

Section 1: Note to Users

These tools aim to help you to develop foundational skills such as listening, asking probing questions, managing conflict, and so on.

It is useful to engage with these tools before, during, and after the training workshop to prepare you for facilitation in a community-led approach. Extensive practice with reflection is needed in order to master the skills that these tools seek to develop.

The tools may be used individually or in small groups. This section enables individual reflection by providing space for reflective writing, using a workbook format. Each tool in this section requires 60–90 minutes to complete.

On an ongoing basis, it is useful to think about which skills you need additional practice on, which challenges (internal or external) make it difficult for you to use a particular skill, and how you will take steps to improve. In small groups, you may want to reflect with three to five colleagues, with group discussion of the questions posed in these tools and of what can be done to deepen particular skills within your agency.

FAC 1. Humility

Humility is the foundation for effective work by outsiders who wish to enable a community-led process. Without humility, we will not listen deeply because we think we know all the answers. Lacking in humility, we impose outsider approaches that are “better” than local practices. By placing ourselves above the community, we are not in a good position to build trust or an authentic relationship with the community. “We” (the NGO workers) are the experts, while “they” (the community members) are people who need to be educated, corrected, and guided by us and our agencies.

This tool invites you to reflect on why we should be humble, on the nature and importance of humility, and how a lack of humility by facilitators or outsiders can impede a community-led approach.

Grounds for Humility

A fair question for child protection workers is: “Why should we be humble?” After all, aren’t we (the outsiders) the experts on children’s protection?

To address this question, it can be useful to think about the limits of our knowledge and expertise. To begin with, child protection issues are so complex that they defy simple answers. Also, the field of child protection has a weak evidence base, and we have much to learn about which interventions are most effective, which elements of interventions do the “heavy lifting,” how to achieve sustainable positive outcomes for children, and so on. Adding to these concerns is the fact that NGO or other externally-enabled interventions on child protection sometimes cause unintended harm. In light of this complexity and these concerns, it would be unwise, even arrogant, to pump oneself up as an “expert.”

Next consider the knowledge that local communities may have. Think what things local people know that we do not know and jot down a few ideas.

Write below:

Did you notice that there are a dizzying number of things that local people know that we, as outsiders, do not know?

Local people understand local views of childhood and children, how children relate with extended family members, what community members expect of children and how expectations vary for girls and boys, how families and communities (and individual people) support children, what harms occur to children and who helps when these harms arise, among many others. Rural people have extensive knowledge about modes of livelihood such as farming, buying and selling goods, animal husbandry, etc. People in urban settings know about where to obtain basic supplies, what to buy or sell and where, and places their children should avoid, among others.

In both rural and urban settings, people have in-depth knowledge of cultural beliefs, values, and practices, and they know their oral histories and traditions. They know how to marshal local resources and develop local solutions to complex problems. This list, which could be extended for pages, indicates that local people have in-depth understanding of their context, their families and communities, and their children that outsiders do not have.

Humility should follow from this recognition that there is much that local people know that we do not. If we want an in-depth understanding of the context, we should set aside our mantle of being experts and instead see ourselves as students of local people. Now let's extend this spirit of humility by thinking further about different aspects of humility.

What is Humility?

Please circle each of the items below that you think best relate to humility or a humble approach in interacting with community people:

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| loud | honest | arrogance |
| listening | angry | I'm an expert |
| funny | modest | narcissistic |
| sad | I'm the center of attention | curious |
| liar | respectful | I'm here to serve |

Line by line, the accurate responses are:

- **Honest:** A humble person has the ability to honestly and accurately assess his/her own knowledge/abilities and their limits.
- **Listening:** Humility leads one to listen rather than try to be the “expert.”
- **Modest:** Modesty is at the core of humility. A humble person is aware of what they do not know and cannot do and does not brag about or exaggerate their knowledge or ability.
- **Curious:** Being humble in relationships often goes with a sense of curiosity, which leads us to want to listen to and learn from others rather than promote ourselves.
- **Respectful:** Humility entails respecting others by, for example, not putting oneself above other people.
- **I’m here to serve:** A service orientation is central to humility. In community-led work, the orientation of the facilitator and the NGO should be: “It’s not about us but about the community—we are here to learn with and support them.”

This constellation of qualities is not seen in people who are arrogant, self-absorbed, and overconfident. Such people spend little time listening and a lot of time blowing their own horn, are unable to assess honestly their own abilities, and disrespect others by presenting themselves as better than everyone else. Usually, they have little orientation toward service per se.

Why a Humble Approach is Important

Thinking about your work as a facilitator or an NGO worker, please take a few minutes to write down several ideas about the value of a humble approach in enabling community-led work on child protection. In other words, why is humility important with regard to community-led work?

Write below:

Did you consider how humility is important for enabling learning? People are less likely to speak openly if they feel that they are being judged or that the outsiders somehow consider themselves to be more knowledgeable.

A humble approach helps to manage the power asymmetry between the community and the NGO and invites the community to be in the driver's seat. If we adopt a humble approach of listening and being there to serve the community, we build deeper relationships with the people. Also, when local people see that the focus is on them and what they themselves can do, there will likely be greater agency on the part of the community and less dependency on outsiders.

Now reflect for a moment on the problems associated with an approach that lacks humility. Imagine that you are a parent, and an international NGO has come to your own community and wants to promote effective parenting. They announce that they are "experts" and have learned from many countries what makes the most effective parenting. Yet you notice that they are from a different place or ethnic group and do not speak your native language. You also notice that they have apparently not bothered to talk with people in your community. They want to teach people a new approach to parenting and invite you to come to their educational session.

How would you likely feel in this situation? Does this approach help the community to mobilize itself around strengthening parenting practices? Why or why not?

Write below:

Developing a More Humble Approach

To develop a more humble approach, it can be useful for you to reflect on the following questions and to write on each for a couple of minutes. Be honest, taking care to avoid the tendency that most of us have to present ourselves in a positive light. At the same time, avoid being so unswervingly critical that it becomes impossible to see the positives in your approach.

- What are my motives for doing child protection work? Aside from wanting to help children, are there personal benefits that I derive from this work and being an "expert"?

Write below:

- In what ways are my personal approach and work with communities respectful and humble? In what ways are they less than respectful and humble?

write below:

- Do local people see me as an equal, or do they see me as placing myself above them?

write below:

- When I'm in the community, does my mode of dress, introduction, speaking, and even travel put me in an elevated position relative to community people?

write below:

- How trustful am I of community processes with regard to supporting vulnerable children?

write below:

- How willing am I to share power with communities? Do I or my agency make the key decisions, or do communities make the key decisions?

write below:

- When I talk with communities, is the focus on me and my agency, or on the community?
Are there ways in which I may be putting myself too much at the center?

Write below:

Developing a humble approach is not a one-step process but is part of a longer journey of self-awareness and transformation. On an ongoing basis, it pays to reflect on the humility of your current approach, taking time to write anew on the questions in this section.