



Language  
Gender  
& Leadership Network

## Empowering Women & Girls Through Drama



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## ACTIVITY 1: Discussion and ice-breaker: Thinking about gender and empowerment

### SET UP

Educator introduces her/himself to the group, asks participants to introduce themselves and begins a group discussion. There should be space for participants to move around and congregate as a group.

- 1. Whole group discussion:** (15 minutes). Educator facilitates discussion about: What do we mean by 'gender' and 'empowerment'?  
**Aims:** Educator to encourage understanding that gender is socially constructed, and invite discussion of the role of stereotypes (femininity, masculinity) and expectations of how men and women/boys and girls should behave. Ask participants to consider what it means to be empowered, in terms of the opportunities and rights available to women/girls. Ideas can be recorded on flipchart/blackboard/paper.
- 2. Whole group discussion:** (20-30 minutes). Educator asks members to briefly share life experiences of when gender has had an impact on their life choices, how others have treated them, or how they have treated others.  
**Aims:** Educator to draw out explorations of why gender matters in participants' own lives, understand the role of gendered discourses, norms and expectations in shaping opportunities.
- 3. Ice-breaker drama activity:** (30 minutes). Educator asks each participant to choose one instance when gender was an obstacle in their life. They form a tunnel and one participant stands at the top of the tunnel and shouts her example e.g., 'I want to study maths', 'I want to be allowed to climb a tree', 'I do not want to do all the housework', 'I want to feel safe at work'. She then walks down the tunnel and the other participants shout encouragement, e.g., 'you can do it', 'you are good at it', 'I will support you', 'you do not have to do all the chores'. Repeat for each willing participant. Finally, the whole group discusses how it felt to express their wishes, to hear the support, and to offer support to others.  
**Aim:** to identify areas of life where gender is important. To practise asserting and verbalising wishes. To use language to empower others.

## ACTIVITY 2: Case Studies: Empowering girls through education

### SET UP

There should be space for participants to move around and congregate as a group. Educator splits the whole group into small groups of 3-6. Each group is given one printed case study from the examples in Appendix I to read through.

1. **Small group activity:** (20-30 minutes). Prepare a 2-3 minute role play based on the case study. Participants can assume the characters in the case study or adapt them to suit their own interpretations.
2. **Whole group:** The small groups take turns to perform their role plays and after each one, the whole group is asked to consider: (1) What are the obstacles that each girl/woman faced? (2) How would we like to respond to people who tried to stand in her way? (3) How did she overcome the obstacles?
3. **Small group activity:** Finally, each group in turn is asked to create a freeze frame of a moment of empowerment from their case study (10 minutes).
4. **Whole group discussion:** (10-15 minutes). Facilitator to encourage discussion about how empowerment was achieved and the impact for the girl/woman, her family, community and country.

**Aims:** To take inspiration from role models who have overcome obstacles. To identify barriers and discuss how they can be tackled. To consider how we can empower other girls and women to succeed and the wider benefits to families, communities and the country.

### ACTIVITY 3 : Designing leadership interventions (half day activity)

#### SET UP

There should be space for participants to move around and congregate as a group. Participants work in pairs/threes. Each group is assigned one printed problem-based scenario (in Appendix II).

#### PART ONE (60-90 minutes)

1. **Pairs/threes:** Each group has 10-15 minutes to develop a very short one-minute role play prompted by their problem-based scenario.
2. The first group performs its role play and identifies for the group a problem faced by the girl/woman e.g., domestic violence, pressure to undergo FGM, lack of access to sanitary products, gender discrimination, sexual harassment.
3. **Whole group:** The educator asks the class to discuss: (1) why this problem matters for the girl/woman, her family, community and country; (2) consider the differences in power between the characters; and (3) what could be done to counteract the problem at individual, family, community, country levels?
4. The next pair repeats steps 2-3 and so on.

**Aims:** To consider the relationship between gender and power across a range of settings. To increase awareness of the impact of damaging stereotypes and dangerous cultural practices and how they can be challenged.

#### PART TWO (60 minutes+)

5. **Return to small groups:** Educator asks each group to imagine they are leaders in any sense they choose (family/community leader, manager in a business, NGO leader, politician). They are then asked to design an intervention strategy to tackle the problem they identified in their role play and think about how this would help to empower the girl/woman and others in the scenario. They are reminded of the importance of active listening, fair division of tasks, good communication.
6. Each group is asked to produce a 60 second TV or radio advert to outline (1) their issue; (2) the intervention; and (3) how the intervention would lead to empowerment. E.g., a community organising a women's council, a school introducing a free sanitary products scheme, an NGO designing an anti-FGM education policy, a business introducing a mentoring scheme.
7. They are asked to perform their adverts for the group. The group is to give constructive feedback on the effectiveness of the play as a means of communicating the key message.

**Aims:** To develop leadership and team-work skills. To consider creative solutions to problems and how to effectively communicate with a broader audience. To use language to inform and persuade. To consider a range of ways of empowering women.

## ACTIVITY 4: #HeForShe: Modelling empowerment

### SET UP

There should be space for participants to move around and congregate as a group. This is intended to be an activity for men/boys to show positive male role models and to encourage empowering behaviour, but could equally be used by mixed/women's groups to encourage discussion of masculinities and challenge gendered roles. Each pair is given one printed narrative extract from Appendix 4.

1. **Whole group:** (10-15 minutes). Either: volunteers are sought to read out the HeForShe narrative extracts in Appendix III, OR they are pre-recorded as talking heads and played for the whole group.
2. **Small group work:** (20 minutes). The educator splits participants into small groups and asks each group to prepare two alternative versions of the narrative: (1) where the man/boy failed to voice support; and (2) as in the narratives, where support/encouragement was voiced.
3. Each group nominates two narrators who each perform one version of the narrative for the whole group.
4. **Whole group:** (10-15 minutes). The educator facilitates a plenary discussion comparing and contrasting the two scenarios. How did the men/boys voice/show their support of women's empowerment? How did this benefit the girls/women? How can all men/boys support women/girls? Discuss the #HeForShe movement and encourage future research into this. How does this benefit others e.g., families, communities, companies, organisations, society?

**AIMS:** To encourage men/boys to think about some of the problems faced by girls/women and how they can use their voices for empowerment. To develop public-speaking and narrative performance skills. To increase awareness of positive examples of male behaviour. To consider how women's empowerment is beneficial to everyone.

## ACTIVITY 5: Writing plays with key messages (longer activity)

### SET UP

Activity can be adapted to the size of group – either as a whole group or as in smaller groups.

1. **Whole group discussion:** (10 minutes). Participants are asked to identify the key themes of the day. They might be e.g., ending early marriage, eradicating FGM, empowering women entrepreneurs, keeping girls in school, ending gender-based violence. Themes are recorded on a flipchart/blackboard for all to see.
2. **Small group work:** (60-90 minutes). Participants are asked to write a script for a 5-10 minute play to be performed for the whole group. They are asked to listen carefully to each other, and to make decisions fairly about the content of the script. They are asked to be as creative as they like to deliver their key message through the play. They need to think about how to use drama to persuade others in their community to support the message.  
**Alternative in school setting:** Educator asks the class to write plays for the whole school/parent community to watch.
3. **Performance:** each group performs their play OR video records their play and shows the recording.
4. **Whole group discussion:** (10-15 minutes). Facilitator encourages feedback on the plays and discussion of the key messages and asks the groups to think about who might benefit from their performances, whether they would be prepared to share their plays/videos with other audiences to communicate their key message.

**AIMS:** To consolidate key messages from the training. To encourage groups to take ownership of the gender empowerment agenda and consider how best to communicate it to their communities. To show how drama can be used for social change. To develop team-working, public speaking and playwriting skills.

## ALTERNATIVE FORMATS DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

These alternative formats should be adapted by the educator to local situations in order to ensure compliance with any Covid-19 regulations.

- (i) If an educator cannot meet the drama training group in person, s/he could attend via video link, with the help of a locally-placed facilitator e.g., teacher, volunteer.
- (ii) If the participants are able to meet in small groups and have access to video call technology, the whole training session could be conducted with a remote educator and remote small groups meeting in a communal video call space e.g., Zoom/Skype.
- (iii) If video call technology is limited/does not exist, drama forums could be created in online spaces such as Facebook private groups or WhatsApp.

Role plays and narrative readings could be pre-recorded by volunteers (with social distancing if necessary) and uploaded to an online space for later discussion. These would then be the stimulus for discussions. The same recordings could be used for multiple training sessions.

If small groups of participants are able to meet, discussions could take place on social media/web spaces (facilitated by the educator) and then they could be asked to record their role-plays/narratives on smartphones and upload the videos to an online space for later discussion. There are likely to be timing lags so the training may need to take place in short sessions over several days.

If no close social contact is possible, the activities could be run entirely on social media as written text discussions (through comments), possibly using pre-recorded videos of role plays/narratives as prompts. Role plays could be substituted with requests to write and share scripts. Again, the training may need to be spread across short sessions over several days. This is likely to be the least engaging option but may be necessary during the tightest restrictions.

- (iv) Alternative outputs could be considered for all group activities, including scripts, poems, posters, artwork etc., which could be shared in online spaces for discussion and feedback between participants online through uploading photographs or documents. It would be important to ensure a dialogue about the key issues to ensure the training is effective. Again, the training may need to be spread across short sessions over several days.



## APPENDIX I ACTIVITY 2: Case Studies: Empowering girls through education

*Educator to print case studies and cut the pages into sections to give one to each group. Depending on the number of participants, educator can select case studies s/he thinks are most appropriate to the group.*

1. **NAME: Winnie**

**ROLE: TEACHER, KENYA**

I was born in Bungoma County where the girl child is not valued. I went through school but my dad was not in support of it. My mother struggled paying school fees for me. My mother had to persevere with my father's beatings because she had chosen to support a girl child who was me. My mother struggled earning a living by selling vegetables and working on people's farms.

I went to high school and performed well. My dad still wanted to engage me to an old man in the village. I ran away through the help of my mother and stayed at my uncle's place. My uncle took me to college where I studied teaching. I never went back home. I graduated and now I am a teacher by profession. I thank God.

My father is now proud of me as a girl child. He now believes that a girl is important. Just like a boy child. He now gets support from me.

**Characters: Girl child Lindah, mum, dad, uncle, old villager**

2. **NAME: Agnes**

**ROLE: STATISTICIAN, UGANDA**

I was running for the higher levels of high school, that is senior finance in year six, and I went to my sister as we were going to the new school and then the academic, the person in charge of academics, asked me, 'What what subjects do you want to do?'. Then I told him: 'I want Physics, Economics and Mathematics.'

The man really looked at me like, 'Economics? Physics? Mathematics? You are a girl?' It was so so disappointing, someone looks at you with a face of wondering: really, a girl? You want to do Physics and Mathematics? I'm like **yes**.

My sister interrupted and said, 'Excuse me, sir, the child has said her subjects that she wants to do, so give her a try, if she fails then you can advise otherwise, give her a **try**'.

I only wish he would still be there to see, but he had left by the time I had finished school successfully.

**Characters: Angellah, sister, academic leader**

3. **NAME: MARIA**

**ROLE: TEACHER, KENYA**

I am the third born of a family of six children, raised by an uncle at Magadi Soda. After form four I went back to my parents at Saboti. I had a lot of challenges while in the village because most girls had not gone to school and being the only girl in the area who had finished high school, I was looked down upon. I worked in a hotel in the same area. I worked with other workers who had never gone to school and they mocked me since I was doing the same job and I had gone to school. I later applied for a job in a factory in which I never succeeded because of my gender. They needed men.

I loved teaching. One of my primary school teachers was my role model and I vowed to be a teacher when I grew up and that is it, I am a teacher now.

**Characters: Maria, hotel worker(s), factory boss, teacher role model**

4. **NAME: ANGELA**

**ROLE: TEACHER, KENYA**

I am a third born girl in a family of eight children, five girls and three boys.

Gender affected me in such a way that my parents concentrated on teaching my brothers. After high school, I had to hustle on my own so as to continue with my education for I wanted to accomplish my vision. I hustled for two years before joining a teacher training college for a certificate course in Early Childhood and Development Education. I worked as a house girl so as to raise money that could take me to college, which I managed.

While I was in high school, there was a madam that was a role model to me. She used to be my close friend and that made me admire and want to be like her in the future which I did.

**Characters: girl child, mother/father, brother(s), high school teacher role model**

5. **NAME: SUSAN**

**ROLE: MARKET BUSINESSWOMAN, UGANDA**

After senior I went for an internship in a certain organisation. I had my internship there and I was ready to be a staff member there but the thing that failed me, my boss wanted to harass me sexually. Yet they were paying me well and I wanted to work there, but since my boss harassed me I decided to leave the job and came back once again with my dad. I feel like I could not report my boss. I feared, so I just decided to leave the job, what I did, I just told my dad what happened and I told him, 'So I'm not ready to continue with the job, I'm coming back, dad'. Then he welcomed me back he said, 'Come back and work'. So I went back to my family and we did business.

**Characters: Woman, boss, father, (colleagues)**

6. **NAME: Irene**

**ROLE: UNIVERSITY LECTURER, ACTIVIST, KENYA**

So when I was a young girl, I actually was meant to believe that I was not a proper woman. I was not a woman because I had not undergone female genital mutilation. This meant that I could not have any friends. I did not have any group of girls who could play with me, who could talk to me from school home for I was in a day school for both primary and high school. I didn't have anybody to walk with, because in their view and even actually the view of the members of the community, if you have not undergone the practice, you are a half a human being. There's a term that they use in Kuria which is very derogatory. If you are called that, nobody wants to associate with you. But then as I grew up I noticed actually other people from different communities now we're at university, they don't undergo FGM and they're very noble. So I wanted to be like these ones and to influence more girls because my mother taught me that if you are educated, you don't need to undergo FGM, you are a complete woman.

**Characters: Irene, mother, school child(ren), university student(s)**

### APPENDIX II ACTIVITY 3: Designing leadership responses

*Educator to print problem-based scenarios and cut the pages into sections to give one to each group. Depending on the number of participants, educator can select problems s/he thinks are most appropriate to the group.*

1. My Mother struggled paying school fees for me. My mother had to persevere with my father's beatings because she had chosen to support a girl child who was me.
2. During school days, I had only two panties which I was given by my sister which was difficult especially during menstruation. I never had an opportunity to get a sanitary towel but used some old rags and cotton wool to prevent blood from flowing on my uniform. This meant that I had to stay out of school during my menstruation days.
3. One of the boys I look after was telling me, 'I don't want any girl from my school to see that I'm cooking she would be spreading the whole thing you know?'
4. Even in P6, someone tried to follow me up when I was taking the books of the children, a certain man followed me up, one of the teachers. When I told my mum, that, 'I'm sorry, these people are harassing me,' my mum said I'm spoilt. So she didn't support me, I was almost jumping out because of the lack of support from my parents. But I remain firm, and I survived the dirty man.
5. By P5 I told my parents that I was inspired to work in Church. But it was also believed that was a job for only men. When I probed to ask my father in particular, he bluntly told me that God and the Bible are patriarchal.
6. In my first internship I worked in a completely male dominated space. All the people I worked with were men. There was a lot of sexual harassment in the office. It was an everyday thing to the extent that for me it was shocking, but I asked a lot of women in the office, it was looked like, 'Oh it's normal. I get cat-called every single day. A manager calls me to his office to ask for sexual favours every single day.' and for me that was extremely shocking.

7. In the market here, even in the community at village level, these men they want when you see them you will come, bend, you kneel down, you talk the whole conversation while you are kneeling down for them. Kneeling for them every time, every now and then, kneel. You talk while kneeling, do everything while kneeling.
  
8. It was planned that I would face the knife together with two other girls and that we would recuperate in my house. The village women went around brewing traditional porridge, they collected lots of firewood while the men slaughtered numerous goats to feed the never-ending stream of villagers and visitors.
  
9. I would rather that my mother stopped me from undergoing this rite because at age 13, what did I know about the negative effects of FGM? I am happy that my step father stood firm and refused for his daughters to undergo the rite.
  
10. Being a girl child the family expected meals on time and the home to be clean, kids attended to and some plants on the farm to grow. I was lucky in that my teachers understood the situation and allowed me to attend school from eight to three in the afternoon then attend to family issues the rest of the time.

## APPENDIX III ACTIVITY 4: #HeForShe: Modelling empowerment

### Narratives of men empowering women

*Educator to print narratives and cut the pages into sections to give one to each group. Depending on the number of participants, educator can select narratives s/he thinks are most appropriate to the group.*

1. My dad beat the odds and this made me become proud of him. He encouraged me to take education seriously and this was great empowerment. I had no issues of lacking school fees because my dad made this a priority.
2. My father took us to the airport when I was little, like in primary school, and I was fascinated with aeroplanes going up, going down, and I remember telling my father, 'You know what? When I grow up I want to make that axle'. My father was just telling me, 'oh, if you want to be that, you want to be an electric and aeronautic engineer mechanical engineer.'
3. When I was done with my A level school I still stayed with a bad group of people and then I ended up being pregnant. My only difference, my father knew the situation that I had entered, what he did, he took me far away, then I had my child at 18. We have a full year lag of waiting for international results before you join university - when results came out and I had performed really well, he said your child is eight months already so you just go back to school whilst you are still with your child. So that's how I was lucky.
4. I am a journalist. All of the editors were male so they don't understand how breastfeeding works and how you cannot be on standby for three hours. That you need to go express and come back. Thankfully my cameraman is a father and a very dedicated father for that matter. I remember at one place, you know how when you're a new mother and you've not had a chance to express and you look so dark and you cannot move your neck and my cameraman looked at me and said, 'I can turn off this camera, let's go to a different location, we tell them that we're going to a different location but let's pass through our hotel, so you can express the milk, then we work.'

5. My husband was raised by a single mother who was a teacher so they never had monies. So he was in charge of cooking, he would do all the house chores around the home. So when I went to his home the first time it was the cleanest bachelor's house I had ever visited. So for me, I don't have a problem, I will go away I will be in the field over three weeks, but when I came back home, our home was well-managed, was well-maintained because he learnt that from home, the mother taught to him from home.
  
6. I thank God for my husband who had the same passion for education as my dad. He took me to Teacher Training College. Sponsored me for my further studies after working as a primary school teacher 20 years. After my undergraduate, he had empowered me enough to have a focus. The focus was to be a lecturer. What did this mean? Pursuing my Masters then PhD. My husband was the one who brought me the forms to fill for my Masters programme. I had not thought of it since I needed a break. To cut the story short, I did my Masters level then joined PhD immediately. I am Doctor of Communication. I am a lecturer Head of Department at the moment, courtesy of my loving and supportive husband.