

Accessibility, participation and inclusion

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) outlines the rights of persons living with disabilities. The information below is designed to help ensure that everyone is included and can participate in your meeting, activity, training or workshop.

Inclusion is recognizing that each person is a full member of society and of the group, and has the right to participate. Below, tips for inclusion are provided for human rights educators. These have been developed drawing on the social model of disability, which focuses on building positive attitudes and minimizing or removing barriers that prevent group members with disabilities from accessing the same opportunities as others.

The participation of persons with disabilities should be an ongoing and flexible process. It is not a question of whether they can participate, but how we ensure that it happens!

What factors influence participation of persons living with disabilities?

Research shows that persons living disabilities often have more barriers and less support than those without disabilities. Communicating effectively can lead to less misunderstanding and teasing. The educator's attitude towards their group members plays a significant role. It will set the tone for the group and influence how group members accept one another's differences. Research shows that persons living with disabilities, who feel supported by their peers and relatives, are more likely to participate in the home and community.

Tips for encouraging participation

- Do not make assumptions about a person's ability to participate
- Identify barriers to participation in an activity and develop solutions cooperatively
- Empower group members to make their own decisions
- Give enough time
- Listen carefully
- Make the activity meaningful for everyone
- Make it fun!

Tips for inclusion

Persons with disabilities should enjoy the same rights and opportunities as other individuals and should be fully respected in their homes and communities. One of the most effective approaches to developing respect for difference and for combating social exclusion is to involve persons living with disabilities in identifying and implementing solutions.

Below are some general inclusive practices when facilitating a meeting, activity, training or workshop. Try not to make assumptions. Be open to adaptations and suggestions to make the workshops as inclusive as possible.

Blind, low or minimal vision

- Enlarge the print on role cards and handouts
- Use high contrast materials –white paper and black markers when group members are engaging in activities which require drawing or writing
- If possible, create some of the role play cards and handouts in Braille

Deaf or hard of hearing

- Minimize background noise in the room and reduce audio stimuli
- Face group members with an auditory impairment and speak clearly
- If possible, provide assistive devices such as an audio amplification device and or non-verbal signals

Speech or communicating effectively

- Minimize background noise in the room
- Do not interrupt or finish a group member's sentences
- Verify if you are not sure you understood
- If possible, provide assistive speech device

Mobility

- Ensure there are clear paths and no obstacles in the room to enable easy movement
- Work cooperatively as a group to come up with creative solutions for activities that require movement

Processing information

- Reduce the number of tasks given at one time
- Reword, rephrase instructions and information
- Increase time or have group members record their answers before sharing in a group discussion to ensure everyone has enough time to think about their answers

Other helpful tips

- Write the instructions or steps on a flipchart
- Be consistent in your workshop routines
- Plan for breaks and/or energizers during the activity
- Use signals such as a gesture or switching the lights on and off when transitioning to a new activity
- Use ability grouping and partnering to support all group members
- Review role play cards and statements in some activities with your group members to ensure no one will have a negative emotional response