Gender ABC

Education Programme
for Primary Schools

Empowerment and Communication

The Gender ABC project is coordinated by

End FGM
EUROPEAN NETWORK

and implemented by

APF
ASSOCIAÇÃO PARA O PLANEAMENTO DA FAMÍLIA

TERRE DES FEMMES

AIDOS
ASSOCIAZIONE ITALIANA
DONNE PER LO SVILUPPO

MÉDICOS DEL MUNDO
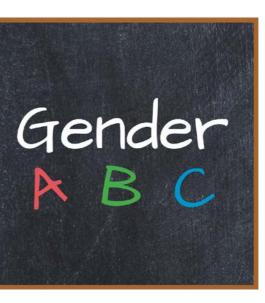
Gender A B C

Education Programme
for Primary Schools

Empowerment and Communication

This educational module was developed by **APF - Associação para o Planeamento da Família** in the framework of the project Gender ABC.

Summary

Section I

INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose

This module is based on individual empowerment and assertiveness regarding peer/group pressure. It focuses on the advantages to be assertive and emphatic, in detriment of doing things unwillingly for fear of group/peer rejection. In addition, it promotes understanding of privilege and discrimination.

2. Main topics

- Assertive communication
- Empathy
- Listening skills
- Discussion and argumentation skills
- Peer pressure vs. peer support
- Gender stereotypes
- Empowerment
- Participation
- Decision-making
- Privilege
- Discrimination

3. Keywords

Empowerment • Communication • Assertiveness

4. Learning objectives

Feel empowered and communicate effectively by:

- Using more conscious verbal and non verbal messaging
- Developing listening and argumentation skills
- Fostering respectful relationships amongst each other in class
- Recognising privilege and discrimination
- Listing ways of turning disempowerment into empowerment
- Fostering decision-making and participation

5. List of activities

Activity name	Target age	Total duration	Materials	Importance[1]
1 Where Do You Stand?	6-8 years 9-12 years	45 minutes	• Large empty room • List of statements (1 per 3-4 participants) • Tape • Agree" and "Disagree" signs • Flipchart paper • Flipchart markers • A4 paper • Pens • Optional (instead of flipchart): computer; data show; and USB with statements	★★★
2 The Empowerment Tunnel	6-8 years 9-12 years	45 minutes	• Large empty room	★★★
3 Who is the Best Communicator?	9-12 years	45-60 minutes	• Photos of celebrities (1 per 3-4 participants + 3 backup copies of each) • Blue tack (or tape) • Flipchart paper • Flipchart markers	★★☆

[1] Activities are ranked from one to three stars, in increasing order of importance, i.e. three stars for "highly recommended".

Section II

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 Where Do You Stand?[2] ★★★

Total delivery time
45 minutes
Preparation: 10
Delivery: 20
Follow-up: 15

Materials & Resources
☐ Large empty room
☐ List of statements (1 per 3-4 participants)
☐ Tape
☐ "Agree" and "Disagree" signs
☐ Flipchart paper
☐ Flipchart markers
☐ A4 paper
☐ Pens
optional ☐ Computer; data show; and USB with statements (instead of flipchart)

Target age
6-8 years
9-12 years

→ BACKGROUND

The aim of the activity is to **foster participation while developing listening and argumentation skills**. Participants take a physical position in the room and then explain and support their opinions.

[2] Adapted from the Council of Europe Manual *Compasito*, p. 192

→ SCENARIO

A Educators divide the room into two parts and put up signs "AGREE" and "DISAGREE" at either end. For younger participants, educators can make use of non-verbal signs (e.g. Green/Red; Smiley/Non-Smiley).

B Educators write discussion statements on a flipchart, each on a separate page, and place them on the line in the middle of the room. For younger participants, educators could add a graphic picture to each statement. In case the display of the room allows good visibility, instead of making use of the flipchart, educators could project the discussion statements.

C Educators announce to the participants that the aim of the activity is to share personal opinions on some important matters: each time educators read a statement, participants decide whether they agree or disagree with it, and then stand in the part of the room where they see the related sign "Agree/ Disagree".
The goal is to discuss each topic and
1) argue persuasively,
2) listen attentively and
3) be able to change opinion and position.

Main rules:
• No-one can speak until everyone takes a position
• The more strongly you agree or disagree with the statement, the further away from the line you will stand
• No-one can stay on the middle line, but if you cannot decide or feel confused about a question, you can stay towards the middle on one side or the other

D Educators show participants the first statement and read it aloud. Then, they ask participants to decide what they think and to take a position. Educators wait until everyone takes a position, then ask individuals from both positions the reason of their decision.

E After allowing a reasonable time for discussion, educators invite participants, if they wish, to change position. If many of them do it, educators ask what arguments have made them change their minds. Educators continue this process for all the statements. Discussion time on each statement needs to be limited so that the activity does not become too long.

★ To keep the participants - especially younger children - alert, educators can encourage stretching or do a quick energiser between questions.

Primary Schools
Empowerment and Communication

Gender
A B C

Gender
A B C

Primary Schools
Empowerment and Communication

Example of statements:

- All children, regardless of age, have the right to express their opinion on matters affecting their life

- -

- Children have no right to participate in family decision making; parents/legal guardians know what is best for children

- -

- If a child's parents are separated or divorced, the child has the right to express their views in the legal process

- -

- Only outspoken or older children can participate in decision-making affecting their lives

- -

- Boys are better at decision-making than girls

- -

- Boys and girls can participate in family decision-making equally

- -

- There is no point in asking children to express their views on school issues

- -

- Not all children have the same right to participate in society; poor children cannot participate as much as others

- -

- Children who have been in trouble with the law lose their right to participate in any decision-making process

- -

- To participate at school means to talk a lot in class

- -

- To participate at school means to have good grades

- -

- Every child can participate in the school group/class with equal rights – regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, physical ability and gender

---

→ BRIEF

Educators lead the discussion by asking questions such as:

> - **Did you like this exercise?**
> - **Was it difficult or easy to take a position?**
> - **Was it difficult or easy to argue your position?**
> - **Did you ever change your position? If so, what made you do so?**
> - **What is more important: to stick to our first opinion or to be able to change opinion?**
> - **Were there some statements more complicated than others? If so, which ones?**
> - **Are there some statements you are still uncertain about? If so, which ones?**
> - **Did you learn something new from this activity?**

Educators can **relate the activity to communication skills** by asking questions such as:

- What are the main types of communication?
  (e.g. verbal and non-verbal communication)

- What are the main elements of the communication process?
  (e.g. sender, receiver, message)

- What is assertive communication?
  (e.g. "how", "where" and "when" you choose to comment is probably more important than "what" you say)

- What is empathic communication?
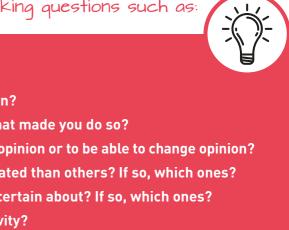 *(e.g. to be non-judgemental; to listen more than talk)*

Educators can **relate the activity to empowerment and to the right to participation** by asking questions such as:

- Are you able to participate in decision-making?
  (e.g. in your family, classroom, school, community)

- Can you imagine some new areas in which you could participate?

- In your opinion, why is the right to participation important for children?

Educators point out that **participation is an important right of every child** and read Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)[3].

---

[3] Article 12, Respect for the child's opinion: *"When adults are making decisions that affect you, you have the right to say freely what you think should happen and to have your opinions taken into account"* (CRC child-friendly version; Council of Europe Manual *Compasito*, p. 296).

Activity 2 Empowerment Tunnel ⭐⭐⭐

🕐 **Total delivery time**
45 minutes
Preparation: 20
Realisation: 15
Follow-up: 10

✏️ **Materials**
☐ Large empty room

👶 **Target age**
6-8 years
9-12 years

→ BACKGROUND

The aim of the activity is to **address the impact of positive and negative communication** (verbal and non-verbal) **for a person's self-esteem and self-drive** and to highlight the effects of peer pressure vs. peer support.

Participants pass through a human tunnel that can either disempower them or empower them, by verbally supporting or menacing their personal convictions.

→ SCENARIO

A Educators ask participants to individually identify two competences they like/would like to have, namely:

• One thing they feel they are good at or something they are proud off; e.g. "I'm good at cycling"
• One thing they find challenging but would like to improve; e.g. "I'm bad at dancing"

B Educators ask participants to join in pairs, preferably looking for someone they feel comfortable to work with. Educators then ask the pairs to decide who is "A" and who is "B" and to share their competences in two rounds ("A" speaks while "B" listens and vice-versa). Educators highlight that during the sharing, the "listeners" are expected to make use of non-verbal communication only; on the contrary at the end of the sharing, "listeners" are expected to verbalise their full support by saying loud and clear something like:

• "You are really awesome! You are the best!" (as feedback on the competence)
• "I believe you can do it! Don't give up! I'm here for you!" (as feedback on the challenge)

C Educators then go around the room and motivate the pairs to praise one another enthusiastically, allowing some time for pairs to rehearse the best praise they can possibly give.

D For the next phase, educators ask participants to create a "human tunnel" that will allow them to experience positive and negative feedback. To create a solid compact human tunnel, educators ask the pair members to hold both hands while facing one another and ask all pairs to align closely together (thus forming "the tunnel").

E Educators then invite participants to walk inside the tunnel, one by one, and give the following guidelines:

Guidelines

• This is the human tunnel and it helps you to understand the impact of empowerment and positive communication, or the lack of it
• You are invited to walk inside the tunnel while stating a verbal message
• Firstly, "A" members walk into the tunnel; then "B" members do it
• The walk inside the tunnel is always individual
• The tunnel verbally interacts with you, either in a positive way or a negative way
• At each round, you are given precise instructions on what to say
• The walk inside the tunnel is meant to be paced and slow; running is not allowed
• The role of the people composing the human tunnel is to state verbal messages, loud and clear, according to the instructions given in each round
• The people composing the human tunnel are never allowed to physically touch the person who is doing the walk
• While you do the walk inside the tunnel, your pair is waiting for you at the end of the tunnel, to welcome you
• While welcoming you, your pair, as well as everyone, is requested to remain silent; at this stage, only non-verbal interaction is allowed (eye-contact, hug, high-five, smile, etc.)
• Once you meet your pair at the end of the tunnel, you stay at the end of the tunnel and align yourself with the rest of the group (as to "become the tunnel" again)
• One by one, pairs move from the front of the tunnel to the end of the tunnel, in a continuous rotating pace
• Once "A" members have done the walk, "B" members do it

F Educators start the activity by giving the instructions that apply for the first round (i.e. encouragement and/or discouragement guidelines for the walking participant and the tunnel).
Educators assist pairs to move from the front of the tunnel to the end of the tunnel, one by one, in a continuous rotating pace. Whenever a participant is out of the tunnel, educators allow the pair time for their reunion, to be nurturing and meaningful.

Educators can run different types of rounds. The instructions for the four main types of rounds follow below.

ROUND 1 **(Competence vs. Discouragement) – Pressure to Fail**

- Participant speaks well of oneself (e.g. "I'm a good cycler! I'm really awesome!")
- Human tunnel responds with discouragement (e.g. "You are terrible! You look ridiculous! You should be ashamed of yourself! Give it up! You'll never succeed!")

ROUND 2 **(Challenge vs. Encouragement) – Support to Succeed**

- Participant speaks badly of oneself (e.g. "I'm a terrible dancer! I'll give up trying! I'll never succeed!")
- Human tunnel responds with encouragement (e.g. "You are great! I love your style! You just need to practice a bit more! I can teach you some moves! You can count on me! I'll always be here to support you! I believe in you! Don't give up! I'm sure you'll succeed!")

ROUND 3 **(Challenge vs. Discouragement) – Pressure to Fail**

- Participant speaks badly of oneself (e.g. "I'm a terrible dancer!")
- Human tunnel responds with discouragement (e.g. "You are really terrible! You look ridiculous! You should be ashamed of yourself! Give it up! You'll never succeed!")

ROUND 4 **(Competence vs. Encouragement) – Support to Succeed**

- Participant speaks well of oneself (e.g. "I'm a good cycler! I'm really awesome!")
- Human tunnel responds with encouragement (e.g. "You are amazing! I'm so proud of you! I'll always be here to support you! Go for it!")

If educators only have time for one round, they select a round of "encouragement". Moreover, educators make sure that:

- every round of "discouragement" is followed by a round of "encouragement"
- the session's last round is one of encouragement
- participants who have been bullied before only experience rounds of encouragement from the group

Variation:

Instead of addressing a key competence, educators could address the core identity; they could ask each participant to go through the tunnel by just stating his/her own name repeatedly (e.g. "I am Sarah"). The human tunnel then replies. Four possible rounds follow below.

ROUND 1 **(Discouragement)**

- The human tunnel jeopardizes the participant's identity by denying her/his/their name (e.g. "You aren't Sarah, you are just a student", "You aren't Sarah, Sarahs are cool!")

ROUND 2 **(Encouragement)**

- The human tunnel reinforces the participant's identity by repeating her/his name and adding positive real characteristics (e.g. "Sarah, you're awesome!", "Sarah, you have such a great smile!", "Sarah, I love you!")

ROUND 3 **(Fully Discouragement)**

- The human tunnel jeopardizes the participant's identity by simply repeating "NO" endlessly (i.e. "No, no, no….")

ROUND 4 **(Fully Encouragement)**

- The human tunnel reinforces the participant's identity by simply repeating "YES" endlessly (i.e. "Yes, yes, yes….")

→ BRIEF

Educators ask participants to sit down and lead the discussion by asking questions such as:

- **How did you feel?**
- **What has this exercise shown you?**
- **Is it important to listen to others? If so, to what extend?**
- **Does what other people say influence our character? If so, to what extend?**
- **What is negative communication? Give examples (verbal and non-verbal)**
- **What is positive communication? Give examples (verbal and non-verbal)**
- **Do you tend to make more use of positive or negative communication? Why? If negative, how can you change it?**
- **Just reflect and answer to yourself: do you tend to receive mostly positive or negative feedback? Why? If negative, how can you change it?**
- **What is the easiest: to be a bully or to be supportive? To destroy or to build?**
- **How can you resist oppression? What strategies could you use?**
- **What is disempowerment? Give examples (caused by self and caused by other)**
- **What is empowerment? Give examples (caused by self and caused by other)**
- **Can disempowered people empower themselves? If so, how?**
- **Can empowered people empower others? If so, how?**

This activity highlights the importance of being surrounded by cooperative and encouraging people, and addresses the personal responsibility of selecting nurturing environments. Also, it highlights the importance of being cooperative towards other people. To feel cooperation and encouragement in everyday life – in detriment of judgement and discouragement – is a key factor for success, as it raises self-esteem and self-drive for action.

We are responsible for the way we treat the other and ourselves. The way we treat other people can significantly impact on their well-being, as well as on ours. It is important to listen to the others and be able to change opinion, to learn and evolve. At the same time, it is important to develop critical thinking, and to be able to know how to differentiate constructive feedback from negative feedback, to be able to identify bullying and resist oppression.

To support, praise and encourage the others requires empathy and emotional intelligence, competences that are at the basis of positive communication and empowerment.

Activity 3 Who is the Best Communicator ★★☆

Total delivery time
45-60 minutes
Preparation: 10
Delivery : 20-35
Follow-up: 15

Materials
- ☐ Photos of celebrities (1 per 3-4 participants + 3 backup copies of each)
- ☐ Blue tack (or tape)
- ☐ Flipchart paper
- ☐ Flipchart markers

Target age
9-12 years

→ BACKGROUND

The aim of the activity is to **understand what makes a person a good communicator**, by means of exploring different types of verbal and non-verbal communication.

→ SCENARIO

A Educators gather participants in a circle and tell participants that during this activity a few celebrities will be invited to help them explore what makes a person a good communicator.

B Educators ask participants to brainstorm what makes a person a good communicator giving a quick input on the two main types of communication (i.e. verbal and non-verbal) and register their ideas on a flipchart.

C Educators spread pictures of national and international celebrities/public figures/cartoon characters on the floor, inside the circle. When selecting the celebrities, educators make sure to promote diversity, especially in terms of gender and style of communication (e.g. emphatic, aggressive, humorous, seeking vs. avoiding eye contact, seeking vs. avoiding body contact). A few examples of celebrities follow below.

- **International celebrities**: Beyoncé, Ariana Grande, Zendaya, Billie Eilish, Kally's Mashup, Vampirina, Pokemon, famous TV host amongst children, youtubers, instagramers
- **National celebrities:** singer, actress/actor, athlete, comedian, the President
- **Currently famous cartoon characters:** Frozen, Mickey Mouse, Dora, Cinderella, Zootopia, The Simpsons

D Educators ask participants to walk towards the picture of the celebrity/cartoon character they feel they know best (regardless if they like the celebrity or not).

E Educators make groups of 3-4 participants according to the celebrity they have chosen. In case several participants have chosen the same celebrity, educators split them in different groups (maximum 3-4 groups per celebrity).

F Educators ask each group to identify the communication skills of the celebrity (verbal and non-verbal, positive and negative traits), sum them up in a flipchart paper and present them in plenary.

→ BRIEF

Educators lead the discussion by asking questions such as:

- **Did you like this exercise?**
- **Was it easy or difficult?**
- **What is the aim of communication? (to send and receive a message)**
- **What makes a good communicator? Give examples (verbal and non-verbal)**
- **What makes a bad communicator? Give examples (verbal and non-verbal)**
- **Do you consider yourself a good communicator? If so, why? If not, what can you do to improve?**
- **Is it important to be a good communicator? If so, what are the advantages?**
- **Does a good communicator empower oneself? If so, how come?**
- **Does a good communicator empower others? If so, how come?**

Session Plan

Name of the module: Empowerment and Communication

Venue / school: _____

Focal point / teacher: _____

Class (grade and reference)**:** _____

Nº of participants: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / _____   **Duration:** _____

Activity/(ies) chosen: _____

Materials (all checked)**:** ☐ **yes** ☐ **no**

NOTES:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Project Gender ABC

MODULES LIST

Primary School Modules

01 *Body Safety / Female Genital Mutilation*

02 ***Empowerment and Communication***

03 *Gender-Based Violence*

04 *Gender Social Norms and Stereotypes*

05 *Human Rights and Children's Rights*

06 *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*

Secondary School Modules

01 *Cyber Violence*

02 *Early Forced Marriage*

03 *Empowerment and Communication*

04 *Female Genital Mutilation*

05 *Gender-Based Violence*

06 *Gender Social Norms and Stereotypes*

07 *Group Building*

08 *Human Rights and Children's Rights*

09 *Intimate Partner Violence*

10 *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*

11 *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*

12 *Sexual Violence*

Support Documents

01 *Risk Assessment*

02 *General Methodology*

03 *General Glossary*

✉ For more information please contact: **info@endfgm.eu**

Gender
A B C

A project by:

End FGM
EUROPEAN NETWORK

APF
ASSOCIAÇÃO PARA O PLANEAMENTO DA FAMÍLIA

TERRE DES FEMMES

AIDOS
ASSOCIAZIONE ITALIANA
DONNE PER LO SVILUPPO

MÉDICOS DEL MUNDO