



Vote with your Feet

Overview: Having people explore their beliefs about sex, gender, and feminism in a game type format can help them question some of their prejudices and misunderstandings and expand their thinking. By physically moving around the room in response to a set of statements, the process gets participants off their feet, renews their energy and encourages greater openness.

Purpose: This is a fairly quick and adaptable methodology that serves two purposes – to elicit from participants any prejudices or confusion they may have about terms such as feminism and gender and to start challenging some of that prejudice as well as providing accurate definitions of key concepts. It is usually done at the beginning and end of workshops to assess if participants have shifted their thinking and to inform the facilitation team about where people are and how to proceed with next steps.

Time Needed: 30 - 60 minutes

Materials and Space Needed:

- List of context relevant statements
- Large workshop space
- 5 large cards placed at each end of the room and in the middle (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree)
- Cards that contain the definitions of feminism, sex, power, and gender that best represent their meanings, written in large letters so everyone can see them
- Bag of sweets (optional)

Credit: www.trainingforchange.org/tools

Process:

Prior to exercise:

- *Read the instructions and steps carefully as the exercise requires some thought in order to be carried out with maximum effectiveness. The idea is to have people review a series of statements about some key concepts that will encourage them to deepen their*



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understanding. There are several suggestions for these statements provided at the end of exercise but you may want to develop your own or modify the ones listed to stress different aspects. Select the statements you feel most reflect the ideas you want to explore. At the same time, write up the definitions on large cards that best reflect the concept's meaning to be used later during the wrap up part of the exercise.

- You begin by reading the statements one by one to the whole group and then asking them to position themselves by the card that most reflects their opinion. Next comes a discussion with each cluster of people around the different cards. Fun idea: You can use sweets to reward each person who speaks – and thus ensure a range of voices is heard.
- At the end of each round, people can move to another square if they are convinced by other's opinions. You wrap up and review definitions
 - Beforehand review the statements/concepts and decide which one best leads you to the theme of the next session and make that the last one you discuss.

In plenary:

- Introduce activity and explain process:
e.g. Some statements will be read, there will be a set of cards on the floor, you stand by the card that most closely represents your response to the statement, followed by a discussion of people's different viewpoints and a chance to rethink your ideas and change your mind.
- Remind everyone to listen carefully, then read statements one by one.
Ask the participants to decide whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or feel neutral about the statement and move to the square that most reflects their opinion.
- Ask for volunteers from each of the different groupings to explain why they chose that response. Each one gets a sweet as a prize! Remind everyone that after hearing people's explanations and positions, they will have a chance to change their mind and join another group so listen with care – this is the chance to VOTE WITH YOUR FEET and move to the statement that now describes how you feel.
Remember it is usually best to start with the group that is the farthest from the statement's or term's most accurate meaning (e.g. the group that says young women in Zambia face no problems in accessing their rights OR say that sex and gender mean the same things). That way, you end each statement getting closer to the most complete and relevant meaning. Co-facilitator records key points.
- At the end of each round, ask people whether they would like to change places. If anyone on a different square is convinced by the argument, they should 'vote with their feet' and move squares.



- Sum up and present the definition of the concept discussed, explaining that this is what many women have felt are the key elements important for understanding the concept, emphasize the points in common and significant differences, clarify any misunderstandings, ask for any final comments and then post the definitions in the room for reference during the rest of the workshop.

Possible statements:

- Gender and sex mean the same thing.
- All women are oppressed.
- Young women in our country have a lot of power.
- Power is always bad.
- Sex and gender are the same thing.
- Feminism is the radical idea that women are people.
- All feminists are lesbians.
- Patriarchy is about men.
- Feminism is un-African (adapt to your context).

Sample Definitions:

Feminism:

“Feminism is a range of theories and political agendas focused on eradicating all inequalities between men and women and defending the rights of all those who have been marginalized – women, men, and children.” (JASS Alquimia workshop October 2013, Nicaragua)

Sex:

“Biological sex refers to physiological and anatomical female or male characteristics with which a person is born” (Goodman and Schapiro 1997; In: JASS (2013). *Feminist Movement Builder’s Dictionary*, 2nd edition, p. 8).

Power:

“Power can be defined as the degree of control over material, human, intellectual and financial resources exercised by different sections of society . . . The extent of power of an individual or group is correlated to how many different kinds of resources they can access and control” (Batliwala 1995; In: JASS Just Associates (2006), *Making Change Happen* 3, p. 5).

Gender:

“Relates to the characteristics – ranging from gender roles to physical appearance – that societies attribute to the notions of “masculine” and “feminine” (JASS (2013). *Feminist Movement Builder’s Dictionary*, 2nd edition, p. 5).