

Power Walk

I. Description:

The Power Walk is a group exercise that facilitates participants to “walk” in someone else’s shoes and experience what it feels like to be powerless or powerful based on gender, occupation, education level, disability, age, health etc. and in the face of different obstacles or shocks.

II. Purpose:

The Power Walk allows participants to become more aware of the power dynamics that exist within and between communities and our organizations and to ensure those lacking power are supported to rise up. The Power Walk is a way to think critically about how people’s different backgrounds and opportunities can result in different levels of power and resilience to climate change and other barriers to prosperity. It also allows for introspection on the part of those in leadership positions in terms of how our roles can create distance between us and those we are trying to work with.

III. Project Cycle Application:

1 - Assessment Phase	Can be used to help people recognize the different types of people in the community and the different opportunities and barriers they face Can be used to identify and bring to the forefront the type of people who should be targeted for resilience building
2 - Planning Phase	Can be used to help people identify barriers to power or “mobility” Can be used to explore how different obstacles and challenges affect people differently
3 - Implementation & Monitoring Phase	Can be used to help participants identify and adapt to the barriers and shifting landscape that may positively or negatively impact different people
4 - Evaluation Phase	Can be used to help participants measure progress and discern if despite “roles” (i.e. gender, age, class, etc.), people are being empowered and benefiting from interventions
5 - Reporting Phase	Can be used to help participants demonstrate and ‘report’ on their current levels of influence in their communities.

IV. Facilitation Steps:

Step 1: Preparation

Prepare role cards (see examples in Appendix) that represent different types of people in the community, including the most vulnerable to climate change and other shocks. Identify an open area where participants will have space to line up horizontally and walk forwards or backwards 5 to 10 meters.

Step 2: Introduction

The exercise could take 30-45 minutes depending on the number of participants and the level of discussion. Introduce the Power Walk exercise by explaining that it is a way for everyone to reflect on the different kinds of people in the community, including ourselves, and how our different backgrounds, opportunities and barriers affect our power and “place” in society. Remind the participants that all present are invited to join in the exercise and share their ideas.

Step 3: Exercise Instructions

1. Ask the participants to stand in a row. Randomly pass out the Power Walk Role Cards so that every participant has one. Ask the participants to read aloud their role card.
2. Explain that you will read a series of statements. If the statement applies to the role the participant is playing they should take one step forward.
3. Read each of the following statements and give participants several seconds to think and decide whether they should take a step forward¹:
 - *Take one step forward if you have had or will have opportunities to complete your education.*
 - *Take one step forward if you don't worry about having enough food to eat.*
 - *Take one step forward if you can earn enough money to make a good life for yourself and your children.*
 - *Take one step forward if you can determine when and how many children you will have.*
 - *Globally more than 1/3 women and girls are victims of violence. Take 2 steps backwards if you are a female.*
 - *Take one step forward if you could get a bank loan to start a business if you wanted one.*
 - *There has been a drought. Take 2 steps backwards if your livelihood depends on rainfall*
 - *Take 2 steps forward if you are part of a social network such as a savings group, cooperative, Church group or other*

Step 4: Debrief & Learning (Look, Think, Plan)

When you finish the questions ask participants to remain where they are standing. Ask the following questions, being sure participants recite their role before they respond:

1. LOOK
 - *What do we see?*
 - *How did it feel to move forward? Stay behind?*
 - *How does it feel to be standing where you are? (those in the front, middle and back)*
2. THINK (while still standing or after returning to your seats)
 - *What does this activity make you think about?*
 - *How have we experienced power or lack of power in our lives or the work that we do?*
 - *What happens when we do not think about power, the power we have, the power others have?*
 - *How does power relate to people's resilience, in general, and to climate change?*
3. PLAN
 - *How does this activity relate to our work with communities and our roles as development practitioners? How do we use our power? How do we pay attention to power dynamics in the communities where we are working?*
 - *What happens when people with power dominate discussions?*
 - *What role do we and our programs play in maintaining and or challenging power differences?*

V. Useful Hints:

¹ The Power Walk prompts should be tailored to your community context, participants and your specific program and learning objectives.

- The Power Walk can be adapted for different groups and objectives. For program staff and/or community leaders and volunteers, it can be used to spur reflection and discussion on how we use our power to lift up others. Among community members who are direct participants, it can be used to identify initial activities to target the most vulnerable populations, and thus build awareness and ownership of the project activities.
- To examine the relationship between power and the effects of climate change, you can create Power Walk scenarios that show how access to dwindling natural resources affects everyone to a certain degree, but most acutely those with less power.

VI. Pairing Pathways:

The Power Walk is useful when paired with:

- Mapping and analysis exercises such as the People’s Map, Transect Walk, and/or Pair-Wise Preference Ranking to discern or validate the identification of vulnerable areas or populations.
- Well-being Map to explore how high and low wellbeing households are resilient (i.e., experience minor seasonal fluctuations in key variables) and to develop target activities
- Contextual Bible studies, such as John 4:4–42 - Woman at the Well

VII. Sources

Partners for Prevention - UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNV Regional Joint Programme, 2013. “Transforming Masculinities Towards Gender Justice: Foundational Knowledge for Action for the Regional Learning Community for East and Southeast Asia (RLC).”

Appendix: Power Walk Roles

- 1 – Male rural small-holder farmer; married; 6 children - boy in school, girls not
- 2 – Female widow, labors in people's fields, depends on kindness of neighbors
- 3 – Male NGO worker with university education, married, 2 children
- 4 – 10 year old girl, not in school, sells candy on city street
- 5 – Female divorced restaurant owner, 3 children in secondary school
- 6 – Male local government official, university education
- 7 – 13 year old boy, mechanic's apprentice, no formal schooling
- 8 – Male restaurant owner, married 4 children, primary school education
- 9 – Female maize farmer, co-wife, 10 children, no schooling
- 10 – Male secondary school teacher, single, no children
- 11 – Female fishmonger, primary school education, married, 4 children, savings group member
- 12 – Female primary school teacher, married, 1 child
- 13 – 16 year old girl, primary school education, working as nanny in city
- 14 – Male widower, blind, lives with son, cannot work
- 15 – Male butcher, married, 2 children under age 5
- 16 – Female smallholder farmer, 5 children, husband left, eldest child is day laborer
- 17 – Male cellphone shop owner, no schooling, married, 4 children, 2 in school
- 18 – Female NGO worker with university education, single
- 19 – Male taxi driver, no education, single
- 20 – 14 year old female student, parents struggling financially, may leave school to work
- 21 – Male cow herder and seller, 2 wives, 12 children
- 22 – Female pharmacy worker, single, 1 child
- 23 – Female maize farmer, her and husband HIV+, no children
- 24 – Male furniture maker, single, no schooling
- 25 – Female restaurant owner, no schooling, 5 children, abusive husband
- 26 – Female, widow, 3 children not in school, sells used clothing at market
- 27 – Male village elder, widower, small plot of maize
- 28 – Female government official, university education, married, 2 children in primary school
- 29 – 8 year old girl, deaf, helps mother sell vegetables at market
- 30 – 12 year old boy, no schooling, herds goats for uncle, parents deceased