

Games on inclusion of age, disability and gender
in preparedness and humanitarian response

Meaningful participation in decision-making

Game title: Meaningful participation in decision-making

Overview: In this game, players role-play a community meeting where participation is tokenistic. Other players are observers and give feedback on how the meeting could be improved. The role play is repeated, but now demonstrating meaningful participation.

Learning objectives:

By the end of the game players will be able to recognise the difference between meaningful participation and tokenistic participation, and identify ways to increase meaningful participation.

Who should play the game?

Individuals working in the humanitarian sector who would like to better understand how to encourage meaningful participation in community meetings.

Number of players: 10 or more

Materials required:

Resource 1: Print three copies of the Situation

Resource 2: Print one copy of the Meeting profile cards, cut up for each actor

Resource 3: Sufficient copies of the Checklist for all remaining players who will observe the meeting

Other requirements:

Enough space to simulate a meeting and for people to observe.

Estimated time required: 50-60 minutes

Facilitator instructions:

- Step 1:** Explain that in this game, volunteers are invited to act in a simulated Water Management Committee meeting (note that they do not need any WASH experience to play this game). During the simulation, other players will observe the scenario. They will then give feedback to the actors. The meeting will then be repeated, incorporating the feedback. Emphasise that during the simulation meeting, people will be acting and this does not represent what they might say or do in reality. Say that this is sometimes called a fishbowl activity.
- Step 2:** Invite eight players to volunteer for a role in the meeting. Give each volunteer a profile card (Resource 2). Ask the Chair of the meeting to make themselves known. Other actors do not need to share their roles.
- Step 3:** Use the Situation document (Resource 1) to explain the scenario in which the meeting is set. Give all three copies of this document to the chair of the meeting.
- Step 4:** Give the volunteer actors a few minutes to think about their role. Whilst they do this, give one copy of the Checklist (Resource 3) to each observer – i.e. the remaining players. Explain that as they observe, they should make a note of any actions they notice against the checklist. Suggest they make any additional notes of good or poor practice below the checklist.

Step 5: Before starting, ask the actors to speak up so they can be easily heard by the observers. Tell the observers to remain silent and not interrupt. Say that they will have about 15 minutes for the meeting and you will indicate when time has run out. Invite the actors to begin when they are ready.

Step 6: When the meeting is finished, thank all the actors for participating and invite the actors to comment on whether they felt included in the meeting, why and why not.

Step 7: Next, invite the observers to first provide feedback on good behaviours or actions that encouraged inclusion and ask any questions they may have. Remind them to use their checklist, adding their own observations. Next ask the observers to give any suggestions on how to change certain behaviours or actions to allow for more meaningful participation from all attendees/community members.

Avoid having actors 'defend' their behaviours at this stage and explain that some roles had more instructions on how to behave than others. Instead, ask them if they could repeat the meeting, this time taking on board the feedback and suggestions. It is recommended that players keep the same role so that the Chair and Deputy Chair in particular have the opportunity to portray more inclusive behaviours. It is, however, possible to switch roles between observers and actors, or between actors.

Step 8: Repeat the meeting, asking observers to return to the checklist.

Step 9: After the meeting has finished, again thank the actors and ask the observers to comment on positive aspects that contributed to inclusion. Then invite the actors to comment on how their experience in the meeting differed from that of the first meeting.

Step 10: Debrief

Ask the group the following questions to help reflect on the activity.

- What did you learn from this activity?
- What is the difference between tokenistic and meaningful participation?
- How can we encourage more meaningful participation?
- Have you experienced or witnessed similar scenarios? If so, what was your experience?
- How do the checklist and inclusion standards support meaningful participation? *If you have a copy of the Humanitarian inclusion standards, ask players to read page 54, ensure that everyone now has a copy or can view a copy of the checklist (Resource 3).*

Level of facilitation required: Medium

Possible adaptations to game:

You can change the scenario and agenda to suit the context in which you are working. You may also want to add roles to the Role Cards to increase meeting participation if you have more players.

Suggested games to play before or after this game:

- Attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers
- Creating accessible meetings
- Inclusion in DRR committees

Additional resources:

- 'Key inclusion standard 4: Knowledge and participation', *Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities*, 2018, p.54-55
- HelpAge International, *Age-inclusive disaster risk reduction: A toolkit*, 2019, p.45

Resource 1: **Situation**

Situation:

The village has expanded over the past five years with many internally displaced people arriving in the area. The water point is currently a 5km walk from the village and there have been reported cases of sexual assault and rape on route to the water point.

AquaAid, an NGO that works in the area, has supported the community to become more resilient by helping with water, sanitation and hygiene. They have set up Water Management Committees. The committee has met every second week for the past three months and has played a key role in many of the decisions affecting the community.

The committee recently invited new members to attend and this is their first meeting. The main topic of discussion is the location and type of water point that AquaAid is funding.

Meeting Agenda:

- Welcome all members
 - Decide on water point location
 - Decide on the type of water point (hand pump, foot pump etc.) and any specifications
 - Decide who will manage maintenance and form the team of pump mechanics
 - Decide how to communicate the new water point to the community
 - Close of meeting
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Resource 2: Meeting profile cards

Chair of meeting

Gender: Man

Age: 50

Health: Good

Literacy: Good

Other: You are a respected member of the community and have many businesses in the town. You have been the chair for many years. You were recently told by the NGO that women of various ages needed to be included in the committee and so you have invited some women to attend. However, you feel that women are not well placed to make decisions about the community and think they are too emotional to make such important decisions.

Deputy Chair of meeting

Gender: Man

Age: 43

Health: Good

Literacy: Good

Other: You are a religious leader with a strong network and influence. You are active in the village committees. You are a confident speaker at meetings and like to be the decision-maker; you tend not to ask others opinions.

Secretary of meeting

Gender: Woman

Age: 31

Health: Good

Literacy: Good

Other: You take minutes for the meetings and organise other administrative tasks. You have been the secretary for a while but have never been asked your opinion on matters that affect women and the community. You are educated and appreciate the opportunity to be involved. In fact, you would prefer to be more active in decision making as you sometimes feel that women are negatively affected by the decisions the chair and deputy chair make.

Community member attending the meeting

Gender: Woman

Age: 47

Health: Good

Literacy: Good

Other: You are confident at speaking out about issues that affect your community and want your voice to be heard. You are well connected within the community but often feel that men dominate these sort of meetings. Your daughter is deaf and you are a strong advocate for the rights of people with disability.

Community member attending the meeting

Gender: Woman

Age: 80

Health: You have diminished vision and hearing, you have a hearing aid to help
Literacy: low

Other: You attend meetings held by the local Older People's Organisation although you are not confident at meetings as you find it difficult to interrupt people (especially men). You prefer not to ask people to repeat themselves if you can't hear them well and you always wait for someone to ask you your opinion rather than offer it.

Community member attending the meeting

Gender: Woman

Age: 62

Health: Fair

Literacy: Good

Other: You have a strong network through the religious group you attend, as well as among family and neighbours. You are not so confident around men but you do have a strong voice when in the company of women.

Community member attending the meeting

Gender: Man

Age: 47

Health: You have had one leg amputated and use crutches. You are currently in good health

Literacy: Fair

Other: You are confident in meetings but tend not to interrupt people; you do not feel your voice is valued. Your wife supports you with all your needs, and she also works and takes care of the family and house. Whilst you advocate for more access for people with disabilities, you are not aware of the different challenges that women and men with disabilities face in the community.

Community member attending the meeting

Gender: Man

Age: 18

Health: Good

Literacy: Good

Other: You are optimistic and ambitious, keen to move into a leadership role and help your community and country grow. You are keen to learn how meetings are run and hear other people's experience.

Resource 3: Checklist

Checklist: Ensuring meaningful participation of older people

Question	Yes/No	Planned action
Organising separate meetings with older people and/or their representative organisations.		
Ensuring diversity and gender balance among participants and in the meeting organising team for all planned meetings.		
Checking accessibility of the venue for all vulnerable groups.		
Providing information before, during and after the meeting.		
Designing communication materials and messages that are simple and easy to understand.		
Checking if all participants are following the proceedings of the meeting.		
Providing time to all vulnerable groups to express their views and ensuring that they are documented in meeting minutes.		
Checking before closing the meeting if they agree with the decisions made.		