

At-A-Glance: Project ROOTS

Who is this toolkit for?

Project ROOTS is a guide for implementing a gender-specific, culturally responsive, and developmentally appropriate prevention program for youth aged 8 to 13. We understand that developmentally this is a crucial period for youth, one which must be coupled with consistent mentorship. Activities were designed for youth aged 8-13 but have been adapted for older groups.

What is the purpose of this toolkit?

Project ROOTS is a prevention education program for children and adolescents that addresses the root causes of gender-based violence and unhealthy relationships including severe forms such as sex trafficking, rape, domestic violence, and sexual exploitation. As a gender-transformative program, it aims to strengthen protective factors in children as they are brought to question the cultural normalization of violence, their association to peers who tolerate it, the destructive norms that valorize power, and the violence that surrounds them at home and/or in their community.

Where should the toolkit be implemented?

Project ROOTS is an adaptable program that can be implemented within a school setting, recreational sites, or other community outlets where youth can meet in a safe space.

How do you use the toolkit?

Project ROOTS include interactive activities that are divided into three main lesson topics: Empathy, Empowerment and Equality. Please note that several of the activities overlap with more than one theme. The activities are adaptable, and each lesson plan should be appropriately modified for the population being served, maturity levels, length of program, and length of the session. The activities should be implemented by a trained Facilitator who is committed to the main goal of reducing gender-based violence and empowering youth, who has experience working with youth (particularly in under-resourced communities), who is consistently present and serves as a mentor, and is trained in mandatory reporting and trauma-informed care.

How much is enough?

To convey basic information, we recommend meeting 1 to 2 hours per session and completing all of the core lesson plans. Project ROOTS has documented benefits of two weekly one-hour sessions over the course of 14 weeks. When shorter sessions are applied, children may be more likely to react with resistance and skepticism. Safe spaces take time to organically create, and the process of learning and unlearning rigid norms is one that occurs over an extended period. Some sites have implemented weekly sessions over the course of the school year and have found this conducive to the continuity of information and discussions. Nonetheless, we recognize that it is not always possible to implement for an extended period of time and have outlined the core activities below.

