

International  
HIV/AIDS

Alliance

Supporting community action on AIDS  
in developing countries

# A parrot on your shoulder

A guide for people starting to work with orphans and vulnerable children

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# Acknowledgements

## The International HIV/AIDS Alliance

The International HIV/AIDS Alliance (the Alliance) is an international non-governmental organisation that supports communities in developing countries to make a significant contribution to HIV prevention, AIDS care and to the provision of support to children affected by the epidemic. Since its establishment in 1993, the Alliance has provided financial and technical support to non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations from more than 40 countries.

## Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

*A parrot on your shoulder* is one of a series of resources that the Alliance is developing to encourage participation in practice. It seeks to support individuals and organisations working with orphans and other vulnerable children living in a world with HIV/AIDS. Today, more than 13 million children currently under the age of 15 have lost one or both parents to AIDS. By 2010, this number is expected to have risen to more than 25 million (UNICEF, UNAIDS and USAID 2002). *A parrot on your shoulder* is also a useful companion to the Alliance's resources for communities working with orphans and vulnerable children in Africa, *Building Blocks: Africa-Wide Briefing Notes* and *Building Blocks in Practice* (January 2003).

The development of *A parrot on your shoulder* started with an initial request from one of our partners, the Khmer HIV/AIDS NGO Alliance (KHANA) in Cambodia. KHANA described a great willingness and enthusiasm among their partners to work with children in a more participatory way, but had found that people were uncertain about how to get started. For example, during a field visit we noticed that children, having been lectured by a field worker about health and good behaviour, seemed very quiet and downcast. The field worker was uncertain about how to engage the children further. We decided to play some games with the children and this led to enormous fun and lots of laughter. Following the games, the children were much more relaxed and able to talk with the field worker and other adults about their problems, hopes and ideas. One grandmother was heard to comment, 'I never knew games could be educational!'

Further consultation suggested that this situation is quite common. People have enthusiasm, willingness and some skills, but need ideas to help them initiate meaningful dialogue with children, and to keep the conversations going. This can be true for people meeting children they don't know for the first time, as well as for community workers who may know the children in their projects, but who want to create an opportunity for children to be more involved in project design and development.

This resource aims to meet the needs of people who want more meaningful engagement with children by providing activities that will help them get started.

The selection of activities is based on what our partners and others have found to work well.

## Issues to consider when thinking about encouraging children's participation

### What is children's participation?

Participation is the process of involving children and young people in making decisions about projects that aim to benefit them. The list below shows different types of children's participation. One type is not 'better' than another: it depends on what works best for you, the children you are working with and the particular project you are working on. Different types of participation can be appropriate with different children and at different stages of a project.

- ✓ **Assigned but informed** – Adults decide on the project and children volunteer to be involved. The children understand the project. They know why they're involved and who decided to involve them. The children have a meaningful role and the adults respect their input.
- ✓ **Consulted and informed** – The project is designed and run by adults, but children fully understand the process and their opinions are taken seriously.
- ✓ **Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children** – Though adults have the initial idea for the project, young people are involved in planning and implementation. Their views are considered and they are involved in making the decisions.
- ✓ **Child-initiated and directed** – The children or young people have the initial idea for the project and decide how it is to be implemented. Adults are available for support but do not take over.
- ✓ **Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults** – The children or young people have the ideas and initiate the project. They then seek advice, discussion and support from adults. The adults provide their expertise for the children or young people to consider.

*'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with age and maturity of the child ...'*

Article 12, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

### What is NOT meaningful children's participation?

There are some activities in which children are involved that we don't consider to be meaningful participation:

- ✗ **Manipulation** – Children or young people don't understand the project and its aims. An example of this would be pre-school children carrying political placards about the impact of social policies on children.
- ✗ **Decoration** – Adults ask children or young people simply to sing or dance at an event related to a particular cause wearing T-shirts proclaiming this cause, and do not explain the cause to the children or involve them in the organisation of the event.
- ✗ **Tokenism** – Children or young people are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions. An example is the token use of children on conference panels, where they are effectively the voice of adult messages.

Adapted from: Hart (1992), and Save the Children Fund (2002)

## Why is children's participation important?

- The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to participate.
- Children and young people are part of the communities that we work with, and projects benefiting them should be seen as benefiting the community as a whole.
- Involving children and young people in decision-making on projects aimed at benefiting them builds ownership and will build their skills and confidence.
- Evidence shows that projects that involve children and young people are more likely to be successful.
- Participation will provide children and young people with important skills and new learning.
- Children's and young people's participation can promote community responsibility for child welfare issues and increases awareness about children's abilities and rights.
- Adults learn how to listen to children and to give them more respect.

## Things to consider when planning for children's participation

- Be clear about why you want to involve children.
- Ensure that children understand the purpose of their involvement, what it is contributing towards, how much time it will take and what they can expect to gain from it.
- Consider how you will accommodate their views and ideas, especially if they may conflict with those of adults.
- Consider what type of participation is most appropriate for children at each stage of the project.
- Consider how you will enable marginalised and less confident children to participate fully in activities and not further marginalise them or reduce their confidence.

- You will need to have the support of your colleagues and the organisation before involving children and young people in your projects.
- Those working with children will need to be committed to the rights of children and young people and to recognise that the benefits will outweigh any extra resources and time needed.
- Participation needs planning – consider the time and resources you will need.
- Remember that children come from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds. They vary in age, gender, disability, caste and class, and have different values, ideas, hopes and fears.

## Things to consider to ensure safe working with children

- In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ensure that all work with children is in their best interests and does them no harm.
- Always let your organisation know where, when and with which group of children you are going to be working. Consider protection issues in deciding the time and location of the activity (for example, whether the children are to be going home alone in the evening, or whether the venue is isolated).
- Inform parents, adult carers or any authorities responsible for the children you are intending to work with of your plans.
- Find out if other non-governmental organisations are working with the children you intend to work with.
- Ideally, work in pairs, or if not, ensure the presence of a parent or carer, especially if working with individual children or small groups.
- Establish boundaries and good practice before working with children.

- Unless you are experienced in this work, avoid working with young people who have been affected by alcohol or drugs. Arrange to meet them another time.
- When using some of the more active games, be aware of physical safety issues. Check the area you'll be working in for physical hazards.
- Consider how you will respond if children disclose or raise issues of inequity, exploitation or abuse.
- Remember that just as it is a child's right to participate, it is also their right not to participate if they do not wish to.

Adapted from Rogers (2000) and Save the Children UK (2000)

### Why use games to initiate a dialogue with children?

- Most children enjoy games – they are fun and foster a feeling of togetherness.
- They can be a non-threatening way for children and facilitators to relax and get to know each other.
- Through games, facilitators can learn a lot about the group of children they are working with.
- Games can help acquire or improve social skills, confidence, concentration, communication, co-operation, and build trust and reduce anxiety.

### When to use games and how to choose them

- Make sure you understand the instructions well before starting the game and feel confident about facilitating it.
- Have any materials needed for the game ready.
- Don't force anyone to participate in the game but encourage them to do so.
- If there are participants who are uncertain, begin with less interactive games, or ones that don't rely on disclosure of personal information.
- Think of some strategies for dealing with any potential 'saboteurs' who may try to interrupt or stop the game. Perhaps explore why they want to do so and the effect on the group.
- Be aware of cultural values. For instance, some activities may be more appropriate for single-sex groups in certain settings. Issues around personal space and physical contact also need to be considered.
- Choose games appropriate to the topic you intend to work on in the future, the time available and the type of group you're working with.
- Consider the physical abilities of the group as well as literacy levels when choosing your games.
- Adapt games according to your purpose and experience, and the cultural context in which you are working.
- Keep some notes about how the activities went, which you can review as you build up your confidence and experience.

Adapted from UNICEF (1998)

## So, are you ready to involve children?

Does your project intend to have an ongoing involvement with children? Have you considered whether being involved will be in the best interests of the child and do them no harm?

No

Don't create false expectations! Reconsider whether to involve children at this time

Yes

Have parents, guardians or other adults responsible for the children been informed and given their permission?

No

Get their informed permission

Yes

Have the children been informed of the reasons for their involvement, the time it will take, how it could benefit them and have given their consent?

No

Explain why you would like them to be involved – but only if they want to. Participation is a right, not an obligation!

Yes

Are you committed to meaningful involvement of children, listening to their freely expressed views and taking them into account?

No

Reconsider whether to involve children at this time

Yes

Are all children being included?

No

Consider how you would remove the barriers to some children's involvement, such as disability or language

Yes

Have the risks of children's involvement been considered, including issues of confidentiality?

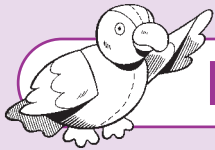
No

Consider what the risks might be and how you will handle confidential issues together

Yes

Go ahead





# Bubbles

A getting-to-know-you activity that encourages participants to talk to each other as they walk around.

## What will you need?

- Nothing.

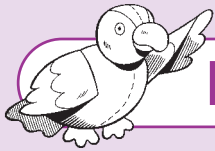
## What do you need to look out for?

- Use all the space you can.
- Keep an eye out to avoid heavy impact collisions!

## How does it work?

- Everyone finds a partner and holds both of their hands.
- Participants have to imagine they are bubbles floating in the air and walk very slowly and gently around the space or room they are in, focusing on each other and talking to each other.
- When one pair bumps into or brushes another pair, their bubble 'pops' and they swap partners.





# My name is ... and I like ...

10

Another good way of learning and remembering participants' names. This works best in groups of around ten.

## What will you need?

- Nothing.

## What do you need to look out for?

- Participants should not feel embarrassed if they cannot remember the whole sequence. Instead, encourage the group to help each other out by giving clues.
- If participants cannot think of an animal, fruit, colour or adjective that begins with the same letter as their name, don't let them feel embarrassed. Instead, encourage the group to help.

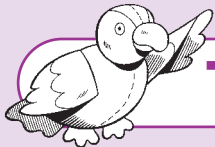
## How does it work?

- Participants sit or stand in a circle.
- The first participant says their name and the name of a favourite animal, fruit, vegetable, colour and so on that begins with the same letter as their name (for example, 'My name is Patrick and I like ponies').
- The next participant repeats this and adds their own name (for example, 'His name is Patrick and he likes ponies. My name is Maria and I like monkeys').
- The third participant repeats the names and likes of the previous participants and adds their own name (for example, 'His name is Patrick and he likes ponies. Her name is Maria and she likes monkeys. My name is Divya and I like dogs').
- Continue until all participants have introduced themselves in this way.

## Adaptation/variation

- Instead of using favourite animals and so on, you can use adjectives that describe the participant (for example, 'I am generous Grace') or that describe how participants are feeling (for example, 'My name is Hussein and I'm happy' or 'My name is Arnando and I'm angry' or 'My name is Sylvia and I'm sad').





# The sheet game

12

Another good activity to reinforce participants' remembering of each other's names.

## What will you need?

- A large sheet or piece of paper.

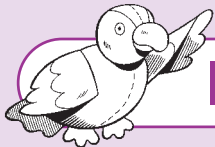
## What do you need to look out for?

- Participants need to have introduced themselves to each other already.

## How does it work?

- Participants are divided into two teams.
- The teams are separated by a large sheet, which can be held up by two facilitators.
- Each team chooses one participant to stand in front of the material, facing the other team behind it.
- On the count of three, the sheet is lifted and the two players facing each other have to say the other player's name as fast as they can.
- Whoever says the correct name first can take the other person onto their team's side.
- The objective is to get as many people as possible onto your team.





# If I could be ...

14

This is another getting-to-know-you activity that works best when it is done quite quickly.

What will you need?

- Nothing.

How does it work?

- Participants stand or sit in a circle.
- Ask them to think about who they would like to be and why. You can stipulate categories of famous people from history, sports, music, movies and so on, or characters who are known in the local community.
- Ask each participant to introduce themselves and say who they would like to be and why.

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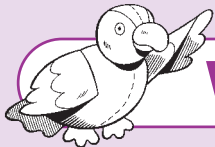
## Examples

If I could be a ...

- car I would be ... because ...
- colour I would be ... because ...
- cartoon character I would be ... because ...
- animal I would be ... because ...
- fruit I would be ... because ...







# Who am I?

16

This activity encourages analysis and question asking.

## What will you need?

- Sticky tape.
- Several pieces of paper with names of famous pop stars, footballers, movie stars, historical figures or people who are well known in the local community, written in marker pen.

## What do you need to look out for?

- This activity needs a group with a shared background.

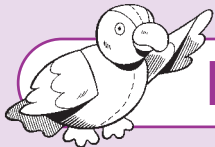
## How does it work?

- Ask for a volunteer and stick one of the names on their back, getting them to show their back to all the other participants.
- Explain to participants that the aim of the activity is for the volunteer to guess whose name is on their back by asking the rest of the group questions.
- The questions can only be answered with 'yes' or 'no' (for example, 'Is this person female?' or 'Is this person alive?').
- The volunteer can make a guess at any time. If they are correct, then the person who answered the last question will have a new name stuck on their back, and the activity continues as before. If they are wrong, they have to continue to ask more questions.
- You can agree a time limit or a maximum number of questions to be asked with the participants.

## Adaptation/variation

- Instead of assigning participants a well-known person, they themselves could each come up with a well-known person to represent without letting the others know who they have chosen. The rest of the participants would then ask the questions that can only be answered with 'yes' or 'no' (for example, 'Are you a singer?' or 'Are you from this village/town/country?').





# Fruit salad

18

This fast and fun icebreaker works well with groups of eight or more, with children and facilitators participating. If the group is smaller, less fruit can be used.

## What will you need?

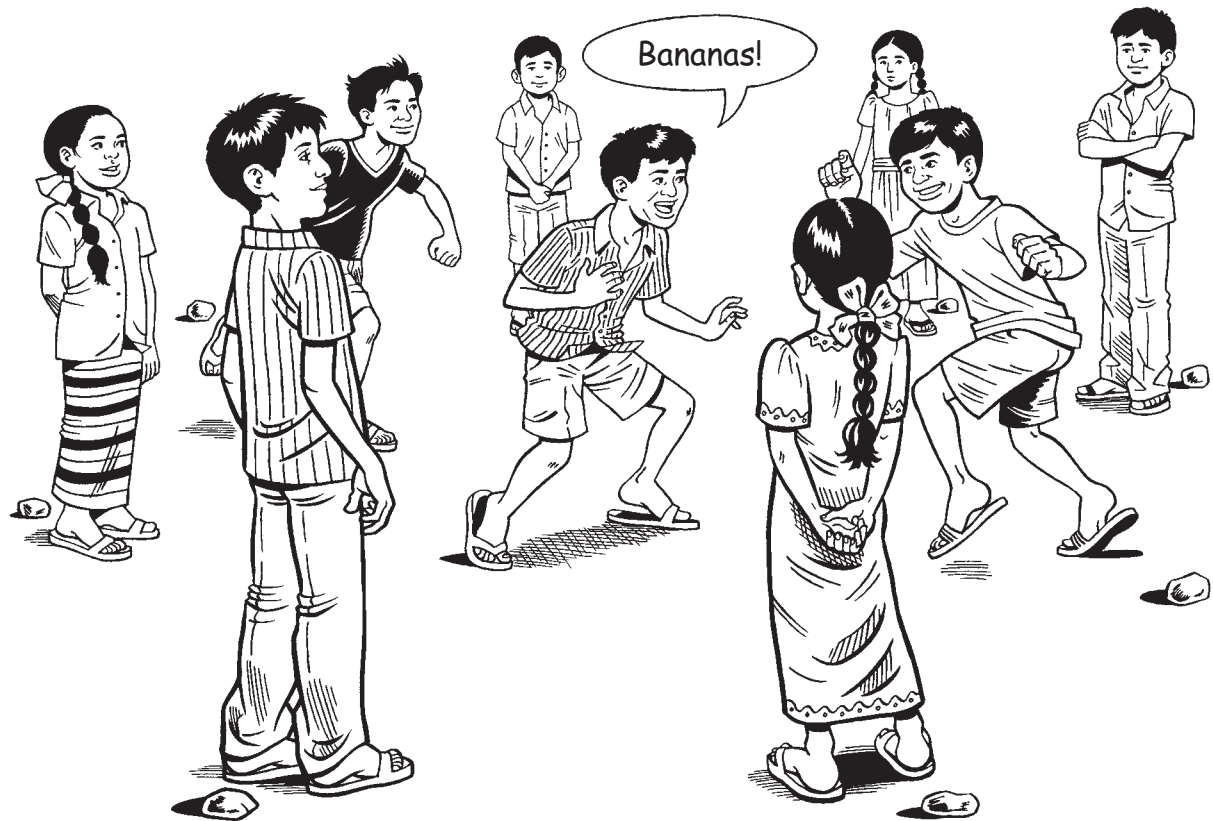
- Chairs *or*
- Stones or other kinds of place markers.

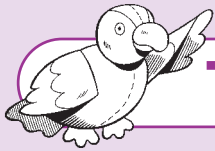
## What do you need to look out for?

- If using chairs, beware of participants getting rough, falling off chairs or hurting themselves!
- Participants should be moving and not just staying by their chair or place marker.

## How does it work?

- Participants sit or stand in a circle, with one person standing in the middle.
- The person in the middle asks three or four people (depending on the size of the group) what their favourite fruit is.
- The person in the middle goes around the circle giving each participant, including him- or herself, the name of one of the fruit in turn. For example, if the fruit are 'apples', 'oranges', 'bananas' and 'mangoes', the person in the middle goes around in the same order until everyone has been given the name of one of the fruit.
- The person in the middle then calls out the name of one of the fruit (for example, 'bananas').
- All the 'bananas' then swap places, with the person who was standing in the middle trying to take one of their places as they move.
- The person left without a place then stands in the middle, calls another fruit and attempts to get a place.
- At any time, the person in the middle can call 'fruit salad', which means that everybody has to move.





# The sun shines on ...

20

A variation on the theme of fruit salad that can be used to highlight what participants have in common.

## What will you need?

- Chairs *or*
- Stones or other kinds of place markers.

## What do you need to look out for?

- Use examples from your own culture/setting.
- Beware of participants getting rough or hurting themselves!

## How does it work?

- Participants sit or stand in a wide circle, with one person standing in the middle.
- The person in the middle calls out: 'The sun shines on everyone who/with ...'. This has to be something true of them, as well as potentially true for other participants.
- Everyone that this includes runs around the outside of the circle as fast as they can to an empty space.
- The person who does not get a space then goes into the middle and repeats the process.

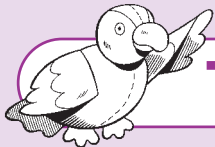
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## Examples

The sun shines on everyone who ...

- is wearing something blue
- is wearing socks
- plays football/cricket
- has a younger sister





# The winking game

22

An energetic activity that works best in larger groups.

## What will you need?

- Chairs *or*
- Place markers.

## What do you need to look out for?

- Cultural issues around winking.

## How does it work?

- Set up a circle with chairs (or place markers) and ask an equivalent number of participants to stand about half a metre behind the chairs, hands at their sides.
- Everyone else should sit on the chairs, leaving between one and three chairs empty, depending on the size of the group.
- One to three of the people behind the chairs will therefore have no participant in front of them.
- The objective is for those who have no one on the chair in front of them to fill that seat. This they do by winking at one of the seated participants, who then has to try to 'escape' from their chair and run to the chair of the person that has winked at them.
- However, the person behind the participant who is trying to 'escape' has to prevent them by tapping them on the back before they move out of reach. If they manage to do this, the participant has to stay where they are.

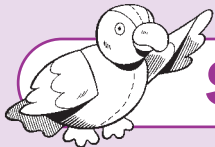
## Adaptation/variation

### 'Killer wink':

- Before starting, ask someone to be the 'killer' but to keep their identity a secret. Explain that one person in the group is the 'killer', who can 'kill' people by winking at them. Everyone then walks around in different directions, keeping eye contact with everyone they pass. If the 'killer' winks at someone, they have to play dead. Everyone who has not been 'killed' has to try to guess who the killer is. If only two people are left at the end, the 'killer' has won!







# Scissors, paper, rock

A fast-moving activity that encourages team work.

## What will you need?

- Nothing.

A facilitator explains the rules to participants, which are:

- Scissors can cut paper, but can be damaged by rock.
- Paper can be wrapped around rock, but can be cut by scissors.
- Rock can damage scissors, but paper can be wrapped around rock.
- Therefore, paper wins over rock, scissors win over paper, and rock wins over scissors.
- Hands are used to represent each: clenched fist for rock, index and middle finger spread for scissors, and hand held flat with palm facing down for paper.

## How does it work?

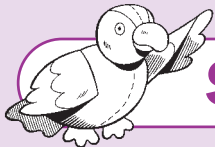
- Participants are divided into two groups.
- With their backs to each other, each group decides whether they want to be paper, scissors or rock without letting the other group know their decision.
- On the count of three, the two groups turn to face each other with the hand gesture to symbolise paper, scissors or rock.
- Sometimes neither group will win because they will both choose the same gesture.

## Adaptation/variation

'Samson and Delilah' revolves around the story of Samson, Delilah and the lion. Culturally appropriate characters can be substituted for these.

- Participants are divided into two groups. With their backs to each other, each group decides whether they will be Samson, Delilah or the lion without letting the other group know their decision. They turn around to face the other group and mime an action representing who they are (for example, flexed muscles and a deep voice could represent Samson, and a ferocious roar could be the lion, a feminine curtsy and high-pitched voice could be Delilah). Delilah defeats Samson, Samson defeats the lion and the lion defeats Delilah.





# Sit next to me

26

A fast-moving and energising activity.

## What will you need?

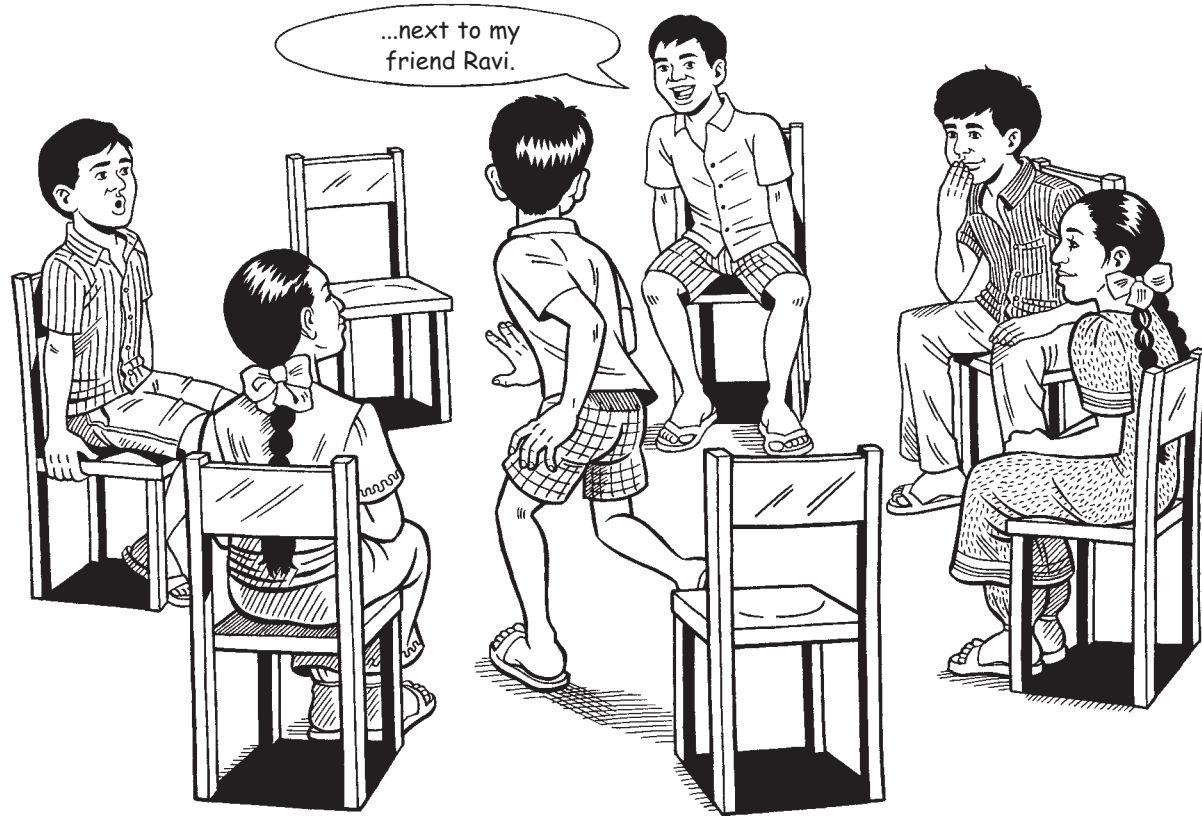
- Chairs – one more than the number of participants.

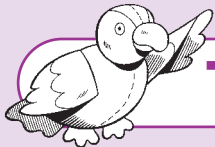
## What do you need to look out for?

- Try to ensure that none of the participants are left out.

## How does it work?

- Arrange chairs in a circle with one more chair than the number of people, and ask participants to sit down.
- The person with the empty chair on their right has to move onto it, saying 'I sit'.
- The person who now has an empty chair on their right moves and sits on the empty chair, saying 'on the chair'.
- The third person again has to move to the vacated chair on their right, but has to say 'next to my friend Ravi' (any other participant on the other side of the circle). That person then has to move very quickly to the empty chair.
- The same now happens with the newly vacated chair: that is, the person with the empty chair on their right has to move onto it, saying 'I sit' and so on.





# Tropical rainstorm

28

The aim of this activity is for participants to produce the sounds of a storm, and it works well with larger groups. This is a good introduction to group work, as the 'storm' will only be effective if everyone works together.

## What will you need?

- Nothing.

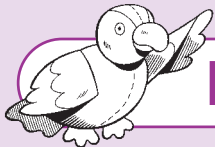
## How does it work?

- Participants stand in a circle.
- One person acts as the 'conductor' of the storm and starts by slowly rubbing both hands together.
- The participant either to the left or the right of the conductor is motioned to do the same, with the person to their left/right following suit, and so on until everybody is performing the same action.
- The 'conductor' then repeats the same process with another action (for example, clicking fingers, clapping, slapping thighs).
- The storm can be brought to a crescendo by, for example, adding stamping feet to clapping.
- The 'conductor' then follows the same steps in reverse to indicate the settling of the storm.

## Adaptation/variation

- Can also be used as a finishing game, as a form of applause for work well done.





# Human sculpture

30

This is a working together, problem solving and trust building activity.

## What will you need?

- Nothing.

## What do you need to look out for?

- Issues around personal space and touching, especially in mixed-sex groups, may need to be considered in some settings.
- Physical disabilities.

## How does it work?

- Ask a volunteer to move away to somewhere where they can't see the rest of the participants.
- Ask the remaining participants to form a human sculpture by joining hands and entwining themselves into as intricate a shape as possible.
- Ask the volunteer to return and disentangle the 'human sculpture'.

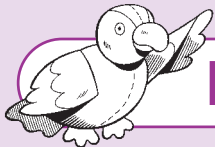
## Adaptation/variation

- Participants stand in a circle and join hands. Keeping their hands joined, ask them to move, twist and turn to form a human knot. Once they have done this, they have to unravel the knot without letting go of each other's hands.
- Ask the group to huddle in a small circle, close their eyes and hold both their arms up in front of them, hands open. They then have to find two hands that are free – preferably not belonging to the same person – and join their hands. Once everyone is holding hands, ask participants to open their eyes and to unravel the knot without separating their hands from each other.



**Group work, co-operation, trust building and problem solving**





# Dragons

An energising activity in which participants have to work co-operatively.

What will you need?

- Nothing.

What do you need to look out for?

- Space.
- Physical disabilities.

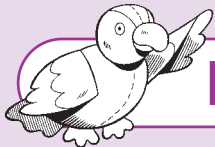
How does it work?

- Participants line up and each hold the shoulders of the person in front of them.
- The person at the front is the dragon's head; the person at the back is the tail.
- The activity starts with the dragon in a straight line standing still – it is asleep.
- The dragon only wakes up when one of the participants in the middle of the dragon's body shouts 'Chase!' Then the head starts to try to chase the tail, which is trying to keep out of its way.

Adaptation/variation

- If there are enough participants, this can also be played in teams of six to eight, with each team forming a dragon as above. The tails again have to try to escape from the head. With more dragons, room for manoeuvre is more restricted. When the head manages to catch the tail, they can change places.
- Another alternative is to have a volunteer try to catch the dragon's tail, which the head will try to protect.





# Points of contact

34

This activity encourages teamwork, problem solving, counting skills, trust and balance.

## What will you need?

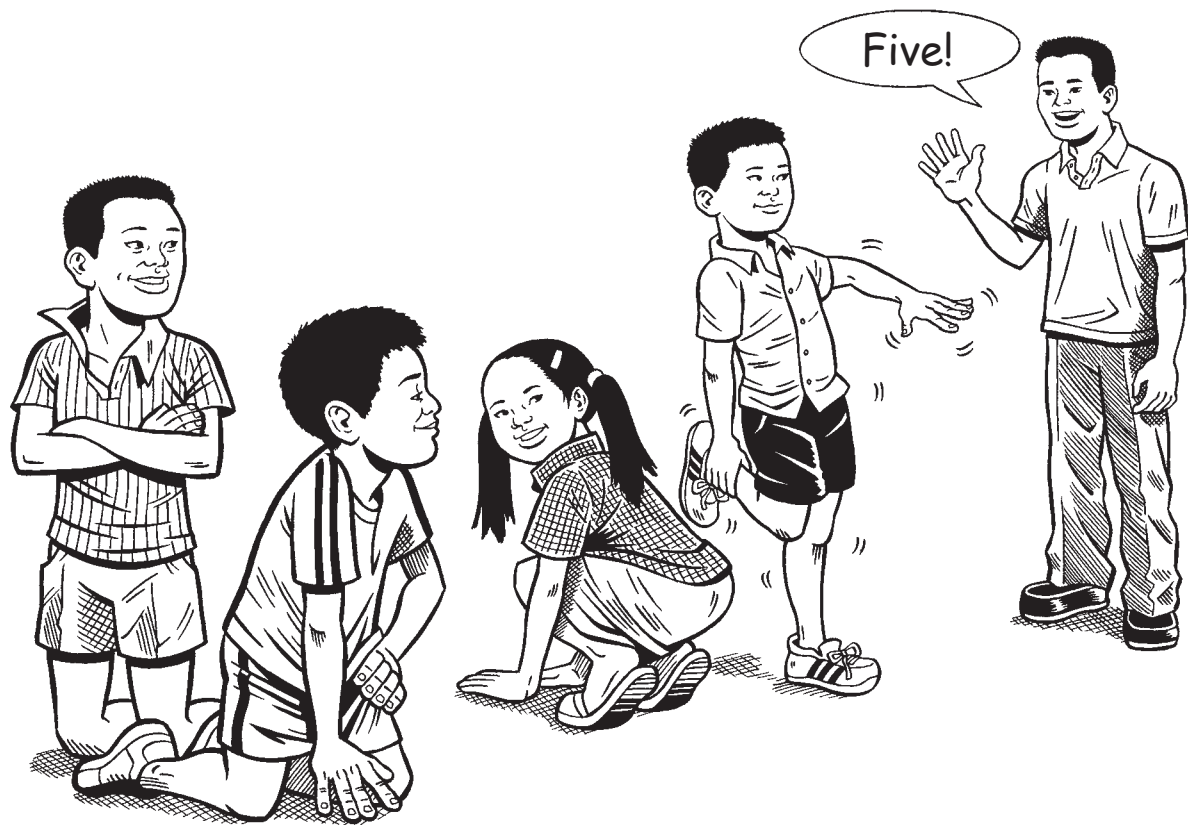
- Nothing.

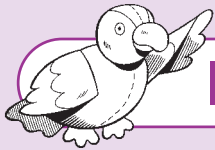
## What do you need to look out for?

- Children being too ambitious and falling over!

## How does it work?

- Explain to participants that there are seven points of the body that can touch/make contact with the floor in this game: two hands, two elbows, two knees, one forehead.
- Call a number between one and seven and ask each participant to touch the floor with that number of points of the body.
- You can then ask people to work together, first in pairs, then in threes, then in fours, and so on.
- Although the number called cannot be higher than seven times the number of participants, it can be lower than the number of people in the group. For example, a group of four people can go as low as two points of contact if two people carry the other two and stand on one leg at the same time.





# Islands

36

**An activity that encourages group work and problem solving.**

## What will you need?

- Several sheets of large paper *or*
- Chalk.

## What do you need to look out for?

- Sensitivities around physical contact.
- People pushing each other off the island.

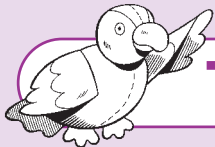
## How does it work?

- Place several sheets of paper on the ground to represent islands. Alternatively, you can draw islands on the ground with chalk.
- Participants 'swim' or walk around the room until a given signal, when they must stand on an island.
- Participants move around again and an island is removed.
- At the given signal, once again everyone must stand on an island.
- The game continues, with an island being removed each time until only one or two are left, depending on the size of the group.
- No one must be left outside when the time for standing on an island comes.

## Adaptation/variation

- Draw five circles on the floor with chalk. Give each island a name and ask all the participants to choose the island they would like to live on. Warn participants that one of the islands will sink into the sea and those on the island will have to move quickly onto another island. Allow suspense to build up and then call the name of the island that is sinking. Participants run to the other four islands. Continue this until everyone is squashed onto one island.





# Take your turn

38

An activity that explores group dynamics, encourages participants to value what everyone has to say and gives shy or quiet people a chance to contribute.

## What will you need?

- Six markers per participant – these can be stones, coins, twigs, and so on.

## What do you need to look out for?

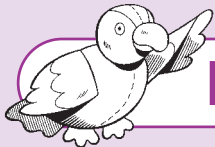
- Group dynamics – shy or quiet people feeling left out.

## How does it work?

- Ask participants to sit in a circle in groups of four or five.
- Give each participant six markers and explain that they should talk about a topic – something that everyone can contribute to. Each time a participant speaks, they have to place a marker in the centre of the circle (even when they say things like, 'yes', 'pardon', 'what did you say?').
- When a participant runs out of markers, they can no longer speak.
- You can then explore who does most of the talking and why, who does most of the listening and whether they are listening actively, the value of each, and so on.







# Find someone ...

40

An activity to encourage everyone in the group to speak to each other.

## What will you need?

- A sheet of A4 paper with a selection of 'Find someone who ...' written on it.
- Enough copies of the sheet for all the participants.
- Enough pens for all the participants.

## What do you need to look out for?

- Literacy levels – if participants are not comfortable with reading and writing, the worksheet could have pictures to illustrate the ideas.

## How does it work?

- Give a copy of the worksheet and a pen to each participant.
- Explain to them that the task is to complete the sheet by putting a tick and a name to each 'Find someone who ....'
- Depending on the size of the group, agree that each time one participant has asked another participant a question, they have to move on to another person, so that the same person cannot be asked two questions in a row.
- Once participants have completed their sheets, review the findings with them by looking at similarities, things in common and surprising revelations.

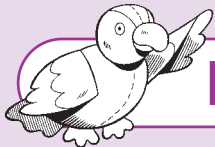
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## Examples

Find someone who ...

- can play a musical instrument
- has travelled outside your village/town/country
- can swim
- has their birthday in the same month as you
- has walked/travelled on a bus/train to come here today
- has a brother, sister, and so on





# Pass the message

42

This activity shows how something someone says can be distorted as it is passed on from one person to another, and another.

## What will you need?

- A long and slightly complicated sentence.

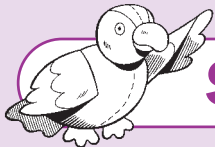
## What do you need to look out for?

- Hearing/speech impairment.
- Children may try to 'sabotage' by inserting rude words!

## How does it work?

- Participants stand or sit in a wide circle.
- Lean over to one of the people sitting next to you and whisper the sentence to them.
- That person then whispers what they have heard to the next person, and so on, until it has been passed along the whole group.
- Ask the last person to say aloud what they have been told.
- The sentence may be different from the original one.
- This can be followed by a discussion on examples in real life when something participants have said has been misunderstood.





# Simon says or Tota kehta hai (‘The parrot says’)

44

This activity encourages active listening and observation.

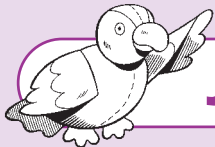
What will you need?

- Nothing.

How does it work?

- Participants stand or sit in a circle.
- Explain that they have to follow any instruction that starts with ‘Simon says’. If the instruction does not start with ‘Simon says’, participants should not follow it.
- Begin by saying something like ‘Simon says clap your hands’, while clapping your hands.
- The participants follow.
- Speed up the actions, always saying ‘Simon says’ first.
- After a short while, give an instruction without ‘Simon says’. Those participants who follow the instruction are out of the game.
- You can make it harder by doing one activity while saying ‘Simon says’ another one (for example, ‘Simon says clap your hands’ while you hop on one foot). Participants should always do what Simon says.





# Just a minute!

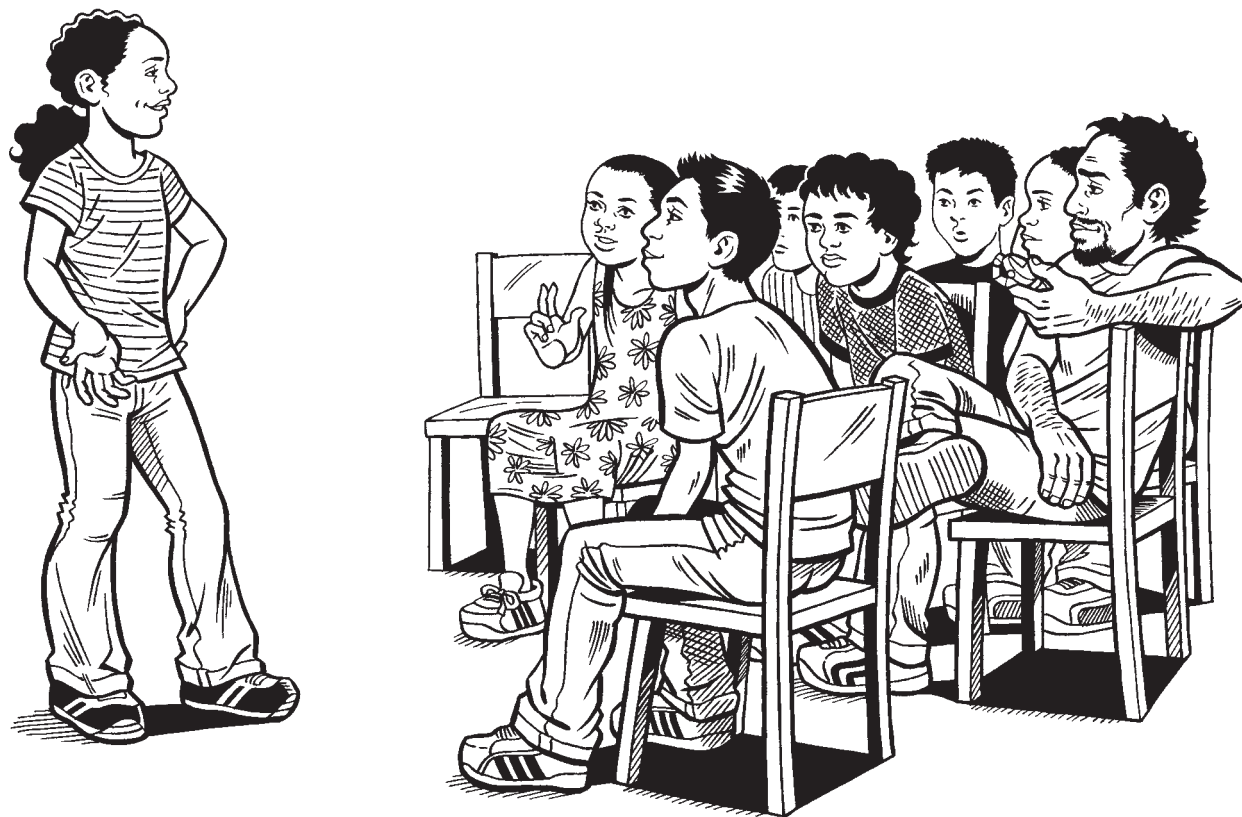
This activity works best with older children aged between 10 and 18, and encourages concentration, verbal skills and imagination. It can be quite difficult.

## What will you need?

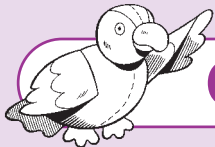
- A list of topics for participants to speak on.
- A watch that can time one minute.

## How does it work?

- Give a volunteer a topic to speak on for one minute. It should be a topic that participants can talk about.
- You can agree rules, such as not repeating words, not hesitating, not laughing, and so on.
- If the speaker cannot stick to the agreed rules, then other participants can interrupt. They should explain why they are interrupting (for example, participant X hesitated or repeated a word) and then take over the topic themselves.
- If someone manages to speak for one minute without interruption, the next participant is given a new topic to speak on.







# Continuous story telling

48

This activity encourages active listening, verbal skills and imagination.

What will you need?

- Nothing.

What do you need to look out for?

- If the group is too large and no time limit is set the story could become unwieldy.

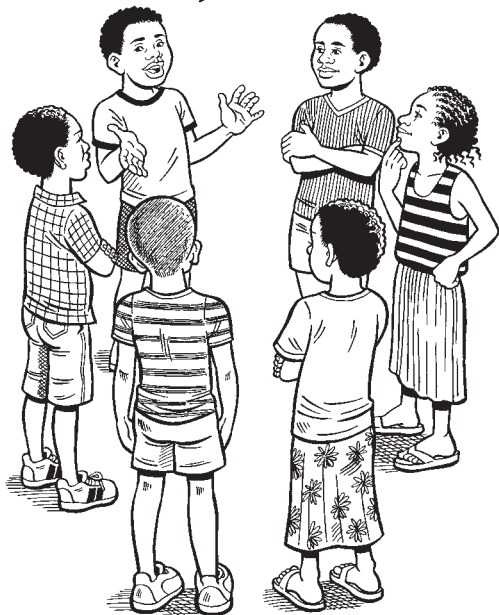
How does it work?

- Participants stand or sit in a circle.
- A participant starts telling a story and stops in the middle of a sentence.
- The next participant continues the story, and so on, until the story ends.

Adaptation/variation

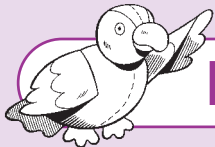
- This can also be done one word at a time.
- Another option is to have participants perform their part of the story as they speak.

Daphtone's mother  
asked him to go to the market  
after school. On the way...



...he met his friend  
Simon who said lets go and play  
football with...





# Do as I say, not as I do

50

An activity to encourage concentration, observation and co-ordination. It works best when it is fast moving.

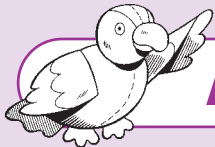
## What will you need?

- Nothing.

## How does it work?

- Participants stand in a circle and choose a leader.
- Explain that the objective is to follow what the leader says and not what she or he does.
- The leader has to say three times the name of a body part, touching it at the same time (for example, 'head, head, head', while tapping their head three times). The leader then has to add another body part, saying its name and touching it at the same time (for example, 'head, head, head, shoulders').
- After a while, the leader might say 'nose, nose, nose, ear', while touching their nose three times but then touching their eye.
- Those participants who follow the action rather than do what the leader is saying are out of the game.





# A parrot on your shoulder

52

**An activity to engage young children's attention using toys and stories.**

## **What will you need?**

- Toys or puppets.
- Story books or stories that you can tell.

## **What do you need to look out for?**

- Engage the children in discussion, don't just keep reading.

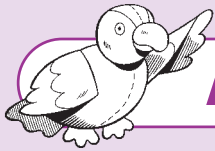
## **How does it work?**

- When working with young children, read aloud from a storybook to a toy parrot that you have fastened to your shoulder or you have sat next to you, or to any other toy.
- The children will engage out of curiosity and you can start talking to them.

## **Adaptation/variation**

- You could also use a musical instrument and song to engage the children and get them to join in.





# Acting out emotions

54

A good way to introduce participants to role play and drama-based activities around specific issues to be worked on later. It allows participants to act out something relevant to them in a safe environment.

## What will you need?

- A set of cards with different emotional or other situations written or drawn on them.

## What do you need to look out for?

- Be sensitive to the fact that some cards may be uncomfortable for some participants to act out or may not be culturally appropriate.

## How does it work?

- You can start this session off with a brief discussion about non-verbal communication or body language – how does it work, what does it show others?
- Introduce the activity.
- Ask for a volunteer and tell participants that while the volunteer is acting out what is on their card, the others can ask questions to try to guess what is on the card. The volunteer has to answer all the questions in character. So, for example, if the card says 'Being angry', the volunteer can reply to the question, 'How are you?' by shouting, 'What has that got to do with you?'
- Participants can make a guess at any time, and if it is right, the person who made the guess picks up another card and takes over. If the guess is wrong, continue until someone gets it right.
- The questions should be kept going at a fast speed.

## Adaptation/variation

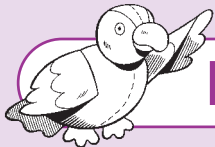
- If you are going to work on feelings with the group, you could ask participants to think of a time when they had a strong emotion and ask them to act it out for the others to guess.
- You could also ask participants to work in pairs and act out a scenario, or to form a 'sculpture' for which the other participants have to interpret the body language.

## Examples

Being ... happy, sad, scared, angry, bored, hungry, tired, rich/poor, confused.







# Mirrors

A good preparation for drama or mime work, this activity develops concentration and observation.

## What will you need?

- Nothing

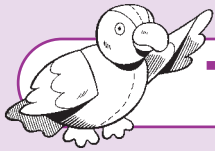
## How does it work?

- Participants stand in a circle.
- A leader is chosen, who will then slowly move their body into different positions and their face into different expressions.
- The rest of the participants have to copy the leader as if they were his/her reflection.

## Adaptation/variation

- This can also be done as a paired exercise, in which the pairs take turns at being mirror and reflection.





# Throw the mask

58

Another good preparation for drama and mime work.

What will you need?

- Nothing

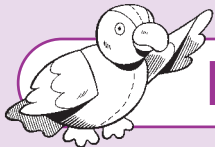
How does it work?

- Participants stand or sit in a circle.
- Ask one of the participants to make a 'mask' of their face – as gruesome or funny as possible.
- Ask them to put their hands to their face, take off the 'mask' and throw it to another participant, who has to catch it and 'put it on' their face.
- They then 'wipe off' the 'mask' and put on their own, which they in turn 'throw' to someone else in the circle.

Adaptation/variation

- You could use this activity to start talking about whether we ever wear 'masks' in everyday life.





# Puppets

A creative activity that can help to explore issues that are important to children.

## What will you need?

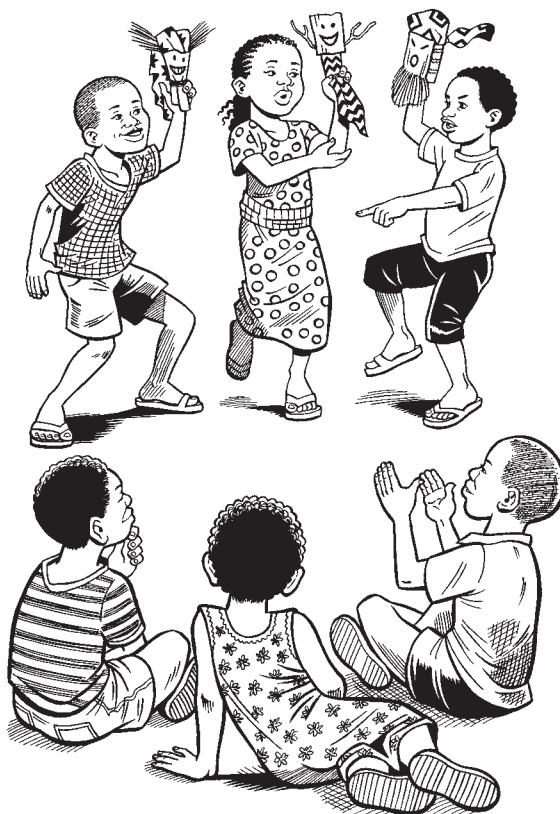
- Materials to make finger or glove puppets and/or masks – old bits of cloth, paper, card, plastic bottles, and so on.

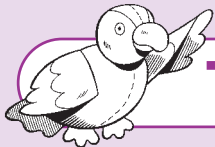
## How does it work?

- Make finger puppets or masks out of any locally available material, and do a short performance using these.
- Then ask children to make their own and do a performance themselves.
- You can determine a theme (for example, something that you want them to think about before starting particular work with them) or let them choose.

## Adaptation/variation

- Rather than doing a performance, this activity can also be used to help children talk about difficult issues by allowing them to talk as the puppet and not as themselves.





# This is me

62

**An introductory activity that gets participants talking to each other.**

## **What will you need?**

- A4 sheets of paper.
- Coloured pens or markers.

## **What do you need to look out for?**

- Reassure children that this is not about judging each other's drawing skills.

## **How does it work?**

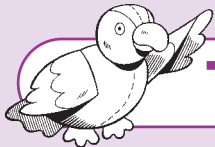
- Ask participants to draw a representation of themselves and to include what they like doing in their drawing.
- Once they have finished, ask them to exchange their drawing with the person on their right.
- Each person of the pair then explains their drawing to the other.
- Participants then introduce their partners to the group while showing them their partner's drawing.

## **Adaptation/variation**

- The drawings can be kept and used at the end of a process of work with the group by sticking each person's drawing on their back and getting the rest of the group to write something positive about them on the drawing.







# Team drawing

This activity highlights the benefits of working together and agreeing an idea or plan before starting a project.

## What will you need?

- Large sheets of paper.
- Marker pens or crayons *or*
- Chalk to draw with on the ground.

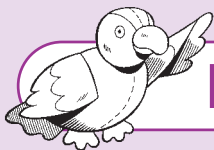
## How does it work?

- Divide participants into groups of five to eight.
- Give each group a large piece of paper and some crayons or marker pens.
- Ask participants to take it in turns in their groups to make one stroke with the pen or crayon on the sheet of paper. They have to do this silently.
- As each participant adds their stroke, each team produces a drawing.
- Once most teams have made some sort of drawing, ask the participants to share their drawings and discuss what they felt when they were producing them.
- You could then explore what would have happened to the picture if they had agreed on an idea before they started.

## Adaptation/variation

- Team drawing could also be used as a way of planning a project. You could ask the teams to work on a drawing of how they would like their community to be or what they would like to change.





# Murals or collages

A co-operative activity that can involve many participants actively and get them talking. It can be used to explore many issues faced by children.

## What will you need?

- Space.
- A wall or
- Large piece of strong paper or canvas, or several flip chart sheets stuck together.
- Paint and paint brushes, coloured pens or chalk.
- For a collage, you can use scraps of fabric, old magazines, sweet wrappers, string, glue, and so on.

## What do you need to look out for?

- This is an activity that would need some forward planning and the consent of any relevant public authorities if it is to be carried out in a public space.

## How does it work?

- The mural (large wall painting) could either be painted directly on a wall or on a very large piece of canvas or strong paper.
- The subject matter could be prescribed or could be left for the children to decide.
- You could start to produce the mural with a small group of children and encourage others to join in, or you could work with a larger group from the start.
- If you are producing the mural in a public space, then this might provide a good opportunity to make contact with children you have not worked with before.

## Adaptation/variation

- This can also be done as a collaborative activity with children in a community setting to encourage working together.
- You could also create large pictures on the ground using sticks, stones, leaves, flowers, and so on.



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68

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