Take a Step Forward

Overview
Children imagine being someone else and reflect on inequality as a source of discrimination and exclusion

Objectives
- To promote empathy and solidarity with others
- To raise awareness of inequalities and their effect on people’s lives and opportunities
- To raise awareness of intersectionality

Preparation
- Adapt the roles (appendix 1) and situations (appendix 2) to your group. Make a role card for every child.
- Copy the sheet of roles, cut out the cards and fold them over.

Step-by-step instructions
1. Introduce the activity by asking the participants if they have ever imagined being someone else. Ask for examples. Explain that in this activity they will also imagine that they are someone else, another child who may be quite different from themselves.
2. Explain that everyone will take a slip of paper with their new identity. They should read it silently and not let anyone know who they are. If someone doesn’t understand something, they should raise their hand and wait for the facilitator to come and explain.
3. Discourage questions at this point. Explain that if they don’t know much about a person like this, they should just use their imagination. To help children get into their roles, ask them to do a few specific things to make the role seem real to them. For example:
   - Give yourself a name and make a name tag.
   - Draw a picture of yourself.
   - Draw a picture of your house or room.
   - Walk around the room pretending to be this person.
4. To further enhance their imagination, play some quiet music and ask the children to sit down and close their eyes and imagine in silence as you read out a few questions such as these:
   - Where were you born? What was it like when you were little?
   - What was your family like when you were little? What is different now?
   - How is your everyday life? Where do you live?
   - What do you do in the mornings, afternoons, evenings?
   - What kind of games do you like to play? Who are your friends?
   - What sort of work do your parents do? Do they earn a lot of money?
   - What makes you happy? What are you afraid of?
5. Ask the children to remain absolutely silent as they line up beside each other, as if on a starting line. When they have lined up, explain that you are going to describe some things that might happen to a child. If the statement would be true for the person they are imagining themselves to be, then they should take a step forward. Otherwise they should not move.
6. Read out the situations one at a time. Pause between each statement to allow the children time to step forward. Invite them to look around to see where others are.

7. At the end of the activity, invite everyone to sit down in their final position. Ask each participant in turn to describe their assigned role. After the children have identified themselves, ask them to observe where they are at the end of the activity.

8. Before beginning the debriefing questions, make a clear ending to the role-play. Ask the children to stand up and pretend to open the zipper of a big overall which symbolises their role. They then step out of the overall and pretend to throw the overall away from them to show that they have stepped out of the role. In this way, you conclude the activity and ensure that the children don’t stay caught up in their roles.

Debriefing

- What happened in the activity?
- How easy or difficult was it to play your role?
- How did you imagine the person you were playing? Do you know anyone like that?
- How did you feel, imagining yourself as that person? Was it a person like you at all?
- How do you know about people like the person you represented? Through personal experience or other sources of information? What kind of image do these sources portray of the person?
- How did you feel stepping forward - or not stepping forward?
- If you stepped forward often, when did you begin to notice that others were not moving as fast as you were?
- Did you feel that something was unfair?
- What was it that made you not step forward? Was it one particular thing, or a mix of your characteristics?
- What gives people in our community more opportunities than others? Or fewer opportunities?

Tips for facilitators

- You can make your own role cards. Those offered here are meant to serve as examples. The closer your role cards reflect the world in which your participants’ live, the more they will learn from the activity.
- Because you cannot always be aware of everyone’s personal situation, a participant may be disturbed or emotionally caught up in one of the roles. You need to be very sensitive in this exercise, and to pay particular attention to children who get upset by the role afterwards or who display unusual behaviour. In this case, try to speak to the child individually.
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak during the debriefing. This activity can call up strong emotions, and the more the children can express themselves and their feelings, the more sense they will make of the topic and their feelings.

**This activity is an adapted version of ‘Take a Step Forward’ in “Compasito: Manual on human rights education for children”, published by the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe, November 2007**

Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as ethnicity, class, and gender regarded as creating multiple and interdependent discrimination or disadvantage.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You are eight. You and your two brothers live in a nice house with a big garden and a swimming pool. Your father is the manager of a bank in your town. Your mother takes care of the house and family.</th>
<th>You are ten years old. You live in a farmhouse in the country. You are a girl and have two brothers. Your father says that you should help your mother with the cooking and cleaning while your brothers can spend more time on their homework. He says women should only work in the house.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are a Roma child of twelve. You live at the edge of a small village in a small house without a bathroom. You have six siblings.</td>
<td>You live alone with your mother in an apartment in the city. Your mother works in a factory. You are very good at music and dancing. Often you feel that you would prefer to be a girl rather than a boy. You like to wear dresses at home. You are nine.</td>
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<td>You are thirteen, the oldest of six children. Your father drives a truck and is away a lot, and your mother is a waitress who often has to work at night. You have to babysit a lot.</td>
<td>You were born with a disability and have to use a wheelchair. You live in an apartment in the city with your parents and two sisters. Both your parents are teachers. You are twelve.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You and your parents came to this country to find safety from the war going on in your home country in Africa. You are now eleven and have been here for three years, since you were nine. You don’t know when you can go home again.</td>
<td>Your parents got divorced when you were a baby. Now you are twelve. You live with your mother and her boyfriend. At the weekends you visit your father and his new wife and their two small children.</td>
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<td>You are eleven. You have lived with different foster parents since you were a small child because your parents couldn’t take care of you. Your foster parents are nice. Four other foster children live in the same small house as you.</td>
<td>You are eight. You live with your two mothers in a small town out in the country. Both of them work from home. You are the only child in your class who has two mothers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You are eleven years old. You live in a village in the country with your parents and a younger sister. Your parents run a bakery. You are often teased because you are rather overweight.</td>
<td>You are 12. You live in an apartment in the city with your mother. You are really good at football and you prefer to play with boys. Your teachers and your mother say you should be more like a ‘real girl’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You and your older sister are very talented at mathematics, physics, languages, and in fact, most things at school. Your parents are university professors. They send you to special courses and training camps all the time to prepare for competitions.</td>
<td>You are 13 and a boy. You live with your parents in a nice house with garden close to a big city. You just fell in love for the first time - you have a big crush on an older boy in your school. It feels strange, and you are scared that others will find out that you like boys.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You are nine years old and have an identical twin. You live in an apartment in the city with your mother, who works in a store. Your father is in prison.</td>
<td>You have a learning disability that makes you two classes behind in school. You are ten and taller than all the other kids, who are only eight. Your parents divorced when you were six and now you live with your father and his boyfriend. They both work so don’t have much time to help you with homework.</td>
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<td>You were born in this town, but your parents moved here from China. They run a restaurant, and you live in the rooms above the restaurant with your sister. You both help in the restaurant after school. You are thirteen.</td>
<td>You are the child of the American ambassador in your country. You go to the international school. You wear thick glasses and stammer a little. You are eleven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are a thirteen year old girl. You have lived in an orphanage since you were a baby. You don’t know who your parents are.</td>
<td>You are ten and you live with your parents and two sisters. Your parents adopted you when you were very little. You don’t know your birth parents, as they live in another country. You have a different skin colour from the rest of your family and friends. You are very good at sports.</td>
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## Appendix 2: Situations

Read the following situations out aloud. After reading out each situation, give the children time to step forward and also to look to see where they are, relative to each other. You can also make up new situations that fit better to your community.

1. You and your family always have enough money to buy what you need.
2. You live in a decent place with television and internet.
3. You are not teased or excluded because of how you look.
4. The people you live with ask your opinion about major decisions that concern you.
5. You can go to after-school clubs and sports teams.
6. You take extra lessons after school in music and drawing or to help with your homework.
7. You are not afraid of being stopped by the police.
8. You have never been threatened by others because of your parents’ background, origin or culture.
9. You have regular medical and dental check-ups, even if you are not sick.
10. You and your family go away on holiday once a year.
11. You can invite friends for sleepovers to your home.
12. When you are older, you can go to university or choose any job or profession you like.
13. When you are older, you will be able to bring home your partner without problems.
14. You usually see people on TV or in films who look and live like you do.
15. You are not afraid of being teased or attacked on the streets, at school or where you live.
16. Your parents and grandparents and even great-grandparents were all born in this country.
17. You feel appreciated for what you can do and encouraged to develop all your abilities.
18. You think you are going to have a happy future when you grow up.