Power Walk

Step 1
Take the participants to an open place. Introduce the game ‘Power Walk.’ Give a character slip/card to each of the participants and ask them to read it to themselves. The characters should be chosen in advance to make them meaningful to and familiar in the particular context.
(5 min)

Step 2
Ask participants to stand in a line. This line is the starting point of the exercise and symbolises Article 1 in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

The participants are to mentally visualise themselves in the roles they have been given on the character slip. Explain that their characters must be kept secret until asked to reveal it.

Ask participants to listen to the statements that will be read out and for every statement to which their character can answer yes, they should take one step forward. If the answer is no, they should not move. Ask the participants if the instructions are clear.
(5 min)

Step 3
Read out the statements one by one. Check if the participants understand fully and move accordingly. Continue until all the statements have been read.

Step 4
When all questions are completed, ask those who have moved to the front to reveal their character/identity. Discuss. Why are they at the front? What particular identities seem more powerful in this context? Are they mostly men or women? Why are they more powerful? To what extent do they exert power over the others? How?

Step 5
Ask those who are at the back to reveal their characters. What makes these groups less powerful in this context? Who is in control of resources? Who can participate and influence decisions? What prevents/holds back these groups (lack of power to, power within, power with...?)

Conclude by highlighting the key messages:

- Development is not power neutral. Power relations have a huge impact on us in terms of what we can become, what we can access, and what we feel we can do and what we feel is possible.

- Lack of power can often lead to discrimination against and exclusion of those who do not have the power within to influence, access and control. Refer to examples from the power walk.

- Rights-based development calls for a rebalancing of power relations: between rights-holders and duty-bearers, between NGOs and the groups they work with. To do this, we need to work in a way and with strategies that “empower groups that are excluded”. 
Examples of characters and statements

Here are a number of examples of identities and statements for the facilitator. These should be adapted to the local context. The key purpose of this exercise is to bring out relevant local examples of discrimination, based on gender, ethnicity, age, religion etc. that limit access to resources and influence. It is also key to include functions that bring power with them – government official, soldier, husband, etc. For this the facilitator should either have good local knowledge or ensure that the categories are discussed with a person with knowledge of the local context. Statements should allow for significant differences between the various categories.

Characters

- Country Representative of NGO, Christian female, 42, living in the capital, university-educated
- Business CEO, Muslim male, living in the capital, aged 38
- Army General, Muslim male, aged 52
- MP, male aged 40, from rural area, did not complete secondary school
- District Health/Medical Officer, male, aged 45
- Child soldier, boy, aged 12, kidnapped by rebel group
- Internally displaced orphan girl, aged 12, living in IDP (Internally Displaced Person) camp
- Poor HIV positive rural woman
- Ethnically-discriminated woman, aged 34, married, has several children, husband has several wives, experiencing food insecurity and conflict
- Ethnically-discriminated male, aged 40, lost a leg in an ambush, 3 wives, 10 children, no income
- Young Christian woman, aged 22, living in refugee camp
- Poor male subsistence farmer, aged 34, with disability
- Village Leader, male aged 39, no secondary education
- Young unmarried mother of 2, aged 19, living in the capital
- Unemployed youth, aged 20, living in a rural area
- Soldier in army, aged 29, 10-year veteran
- Visually impaired young man living in a rural area
- Female sex worker aged 19, living in city, no secondary education
- Grandmother taking care of 4 orphans in rural area, no income, no assets

For the statements (situations)

- I can influence decisions made by District Council or Government
- I have access to micro-credit or a bank loan
- I can buy and negotiate a condom with my partner
- I have access to health services when I need it
- I eat two full meals a day
- I am not in major danger of being sexually abused
- I am a member of a number of groups and associations
- I can decide how my household income is spent
- I can go to school
- The traditional leader in my village listens to what I have to say
- I am treated well if I need to go to the police station or a government office

From ACT Alliance Gender-Inclusive-Based Development Training Manual