



## A2 ACTIVITIES TO REVEAL HIDDEN ISSUES

# Listening to and understanding young people



## Why use this activity?

To create an opportunity for older people to listen to younger people, and for younger people to listen to older people. The aim is to learn about each other's experiences, hopes and fears, and to value each other's views and perspectives. The tool also encourages the community to learn the skill of 'critical reflection' so they can explore their own beliefs and cultural practices and begin to identify any they would like to change.



## A brief description

Older people observe younger people responding to statements which are read out to the group. Through discussion, the younger people then answer questions and share their experiences and feelings. The activity is repeated with younger people listening to older people.



## You will need

- Four large pieces of paper, board or something similar
- Pens



## Time taken

About two hours



## What to do

If it is not appropriate to do this exercise as a mixed group of men and women, you could conduct separate activities, one with young and older women, and one with young and older men.

Awareness raising

Children &amp; youth

Climate &amp; environment

Conflict &amp; peacebuilding

Corruption &amp; governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination &amp; inclusion

Food &amp; livelihoods

Gender &amp; sexual violence

Health &amp; HIV

Influencing decision-makers

Migration &amp; trafficking

Water, sanitation &amp; hygiene

## A2 LISTENING TO AND UNDERSTANDING YOUNG PEOPLE

Separate your group into older people and younger people. You may want to do this by age, for example, by asking everybody under a certain age to form a 'young people's' group. Or you may want people to choose themselves whether they identify as a 'young person' or not. Alternatively, you may want to carry out this activity with the church or community youth group, in which case you will already have a natural grouping of young people.



Explain that the older people are going to spend 30 minutes watching and listening to young people carry out an exercise. They must not speak in this time, just watch and listen. The younger people will then watch and listen to the older group. Arrange the room or meeting space so that one group can observe the other. If you are in a room, you could place chairs around the walls, for example.

Find four large pieces of paper, board or something similar. Write the words 'strongly agree' on one sheet, 'agree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' on the others (one phrase per sheet of paper or board). Make sure the writing is big and clear, and can be seen by the people watching. Place the signs in each corner of the room or space you are using.

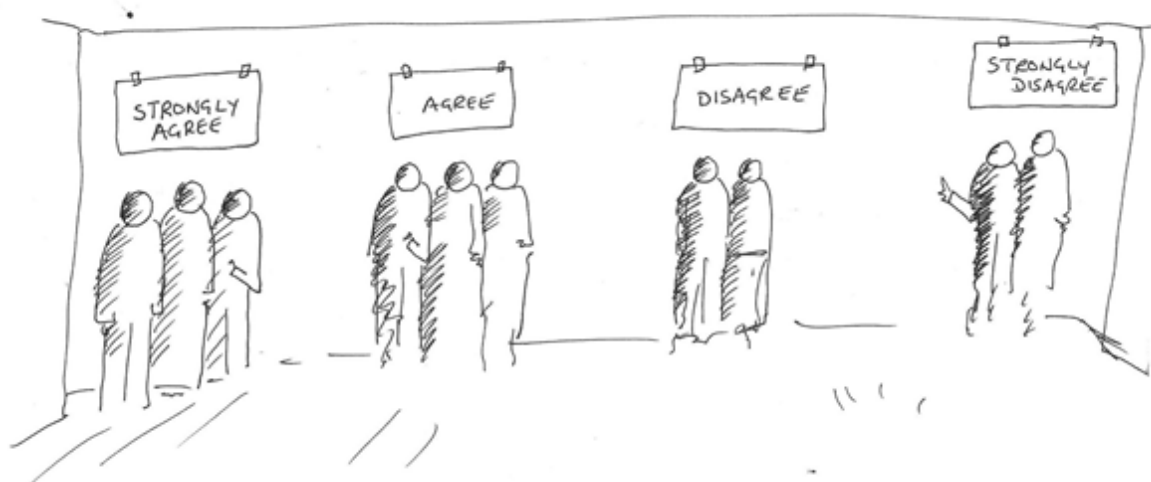
### Part 1

Ask the older adults to sit on the chairs or benches you have set out. Ask the young people to sit or stand in the middle of the meeting space. Explain that you are going to read out a statement, and ask whether the young people strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree. Explain there is no right or wrong answer to these questions, and that they may answer in different ways.

**Statement 1: "Being a young person in this town/village is easy." Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?**

Ask the young people to stand by the statement they feel is their answer.

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Once everyone has moved to stand by a sign, ask some people, individually, to explain why they chose their answer. You may need to remind people to take it in turns to speak, and to not all talk at the same time. Try to encourage the young people to share some of the joys and difficulties of being young in their community.

When you are ready, move on to some other statements. There are some suggestions below. It may take too long if everybody speaks for every statement, so try to encourage diverse contributions (for example, by asking questions such as ‘does anyone have an answer that’s very different to what we’ve heard from others?’). Ensure that everyone gets the opportunity to speak at some point during the activity.

You could encourage people to respectfully challenge each other's answers, and try to persuade each other to change corners. The important thing is that people get the opportunity to share their views, and other people listen.

**Statement 2: “I want to stay living in this village/town my whole life.” Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?**

Again, once everyone has moved to stand by a sign, ask people to explain why they chose their answer. If they agree, what is it that makes them want to stay? If they disagree, why do they want to move?

**Statement 3: “I feel valued as a young person in my community.” Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?**

Once everyone has chosen a sign to stand by, ask further questions. What things make them feel valued? Why do some young people feel they are not valued? Ask them what is important to them, and what they would like older people in the community hear.

**Statement 4: “A wife should stay at home and have children, while a man should travel and find work.”**

There might be strong opinions on this statement! This is an opportunity for people to share their views.

**Other potential statements that you could use as a basis for discussion:**

“The internet is dangerous and should be avoided.”

“I feel hopeful about the future of our environment.”

“I have to move to the city to get rich.”

“I believe I will be able to have a good job/livelihood when I am older.”

***What other statements could you read out that are appropriate in your context?***

Once the young people have finished discussing their statements, you could have a short break, or carry out an energiser, before moving onto Part 2. See **Introductory tool: Facilitation skills** for ideas for energisers.

**Part 2**

Repeat the activity above but this time with the young people watching and listening to the older people answer.

**Statement 1: “Being an adult/parent/older person [choose the most appropriate word] in this village/town is easy.” Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?**

Continue with the other statements that you have used in Part 1. Continue to encourage discussion amongst the older people, as you ask them to explain why they’ve chosen the response they have. The young people must sit and listen, as the older people did for them.

**Part 3**

**After both groups have finished their discussions, ask the following questions to facilitate a discussion between both groups.**

- What surprised you about this activity?
- What did you learn?
- What will you do differently from now on?
- How can you plan to have fun helpful discussions like this again? What sorts of subjects would you like to cover? Will you commit to doing it?

*If this activity has been successful, consider how you could use it again to encourage self-led cultural behaviour change. What other difficult or taboo issues could be explored using this method? Try to encourage the group to think about things they would like to discuss in the future using this type of activity.*

**Finding out more**

- Tearfund (2007) *Footsteps 72 – Family life*  
[tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps\\_71-80/footsteps\\_72/](http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_71-80/footsteps_72/)

**Related tools:**

- A1 – Revealing the need to value and equip young people [A1: Children & youth-2]
- B – Loving our young people (Bible study) [B: Children & youth-3]