

Intersectional Feminist Discussion Toolkit



Acknowledgements

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Introduction

This discussion toolkit has been created for activists wanting to facilitate a discussion group on intersectional feminism. It will support you to set up a discussion group and provides some options for how you can structure and run discussions.

If you are interested in running a discussion group, be sure to email ActionAid Australia's Campaigns team so we can support you in the planning and promotion of your event. You can direct your email to our Community Organising Manager, Liz Hadjia, at liz.hadjia@actionaid.org

What is an intersectional feminist discussion group?

ActionAid Australia wants to ensure that our activist network, along with staff and volunteers, has a strong, shared understanding of intersectional feminism.

As this lens is applied to all of ActionAid Australia's campaigns and movements, it is important to us that activists are empowered to open up safe spaces to discuss and explore intersectional feminism.

These discussion groups are designed to be a non-judgmental, open and safe way to explore how intersectional feminism relates to activism and community organising. They are grounded in storytelling and relationship-building between group members.

Ideally, discussion groups would take place in quiet settings, such as libraries or cafes, and should run for approximately 1 - 1.5 hours. It is important to keep the group small enough to allow people to feel comfortable and safe sharing their experiences and thoughts. We encourage you to follow the 'rule of eight': if the group

expands beyond eight, we suggest that you break into more than one discussion group.

How does this discussion toolkit work?

Each meeting of your discussion group would ideally follow a similar formula.

Start by setting some group expectations and talk about how to manage 'triggers' (anything that might distress someone, due to memories associated with a particular traumatic experience). The scripts below will help you to facilitate and avoid this.

After you have developed a group agreement you can start delving into the different sections laid out in this toolkit. Each section follows the same formula:

Begin by opening up a general discussion on the theme of the section to gain initial thoughts or insights and gauge the array of opinions and levels of understanding in the room.

Start with one or two conversation starters (like an article or video) that aim to spark further discussion and support you to delve deeper into a particular issue. Some examples have been provided in the pages that follow.

You can then use our list of guiding questions to break down the conversation starters and explore the topic further. Any definitions, summaries or suggested scripts are italicised, and you can use these to help guide your facilitation of the discussion group.

Setting Expectations

This discussion group is intended to be a non-judgmental, safe, open and accessible place of learning, understanding and discussion. There are a few things that we can do as facilitators to ensure that we create this environment.

Before commencing any discussion, set some expectations with the group. You could use the following script to ask questions and write down the responses of participants to create a list of group norms:

Are there any norms or group behaviours that people would like to uphold? For example, not talking over each other and respecting the opinions of others.

Try and think about what we want and don't want this space to be.

In an ideal environment how would we communicate with one another?

Are there any topics or phrases that are off limits?

ActionAid Australia, as an organisation, practices feminist communication. This means:

All participants are self-aware of their contributions to conversations and how they are affecting others.

Participants are aware of how often they're speaking, and may decide not to speak sometimes, if we realise that we have been speaking a lot and others haven't had the chance to.

Ensuring that women's voices are heard as often as men's.

We actively listen to each other.

It is also a good idea to prepare the group for challenging and, at times, confronting discussions about vulnerability, privilege and diverse feminist experiences.

It is important to listen to others wholeheartedly. This discussion group is a step to recognising, learning and understanding other people's experience.

It's okay to move out of our comfort zones; have a difficult conversation and to challenge the accepted norms. It's a great way to look at a situation from a new angle and appreciate new and diverse perspectives. This might also mean listening and sitting with discomfort. You may have the urge to jump in or contradict people, but we encourage you to take the time to pause and ask yourself "what does it mean if they're right, and do I need re-examine my assumptions?"

Managing Triggers

One concern we often hear is how to manage triggers in group settings. Ask the group to let you know of any sensitive topics, worries or triggers before beginning the session so that you, and other group members, are aware and prepared.

If someone feels uncomfortable or overwhelmed, they are more than welcome to leave the space or take a break. Self-care should be promoted over participation.

The topics discussed can be confronting and uncomfortable, which can be okay! It's good to be aware of your own, and other people's experiences. Remember to sit with what you are hearing/seeing and broaden your understanding. But also make sure everyone does this within their own comfort level.

Now that you have set up a safe and inclusive environment, you can dive right into the discussion.



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Part 1

Defining Feminism

'Feminism' can be a broad and nebulous concept to explore, so let's start by first understanding what it is, and what it means to be a feminist.

Start by stating that there are many 'feminisms' and ask the group to offer their definition of feminism and what it means to them.

You can use a whiteboard or large piece of paper to help visualise the ideas and sum up the responses.

Once the group feels confident in understanding some of the ideas and themes of feminism, offer them an example of a definition:

If someone is a feminist, they believe in gender equality, that everyone should be equal, and have equal access to the same opportunities as one another, rather than be dictated or discriminated by their sex or gender. Feminism is recognising the systematic historical oppression of women through various modes of discrimination and social norms, such as patriarchy. Feminists recognise that all genders suffer, and that breaking down the patriarchy and gender roles will benefit everyone.



Conversation starters

Choose one of the conversation starters below and introduce it to the group. Then break people up into small groups and use the questions to guide discussion for 10-15 minutes.

Name	Type of conversation starter	Description	Guiding questions
'Feminism'	Slam Poetry Video (YouTube)	CLICK HERE: Video A slam poetry reading that highlights some of the deep-rooted issues of patriarchy and the image of feminism. It also introduces intersectionality and recognises the different experiences of women, especially women of colour.	What message is 'Feminism' trying to convey about the nature of patriarchy and the image of feminism? How do we learn about feminism when we're growing up?
Okenyo, 'Woman's World'	Music video (YouTube)	CLICK HERE: Video LYRICS: https://genius.com/Okenyo-womans-world-lyrics (print lyrics to aid group in unpacking ideas) The Sydney-based artist introduces intersectionality and ideas of self-awareness and empowerment through her unique feminist storytelling.	How does Okenyo represent feminism in her music?



Part 2

Introduction to Intersectional Feminism

Start off by playing one of the videos below to introduce 'intersectionality' to the group.

Conversation starters

Choose one of the conversations starters below and introduce it to the group. Then break people up into small groups and use the guiding questions to stimulate discussion for 10-15 minutes.

Name	Type of conversation starter	Description	Guiding questions
'On Intersectionality in Feminism and Pizza'	Video (YouTube)	CLICK HERE : This video is a fantastic introduction to intersectionality using pizza as a metaphor for different identities.	Who is represented by 'Burgers', 'Pizzas', 'Cheese Pizzas' and 'Deluxe Pizzas'? - Burgers: men - Pizzas: women - Cheese pizzas: white women - Deluxe pizzas: any combination of LGBTIQ+, POC etc., women.' What does intersectionality mean to you? What does it look like?
'Sometimes you're a Caterpillar'	Video (YouTube)	CLICK HERE : This animation explores intersectionality through two animals who are trying to get under a fence and one simply just can't do it.	How did the conversation between the snail and the caterpillar represent intersectionality? Did you relate to some of the dialogue in the video?

Once the group feels confident in understanding some of the ideas and themes of intersectionality, offer them a straight-forward definition:

The term ‘intersectionality’ was coined by civil rights advocate and law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectional feminism is an understanding that everyone has specific experiences of their gender, and recognises the different identities and challenges they may face or that make them vulnerable. For it to achieve its stated aims, feminism needs to accommodate the different needs, experiences and identities of different people, using an intersectional approach to recognise how privilege, power and circumstance may affect your understanding and perspective.

These identities overlap and intersect, and can be experienced with various intensity at different times. They can be amplified when put together, so it is important to listen to and acknowledge these different experiences. “Women aren’t just exposed to sexism – racism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, and religious persecution are intrinsically linked to how diverse women experience inequality” (<https://iwda.org.au/3-ways-to-be-an-intersectional-feminist-ally/>).

So we’ve talked a little bit about identities, differences, disadvantages and privileges, but what exactly is ‘privilege’?



ActionAid activists at 2017 training in Sydney.

Part 3

What is Privilege?

Conversation starter

Choose one of the conversation starters below and introduce it to the group. This time, break people up into pairs (this will allow for deeper conversation) and use the guiding questions to stimulate discussion for 10-15 minutes.

Name	Type of conversation starter	Description	Guiding questions
'What is Privilege' – BuzzFeed privilege walk.	Video (Facebook)	CLICK HERE : Powerful video on how life experiences can change how you are treated and have access to opportunities by visualising privilege walking.	Before diving in, ask participants to silently reflect for a minute on this question: What are some personal experiences you have had dealing with or noticing privilege?
'How privileged are you' or Stand Up Privilege	Quiz (Buzzfeed) or read questions.	CLICK HERE : This is a quiz that you can take to find out how privileged you are. This may be a confronting task, so we recommend it is done with an open-minded group with access to computers/phones, or you can read out the questions and people can write down or sit/stand if it relates to them. It can also be provided to the group when they leave if they are interested in finding out more about their own privilege.	Can you think of some examples of privilege? Examples of everyday privilege: men walk around at night without concerns over their safety, whereas women think twice. Or if you have a medical emergency you can easily access the hospital and don't worry for economic reasons. Why is it important to recognise privilege and our lived experiences?

Once the group feels confident in understanding some of the ideas and themes of privilege, offer them a straight-forward definition:

Privilege is the access to or enjoying rights or advantages simply by membership of a particular group or identity. These privileges are often unearned and/or undeserved.

Privilege exists on a continuum with many complex dimensions. Understanding privilege is about discovering how we personally interact with our and other people's identities and dimensions of privilege. We are always interacting with these dimensions whether it's consciously or unconsciously. These can include gender, religion, socio-economic status, race, appearance, sexual orientation, ability and citizenship.



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Part 4

Privilege and Intersectionality within a Movement

Intersectional Movements

Conversation starters

Choose one of the conversations starters below and introduce it to the group. Then break people up into small groups and use the guiding questions to stimulate discussion for 10-15 minutes.

Name	Type of Resource	Description	Guiding questions
'How can movements be intersectional?'	Video (website)	CLICK HERE: This video highlights the importance of intersectionality within organising and movements.	Why is it important to recognise intersectionality in movements, specifically in ActionAid's movement? What are some examples of intersectional movements?

Once the group feels confident in understanding the importance of intersectionality in a movement, offer them this reflection:

As a feminist and global justice organisation, ActionAid Australia is dedicated to opening up spaces to discuss feminism and intersectionality that are non-judgmental, safe, accessible, and build understanding amongst our activists. It is important through our programs, movements and campaigns that we are recognising the multi-faceted and complex nature of the issues women face, and we are tackling them in ways that are informed, respectful and put the voices and needs of women at the centre.

A nice quote from writer Mariella Moshof to reflect the importance of intersectional movements:

“ If we fail at the basic starting point of educating ourselves on all marginalised identities and the specific struggles they face, then we'll never be able to create a movement that's truly inclusive. ”

Part 5

Solidarity and being an Intersectional Feminist Ally

Offer this introduction to the group on how to be an intersectional feminist ally:

By now hopefully you know what intersectional feminism is. But how can you be an intersectional feminist in everyday life?

Intersectionality means being committed to equality for all, using your position of privilege to elevate the voices of those who have less, rather than talking over them in the name of being an ally. Remember: "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own." – Audre Lorde

Being intersectional involves taking personal responsibility for educating yourself. Read articles, listen to people's stories, examine your words and actions.

Intersectionality in a movement is about creating noise for issues that may not directly affect us, but are important to the causes we believe in and stand behind. Intersectional feminism means recognising, understanding, and accounting for the multitude of identities, experiences and vulnerabilities that shape women's ability to act in times of need or struggle.

One of the key pillars of ActionAid's Human Rights Based Approach is Solidarity. This means not speaking over or for people, but standing behind them. It involves strengthening and building movements for change that are led by those most affected by poverty and exclusion, and building collective power to demand change. It recognises those identities most at risk

or vulnerable to oppression and discrimination, and involves them in decision making for positive change.

We have pledge cards with some of the ways that you can stand in solidarity with the women ActionAid works with. But we encourage you to think of your own ways too. What skills can you bring to this feminist movement?

On these pledge cards you have the following options:

- 1. Join your local ActionAid Australia group*
- 2. Have a one-on-one with your local ActionAid Australia Community Leader*
- 3. Run your own feminist discussion group*
- 4. Other:*

There is where you can choose how to get involved. Think about any skills or knowledge you bring to this movement. Are you passionate about events? Then maybe you can support your local group to carry out more events like this? Are you great with people? Then maybe you want to run a stall and talk to members of your local community about how they can get involved with ActionAid Australia and the women's rights movements.

Whatever your skills or passions, we would love to hear about them.

List of Sources Used

Feminism:

'Feminism':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fiOSGvYMBA>

Woman's World:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vj_qnaCIFI0

Lyrics for 'Woman's World':

<https://genius.com/Okenyo-womans-world-lyrics>

Intersectionality:

'On Intersectionality in Feminism and Pizza:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgK3NFvGp58>

'Sometimes You're a Caterpillar':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRiWgx4sHGg>

Privilege:

What is Privilege? (Buzzfeed privilege walk):

<https://www.facebook.com/BuzzFeedOz/videos/1936578223240531/>

How Privileged Are You? (Quiz):

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/regajha/how-privileged-are-you>

Intersectional Movements:

How can movements be intersectional?:

<https://www.movetoendviolence.org/blog/movements-mosaics-call-practice-intersectionality/>

Further Resources:

If any of your group members are interested in learning more about intersectional feminism and looking at other resources, here are some great ones to share:

These could also be used to further develop the Discussion Toolkit in the future. It is highly recommended that Community Leaders explore these sources to incorporate into future discussions.

'Check your Perspective, not your Privilege.'	TedTalk (YouTube)	CLICK HERE : This short talk provides a good reflection on how privilege can be misused.
'If Women Ruled the World'	Video (YouTube)	CLICK HERE : This video explores bottom up approaches to feminism and patriarchy that address the root problem of gender imbalances rather than 'cosmetic fixes'. Contains coarse language.
'An Open Letter of Mary Daly' - Audre Lorde	Open Letter	CLICK HERE : A letter about intersectionality in the women's movement.
'Who Said It Was Simple?' – Audre Lorde	Poem	CLICK HERE : This poem delves into the complexity of the multiple identity spaces of the author (black, lesbian and deaf), and how intersectionality informs our experiences.
'Trouble at the Intersection' – Celeste Liddle	Speech	CLICK HERE : A longer read, but highlights the importance of intersectionality within the Australian community, especially in regards to Indigenous people, Australia's history, and ideas of poverty.

Name: _____

Email: _____

Number _____

I pledge to:

☐ Join my local ActionAid group

☐ Have a one-on-one catch up with a local ActionAid organiser

☐ Run a feminist discussion group

Other: _____

Feel free to talk to our organisers for help!

act:onaid



Name: _____

Email: _____

Number _____

I pledge to:

☐ Join my local ActionAid group

☐ Have a one-on-one catch up with a local ActionAid organiser

☐ Run a feminist discussion group

Other: _____

Feel free to talk to our organisers for help!

act:onaid



Name: _____

Email: _____

Number _____

I pledge to:

☐ Join my local ActionAid group

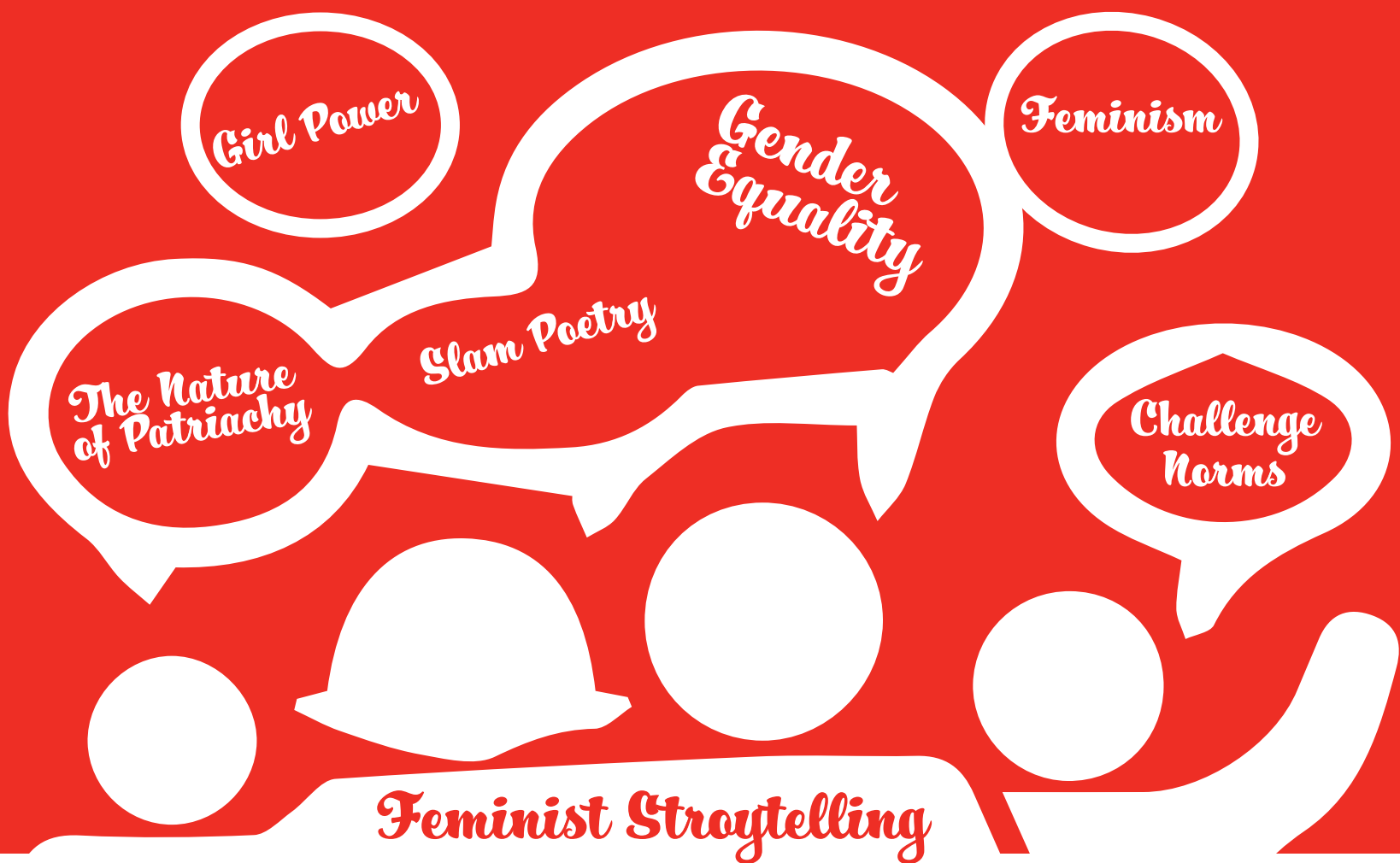
☐ Have a one-on-one catch up with a local ActionAid organiser

☐ Run a feminist discussion group

Other: _____

Feel free to talk to our organisers for help!

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For more information please go to:
actionaid.org.au

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- 🐦 twitter.com/actionaid_aus
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- 🌐 www.actionaid.org/australia

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