



One step forwards 45 min

EXPLORING FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

ROLE-PLAY

PLENARY EXERCISE

About the exercise

TARGET AUDIENCE

Any group willing to engage in participatory learning.

PURPOSE

- To help participants appreciate the importance of human rights/freedom of religion or belief (FORB) for people of all faiths and none, by putting themselves in the shoes of people from other backgrounds.
- To increase awareness of the challenges that people of other religions or beliefs meet in daily life.
- To illustrate how religion/belief and other identities such as gender and class intersect, with the result that some people face multiple disadvantages.



DESCRIPTION

In this simple role-play exercise, participants put themselves in the shoes of characters they are given and take a step forward if their character would agree with a statement read out by the facilitator. As the physical gap between participants widens, the advantages and disadvantages facing different groups in society become apparent.

Instructions

RESOURCES

- A space/room big enough for participants to stand next to each other in a line along one wall and take about 15 small steps forwards towards the other side of the room.
- Photocopied [character cards](#) to hand out.
- A list of [statements](#) to read out.

Find several versions of the statements and character cards adapted to particular countries and regions at www.forb-learning.org/changemakers-onestepforwards.

This exercise and the accompanying resources are available in multiple languages as part of Session 3 of the Local Changemakers Course: www.forb-learning.org/changemakers-languages.

ADVANCE PREPARATION

Prepare character cards and statements as follows:

- Choose a standardised set of character cards and statements as a starting point. Standardised sets of characters and statements tailored to a range of regional/country contexts are available on the link above. Choose the set that best relates to your geographic and cultural context.

Then:

- Choose which characters to use. In each standardised set you will find around 30 character cards to edit and print. You need one character card per participant. Select characters to use based on greatest relevance and diversity of characters. Fuller guidance on how to select and adapt characters can be found in the documents.
- Choose which statements you will use. You need 12-15 statements to read out. Select statements from the standardised list based on relevance to your country context.

HOW TO INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE 8 MIN

If necessary, ask participants to help you move tables and chairs out of the way before starting the exercise.

- Explain that we are now going to think about who has advantages and disadvantages in our communities and how that impacts upon their lives.
- Explain that the group is going to do a simple role-play exercise in plenary. Everyone will be given a character. They need to line up with their backs to one side of the room. The only thing they have to do is to take a step forward if they think their character would agree with a statement that you are going to read out.
- Distribute characters randomly asking people to keep their character secret. It doesn't matter if a man gets a woman's character or vice versa.
- Spend a few minutes helping people to get into character by asking them to reflect briefly on the following questions.

Imagine that you are the character on your card:

- What was your childhood like?
- What is your everyday life like – what do you do in a typical day, who do you socialise with, what is your income and lifestyle?
- What are you afraid of and what do you hope for?

HOW TO RUN THE EXERCISE 35 MIN

• **ROLE-PLAY** (15 MIN)

Ask the participants to stand next to one another in a straight line on one side of the room. Tell them that you will read out a number of statements. If they think their role/character would be able to agree with a statement, they should take one step forwards. If their character would disagree, then they should stand still.

Emphasise that the point of the game is NOT to take steps forwards but to be as true to the reality of the life of your character as possible. Participants are not allowed to talk during the exercise.

Read the statements out loud, one at a time. After each statement, pause to allow participants time to think about if their character can move forward. After you have read all statements, give participants a moment to note their positions in the room compared to other people, without saying who they were.

• **DISCUSSION IN PLENARY** (20 MIN)

Ask the participants open questions such as the following. (Take one or two answers to each question, to ensure you have time for the final two questions.)

- What happened during the exercise?
- How did you feel stepping forwards or not being able to step forwards?
- How did it feel to see the growing gaps between people?

- Was it easy or difficult to play your role – to put yourself in that person's shoes?
- Were there moments when you felt your character's basic human rights were ignored, including their freedom of religion or belief? When?

Ask everybody to say what their character was.

- Do our respective positions in the room reflect the realities of inequality in our society in any ways? Who is being left behind – women, minorities, poor people?
- What consequences does this have for people's lives?

HOW TO CONCLUDE THE EXERCISE 2 MIN

Conclude by saying that human rights conventions say that we are born equal in rights and dignity – that we start on the same line. But denials of our equality based, for example, on our religious or belief identity, our social status or if we are a man or a woman, have a huge impact on our lives from the moment we are born. Many people get left behind.

Source

Adapted from the EU Commission's Compass manual and Education for Peace training materials for the Local Changemakers Course. www.educationforpeace.com/english/forb-php
www.forb-learning.org/changemakers