Modifying Training Activities to be Accessible

Trainings are a good opportunity to share knowledge about a specific topic, and support participants in developing the skills they will need to become effective disability rights advocates or allies. Though trainings require a lot of time, they can be fun and interesting, especially when activities are included.

However, sometimes training activities are not fully inclusive of participants with disabilities. This resource provides some general guidelines for inclusive trainings and some information on how to modify different types of activities so that all participants are able to join and learn.

In Myanmar, women who are blind or have low vision take notes during a training on international disability rights standards.

Source: International Foundation for Electoral Systems

General guidelines for inclusive trainings

Regardless of which training activities are chosen, here are some things to keep in mind:

- **Choose an accessible venue.**

  o Host the training on the ground floor, unless there is a working elevator or lift available.
  o If possible, prop the doors open so that participants can easily enter and exit.
  o Try to find a location that is on flat ground, not on a hill or steep incline.
  o If the room might be difficult to find without assistance, ensure there are greeters to direct people to the room.
  o Ensure that there is at least one accessible bathroom stall nearby for participants to use.
  o Set up the room so there are wide and clear pathways around tables.

- **Ask participants if they need assistance.**
  When participants register for the training, provide options for assistance, such as: "sign language interpreter", "reading the materials in advance", "an assistant to read written materials to me", or "easy-to-read language."

- **Create simple and clear PowerPoints.**
  If a PowerPoint is being used as part of the training, it is important to create simple slides with a few bullet points or images that can be briefly scanned by participants. This way, if a person is using a sign language interpreter, they can read and turn back to the interpreter as quickly as possible.

- **Offer materials such as PowerPoints and handouts in advance whenever possible.**
  Some participants will learn better if they are given time to read the materials in advance of the training. Others might need to share the materials with sign language interpreters to come up with appropriate translations for specialized vocabulary.

- **If materials cannot be provided in advance, add extra time for reading.**
  For example, when presenting using a PowerPoint, pause for about 3 seconds before speaking each time a new slide with text comes up. This provides a little bit of time for participants to read the slide and then redirect their attention back to the presenter.

- **Choose different types of activities for each training**.
  This way, everyone has a chance to learn the way they learn best. For example, some people prefer listening or reading activities, while others prefer hands-on activities.

- **Avoid activities that require strenuous physical movement or that are too difficult to adapt.**
  These include obstacle courses, human "knots", activities that severely limit movement in some way (e.g. if you can only step on a certain color), or activities that depend too much on one particular physical ability (e.g. the ice-breaker "Telephone", which solely depends on listening).

In the Dominican Republic, participants in a training on how to be an election observer give a presentation.

Source: International Foundation for Electoral Systems

- **Provide written directions for activities with a lot of steps.**
  For some participants, it will be helpful to have written instructions if there are several steps involved in an activity.

- **Communicate with participants with disabilities in respectful ways.**

  - When approaching a person who is blind or has low vision, identify yourself by name.
  - If a person is working with a service animal, do not pet or distract the animal.
  - If approaching a deaf or hard-of-hearing person where they cannot see you, gently tap their shoulder or wave a hand in their peripheral vision to get their attention.
  - When getting attention during an activity, provide both visual and auditory commands. For example, flash the lights or wave a flag when calling out for attention.

- **Be flexible.**
  It is rare that one solution will always work for everyone. Be willing to adapt or switch activities if needed.

Modifying training activities

Below are ideas for modifying four popular types of activities, including team-building games and ice-breakers. The adaptations that are used may depend on the pre-existing skills and capacities of participants.

Activity type #1: Physical movement
Participants move around a room, or small objects are tossed or passed around

Examples	Possible Adaptations
Agree or Disagree In a given space, one side is designated as the "Agree" side, and the opposite side is the "Disagree" side. Preselected prompts are read by the moderator, and participants move to either side depending on if they agree or disagree with the statement. **Ball-tossing** Participants sit or stand in a circle and toss a ball or other soft object, taking turns to respond to game prompts. **Moving Forward** Participants are assigned a person, job, or other characteristic. They line up in a row, and then the trainer calls out different scenarios. Participants who match the scenario are able to move forward; those who don't, stay where they are. The game ends when the first person to reach the finish line arrives.	• In activities such as "Agree or Disagree", describe the results. For example: "Most people are on the Agree side, and a couple are on the Disagree side" • Pass objects around instead of tossing • If there are spoken statements that are part of the activity, provide them on a PowerPoint slide, poster or piece of paper so they can be read as well • Ensure there are no obstacles in the room or hallway that would prevent free movement, such as a rope on the floor, bumps in the floor, or narrow passageways

Activity type #2: Performance
Noise, gestures or acting is used to communicate

Examples	Possible Adaptations
Samson, Delilah and the Lion *(also known as "Tiger, Man, and Gun")* Similar to "Rock, Paper, Scissors", only there is Samson (man), Delilah (woman), and a lion. Participants are in two rows facing each other. They huddle, choose which one they want, and turn around to show that pose.	• Add visual input to auditory games, and vice versa. For example, in "Samson, Delilah and the Lion", participants can use both noise and a gesture to communicate. • Instead of asking participants to turn around in games such as "Samson, Delilah and the

Line-up Participants use nonverbal communication to line up in order of height, birth month, or other characteristic. **Role-playing** Participants are divided into groups. Each group is given a scenario (e.g. "Meeting with a member of Parliament") and a little time to figure out who will play each role. At the end, the participants gather together, and each group performs their role-play session. Other participants can give feedback or comments on the role play. **Pictionary or Charades** Create 10-20 slips of paper, each with an election terminology (e.g. "gerrymander", "sitting member"). Divide participants into two teams. Each person will come up, choose a slip, and then have 2 minutes to either draw or perform their card. Performers are not allowed to use words or sign language to describe their terminology. The first team to correctly guess all of their cards will win.	Lion", permit them to remain facing each other as they discreetly decide what to do • In an ice-breaker like "Line-up", pick a characteristic or category where participants can use both sound and a gesture to communicate and organize themselves, like animals or famous characters from local television or movies • For role-playing activities, provide scenarios in both written and spoken formats, and emphasize that every group member should have a role • In role-playing activities, ask group members to write down or draw a quick script • For activities such as Pictionary or Charades, consider providing descriptive commentary while performers draw or act, e.g. "it looks like she is drawing a box" • Also, for Pictionary or charades, assign someone to write down a list of "rejected" suggestions as participants go along

Activity type #3: Building or crafting
Materials are provided and participants are asked to build or make something

Examples	Possible Adaptations
Spaghetti game Participants are provided with uncooked spaghetti and marshmallows, and asked to work together to create the highest structure they can in a given amount of time. **Snowflake** Participants are asked to fold a sheet of paper in half. Then they fold it again. They are asked to make a small tear anywhere on the paper. When the papers are unfolded, no two papers are exactly the same.	• If a participant needs to build something and struggles to grasp smaller items, switch out objects for larger and easier items to put together, such as pre-torn tape and cardboard sheets • In some cases, an assistant might be helpful for folding papers in some activities such as the "Snowflake" ice-breaker (this should never be done without first checking with the person with a disability to see if this is ok)

Activity type #4: Writing, drawing or reading
Participants are asked to write, draw, or read

Examples	Possible Adaptations
World Café Participants are divided into groups and each group is rotated around a room to different stations. At each station is a different treat (e.g. small candies or sweets) and a different topic. **Bingo** Participants win by shading in a row of boxes on a card, where the contents of the boxes match the information called out or found out from others. **Round Robin** This is best used in smaller trainings (less than 10 people). Choose one topic for the whole group. At a signal, each participant writes down their response on a sheet of paper. After a minute or two, the person passes their paper to the person on their right. When the person gets a new sheet, they continue to write ideas or expand on ideas written down, but cannot repeat anything. Repeat until the sheets have gone around or ideas have stopped coming. The whole group gets together to choose 2-3 ideas to expand.	• In group activities such as World Café where there is a lot of written materials, pass around the materials instead of asking participants to move • Provide printed materials in accessible formats, or make reading them aloud part of the activity • An alternative way to make activities such as "Bingo" or "Round Robin" accessible is to conduct the activity in pairs rather than individually