

Path to Equality-land

“The obstacle is the path.”

Zen proverb

Themes	Gender equality, Discrimination and Xenophobia, Education
Complexity	Level 3
Group size	4+
Time	90 minutes
Overview	This activity involves small group work, imagination, and drawing to explore issues of gender equality and discrimination against women.
Related rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Freedom from discrimination on grounds of sex and gender ▪ The right to marry with the free and full consent of the intending spouses ▪ The right to special protection for mothers before and after childbirth
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To develop understanding and appreciation of the goals of equality and gender balance ▪ To develop imagination and creativity to envision the future ▪ To promote justice and respect
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 A4 sized sheet of paper and 1 pencil per small group for the brainstorm ▪ Large sheets of paper (A3 size) or flipchart paper, one sheet per small group ▪ Marker pens of different colours, enough for all small groups ▪ A map, preferably a hiking map or any other sort of map that shows physical features, for instance, mountains, valleys, rivers, forests, villages, bridges, etc.
Preparation	Familiarise yourself with the map and the symbols used.

Instructions

1. Explain that in this activity participants will be drawing a fantasy map of how to travel to Equity-land, a country where there is true gender equality. It will exist in the future, but at present it only exists in people's imaginations.
2. Ask people if they know of any folk tales or other stories that use the metaphor of a person going on a journey to present moral ideals. Talk about the way a dark forest, for instance, may be used as a metaphor for evil or a red, rosy apple be used to represent temptation. The traveller may show moral strength swimming across a fast flowing river or humility helping a distressed animal.
3. Briefly review what a map looks like. Point out the ways that contours are drawn, the shading for mountains and rivers and the symbols that are used for forests, moorland, buildings, power cables, etc.

THEMES



GENDER EQUALITY



DISCRIMINATION



EDUCATION

COMPLEXITY



LEVEL 3

GROUP SIZE



4 OR MORE

TIME



90 MINUTES

4. Ask people to get into small groups of three to five people. Hand out the small sheets of paper and pens and give them about 15 minutes to make three short brainstorm on:
 - what they imagine Equality-land might look like
 - what obstacles they might encounter on the path to Equality-land
 - how they would overcome the obstacles
5. Now hand out the large sheets of paper and the markers. Ask each group to make their own fantasy map to represent the landscapes of the present and the future together with a path that runs between the two. They should make up their own symbols for the geographical features and for the obstacles and facilities that lie along the path.
6. Give the groups 40 minutes to draw their maps. Remind them to make a key for the symbols they have used.
7. Come into plenary and ask people to present their maps.

Debriefing and evaluation

Start with a discussion about the way the different groups worked together and how they made decisions about what to represent and about the way they drew the map. Then go on to talk about what Equality-land in reality might look like and the obstacles.

- Did people enjoy the activity? Why?
- Which of three questions was the easiest to brainstorm? Which was the hardest and why?
- What were the main features of Equality-land?
- What are the main obstacles which prevent their present society from being the ideal Equality-land?
- What needs to change in order to build a society where there is gender equality?
- Are policies of positive discrimination justified as short term measures to boost gender equality?
- If you had to rate your country amongst all the countries of the world for equality of opportunity for both men and women, how would you rate it on a scale of 1 to 10? 1 is very unequal, 10 is almost ideal equality.
- Which other groups are discriminated against in your society? How is this manifested? Which human rights are being violated?
- How can disadvantaged groups be empowered to claim their rights?
- What role has education to play in empowerment?

Tips for facilitators

If participants get stuck thinking about how to picture their ideas, you could start them off by suggesting a woman uses a bridge of education to go over a river of prejudice against women who want to be lawyers. Another example could be for a man to find a jewel of satisfaction working as a nursery teacher, looking after very small children. Of course you will have to think of examples of gender stereotyping that reflect the reality in your society!

Variations

The groups could make models of the landscape using “junk”. In this case, you will need to have a good collection of small boxes, tubs, tubes, paper, stones, nuts, bits of string and wool, paper clips, etc and also glue and card for the bases for the models.

The method of drawing a map from the present to the future can be adapted to most issues where you want participants to think freely and imaginatively about finding solutions to problems.

Suggestions for follow-up

Explore gender further or one of the other issues which were raised. For example, you could do research in the local library or on the Internet or ask a representative of an organisation that works to address inequality of opportunity for a particular group in society to come to talk to the group.

Alternatively, you may like to explore issues about discrimination and the right to cultural identity within the context of sustainable development in the activity “Makah whaling”, on page 166.

Ideas for action

Look at your own school, club or workplace policies about equal opportunities in relation to gender and discuss how the policies are implemented and whether or not any changes or extra efforts need to be made to bring your institution to the status of Equality-land.

Further information

The concept behind this activity is that of “Empowerment”. Empowerment is difficult to translate and sometimes also difficult to explain, even in English! “Empowerment” is both the means and the outcome of the pedagogy that some people call “Liberatory” education.

One definition of ‘empowerment’, from Oxfam, is:

“Empowerment involves challenging the forms of oppression, which compel millions of people to play a part in their society on terms that are unequal, or in ways which deny their human rights.”

Key dates

25 November
International Day for the
Elimination of Violence
against Women