



EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT PLA PROTOCOL

The following activities are taken from the *Protocol* created by a team of researchers undertaking a Gender study¹. The Protocol is an adaptation of the one developed by Eileen Kane (1995). The questions and methods are distilled below to give readers a flavor of the activities. To implement them skilfully it is important to have training in the use of PLA methodology, and to adapt the methods to the particular community's interests, communication style, literacy level, and self-awareness. There is a logical flow to these activities from the general to the specific, with each progressive task building greater group trust and sharing. However, you may not need to use each activity in every setting.

1. COMMUNITY MAP Using a clear space on the ground or a floor, invite people to create a map of their community. A good way to start is to draw the main road or some other important feature and then to hand over the stick to the community to draw the map themselves. Once people have drawn in important landmarks, resources, and houses, they can use stones or other markers to identify who lives where and does what. One person on the team then acts as a “map recorder” to transfer the data to paper, a copy of which is given to the community.

2. WELL-BEING (CARD SORT) Write the names of (or symbols for) each family on cards. Gathering a small group of people from the community, tell them your interest is in finding out whether people have a comfortable and secure life in the community. Read out the names on the cards (about five at a time) and ask them to determine, “*Who would be the most comfortable and secure, and who would be least?*” Continue this sorting process, asking if there are four or five groups that might be created. Invite your discussion group to come up with names for each of their groups/categories, then discuss what people are like in each group, what makes them alike, and what makes them different.

3. LIFE STAGES (TIME LINES) Draw a line on the ground (or a culturally appropriate symbol for the life span; it might be a circle or some other form). Put in some age markers, such as *birth, before school, youth, young adult, older adult, elder, end of life*. (Make sure they are age categories that make sense in that culture.) Invite people in your community group to mark important stages or turning points that people go through and discuss them briefly. Then create a time line (circle, etc.) for children, from birth to approximately six years of age, and encourage the group to identify key markers in each age period. Use this activity to invite community members to identify and name stages of young children's development as they perceive them; to identify the characteristics of each stage; and to look at both variations among children, as well as the ways the

stages are similar and different for girls and boys. Record their observations, then conduct a Focus Group (see item #9 below) to verify the observations, make changes, note exceptions and explore implications of their data.

4. WHAT PROMOTES WELL-BEING? (COMPARISON ACTIVITY) Showing two pictures, one of a child who appears to be healthy, happy and active, and a second of a child who is sickly, thin and appears to lack energy, ask the community group, “*How are these children different?*” “*What does this one (the sickly child) need in order to be more like this one (the healthy child)?*” Out of this discussion, create a list of things that children need in order to flourish (using symbols in non-literate groups). Have the group rank each of these needs, most important to least. Then ask the group to address the needs in relation to boys and girls: “*With each of these needs, who is more likely to get them met, the boy or the girl?*” Group members can allocate 10 stones for each item, dividing them between girls and boys. A follow-up discussion can focus on the question, “*Given these needs, how is each one met?*” Group members can note next to each need the answers to these questions: “*Who satisfies this need?*” “*Who is responsible for meeting these needs?*”

5. WHAT CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW (FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION) Convening groups that are appropriate to the culture, either mixed gender, single gender, mixed ages or peer groups (or all of these), explore the question: “*What do children need to know?*” Symbolize/record all suggestions and comments. With each response, ask group members to identify whether girls or boys need to know this more, less, or the same. They might weigh each quality by allocating 1-10 stones to it, and then do it for girls, and again for boys. Once the group has generated its lists, invite participants to select the 6-10 things it is most important for boys to know, and the 6-10 things that girls should know, and then rank order the items if they can. A follow-up activity is to “interview the matrix” created from the first comparison by asking the question, “*Who helps boys learn these things?*” and “*Who helps girls learn these things?*” Again, invite the group to discuss, weigh and rank their ideas.

The phrase “interview the matrix” refers to examining the matrix and adding a new column or row to deepen the information. Thus once you have created a baseline matrix, you can expand it by conducting a follow-up discussion (often one that goes into more depth or adds a new dimension of information). Then you can add a new column or row to the matrix, and fill in the extra information. For example, after creating a matrix that provides a rank order of what boys need to know, you might interview the matrix by adding a column to show who is responsible for teaching boys those things. An example comes from India. In response to the question of what boys and girls needed to know the group generated separate lists and rank ordered the items, beginning with what was most important. After that they interviewed the matrix by answering the question: “*Who teaches boys these things?*” and, “*Who teaches girls these things?*” The results from India are presented below:

WHAT BOYS NEED TO KNOW

WHO TEACHES THEM

	MOTHER	FATHER	BROTHER/SISTER
Speak well	x	x	x
Learn to read and write	x	x	x
Give respect to elders	x	x	
Good behavior/relationships	x		
Farming		x	
Preparing cattle feed	x		
Cattle grazing		learns by himself	
Help parents in work		x	
Pooja (religious ceremony)		x	
How to eat food/wash/clean	x		
Drive a tractor		x	

WHAT GIRLS NEED TO KNOW

WHO TEACHES THEM

	MOTHER	FATHER	BROTHER/ SISTER
Speak well	x	x	x
To cook well	x		
Recognize and respect others	x		
Helping in the housework	x		
Pooja	x		
Keep clean	x		
Sing bhajan (religious song)	x		
Have a good character	x		
Good relationship with in-laws	x		
Farming	x	x	
Help in care of siblings	x		
Alphabets, counting, poems, songs	x		x
How to go to shop for purchases	x	x	

6. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN 5-6 YEARS OF AGE (CREATING A CHART) Beginning with a group discussion of the question, “*What are children five-six years of age like?*”, the objective is to get an idea of what the community thinks young children are like, how they should behave, and what is done to socialize children to the appropriate behaviors. Have someone record in words or symbols the various suggestions. Using 10 stones for each item, group members can rank how true each characteristic is for girls and boys.

Then, a second activity is to explore, for each gender, “*What are the characteristics of “good” and “bad” children?*” It is useful to focus on one gender at a time. “*What is a good girl like?*” “*What is a bad girl like?*” Then items can be rank ordered within each list and the two lists can be compared.

A third activity is to explore rewards and punishments. Starting with the question, “*When are children praised?*”, help the group to make a chart, listing the responses in the left column, and

comparing, using 10 stones whether boys or girls are more likely to get praised for this activity. Follow up by interviewing the matrix: “*Who is most likely to give praise and how?*” A similar matrix can be created addressing the question of, “*When are children punished?*”

7. DAILY ROUNDS (SMALL GROUP INTERVIEW) The objective is to get an understanding of what children do during the day and who is responsible for them during that time. This small group interview can be done with six-year-olds, as well as with adults or youth. Identifying a child approximately four years of age in the community, ask, “*What kinds of thing would a girl _____’s age do during the day? What does she do when she first gets up? What does she do next?*”, etc. Beginning with the time children usually wake up, create a time chart, listing activities in relation to each time of day. Invite the group to list possible caregivers or people responsible for that four-year-old. Then, noting caregivers across the top of the matrix, and activities of the four-year-old down the left hand side, give the group 20 markers for each activity to decide which caregivers are most responsible for each moment of the four-year-old’s day. A separate matrix can be created for four-year-old boys, four-year-old girls, six-year-old boys and six-year-old girls.

8. CAREGIVER/EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM OBSERVATIONS (OBSERVATION CHECKLIST) This activity helps you to identify the amounts and types of interactions between teachers/caregivers and boy and girl children. Are boys responded to differently than girls? Are they talked to in different ways? Use a checklist form that has across the top: “teacher listening to boy”; “teacher listening to girl”; “teacher talking to boy”; “teacher talking to girl”. Include some categories of talk: “teaching/explaining”; “asking a question”; “praising a child”; “verbally punishing a child”. Then, use this form for a given time block when the teacher is interacting with the children. If you have longer observation time, you can actually track how much time during the day the teacher is interacting with children. At 30-second intervals, note what the teacher is doing (talking, listening, to whom and how) across a single line of your form. Simply tick what is happening, then jot down any comments you might want to add. At the end of the observation block, you will have a chart showing roughly the range and nature of interactions. It is useful to do this exercise at different 10-minute blocks of time during the day to get a clear picture of both the type and amount of adult-child interaction.

9. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES (FOCUS GROUPS AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS) Using the matrices, lists, charts, maps, and observations generated in other activities, it is useful to follow up by working with focus groups and/or key informants. Focus groups are not simply question and answer sessions. They are a set of carefully chosen key issues (that emerged from the community’s participation), that are presented to a group which is in some way homogeneous. The group then discusses the issues, rather than simply answering a set of questions from the interviewer. Focus groups allow you to gain perspective on an issue from sub-groups in the community—older women, younger women, children, elders, etc. Key informants are individuals who may have an interesting or unusual perspective to share—because they are older and have been around a long time, because they are the exception to the rule, because people mention them as leaders or outcasts, etc. (Children and youth, too, make interesting key informants.) Asking them to comment on or explain some of the results of earlier exercises often yields insights and deeper understanding of the culture and community practices.

REFERENCE:

Kane, E. 1995. *Seeing for Yourself: Research Handbook for Girls' Education in Africa*. Washington, D.C.: Economic Development Institute of the World Bank.

1. For more information on the study, see Judith L. Evans, “Both Halves of the Sky: Gender Socialization in the Early Years”, Coordinators’ Notebook, No 20, 1997. copyright *The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development*, 1997.

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