deeply linked to the privileges or disprivileges we experience. It enables participants to reflect on the roots of their own sense of self-worth. It aids participants recognize that many of their self-doubts stem from their location in an unequal society and prepares them to think more deeply about themselves in relation to society. That is a critical step in building resilience to the many stressors young people experience in our society. Participants reflect on how to build solidarity and support each other through these stressors. The session uses the story of two young women - Lakshmi and Latha - for participants to analyze. The story is revealed in small steps. As participants understand the backstory of Lakshmi and Latha, their analysis deepens; they see how social inequality has affected the life skills and sense of self worth of Lakshmi and Latha.

Objectives

- To recognise how one's own confidence, assertiveness and other life skills are also shaped by class, caste, gender
- To see how those disprivileges might be stressing one's mental health
- To explore ways to build one's own resilience in the face of those disprivileges

Suggested Time

60 minutes

Preparation

Keep adequate copies of the hand-out ready for distributing to participants.

Materials

- Copies of the handout
- Whiteboard, marker pens
 - Chart paper for group work

Steps

1. Please distribute copies of the handout to the participants.
 - a. The handout contains Lakshmi's and Latha's story – how their lives are today.
 - b. It does not contain their backstory. Only the facilitator has that. They will read it aloud only later in the session.
2. After participants have read the story handout given to them, tell them that we will be analysing the story paragraph by paragraph.
3. Invite a participant to read aloud the first paragraph of the story (segment 1a)
4. Process that segment with the discussion question for that segment.
5. Tell the participants that you would like to share some backstory.
6. Read aloud the backstory segment 1b
7. Ask participants to reflect on the backstory with the discussion questions for that segment.

8. Next, proceed to segment 2a. Invite a participant to read aloud segment 2a.
 9. Discuss segment 2a, share the backstory segment 2b and discuss segment 2b.
 10. Repeat this process for all the segments – first read the present story, discuss, share the backstory and discuss again.
 11. Finally, ask the closing discussion questions. If time is available, let the participants discuss some of those questions in small groups.
 - a. The last two questions are best discussed after completing all the sessions of this training program.
 - b. However, if there is time only for this one session, then the facilitator can conclude this session with the last two questions.
-



Discussion Questions

After reading segment 1a

- A. How is Latha performing better than Lakshmi? Why is Lakshmi unable to negotiate or say “No”?

After reading segment 1b

- B. After hearing this backstory, what do you think? Why is Lakshmi unable to negotiate or say “No”?
- C. What are its consequences?

After reading segment 2a

- D. How is there a difference in the way Latha and Lakshmi take leaves?

After reading segment 2b

- E. After hearing more of the story, how do you think their pasts have shaped them?
- F. What are the consequences of Lakshmi feeling guilty to take leaves?

After reading segment 3a

- G. What is the difference we see in the way Latha and Lakshmi approach trainings?

After reading segment 3b

- H. Why is there a difference in their approach to trainings?
- I. What are the consequences for Latha and Lakshmi?

After reading segment 4a

- J. Why is Lakshmi having sleepless nights?
- K. What are the pressures Latha faces?

Closing question

- L. How have your disprivileges/privileges affected your life skills?
- M. (Optional) How has that affected your mental health?
- N. (Optional) What can we all do to build our resilience in this situation? How can we support each other?

 **Notes**

This session uses Lakshmi and Latha’s story for discussion. Only part of the story is revealed initially – how Laskhmi and Latha are doing currently. Participants are invited to reflect on why their behaviours are different.

As participants analyse how their behaviours are different, the facilitator reveals the back-story for Lakshmi and Latha, step-by-step. After each reveal, the facilitator asks more discussion questions.

The handouts section of this lesson plan contains the present-day story that is distributed to participants at the beginning of the session. It is structured in 4 paragraphs – we call them 4 segments.

The table below shows both the present-day story, as well as the back story of Lakshmi and Latha. Hence, the table contains the 4 segments of the present-day story interleaved with the segments of the back-story. The present day story are numbered 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a. The back story are numbered 1b, 2b, and 3b.

The table also includes the questions suggested for discussion, after each segment.

Segment	Story segment to read aloud	Discussion questions after reading each segment
1a	Latha and Lakshmi work at the front desk of a large hotel chain. During their performance reviews, Latha got high scores, everyone is happy with her work. Her manager highlighted how Latha negotiates with clients when they make extra demands, giving them different options. Lakshmi got medium scores, everyone agrees she works very hard. She always tries to please everyone; she never says “No” to clients. That often requires her to work longer and use more hotel resources to meet the demands of clients.	How is Latha performing better than Lakshmi? Why is Lakshmi unable to negotiate or say “No”?
1b	Latha’s mother is a school teacher, and her father is a lawyer. Growing up, she saw how her father negotiated with clients and others, giving them different options. Lakshmi’s mother is a domestic worker, and her father a driver. If they didn’t please their employers, their jobs were always at risk. They had to do whatever was demanded of them.	After hearing this backstory, what do you think? Why is Lakshmi unable to negotiate or say “No”? What are its consequences?

2a	<p>Their friends noticed there was a difference in how they took leaves. Latha planned her leaves in advance, and took permission from the manager early. She saw leaves as her right and used up all her leaves every year. Lakshmi rarely took leaves, she almost felt guilty asking for leaves. She seldom got to take a break from the stressful job at the hotel.</p>	<p>How is there a difference in the way Latha and Lakshmi take leaves?</p>
2b	<p>Latha's father worked to his own timings and didn't need anyone's permission to take leave. In the summer, her parents used to get holidays; as devote Hindus, they used to go on a pilgrimage for a few days every summer. That was a highlight of Latha's growing up. Lakshmi's parents never got a break, they struggled to get permission from the owners when they had emergencies. Many times they had to go to work even if they were severely sick - they could not afford to lose their job.</p>	<p>After hearing more of the story, how do you think their pasts have shaped them?</p> <p>What are the consequences of Lakshmi feeling guilty to take leaves?</p>
3a	<p>The manager nominated both their names for more trainings. Latha looked up the available training programs – she requested to be sent to a Billing Software training program. “I want to build my capacities to become a supervisor soon”, she told her manager. The manager advised Lakshmi to take the Communication and Negotiation Skills training program; they would help her become more assertive, he said. “The manager clearly thinks I am not good at my job. If I don't attend this training, I might lose my job”, Lakshmi thought to herself.</p>	<p>What is the difference we see in the way Latha and Lakshmi approach trainings?</p>
3b	<p>Latha's mother had attended many training programs to grow in her career. She saw her parents discuss which training program she should select and how that would benefit her. No adult that Lakshmi knew had attended training programs after they started working. Lakshmi saw college education itself as a luxury. To attend another course while she was working meant she was not working hard enough. She didn't see it as capacity building but as a warning from her manager.</p>	<p>Why is there a difference in their approach to trainings?</p> <p>What are the consequences for Latha and Lakshmi?</p>
4a	<p>A year later, Latha got a promotion and a salary hike. She wants to become a manager soon; her father was disappointed that she didn't become a lawyer like him. She wants to impress him and get his approval. Lakshmi also got a salary increase, though not a promotion. Her communications skills have improved and she is doing</p>	<p>Why is Lakshmi having sleepless nights?</p> <p>What are the pressures Latha faces?</p>

	<p>better. But she feels a lot of internal pressure. Her negative self-talk tells her that she doesn't belong here, that she is an impostor. Maybe she should look for another job in a smaller company, she tells herself. Lakshmi has sleepless nights worrying about her job.</p>	
--	--	--

Here are some likely answers from participants for the discussion questions. These are only sample answers, and not to be seen as the "correct" answers the facilitator should aim for from the participants. Let the conversation flow organically; build on the responses of the participants.

How is Latha performing better than Lakshmi?

- Latha is better at negotiating
- Latha says "No" better
- Latha sets boundaries
- Latha doesn't have to overwork herself

Why is Lakshmi unable to negotiate or say "No"?

- Lakshmi is afraid to say "No"
- Lakshmi is less confident
- She is a people pleaser
- She is less skilled than Latha
- Maybe she got less opportunities from childhood

After hearing this backstory, what do you think? Why is Lakshmi unable to negotiate or say "No"?

- Their backgrounds are very different
- Latha grew up with privilege, she got more opportunities
- Latha learnt to negotiate and say "No" from childhood
- Lakshmi didn't get the opportunities Latha got
- Lakshmi has never been exposed to negotiating

What are its consequences?

- Latha grew up confident, Lakshmi has less confidence
- Latha is able to say "No" and set boundaries more easily
- Latha is able to negotiate better
- Lakshmi comes across as less competent, less bold and timid
- Lakshmi is seen as a lower performer at work
- Even in personal life, there will be similar differences
- Even in their parenting approaches, there might be differences

How is there a difference in the way Latha and Lakshmi take leaves?

- Latha plans early and takes all her leaves every year; she does not feel guilty.
- Lakshmi feels guilty and hesitates to take leave.
- Maybe because their parents had different types of jobs, their approach varied

After hearing more of the story, how do you think their pasts have shaped them?

- Their different backgrounds have definitely shaped them.
- Latha's parents had jobs that allowed them to take leaves. She saw how they took those leaves and planned their holidays.
- Lakshmi's parents worked much harder, they were poorer, they were not allowed to take leaves
- That's what Lakshmi grew up seeing.

What are the consequences of Lakshmi feeling guilty to take leaves?

- Lakshmi works harder, but does not take rest
- She does not give herself time to rest or take breaks
- She puts more pressure on herself
- Her health is likely to suffer more

What is the difference we see in the way Latha and Lakshmi approach trainings?

- Latha sees trainings as capacity building; she sees it as an opportunity to grow
- Lakshmi feels insecure and afraid when she is sent for a training
- Latha chooses her training; Lakshmi goes for one her manager selects
- The manager doesn't seem to have given Lakshmi a choice; only Latha seems to have been given a choice
- Latha used her negotiation skills to ask for a training she wanted; Lakshmi chose what was given to her

Why is there a difference in their approach to trainings?

- Their exposure to workplace trainings was very different
- Latha had seen how her mother chose trainings to grow in her career
- Lakshmi did not have similar exposure
- Lakshmi felt insecure when she was sent for a training
- Lakshmi didn't feel she had a right to demand a training she wanted
- Latha felt confident to ask for a training that she chose

What are the consequences for Latha and Lakshmi?

- Latha is able to use the trainings to grow more
- Lakshmi feels stressed and insecure; she is able to grow less
- Their manager ends up thinking Latha is a better performer than Lakshmi
- Latha and Lakshmi themselves might think Latha is a better performer
- Latha gets more encouragement and becomes more ambitious. Lakshmi does not.

Why is Lakshmi having sleepless nights?

- Lakshmi feels she is not doing well.
- She feels insecure.
- She compares herself with Latha and thinks she is not good enough.
- She feels like a fake, an impostor.
- She doesn't feel she belongs here.

What are the pressures Latha faces?

- Latha also faces pressures, though less and different than Lakshmi's.
- Latha feels the pressure to get her father's approval
- She has to reach high levels to gain her father's acceptance/approval
- She has to work harder and feels more pressure to be successful

How have your disprivileges/privileges affected your life skills?

- I grew up shy and as an introvert
- I have less confidence
- I am not very assertive
- I am not able to set boundaries
- I blame myself for everything
- I have a lot of self-doubt
- I think I do not belong here
- I have low self-worth
- When people appreciate me, I don't believe them
- I question my abilities a lot
- I work harder
- I think I must reduce my ambitions
- I feel I have failed my parents and teachers

These next two questions are best discussed after completing all the sessions of this training program. However, if there is time only for this one session, then the facilitator can conclude this session with these two questions.

How has that affected your mental health?

- I feel very anxious
- I feel low
- I feel I do not belong
- I feel excluded from my friends
- I feel very stressed
- I feel I am a loser and a disappointment to others

What can we all do to build our resilience in this situation? How can we support each other?

- We can recognize the role of caste, class, gender in shaping these feelings
- We can help each other recognize the roots of our lack of confidence
- We can affirm each other
- We can listen to each other
- We can encourage and appreciate each other
- We can share useful experiences with each other
- We can show each other that we are not alone; we are there for each other
- We can observe and build our skills, share with each other
- We can stop blaming ourselves

 Handouts

Lakshmi and Latha's Story

Latha and Lakshmi work at the front desk of a large hotel chain. During their performance reviews, Latha got high scores, everyone is happy with her work. Her manager highlighted how Latha negotiates with clients when they make extra demands, giving them different options. Lakshmi got medium scores, everyone agrees she works very hard. She always tries to please everyone; she never says “No” to clients. That often requires her to work longer and use more hotel resources to meet the demands of clients.

Their friends noticed there was a difference in how they took leaves. Latha planned her leaves in advance, and took permission from the manager early. She saw leaves as her right and used up all her leaves every year. Lakshmi rarely took leaves, she almost felt guilty asking for leaves. She seldom got to take a break from the stressful job at the hotel.

The manager nominated both their names for more trainings. Latha looked up the available training programs – she requested to be sent to a Billing Software training program. “I want to build my capacities to become a supervisor soon”, she told her manager. The manager advised Lakshmi to take the Communication and Negotiation Skills training program; they would help her become more assertive, he said. “The manager clearly thinks I am not good at my job. If I don’t attend this training, I might lose my job”, Lakshmi thought to herself.

A year later, Latha got a promotion and a salary hike. She wants to become a manager soon; her father was disappointed that she didn’t become a lawyer like him. She wants to impress him and get his approval. Lakshmi also got a salary increase, though not a promotion. Her communications skills have improved and she is doing better. But she feels a lot of internal pressure. Her negative self-talk tells her that she doesn’t belong here, that she is an impostor. Maybe she should look for another job in a smaller company, she tells herself. Lakshmi has sleepless nights worrying about her job.

2. Understanding Gender

Overview

Gender is the socially constructed and constituted difference between women and men that leads to power inequalities. Gender specifies what roles women may play, what roles men may play; it attributes different qualities to women and men; and it creates a power hierarchy between women and men. The terms women and men are themselves broad, overlapping categories; they include people of diverse identities: effeminate men, trans women, trans men, gender fluid persons, to name a few.

In this session participants learn to unpack how gender is socially constructed and constituted and why it is unjust. They also learn that women and men are not rigid categories or boxes, and that there is fair diversity within and among these categories. To do that, the session first invites participants to share their perceptions about women and men; the facilitator then probes participants on these claims. The participants recognize the attributes they assigned to women and men are stereotypes and that these stereotypes lead to inequality. They reflect on the consequences of gender differences on women and men, including on their self-image and mental health.

Objectives

- To understand that gender is a socially constituted difference
- To see that gender inequalities lead to unequal power relations
- To recognise the consequences of gender, including on the self-image of women and men

Suggested Time

60 minutes

Preparation

Keep copies of the handout for this session's second group activity ready.

Materials

- 4 chart papers and sketch pens to write
- Adequate copies of the handout for the second group activity
- Whiteboard, marker pens

Steps

1. Divide the participants into 4 groups, and give them chart papers and sketch pens
 - a. Ask two groups to write: What all comes to your mind when you think of women?
 - b. Ask two groups to write: What all comes to your mind when you think of men?
2. Display the charts, the two charts on women on the left, the two for men on the right
3. Ask participants if they agree with the terms, and to identify terms common to both sides
4. Next, move on to the other terms. Gently challenge the stereotypes on the charts.
 - a. Examples of such questions for stereotypes about women:
 - i. Are all women "gentle"? Are no men ever "gentle"?

- ii. Are all women “kind”? Are no men ever “kind”?
 - b. Examples of such questions for stereotypes about men:
 - i. Are all men “aggressive”? Are no women “aggressive”?
 - ii. Are all men “leaders”? Are no women “leaders”?
 5. Ask participants where we learnt these ideas about women and men
 6. When participants say we learnt it from society, use that to introduce the concept of gender
 - a. Define gender as “the socially constituted difference between women and men”. This is an initial working definition; we shall refine it a little later.
 - b. Explain that the socially constituted differences cover roles, qualities, behaviours, norms, etc.
 - c. Point out that gender varies from culture to culture, and time to time
 7. Divide the participants into 4 groups; assign each group a set of stereotypes about women and men.
 8. Ask the groups to determine the consequences of those gender stereotypes, including on the self-image of women and men. Give the groups 10 mins to prepare their answers.
 9. Invite the groups to present their answers.
 10. Point out that the consequences they have spelled out leads to unequal power relations between women and men.
 11. Revise the working definition to now read “gender is the socially constituted difference between women and men, that leads to inequalities in power”
 12. Invite participants to reflect on how the socially constituted difference of gender might affect the mental health of women and men.
 - a. Collate the answers on the whiteboard.
 13. Ask participants if gender is fair.
 14. Introduce the terms Gender Identity, Transgender and Cisgender
 15. Explain that “women” and “men” are not rigid boxes, that many people do not feel they belong to either one fully.
 16. Invite participants to share examples of people they know who shake the rigid boxing of “women” and “men”
 17. Ask participants whether people who don’t conform to the traditional gender boxes experience more or less power?
 18. Point participants to more [readings](#) on gender identity.
-



Discussion Questions

- A. What all come to your mind when you think of women/men?
- B. Do we all agree with the terms on these charts?
- C. What all terms have come common for both women and men in these charts?
- D. Gently challenge the stereotypes on the charts.
 - a. Are all women X? Are no men X? (X could be stereotypes on women)
 - b. Are all men Y? Are no women Y? (Y could be stereotypes on men)
- E. Where did we learn these ideas about women and men?
- F. Define Gender

- G. What are the consequences of these socially constituted differences? How does it affect the self-image of women and men?
- H. Revise definition of Gender
- I. How might Gender affect the mental health of women and men, girls and boys?
- J. Is this fair?
- K. Introduce the terms Gender Identity, Transgender and Cisgender
- L. Who are some people you know who shake the rigid boxing of “women” and “men”?
- M. Do people who don’t conform to the traditional gender boxes experience more or less power?

Notes

Gender refers to the socially constituted difference between women and men; these lead to unequal power relations between women and men. Examples of these socially constituted differences include: “Women are expected to be submissive, men are expected to be aggressive”, and “Women are considered good followers, men are considered good leaders.” These socially constituted differences vary across time and culture.

Here are some answers that might come from participants for the discussion questions above. These are given only for our reference. Let us not “expect” these answers. Instead, let us always listen to what participants are saying and build on that.

What all come to your mind when you think of women/men?

Here is an example of how the board might look, at this point.

Women		Men	
Gentle	Kind	Strong	Leader
Mother	Hard-working	Hard-working	Spends money
Jealous	Cooking	Earns money	Trustworthy
Gossip	Beautiful	Alcohol	Angry
Long hair	Breast-feeding	Intelligent	Aggressive
Wears bindi	Gives birth	Travels	Irresponsible
Sacrifice	Spiritual	Aggressive	Violent
Loving	Caring	Moustache	Short hair
Peaceful	Uses make-up	Wears shirts	Uses perfume
		Courage	

Do we all agree with the terms on these charts?

Most might agree to most terms. Some might disagree with some terms. Share that we shall go deeper into these terms soon.

What all terms have come common for both women and men in these charts?

Point out that a few terms have come in common. Observe that most qualities are distinct for women and men, based on the charts.

Gently challenge the stereotypes on the charts.

Select a few stereotypes to probe deeper. Invite participants to think more deeply about them. The purpose of this probing is to make participants reflect on their own assumptions and biases.

Where did we learn these ideas about women and men?

Participants are likely to say “society” initially. Ask them where in society we learnt this from. Their answers might include:

- Family
- School, college
- Movies, TV serials
- Religion
- Culture
- Stories, mythologies

What are the consequences of these socially constituted differences? How does it affect their self-image?

- Women are denied freedom
- There are more restrictions on women
- Women are considered “weak”, men are considered “strong”
- Women are discouraged, de-motivated
- Women feel disillusioned
- Women are over-worked, paid less, devalued
- Women have to do all the work at home; it is seen as women’s “duty”
- Women are disrespected, denied equal rights
- Women face violence against them; they accept the violence.
- Women experience humiliation, insult, injury
- Women might see themselves as weak, helpless, of lesser value
- Men see themselves as responsible, intelligent, the leaders
- Men are not allowed to express the full range of emotions
- Men are considered weak if they express their human vulnerabilities
- Men take on more responsibilities, more stress – especially at work
- Men feel they have to earn a high income, and definitely higher than women in the house

How might Gender affect the mental health of women and men, girls and boys?

- Women are at higher risk of depression, anxiety and other mental illnesses
- Women blame themselves, feel low self-worth, doubt themselves
- Men are at higher risk of taking their own lives
- Both women and men suffer, blaming themselves

Is this fair?

- No, it’s not fair at all.

Introduce the terms Gender Identity, Transgender and Cisgender

Gender Identity refers to a person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender. That may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth. When a person's gender identity matches what society considers as "normal" for the sex assigned to them at birth, they are called cisgender. When it does not match society's norm, the person is called transgender.

Transgender is an umbrella term referring to an individual whose gender identity is different from their sex assigned at birth. For example, a person might have been assigned "male" at birth, but they might identify themselves as a woman.

Cisgender is a gender identity that society deems to match the person's assigned sex at birth. The prefix cis- means "on this side of" or "not across." A term used to highlight the privilege of people who are not transgender.

Who are some people you know who shake the rigid boxing of "women" and "men"?

- One of my friends is a trans man
- The film star Anjali Ameer is a trans woman
- My neighbour identifies as gender fluid
- etc

Do people who don't conform to the traditional gender boxes experience more or less power?

- They are discriminated against, they have less power
- Many of them face violence from childhood
- They are insulted and humiliated a lot
- They are denied jobs, etc.



Handouts

What are the consequences of these gender differences?

Group 1

- Cricket and football are considered boys' games
- Women are paid less than men for the same work
- Men are expected to be aggressive
- Women may not laugh loudly

What are the consequences of these gender differences?

Group 2

- Most land is owned by men, not women

- Women need more protection and restrictions than men
- Boys are taught to swim; girls are not usually taught to swim
- Women are considered good cooks

What are the consequences of these gender differences?

Group 3

- Girls are considered impure when they menstruate
- Women are expected to be submissive
- Girls must get married at a very young age
- Men are expected to be the breadwinners of their families

What are the consequences of these gender differences?

Group 4

- When there is less food in the home, women must sacrifice
- Brothers are expected to protect their sisters
- Women are not supposed to speak loudly
- Women may not go out after sunset

3. Understanding Caste Today

Overview

Caste in India is spoken about (or not spoken about) in very different ways, across contexts. While some might claim caste no longer matters, a keener look around- at where we live, study and work, whom we marry, what we eat and with whom - reveals caste pervades our social lives. Often, caste is spoken about in education contexts only in relation to 'reservations' for the socially disadvantaged, or in relation to the demands for higher reservation quotas taken up by different caste groups across the country. Caste in the everyday and how it impacts us is rarely acknowledged. This session is geared towards helping learners understand caste as graded hierarchy that impacts our everyday lives, and question caste-practices to the extent possible.

Objectives

- To enable learners to question the notion that caste is a thing of the past or immaterial in the contemporary
- To enable learners to question the notion of merit- and understand how it is shaped by socio-cultural capital, and thus revisit attitudes towards reservations
- To facilitate further engagement with the question of caste and caste-based inequalities

Suggested Time

60 minutes

Preparation

The facilitator needs to understand how the silences around caste can perpetuate inequalities.

The facilitator also needs to be grounded emotionally, as conversations around caste, can become highly charged

Materials

- Whiteboard, marker pens
- Papers and sketch pens
- Quiz as a hand-out
- Reading of Annihilation of Caste as a hand-out

Steps

1. In the first activity, divide the learners into small groups of 5-7 persons.
2. Ask them to list all the restaurants/food items they know that bear the name of a caste
3. Ask them to list all the caste-names they know (*jatis*)
4. Ask participants to reflect on which caste names are used with names of restaurants/food items and which caste names are not.
5. Ask why this division exists
6. Ask what are the consequences of this division

7. The second activity will revolve around 'me and my caste' (a short quiz will be handed out to participants to check their own caste privilege)
 8. The quiz will be taken individually by learners, after which they will be encouraged to share what the questions made them reflect upon
 9. (Optional) Divide learners into small reading groups to read the excerpts given in the handout. They are asked to think about caste as a division of labourers, rather than division of labour- what do they feel about it? Why does Ambedkar argue that it is hard to create a common front against caste? How does the group think the graded hierarchy can be challenged?
-

Discussion Questions/Pointers

- A. List all the restaurants/food items you know that bear the name of a caste
 - B. What are the various caste names you know?
 - C. Which caste names are used with names of restaurants/food items and which caste names are not?
 - D. Why does this division exist?
 - E. What are the consequences of this division?
 - F. When does caste appear visibly in our society? When does it seem invisible?
 - G. Quiz: Me and My Caste <https://forms.gle/add6Cu5JBvQcXYJE7>
 - H. What privileges or dis-privileges do I experience from caste?
 - I. How does that affect my confidence, assertiveness and other life-skills?
-

Notes

Here are some of the likely answers for the discussion questions. Let participants take their time to reflect and give the answers.

List all the restaurants/food items you know that bear the name of a caste

- Iyer Mess
- Brahmins Coffee Bar
- Iyengar Bakery
- Gowdara Mudde Mane
- Reddy mess

Which caste names are used with names of restaurants/food items and which caste names are not?

- Dominant caste names are used for restaurants
- What caste or religion names are used with vegetarian and non vegetarian restaurants?
- Dominant caste names are used for restaurants that are considered "superior"

Why does this division exist?

- It is to signal that a restaurant is run by people of a particular caste
- Dominant caste people only eat from their hotels
- There is a belief that vegetarian food is purer

What are the consequences of this division?

- Dominant caste people look down on others
- Vegetarians look down on meat eaters
- Some people feel they are superior, and that others are inferior
- An “us” vs “them” mindset appears
- Marriages across castes is discouraged claiming that “others” are different and inferior

When does caste appear visibly in our society? When does it seem invisible?

- Very visible in marriage, food, rituals, names, renting houses, etc.
- Very visible in caste-based violence and the way people are treated/mock
- Less visible (but very prevalent) in jobs, interviews, promotions, business transactions

What privileges or disprivileges do I experience from caste?

Participants experience will vary. Here are some examples that might emerge:

- My parents were denied education, dignified jobs, decent income
- I experienced untouchability and humiliation from friends
- I was called names and bullied by dominant caste class mates
- I was mocked for riding a bike
- My family was treated with dignity by my teachers
- My parents went to college and had a Master’s degree

How does that affect my confidence, assertiveness and other life-skills?

- I was always afraid of being treated badly
- I doubted myself a lot
- I am not assertive enough
- I don’t feel I deserve good things in life
- I blame myself a lot
- I feel I have been lucky and don’t deserve it
- I feel guilty and bad for being a dominant caste person

Ideally, the facilitator must be familiar with some basic readings around caste. It is important that the facilitator understands the linkages between caste and the modern economy, everyday violence of caste, and how atrocities in the name of caste persist. The facilitator must be able to draw attention to how caste-based inequalities remain in the contemporary, both as horrific atrocities but also as everyday violence. Recent incidents such as a Dalit boy mocked for riding a bike, or a Dalit woman attacked for touching a well should be talked about.

Suggested readings for the facilitator (could be shared with participants also)

[In the Name of Globalisation: Meritocracy, Productivity and the Hidden Language of Caste](#)

[The Annihilation of Caste](#)

[Caste and food](#)

 Handouts

Excerpt from Annihilation of Caste- B. R. Ambedkar

Caste is not just a division of labour, it is a division of labourers

[1:] It is a pity that Caste even today has its defenders. The defences are many. It is defended on the ground that the Caste System is but another name for division of labour; and if division of labour is a necessary feature of every civilized society, then it is argued that there is nothing wrong in the Caste System. Now the first thing that is to be urged against this view is that the Caste System is not merely a division of labour. It is also a division of labourers. Civilized society undoubtedly needs division of labour. But in no civilized society is division of labour accompanied by this unnatural division of labourers into watertight compartments. The Caste System is not merely a division of labourers which is quite different from division of labour—it is a hierarchy in which the divisions of labourers are graded one above the other. In no other country is the division of labour accompanied by this gradation of labourers.

[2:] There is also a third point of criticism against this view of the Caste System. This division of labour is not spontaneous, it is not based on natural aptitudes. Social and individual efficiency requires us to develop the capacity of an individual to the point of competency to choose and to make his own career. This principle is violated in the Caste System, in so far as it involves an attempt to appoint tasks to individuals in advance—selected not on the basis of trained original capacities, but on that of the social status of the parents.

[3:] Looked at from another point of view, this stratification of occupations which is the result of the Caste System is positively pernicious. Industry is never static. It undergoes rapid and abrupt changes. With such changes, an individual must be free to change his occupation. Without such freedom to adjust himself to changing circumstances, it would be impossible for him to gain his livelihood. Now the Caste System will not allow Hindus to take to occupations where they are wanted, if they do not belong to them by heredity. If a Hindu is seen to starve rather than take to new occupations not assigned to his Caste, the reason is to be found in the Caste System. By not permitting readjustment of occupations, Caste becomes a direct cause of much of the unemployment we see in the country.

[4:] As a form of division of labour, the Caste system suffers from another serious defect. The division of labour brought about by the Caste System is not a division based on choice. Individual sentiment, individual preference, has no place in it. It is based on the dogma of predestination. Considerations of social efficiency would compel us to recognize that the greatest evil in the industrial system is not so much poverty and the suffering that it involves, as the fact that so many persons have callings [=occupations] which make no appeal to those who are engaged in them. Such callings constantly provoke one to aversion, ill will, and the desire to evade.

[5:] There are many occupations in India which, on account of the fact that they are regarded as degraded by the Hindus, provoke those who are engaged in them to aversion. There is a constant desire to evade and escape from such occupations, which arises solely because of the blighting effect which they produce upon those who follow them, owing to the slight and stigma cast upon them by the Hindu religion. What efficiency can there be in a system under which neither men's hearts nor their minds are in their work? As an economic organization Caste is therefore a harmful

institution, inasmuch as it involves the subordination of man's natural powers and inclinations to the exigencies of social rules

[16:] ..Caste system has two aspects. In one of its aspects, it divides men into separate communities. In its second aspect, it places these communities in a graded order one above the other in social status. Each caste takes its pride and its consolation in the fact that in the scale of castes it is above some other caste. As an outward mark of this gradation, there is also a gradation of social and religious rights, technically spoken of as Ashtadhikaras and Sanskaras. The higher the grade of a caste, the greater the number of these rights; and the lower the grade, the lesser their number. [17:] Now this gradation, this scaling of castes, makes it impossible to organise a common front against the Caste System. If a caste claims the right to inter-dine and inter-marry with another caste placed above it, it is frozen the instant it is told by mischief-mongers—and there are many Brahmins amongst such mischief-mongers—that it will have to concede inter-dining and inter-marriage with castes below it! All are slaves of the Caste System. But all the slaves are not equal in status. [18:] To excite the proletariat to bring about an economic revolution, Karl Marx told them: "You have nothing to lose except your chains." But the artful way in which the social and religious rights are distributed among the different castes, whereby some have more and some have less, makes the slogan of Karl Marx quite useless to excite the Hindus against the Caste System. Castes form a graded system of sovereignties, high and low, which are jealous of their status and which know that if a general dissolution came, some of them stand to lose more of their prestige and power than others do. You cannot, therefore, have a general mobilization of the Hindus (to use a military expression) for an attack on the Caste System.

4. Disability Justice – An Introduction



Overview

This session goes deeper into a particular axis of power that many participants might be less familiar with. The objective of this session is to raise the consciousness of participants that disability is a social injustice, that it is socially constructed barriers that deny persons with disabilities equal outcomes. The session challenges participants' perspectives on disability, especially "disability as a defect" perspective and "disability as an inadequacy" perspective. After learning the justice perspective and the distinction between impairment and disability, participants work in small groups to identify the barriers persons with disability experience in education.



Objectives

- To recognize different perspectives on disability and the difference between impairment and disability
- To see how socially constructed barriers discriminate against women and men with disability.
- To feel disability is an injustice that needs to be addressed in all walks of life.



Suggested Time

60 minutes



Preparation

Keep a copy of the statements for the Impairment vs Disability quiz ready.



Materials

- Whiteboard, marker pens
 - Chart paper for group work



Steps

1. invite participants to share the various ideas we all have about "disability". What is disability? What does it mean?
 - a. Point out you are not asking for the various types of disability, but rather what disability means.
2. Write the responses on the whiteboard, subtly categorizing them into three layers.
 - a. Let words related to the defect perspective be written towards the top
 - b. Let words related to the inadequacy perspective come in the middle
 - c. Let words related to the justice perspective come at the bottom
3. After receiving all responses, point out that these responses correspond to three different perspectives on disability. Draw the dividing lines between the perspectives.
4. Introduce the three perspectives
5. Use a quick quiz to ensure participants have understood the difference between impairment and disability

6. Divide participants into groups and invite them to identify 5 barriers children with disabilities experience in education
 7. Let the groups present their answers to the larger group.
 8. Narrate the story the country of the blind and invite reactions from the participants
-



Discussion Questions

- A. What are the various ideas we have about disability? What is disability? What does it mean?
 - B. Are these statements about impairment or disability?
 - a. Some people cannot hear sounds. (Impairment)
 - b. People who cannot hear are considered abnormal. (Disability)
 - c. Very few schools teach sign language to communicate with hearing impaired. (Disability)
 - d. People with auditory (hearing) impairment do not get jobs easily. (Disability)
 - e. Some children are born with autism. (Impairment)
 - f. Children with autism are seen as a burden on society. (Disability)
 - g. Very few teachers are trained to educate children with autism. (Disability)
 - h. People with low vision cannot see clearly.
 - i. People who cannot see are not consulted while planning government programs (Disability)
 - C. In your groups, identify 5 barriers children with education experience in education
 - D. What do you feel after hearing the story “The Country of the Blind”?
-



Notes

Here are some of the answers that might come from participants. Do not “force” any of these answers from participants – these are not “the” correct answers. Let us listen to the responses of participants and build on that. You can add your understanding too during the discussions.

What are the various ideas we have about disability? What is disability? What does it mean?

Point out you are not asking for the various types of disability, but rather what disability means.

The responses are likely to include a variety of words and phrases: disability means defect, abnormal, less capable, needs help, dependent, excluded, does not have friends, asexual, due to bad Karma of past lives, past sin, etc. As participants call out these phrases, write them on the whiteboard, organizing/clustering them quietly into three categories. Don’t label the categories yet, nor make it obvious that you are categorizing them. A simple approach is to divide the white board in your mind into 3 sections and to fill those 3 sections with the phrases being called out.

The 3 categories we want to organize the words into reflect three different perspectives on Disability:

1. Defect Perspective

2. Inadequacy Perspective
3. Diversity Perspective (Justice Perspective)

defect, abnormal, can be fixed, requires surgery, result of past sin, bad Karma, ugly	Defect perspective
inadequate, needs help, burden, dependent, supported with assistive devices, unskilled, less productive, needs support, needs assistance, incomplete	Inadequacy perspective
excluded, discriminated, does not have friends, denied education, denied equality, faces many barriers, denied choice, denied freedom, bullied, insulted, humiliated, forcefully sterilised	Diversity/Justice perspective

Ideas like *defect, abnormal, can be fixed, bad Karma*, etc reflect the defect perspective. The defect perspective sees Disability as a defect in the person, an abnormality that needs to be corrected, possibly medically. The defect perspective tends to look down on the person with disability, seeing them as a bad person, an abnormal person or a lesser person.

Ideas like *inadequate, needs help, burden, dependent* etc. reflect the Inadequacy perspective. The inadequacy perspective sees the person with disability as being inadequate – not have enough strength, capability, skills, etc. that can be overcome by providing them aids and equipment. The inadequacy perspective also tends to look down on persons with disability, seeing them as inferior persons or a lesser person.

Ideas like *excluded, discriminated, does not have friends, denied education*, etc. reflect a diversity or justice perspective on Disability. The diversity/justice perspective sees that human beings are very diverse with different skills, capabilities, etc. They see disability as arising from dominant society catering to the needs of the dominant class and excluding people who are different. Thus, in this perspective, the absence of legs do not cause a disability – that is part of human diversity. But when steps to a building prevent a person in a wheelchair from entering a building, society *disables* that person. The designers of the building could have chosen ramps over steps. By choosing steps in their design, they excluded people in wheelchairs from easily accessing the building. Thus, the disability is socially constructed, it is not inherent in the person who is being disabled.

The Disability justice movement uses two words to clarify these ideas: impairment and disability.

Impairment refers to the biological diversity inherent in human beings. For instance, some people have two legs, some have one and some have none. There is nothing right or wrong about being one way. This is natural biological diversity. People should not be discriminated or excluded because they are different.

Disability refers to the socially constructed barriers that lead to people with impairment enjoying lesser outcomes in life. These barriers could be physical, attitudinal or institutional. Physical barriers

include steps to buildings, or the non-availability of books for visually impaired readers. Attitudinal barriers include attitudes like “people with impairment cannot do any jobs”, or “people with impairment may only marry other people with impairment”. Institutional barriers are rules and laws that discriminate directly or indirectly against persons with impairment. The minimum wage law excluding persons with impairment is an example of a direct law that discriminates. Building codes not requiring accessible buildings is an example of indirectly discriminating against persons with disability. Disability is thus a social injustice that needs to be addressed structurally. We need to change society to ensure justice for people with impairments.

Are these statements about impairment or disability?

- Some people cannot hear sounds.

Impairment. The inability to hear sounds is a biological difference.

- People who cannot hear are considered abnormal.

Disability. This attitude towards people who cannot hear is a socially constructed barrier that denies them their rights.

- Very few schools teach sign language to communicate with hearing impaired.

Disability. Children with hearing impaired are denied the right to equal education as most schools consider only a narrow range of learners in their teaching methods. That becomes a barrier for children with hearing impairments.

- People with auditory impairment do not get jobs easily.

Disability. This attitude towards people who cannot hear is a socially constructed barrier that denies them their right to livelihood.

- Some children are born autistic.

Impairment. Being born autistic is part of nature’s diversity.

- Autistic children are seen as a burden on society.

Disability. This attitude towards people with autism and other neurodiversities is a socially constructed barrier that denies them their rights.

- Very few teachers are trained to educate autistic children.

Disability. The non-availability of teachers trained to educate autistic children is the result of society’s attitudes towards children with autism.

- People who cannot see are not consulted while planning government programs.

Disability. When people with visual impairment are not consulted, it is because they are not considered worthy, important or knowledgeable. That is a socially constructed attitude that denies their voices and views being heard and factored into the planning.

In your groups, identify 5 barriers children with education experience in education

- Negative attitude towards children with disabilities
- Non-availability of teachers skilled in teaching children with special needs
- The schools are inaccessible for children with disabilities (eg steps, steep slopes, etc.)

- Text books are not available in formats friendly for children with visual impairment
- Children with disabilities are not included in sports and games
- Children with disabilities are mocked and bullied by other students

What do you feel after hearing the story “The Country of the Blind”?

- “Normal” is a concept defined by the dominant group
- What is normal to us is socially conditioned
- If we were born in a different kind of society, we would be seen as disabled
- So many concepts in our culture – “beauty”, “productivity”, etc. – are socially mediated.



Handouts

The Country of the Blind (Adapted and Abridged)

Originally written by: HG Wells

There was a village surrounded by water on three sides. A huge mountain covered the fourth side. So the village was quite cut off from the rest of the world.

A long time ago, a sudden disease affected all the people of that village. Everyone lost their eyesight. Not only them, but also their children, their grandchildren. Generation after generation have been born, no one can see.

Over time, the villagers developed their own lifestyle and culture. They worked during the night because it was cooler to work in the night. They slept during the day, because people couldn't go out in the heat. They developed their own stories, music and sculptures and other art forms. They had their own government.

Last week, a man who was trekking in the nearby mountains lost his way and ended up in this village. The villagers welcomed him warmly. No one had come from outside for centuries.

The man looked around the village and was amused. Everybody was blind! “Maybe I should just settle here and become their King”, he thought. He asked if he could live in the village. The villagers felt there was no problem.

That was a week ago.

This morning the villagers have called an internal meeting to discuss this outsider. They are not happy with him. There are some complaints.

“This man is not capable”, one villager says. “He cannot work in the night like us. All of us know it's better to work in the night. But he is making special requests to work in the day.”

“Yeah, it's not only that. His sense of beauty is very underdeveloped. He is unable to appreciate the beauty in the art we create. Instead, he finds many ugly things beautiful!”

As the villagers continued to complain about the man, one older woman said in a calm voice: “Don't worry. I have investigated this man. I have studied his body scientifically. He has a slight defect in his body. He has an abnormal growth called eyes; they are causing these problems. We can fix him by doing a surgery and removing that defect.”

5. Intersectionality: an overview

Overview

This session is intended to develop an intersectional perspective. Participants see how different social inequalities affect peoples' experiences throughout their life. This session is structured as a Power Walk, with the "walkers" knowing only their own gender/caste/class identity. As statements are read aloud, the participants move forward or backward depending on whether it applies to them. The movement of the walkers vary depending on the intersection of gender, class, caste, disability, etc. Participants reflect on the consequences of these intersecting inequalities in their own lives, including on their self-image and mental well-being. This session comes full circle from where this training program began; participants now have a deeper understanding of the various inequalities that shape their lives and affect their mental well-being. This helps them to think through more deeply and clearly how they can build their own resilience and support others.

Objectives

- To understand how gender, class, caste, disability lead to unequal outcomes for girls and boys
- To develop the skill to articulate how the different inequalities intersect
- To feel a sense of injustice at the way the world is unequally structured

Suggested Time

60 minutes

Preparation

Prepare strips of paper with the roles to be assigned to each person. Select a space that is large enough for everyone to move forward and back

Materials

- Whiteboard, marker pens
 - Chart paper for group work

Steps

10. Invite everyone to stand in a line for the Power Walk
11. Share you are going to assign each person a role for the next 15 minutes
12. Give each person a slip of paper with their role
13. Give a few practice instructions for moving forward and back
14. Read aloud each instruction from the Power walk list; if it applies to them, let them move a step forward; otherwise, let them move a step back.
15. Invite participants also to create/add their own statements for the activity
16. Process the Power Walk with the first four discussion questions below.
17. Give participants time to reflect individually on the questions:
 - a. What are the intersecting set of privileges/disprivileges each one of us have?
 - b. How has that affected my self-image and my mental well-being?
18. Divide participants into small groups to work in groups and respond to the question:

- a. What can we all do to build our resilience in this situation? How can we support each other?
-

Discussion Questions

- A. As you look at where you are in this hall, what do you feel? How does this make you feel?
 - B. What do you see here in front of us?
 - C. Why are some people in front, and some behind?
 - D. Is this fair or unfair? Why?
 - E. What are the intersecting set of privileges/disprivileges each one of us have?
 - F. How has that affected your self-image and mental well-being?
 - G. What can we all do to build our resilience in this situation? How can we support each other?
-

Notes

For the “Power Walk”, request everyone to stand in a line, facing the front. Leave 3-4 feet space between each person. Let the line be towards the middle of the hall/open space.

In the Power walk, everyone will assume one of many roles. Give each person in the line a slip of paper with their role. The table below lists some of the roles. You can adapt the roles as required.

#	The roles to be assigned to participants of the Power Walk
1	You are a young dalit boy; your parents are manual labourers.
2	You are a young boy from a dominant caste, land-owning family living in a large house.
3	You are a young dalit girl; your parents are manual labourers.
4	You are a young girl from a dominant caste, land-owning family living in a large house.
5	You are a young dalit boy; you are visually impaired and cannot see.
6	You are a young dalit girl; you are visually impaired and cannot see.
7	You are a young boy from a dominant caste; you are visually impaired and cannot see.
8	You are a young girl from a dominant caste; you are visually impaired and cannot see.

Prepare enough copies of the above roles so that you can give one slip to each person in the line.

Tell the group that for the next 10 – 15 minutes they need to imagine themselves in the role you have assigned them. Let them take a minute to think about who they are.

Share that you will be giving a series of instructions. If the statement applies to them, they should take a step forward. If the statement does not apply to them, they should take a step back.

Read the statements from the handout aloud. After reading each statement, give enough time for everyone to think and move forward or backward.

After the 12th statement, invite the participants to think of 2-3 similar statements themselves. Share that aloud and let each person move forward or backward.

After you have finished saying aloud all the statements, invite everyone to look around and see where they are.

Starting from the front of the room, ask each person to read aloud who their character was.

For example, the person in the front of the room might read aloud her slip “You are a young boy from a dominant caste, land-owning family living in a large house”.

Like that, ask each person to read aloud the role they were playing. Most likely, the dominant caste men without disability will be towards the front of the hall; the dalit girl with disability and other girls are likely to be towards the back of the hall.

As you look at where you are in this hall, what do you feel? How does this make you feel?

Emphasize the word “**feel**”. This first question is about our feelings and emotions when we see the inequality in front of us. Our later questions will be about thinking, but right now give a few minutes for people to express how they feel. They might share:

- I feel angry
- I feel sad
- I am frustrated seeing how we are all separated
- I am shocked how far behind the “girls” are

What do you see here in front of us?

- There are a lot of barriers in the lives of women and dalits
- Men, especially dominant caste men, can move forward easily
- Child marriage is a huge barrier for women
- Not only gender, but class, caste and disability also affects how much we can go forward
- A dalit boy can sometimes go forward more easily than a girl; but he can’t go as much as a dominant caste boy
- Women with disability are behind men with disability

Why are some people in front, and some behind?

- The barriers a person faces determine how far they can go
- A person with multiple barriers/disprivileges is likely to be further behind
- A person with multiple advantages/privileges is likely to be ahead
- The inequalities intersect –the experience of boys vary depending on their caste also
- All girls are not the same; caste, class and disability affect their life experience

Is this fair or unfair? Why?

The group will almost certainly say “No, this is not fair”. Encourage them to express why they feel this is unfair. They might share:

- These discriminations are unfair as a person is treated differently, just because of the gender (or caste) they are born into
- Gender is unfair because it denies freedom to girls and women
- The gender, caste, class, ability we are born into is just chance
- Everybody should be treated equally – that is fairness. Any discrimination is unfairness.
- It is unfair because society has already created these rules, even before we are born. We did not “choose” to be born into a particular gender, caste, class, or ability. .

What are the intersecting set of privileges/disprivileges each one of us have?

Participants will have different combinations of privileges/disprivileges. Some responses could be:

- I am privileged in terms of caste; I am disprivileged in terms of gender and ability.
- I am privileged in terms of gender; I am disprivileged in terms of caste and class.
- I am privileged in terms of caste and ability; I am disprivileged in terms of gender.
- I am privileged in terms of gender and religion; I am disprivileged in terms of caste and class.
- I am disprivileged in terms of gender, caste, class and religion.

How has that affected your self-image and mental well-being?

- I have low self-worth
- I have less confidence
- I am not very assertive
- I am not able to set boundaries
- I blame myself for everything
- I have a lot of self-doubt
- I think I do not belong here
- When people appreciate me, I don't believe them
- I question my abilities a lot
- I work harder
- I think I must reduce my ambitions
- I feel I have failed my parents and teachers
- I feel very anxious
- I feel low
- I feel I do not belong
- I feel excluded from my friends
- I feel very stressed
- I feel I am a loser and a disappointment to others

What can we all do to build our resilience in this situation? How can we support each other?

- We can recognize the role of caste, class, gender in shaping these feelings
- We can help each other recognize the roots of our lack of confidence
- We can affirm each other
- We can listen to each other
- We can encourage and appreciate each other

- We can share useful experiences with each other
- We can show each other that we are not alone; we are there for each other
- We can observe and build our skills, share with each other
- We can stop blaming ourselves

Handouts

Statements for the Power Walk

1. Society encourages you to study well and get a good job.
2. You have free time and do not have to spend a lot of time doing household chores
3. The village treats you with dignity and respect
4. Your parents studied in college
5. You will be given higher wages because of your gender
6. You are not at risk of becoming a child labourer
7. You regularly play with your friends in the big playground
8. Society does not expect you to always sacrifice due to your gender
9. You can walk around the village freely after sunset
10. Your parents did not lose their daily wages due to COVID lockdown
11. People from your caste are in positions of authority
12. You may drive bikes in your village
13. Your entire community has never been blamed for spreading COVID or terrorism?
14. You are not worried of being told to leave the country for saying something is out of place.
15. Your traditional dresses are not seen as threatening by others
16. [the facilitator can modify or add statements to this list]