

Activity 3.27 Research in the Communities – Going Deeper Through Community Reporting (The Arts)

Module: 3. Local and Global Communities

Duration: 90 minutes

Social Development Themes: Arts

Summary

As suggested at the beginning of this module, there are a number of creative tools and techniques that could support participants to explore their communities and look deeper, and with new lenses, at the world they're living in. One way to do this is through an exercise that turns participants into community journalists, finding out more about the people and the stories that are around them, in order to design and deliver the right kind of social action.

The arts often uses stories as a way of engaging people, creating spaces for meaningful conversations around some of the issues that are important to communities. We all have stories; we carry them around with us and, as we grow, so do our stories. Sometimes we lack the confidence to tell our stories and feel there isn't the audience to listen to them. One of the reasons an arts process can be a useful approach is that it can give people the self-belief to feel like their stories are worth being told, and that these stories should be listened to.

Learning Outcomes:

Ability to identify a social development issue to address in the community

Understand the concept of community and connections between local and global community

Approach:

1. If possible, encourage the group out into the community to ask people some relevant and sensitive questions. This can be a powerful way of finding out more about what's important to the people living around them. One way of documenting these conversations could be on mobile phones, or Dictaphones, if they're available to the group.

2. Once the group has decided on the questions, think about where they want to go and who could be the most useful people to talk to. Ask the group to think about three or four questions they want to ask and, in small groups or pairs, give them a certain amount of time to go and ask them.

3. It's important to be honest and transparent about why you're asking people questions and what's going to happen with the answers. Tell people about Active Citizens and your intentions to find out about issues that are affecting the community. Be persistent and ask relevant, open questions but also respect the fact that some people may not want to talk.

4. Bring the answers back to the group and listen to the material. What are the common themes? Are there similar issues that people in the community are finding challenging? What might this tell you about the kind of social action project you could create?

5. You could think about creating characters from the people you've interviewed and turning some of their stories into a short play. Are there other creative ways that you could use the material you've gathered? Could you write a poem or song about the issues you've uncovered? Do you think the issues are specific to that community, or would there be similar answers in other communities, regions or countries?