

Listen Closely

“Nothing is ever said unless someone listens.”

Complexity	Level I
Group size	6 to 30
Time	60 minutes
Overview	Feelings of being ignored are common in discussions of gender. An exercise that focuses on communication can raise the problematic issue of exclusion based on gender.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the process of exclusion based on gender • To understand the role communication can play in exclusion
Materials	None
Preparation	Make sure you are prepared to provide participants with examples of the kind of experiences or stories you have in mind. Prepare a large empty space in which the participant pairs can work without being distracted by each other.

Instructions

Ask participants to form pairs. One person is given the task to think of an experience or to tell a story. The other person should do everything to show that s/he is not listening, except speaking or walking away. After 2 to 3 minutes the pairs are asked to change roles and to repeat the exercise. When this is done the first person is asked to tell the same story again. This time, the listening partner should listen attentively and do everything to show that s/he is listening, even using small expressions or noises (e.g. “uh-huh”). Again, after 2 to 3 minutes, they swap roles.

Debriefing and evaluation

Begin with the process and how people felt doing the activity. The following questions may guide the discussion:

- How did it feel to be ignored?
- How did it feel to ignore someone?
- How did it feel to be listened to?
- How did it feel to be the attentive listener?
- Which role was best and why?

Continue with a discussion of the role that communication can play in processes of exclusion:

- What is meant by ‘active listening’?
- How can you become an active listener?

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- What can be gained from active listening?
- What can you do when you are being ignored?

Conclude by exploring how exclusion on the basis of gender works:

- What role does gender play in exclusion?
- How do the mechanisms of exclusion discussed affect young people in the context where you live?
- How can you or your organisation help young people overcome exclusion on the basis of gender?

Tips for facilitators

While this exercise is rather generic and can be used to explore communication and exclusion in relation to issues other than gender, it is important to remember that you are only using the exercise as a way into understanding processes of exclusion. Try, as far as possible, to draw out participants' own examples of exclusion based on gender in the debriefing discussion.

Suggestions for follow-up

Develop guidelines using brainstorming and discussion techniques for gender sensitive and inclusive communication with the participants which they can then apply in the settings where they meet exclusion based on gender. If you are interested in issues of social exclusion, we suggest you consult the T-kit on Social Inclusion <http://www.training-youth.net/site/publications/tkits>.

Ideas for action

Apply the gender sensitivity and inclusive communication guidelines in the group with whom you work. Ask the group to monitor their progress and evaluate the differences in their experience of the work within the group. Initiate a discussion in the local school and your organisation about mainstreaming such guidelines.