



## A PRACTITIONER'S TOOLKIT

Making water, sanitation and hygiene safer through improved programming and services

## Toolset 4-A

Methodologies for working with communities

## TS4-A – Building trust and understanding

## This toolset includes:

Examples of short exercises that can be used as warm-ups and to build trust and understanding, which:

1. Relate to the different experiences and perspectives of women, girls, men and boys.
2. In some cases provide opportunities for humour, while also providing a learning opportunity. This can be useful for creating a trusting atmosphere in which to discuss more sensitive subjects.

Refer to the table below for a listing of the exercises and can be found on accompanying sheets.

Some of the activities listed below should be done in groups of the same age and gender, especially [TS4-A-6](#) – 'Ideal images and current realities'.

## Exercises to build trust and understanding

Code	Title	Description	Source
<a href="#">TS4-A-1</a>	A knotty problem	The exercise illustrates in a funny way how the people who can best work out solutions to problems are the ones who have experienced the problems first hand.	Welbourn, A. (1995)
<a href="#">TS4-A-2</a>	Fixed positions	An exercise to encourage participants to realise that our perspectives on things are based on who we are and our own experiences. This encourages people to be less judgemental about the actions of others.	Oron, B., G. Sebuwufu and A. Welbourn (2014)
<a href="#">TS4-A-3</a>	Spider's web	An energiser and to remind everyone that we depend on one another, and that each one is an important part of the group.	Welbourn, A. (2007)
<a href="#">TS4-A-4</a>	Mime the lie	Warm-up game. Shows in a funny, obvious way that what people say they are doing is not necessarily what they are really doing.	Welbourn, A. (1995)
<a href="#">TS4-A-5</a>	Folding paper game	To show in a funny way how easy it is for different people to interpret the same instructions in different ways.	Welbourn, A. (2007)
<a href="#">TS4-A-6</a>	Ideal images and current realities	To explore people's perceptions of the ideal man, the ideal woman and how these ideal images vary from our own reality.	Oron, B., G. Sebuwufu and A. Welbourn (2014)

... continued

**TS4-A-7****Game of life**

An exercise to highlight issues on discrimination and power. The exercise provides an opportunity to highlight various issues around the differences in position and status of people who are disabled and between men and women, and hence the differences in the challenges they face. Humour can take the edge off the game, but it can reveal things about communities which they may never have considered before.

Coe, S. and L. Wapping (2010)

## References

Welbourn, A. (1995) *Stepping Stones, A training package on HIV/AIDS, communication and relationship skills*. Oxford, UK: Strategies for Hope Trust.

Oron, B., G. Sebuwufu and A. Welbourn (2014) *Stepping Stones for Peace and Prosperity*. UK: Strategies for Hope.

Coe, S. and L. Wapping (2010) *Travelling together; How to include disabled people on the main road to development*. UK: World Vision.

## TS4-A-1

## A knotty problem

**Aim:** The exercise illustrates in a funny way how the people who can best work out solutions to problems are the ones who have experienced the problems first hand.

Welbourn, A.  
(1995)

**Description:** Two members of the group try to give directions to the rest of the group about how to disentangle themselves from their problem. This is very hard for them.

**Directions:**

1. Ask two people to volunteer to be 'professional health workers' and ask them to go away from the group until called back.
2. Ask the rest of the group to form a big circle by holding hands with their neighbour on each side of them. Then, by keeping their hands held tightly throughout the exercise (until stage 6 below), the circle of participants should tie itself into as entangled a knot as possible. Remind the group never to drop their hands and only to follow the instructions of the 'professional health workers' literally, not going out of their way to help them.
3. Call the 'health workers' back to the group and instruct them to hold their own hands behind their backs.
4. Then ask them to unravel the knot of the others, using verbal instructions only, within three minutes. They can move round the knotted circle of people, but cannot touch anyone.
5. You will find that the 'health workers' will move around the group and may manage to change the positions of a few of the group slightly, but they will fail to disentangle them! After three minutes, call stop.
6. Ask the circle members now to drop their hands. Then ask them to form a new circle, this time with the 'health workers' and yourself too. All of you should now join hands again, in a big circle.
7. Tie yourselves into another knot. Then time your own disentanglement: it should take about 20 seconds.



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**Feedback and discussion:** This exercise shows us and the community how we as managers or outsiders do not have solutions for all problems. Instead the community should have the major role in solving its own problems. Sometimes they only need a little input from outside to make a great advance in their achievements.

Encourage the participants to relate this game to their own lives by asking them for examples of when they have experienced this for themselves: e.g. in relation to their parents, school, extension workers, elders etc.

► In some societies this exercise is not possible for men and women to do together. However, it can be undertaken with peer groups of a similar age and gender.

## TS4-A-2

## Fixed positions

**Aim:** To encourage participants to realise that our perspectives on things are based on who we are and our own experiences. This encourages people to be less judgmental about the actions of others.

Oron, B., G. Sebuwufu and A. Welbourn (2014)

**Description:** Participants stand in a circle and comment about what they see, from different angles, of someone standing in the middle.

**Directions:**

1. Form a circle and ask one participant to stand in the middle. Ask her/him to stand still, facing the same way throughout the questions and answers that are to follow.
2. Explain to all participants that you are going to ask some questions. Ask everyone at all times to answer according to what they can actually see from their own position, not what they know is there.
3. Ask someone standing in front of the person in the middle: "How many eyes has s/he got?"
4. Ask someone standing behind the person in the middle the same question.
5. Ask someone standing directly to the side of the person in the middle the same question.
6. Then ask the person in the middle how s/he feels being described, without being asked themselves who they are?!
7. Then place someone else in the middle and choosing, say, the arms this time, run through the same questions with three different people.
8. Next, ask one participant to walk round the whole circle, looking at the person in the middle and perceiving her/him from all angles. Ask the walker to give a running commentary on what s/he is seeing and how her/his vision of the person in the middle changes.
9. Then again, ask the person in the middle how s/he feels about being described by others, without themselves being asked.



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**Feedback and discussion:** Ask the participants to consider how our perspective on a situation shapes our understanding of it. Think about how each observer felt when the other observers gave a different description of what they saw to their own. Then think about how the person in the middle felt when her/his views were not asked about at all. How can we give ourselves a more complete picture more of the time? In what way can we relate this exercise to our everyday experience?

This is a useful exercise to remind participants about during future sessions. It is often hard for us to remember that there are more valid views than our own about a situation or a person. We are often quick to judge others without trying to understand more about them first. And we often completely forget to ask them themselves!!

## TS4-A-3

## Spider's web

**Aim:** An energiser and to remind everyone that we depend on one another, and that each one is an important part of the group.

Welbourn, A.  
(1995)

**Materials needed:** Ball of string.

**Description:** A ball of string unravelled and held taught by everyone, like a spider's web.

**Directions:**

1. Make sure everyone is sitting in a circle. Produce a big ball of string. Hold on to the end of the string, then roll it across the ground to someone sitting opposite you, saying his/her name as you roll it to him/her. Keep holding on to your end, tightly.
2. Ask the recipient to hold on to the string, so that it makes a taut line on the ground between you both. Then ask him/her to roll the ball back across the circle, across the ground, to someone else, saying that new person's name as it rolls to him/her.
3. Everyone keeps on with this, until the circle is full of taut lines cross-crossing the circle. Each person should be holding on tightly to a bit of string. The ball of string should finally be rolled back to you, so that you hold the beginning and the end of the string.
4. Next ask everyone to look at how the string connects you all, like a spider's web. You are all dependent on one another to keep this web firm and supportive. If anyone were to take their hand away from the web, that part of it would collapse.
5. Ask people to suggest how this spider's web exercise relates to our real lives.
6. After a few comments, ask everyone to lay their piece of string down on the ground. Gather up the string in a loose pile, so that it can be rewound later. Ask everyone to think about our dependence on one another – and our need to support one another – during the course of today's session.



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## TS4-A-4

## Mime the lie

**Aim:** Warm-up game. Shows in a funny, obvious way that what people say they are doing is not necessarily what they are really doing.

Welbourn, A.  
(1995)

**Description:** Each person in turn mimes an action and, when asked, says s/he is doing something else. The next person has to mime what the previous person said s/he was doing.

**Directions:**

1. Ask everyone to stand in a circle. You start by going into the middle of the circle and mime an action, such as getting dressed. Ask the person who was next to you in the circle to ask you aloud what you are doing. You reply by saying out loud, for example, "I am digging the ground!" Everyone will laugh! Next, ask the person who asked you now to enter the circle instead of you and to mime what you said you were doing.
2. When her/his neighbour asks what s/he is doing, s/he also lies, and so the game continues, until everyone in the circle has had a go at doing one thing and saying they are doing something else.



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- This is a good warm-up exercise, because it makes everyone laugh and includes everyone. It is also useful to refer back to later in the session: we often say we are doing one thing, when in fact we are doing something else. We may also lead others into problems if they don't see through our lie.

## TS4-A-5

**Folding paper game**

**Aims:** To show in a funny way how easy it is for different people to interpret the same instructions in different ways.

Welbourn, A.  
(1995)

**Materials:** Four sheets of large (A4) writing paper.

**Description:** Four volunteers are asked to close their eyes and fold a piece of paper, according to spoken instructions. Onlookers see how differently they interpret the same instructions.

**Directions:**

1. Ask for four people to volunteer to move out in front of the other participants. Place them where all four volunteers can clearly be seen. Ask each volunteer to put on a blindfold or to promise to keep their eyes shut! No participant is allowed to ask any questions during the exercise.
2. Hand each volunteer a piece of writing paper. Each piece should be just the same size.
3. Then ask participants to do the following: they should fold their paper in half. Then they should tear off the bottom right hand corner of the paper. Then they should fold the paper in half again. Next they should tear off the lower left hand corner. Remind them not to peek!
4. Then ask all four volunteers to open their eyes and unfold their pieces of paper, displaying them to the other participants. It is highly unlikely that all four pieces of paper will have been torn in the same way.



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**Feedback and discussion:** Ask the participants what this exercise can show us. One point is to show everyone how even simple instructions can mean very different things to different people (it makes no difference in this game how literate someone is). We often think we are saying something clearly to someone, only to discover later that what we have meant and what they have understood have been quite different! Everyone followed the instructions correctly, but the results were very different.

## TS4-A-6

## Ideal images and current realities

**Aims:** To explore people's perceptions of the ideal man, the ideal woman and how these ideal images vary from their own reality.

Oron, B., G. Sebuwufu and A. Welbourn (2014)

**Description:** Introduction from the facilitator, followed by a drawing exercise and discussions.

**Directions:**

1. Explain to the participants how in the last session we looked together at verbal communication and at body language, which are two of the ways in which people relate to one another. We are now moving on to explore how different people in our society are expected to behave.
2. Ask them if they remembered to bring some examples of short songs, short stories or proverbs. Ask five or six to tell them or sing them to the rest of the group.
3. After a few general examples, ask them to break into new groups of three or four and to focus particularly on the ideal image in their own society – and in the town – of their own age and gender. Note that from now on in the exercise, the discussion will focus only on people of their own age and gender.
  - If you are working with the young women, ask them to describe what a young woman is expected to say and do or not say and not do – both in her own community, and in the eyes of wider society.
  - If you are working with the older men, ask them to describe what an old man is expected to say and do or not say and not do – both in his own community, and in the eyes of the people in town.
  - ....and so on.
4. After a few minutes of small group discussion, ask the participants to re-form a large circle and share with the large group their ideas on the perfect young woman or old man or whichever your peer group is, from the point of view of their own community and from people in town.
5. Next, ask the participants to re-form into the same groups of three or four and discuss how easy they find it actually to live up to the expectations which their society – and people in town – has for them – and how realistic these expectations are. Encourage the participants to go on to consider what a normal young woman, normal old man etc. (whichever is the peer group you are with) is most likely to be like – from their own perspective.
6. After a few more minutes, ask the groups to re-form a large circle and share with the whole group what their real experiences are like.



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**Feedback and discussion:** The idea of this exercise is to help people to appreciate that we all have ideal images of how we are supposed to behave, placed upon us by our own community and also by wider society in our country; and that there is always a gap between our images and reality. We all find our images hard to live up to at times. It can often be reassuring to realise this and to appreciate that we all feel this at times.

Sometimes ideal images can actually be very far from current realities. For instance, if people believe that 'a woman's place is in the home', this can often be used as an excuse to keep girls out of school or for them to marry early. Similarly the belief that 'real men steal many cattle each year' can result in a man risking his life very often. Encourage participants to think about this and to make their own comments about the way some of the examples they have already mentioned can be difficult for us to live up to, and can sometimes also make us feel that we are somehow failures.

Please emphasise to your group that this is not supposed to be an exercise that reminds them how they should behave! Instead, it is supposed to help us recognise how difficult and limiting some of the labels that our societies put on us are for us to live up to. If your group finds it a bit hard to think of examples to begin with, here are some suggestions that you might make to help them start to express their own ideas. Do not impose these ideas on your group: they need to come up with their own descriptions of their lives. But you could say that in other countries, people have described differences between their ideal and their real lives in this way, and how is it here for them?

e.g. older men	IMAGE	As leaders, decision-makers, with many children, grandchildren, authority, power, money etc.
	REALITY	Young don't listen to us, not much authority, too many bills to pay etc.
e.g. younger men	IMAGE	Brave warrior, strong, macho, many kids, good income, many wives, protector of family and community etc.
	REALITY	Many demands on income, unemployment, too many mouths to feed, just girlfriends or one wife, no ability to protect family and community etc.
e.g. older women	IMAGE	Honoured old lady, looked after by children, respected by all, less work etc.
	REALITY	Too much work, grandchildren to look after, no access to cash etc.
e.g. younger women	IMAGE	Polite, submissive, undemanding, hard-working, obeying father or husband, officially married or soon to be officially married, many kids etc.
	REALITY	Too many kids, no money to spend, no personal freedom, failure to marry because no money, still living in father's house etc.

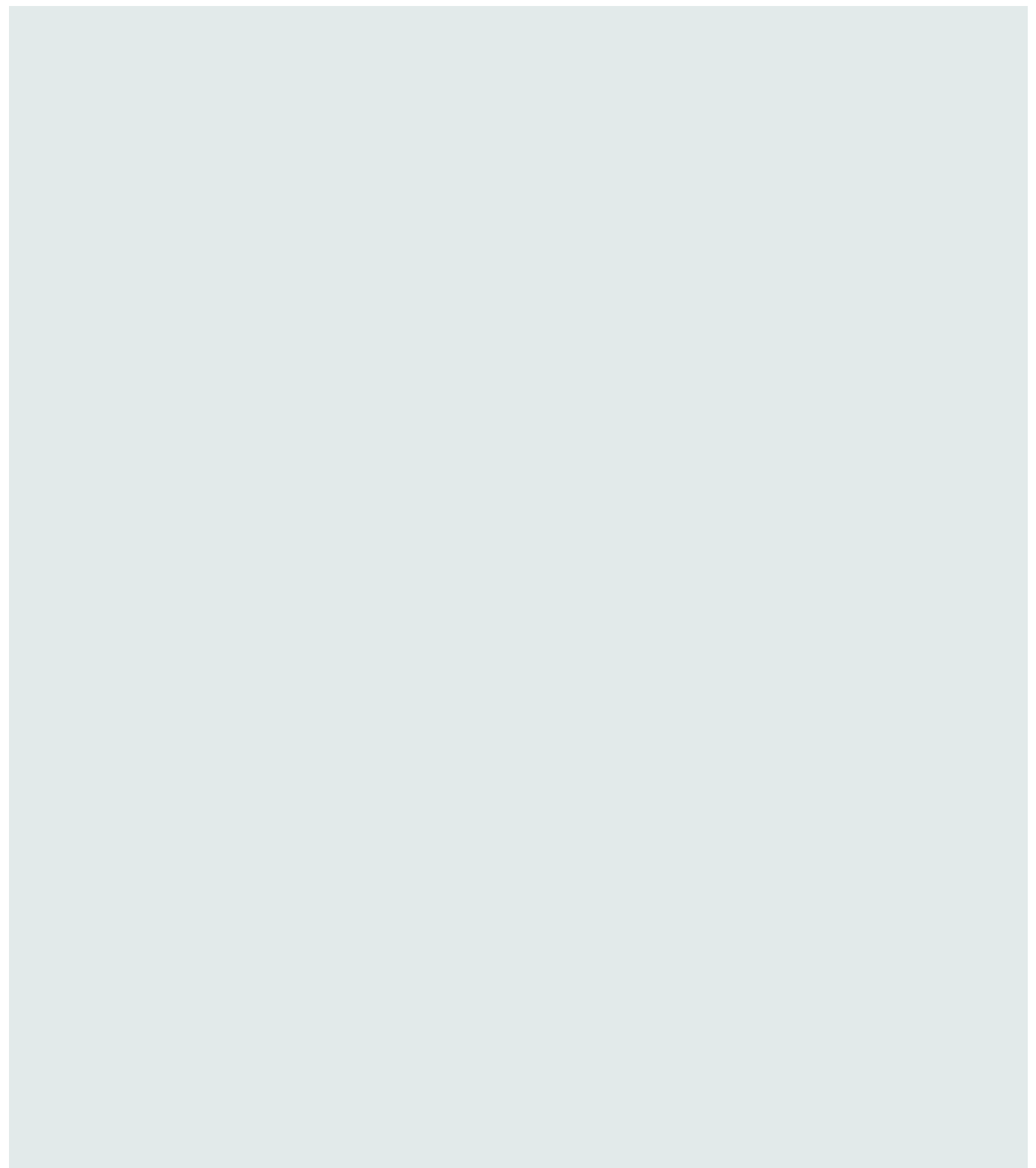
Again, talk only about the experiences of the peer group you are working with – e.g. if you are working with younger women, talk only about what it is like to be a younger woman in their community!

#### TS4-A-7 Game of life

**Aims:** An exercise to highlight issues on discrimination and power. The exercise provides an opportunity to highlight various issues around differences in the position and status of people who are disabled and between men and women, and hence the differences in the challenges they face. Humour can take the edge off the game, but it can reveal things about communities which they may never have considered before.

Coe, S. and L. Wapping (2010)

Refer to the exercise in the supporting documents folder [on the USB stick](#).



**VIOLENCE  
GENDER  
& WASH**

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