I deal with my pain. I deal with my happiness. I deal with my neighbor. I deal with my life. I deal with my world.

**I DEAL**

Introduction

to War Child’s I DEAL & BIG DEAL interventions

What you should know as a facilitator
War Child Holland is an independent international non-governmental organization. The organization invests in a peaceful future of children affected by armed conflict. War Child Holland is part of War Child International, a network of independent organizations.

War Child programs strengthen psychosocial development, contribute to peace-building processes and advocate for the rights of children and youth, applying the power of creative arts and sports.

War Child Holland has programs in Afghanistan, Colombia, DR Congo, Georgia, Israel and Palestinian Territories, Kosovo, The Netherlands, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Uganda.

Introduction

to War Child’s I DEAL intervention

Version July 2007
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My first I DEAL group. First session: Identity & Assessment. From the start, I could identify my biggest problem: my authority as a facilitator was being challenged by one of these kids I was so eager to help. His name was Vincent, an overactive 13-year-old. In the village, Vincent was known as a troublemaker, known for beating and stealing. Girls were afraid of him, since he would harass them at any time. To be honest: Vincent was a pain in the neck for the whole community. And a disturber of the games I so badly wanted to teach.

In between the first and the second session, Vincent went too far. With a catapult, he shot stones to an elderly village woman. Tension around the boy got higher. This tension overshadowed every single game in my second I DEAL session. How to proceed?

Then – this manual had not yet been finalized – I found the key in my I DEAL instruction papers: reflecting on identity is all about openness. I sat down and told the children how I, being a little girl, tended to steal milk. Up to that day when the milk can, which my mother kept in a high place, fell down when I aimed to get it. There, crying my eyes out, face and clothes full of sticky milk, I realized how bad my behavior had been. My I DEAL pupils laughed and smiled, and I saw them reflect on my openness.

The next I DEAL session on Identity & Assessment, things had changed miraculously. Vincent told the group he had visited the old lady he had been attacking with his catapult. The boy reported to have offered her his apologies. The other children were amazed: is this really our Vincent? Slowly, during the process, we learned how Vincent had experienced the loss of his parents, who had been killed during the war. Thanks to the I DEAL intervention, Vincent reflected on his identity and decided to change his behavior.

Vincent now volunteers as the encouraging leader of the group, being a great help for me as a facilitator.

Jackie Atingo

Creative Development Worker
War Child Uganda
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1 I DEAL AND BIG DEAL: WHAT AND WHY?

I DEAL and BIG DEAL are manual packs, designed to help children and adolescents deal with life after armed conflict.

Healthy development of a child can be hampered during a period of armed conflict. As a consequence, life skills may not be sufficiently developed. Through I DEAL, we invite children to discover their identity. I DEAL calls upon the capacity, hidden in every human being, to cope with emotions of love and hate. It aims to help (re)define the child as the specific young human being he or she is, preparing for a future.

1.1 The method

I DEAL and BIG DEAL are theme-based creative life skills trainings for children and adolescents. I DEAL is designed for children between 11 and 15 years old. BIG DEAL is for adolescents between 16 and 20 years old.

Most of what is written here on I DEAL also applies to BIG DEAL. BIG DEAL holds the same goals and methods as I DEAL, but for a different age group. Wherever in this Introduction we speak of I DEAL, one could also read BIG DEAL.

I DEAL + BIG DEAL themes

- Identity and Assessment
- Dealing with Emotions
- Peer Relations
- Relations with Adults
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Prejudice and Stigmatization
- Conflict and Peace
- Future

Additional BIG DEAL theme

- Boy-Girl Relations

For each theme, a module is developed, which consists of 2 to 5 sessions. Sessions are presented as session plans, which include various exercises. You find these modules in separate documents, listed in chapter 6.

The IDEAL and BIG DEAL manual packs have been written for facilitators: staff conducting interventions at community level. In the first place we aim at War Child facilitators, but the manuals can also be used by teachers or other (para)professionals.

1.2 This Introduction

This document provides examples and instructions that are the background you need before you start the sessions. The explanations concern the goals, principles and structure of I DEAL, which should always be in the back of your mind. The instructions are about general topics like, How to manage a group of children? What to do in order to capture their attention? How to relate to gender differences in the group? The exact process of a session is to be found in the step-by-step session plans for each module.

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1 Creative Development Workers (CDWs), Project Officers (PO’s) or other implementing War Child staff.
The next chapter will explain the basics of creative play, which is central to all War Child Holland interventions and to I DEAL in particular.
2 CREATIVE PLAY

War Child Holland’s methodology is characterised by the application of creative means. We use creative play both in interventions with children (e.g. school groups, street children, community groups), as in training of adults (e.g. parent groups and teachers).

2.1 Playing does matter

Creative activities offer means to learn physical, emotional and social skills, helping children to express emotions, communicate and build relationships. Stimulating creativity aids to restore the normal course of children’s development. Play is beneficial for the development of coping mechanisms that enhance resilience and psychosocial well-being in children. In other words: through play, children can learn to (better) deal with their life.

Play and creative expression serve healthy child development. Moreover, children are often better able to express themselves through play than with words. If we observe carefully how children play, we can learn a lot about their feelings, problems, wishes, needs, and (developmental) situation.

During activities with children we create a safe and enjoyable environment in which children feel free to participate. The activities generally aim to:

- provide a creative outlet for a child's emotions and feelings;
- stimulate creative and imaginative development;
- develop a child's ability to communicate and interact;
- strengthen a child’s (constructive) coping skills;
- further a child's self-empowerment;
- develop a child's life skills.

2.2 Forms of play

Music and dance

In most cultures music and dance are ways of bonding and articulating identity; they help people deal with positive and negative experiences in life. The non-verbal component of music and dance activities is a very appropriate tool for children to express themselves, to make contact with others and to be understood by adults. Music is emotionally felt by both children and adults, and may help them differentiate between different sentiments. Experiencing movements and rhythm releases tension. It provides an opportunity to express feelings and to master those feelings, without words being necessary.

Art Activities

Through activities like drawing, painting, photography, and puppet making, children are offered ways to express emotions and views they find difficult to express in word and sound. Art activities enable children to show where they come from, who they are, what they want, and what they are hoping for or dreaming of. The fact that they produce something unique themselves enhances their self-confidence and imaginative skills.

Drama and Storytelling

Drama exercises and story telling offer a safe opportunity for children to express and deal with their emotions. Drama and storytelling may evolve around specific themes or emerge from children’s personal imagination. Drama activities with groups expose children to a range of psychosocial stimulators such as trust building, concentration,
group cohesion, co-operation and self-confidence. Interactive drama is believed to be particularly useful to explore and discuss issues in a community that affect the psychosocial well-being of adults and children.

**Sports and Games**

Sports and games offer children the opportunity to release energy. Physical activity is essential to the development of a child. It is a healthy alternative to boredom and idleness.

Like the creative forms of play, sports make children work together toward a common goal. It allows individuals to develop initiative and self-esteem. Sports and games are all about teamwork, leadership, self-discipline, responsibility, respect, dealing with winning and losing.

Sports and games make children explore their bodies and physical capacities, so they develop their motor skills, coordination and balance.

**2.3 Creative play and I DEAL**

Creative play is I DEAL’s primary tool. In each session you will find games to play. Your task as a facilitator is to make those games work in your particular group of children, or otherwise adapt them to your local work setting. In order to do so, you will need some reflection on your role as a facilitator. That is what the next chapter is about.
3 THE ROLE OF A FACILITATOR

I DEAL interventions are led by a team of two facilitators:

1. A leading facilitator, who does most of the talking and explaining. He or she guides group talk and is in charge of the games.
2. A co-facilitator, who stays more in the background. Still, the co-facilitator has a very important task. He or she continuously keeps an eye on the group, to insure a sensitive response to signals of the group or individual children. For example, if the group gets distracted, or a child seems upset about something, the co-facilitator may signal the leading facilitator. The co-facilitator also guides children that still need a hand after the facilitator has explained what to do.

As a facilitator, be it the leading or co-facilitator, you are responsible for creating a safe environment for the children. You have to inspire them. The work requires you to be flexible and responsive. The two of you are the ones structuring, coaching, stimulating, and supporting.

On top of that you must be a role model: positive, energetic, open and cooperative. In the following paragraphs we elaborate further on the role of the facilitator.

3.1 Creating a safe environment

Creating and maintaining physical and emotional safety is important when working with children.

Physical safety

Make sure that the location where you are working is safe. Let there be no sharp objects or other harmful objects. In some cases risks are even bigger: when there is fighting going on in the region. You are the one to guarantee the safety and protection of the group!

Physical safety also means you have to pay attention to group size. When the group is too big to keep an overview, you might lose sight of the participants. This increases the risk of unsafe situations.

Emotional safety

Besides being physically safe, children also need a sense of safety during a session. They should not be afraid to talk or express themselves. This demands emotionally safe atmosphere and conditions. Again, you as a facilitator are responsible for creating this atmosphere. How to accomplish this will strongly vary between different settings and circumstances. In any case: be calm and attentive.

3.2 Rules and structure

Set ground rules before you start. This serves for a safe atmosphere. Rules help to guard the children through the intervention. Possible ground rule topics:

- arriving promptly;
- mutual respect (no hitting, bullying, interrupting each other);
- no smoking;
- no drugs & alcohol (for the youth).

The type of rules will again depend on the local setting and circumstances. In the module Identity and Assessment the participants determine ground rules together.
**Time management**
Managing time is related to setting ground rules and is important for keeping up the concentration of the group. It also contributes to the predictability and safe atmosphere of the session.

**Clarity of instructions**
Give clear instructions. Your explanations should be short, the emphasis should be on demonstration. Introduce a game or exercise by demonstrating it and explaining it step by step, instead of explaining all the rules at once. Be stable and certain about your actions.

Facilitators create an atmosphere in which the children know what to expect. It strengthens their trust in the facilitator that he or she will keep the group together and will not let them down.

### 3.3 Inspiring and activating the children
Each session should be an inspiration to the children. It should be playful and activating. With your attitude, as a facilitator you are to stimulate the group to feel free to explore. A supporting, caring attitude makes children feel accepted. Show the children your respect and do not judge their performances. Just stimulate them. Facilitators often serve as role models for the participants. This especially applies to the adolescents, thus when working on BIG DEAL modules.

### 3.4 Flexibility and troubleshooting
Facilitators are troubleshooters. They should be able to cope with the unexpected situations and incidents that occur during the session. They should be able to adapt the approach or activities to the changing dynamics of a group, challenging behavior of participants, or external challenges, like other people disturbing the group. Depending on how the children respond, the leading facilitator decides how to continue. This could mean changing the focus during the session, adapting an activity if children become bored or restless, or resetting the goals.

### 3.5 Verbal and non-verbal communication
Since most tools are creative exercises, part of the communication is non-verbal. Non-verbal communication is expressing and sharing thoughts and emotions without using words. Instead, you use body posture, tone of voice, eye contact and facial expression.

Your verbal and non-verbal communication toward the children has to be consistent. Telling the children about respect and acceptance is pointless when you act disrespectful yourself. They need to feel acceptance in your attitude, hear it in your voice, and see it in your behavior. Consistent communication will increase the children’s trust in the facilitator. Be aware of the impact of your own attitude!

Of course verbal communication is equally important. Volume, tone of voice and pronunciation determine whether the participants will hear what you say. Easy language is required to make sure they actually understand it. Besides, you should be able to ask the appropriate questions and be able to summarize comments of the participants or a discussion of the group.
3.6 **Group dynamics**

The dynamics of the group can be influenced by both internal and by external factors. Internal factors are factors within the group, like the level of involvement of the children. External factors refer to factors outside the session, like a tiring day at school that causes the children to be distracted.

A facilitator should be aware of the dynamics in the group. To increase your awareness about the group, you may ask yourself the following questions:

**Children toward each other**

How do the children in the group interact with each other?
Do they cooperate easily?
Do the children accept each other?
Are they aggressive?
Are they hesitant?
Are certain children left out?
Could there be external reasons for certain behavior?
Are there individual children who show severe difficulties in the interaction?

**Children toward the facilitators**

How do the children interact with the facilitators?
Do they dare to ask for assistance when they need it?
Do they avoid (eye) contact?
Are they shy, responsive or hostile toward the facilitators?

The next chapters describe how to form an I DEAL or BIG DEAL group, and how to structure the sessions of these intervention methods.
4 The I DEAL group

In a group, children can exchange experiences, learn from each other and enjoy positive peer interaction. The general goal of I DEAL is giving children the chance to strengthen constructive coping skills, which stimulate healthy psychosocial development. I DEAL groups build on children's own strengths and capacities.

4.1 Existing groups

Where possible, we work with groups of children that already exist as a group, like a school class or children from a certain (part of a) community or IDP camp. Such a group integrates both children with more and with less specific conflict-related problems. This approach avoids isolation of groups or individual children that have been particularly affected by their experiences and is a conscious strategy for social integration of children.

4.2 Age range

For good interaction in the group, the age range should be kept small. Children of approximately the same age can function at the same level in exercises and discussions, and their preferences of games will be more alike: a 12-year-old likes other games than a 17-year-old does.

For these interventions, War Child identifies two age groups:

- I DEAL: children between 11 and 15 years old
- BIG DEAL: adolescents between 16 and 20 years old

4.3 Group size

In general, the bigger the group, the more diluted the attention of the facilitators will be. A small group (10 to 15 children) provides for a context in which children receive attention and can stretch their boundaries. In some settings it is hard to select small groups. In that case you will have to choose for bigger groups. Still, we advise facilitators not to surpass a maximum of 30 children. More children will hamper the group process.

4.4 Setting

The setting/location for sessions will vary. Settings can be regular schools, special schools, refugee camps, youth prisons, et cetera. Often you will have to adjust to available space, equipment and working conditions. Always try to arrange a good location. Take time to make adaptations to the space, move furniture or improvise a partition to avoid major distraction.

In an open space, the level of concentration will usually be lower than in a closed room and activities will have to be adapted accordingly.

4.5 Gender

In some cultures girls and boys are not supposed to integrate. In these cases you will naturally have to organize your I DEAL sessions for girls and boys separately. Be aware of the possible influence of the facilitators' gender on the group!

Some activities might culturally be less appropriate for girls or boys. You will probably have your own knowledge and view on this. If you do not, ask the stakeholders: the children themselves, teachers or community leaders.
On the other hand, one aim of your creative activities should be to stretch children’s boundaries and challenge their ‘old’ behavior. This may question some existing behavior. If you propose an activity which may not be in line with local customs, it is up to your judgment to find a balance between ‘challenging’ and ‘appropriate’.

4.6 Local practice

Apart from gender, there will be other social characteristics; specific to the community you are working in. For instance, for many painting is only considered valuable if the end-result is a concrete picture, whereas in I DEAL sessions it is the process that counts, not the end product. This makes clarifying expectations of e.g. parents and sensitive guidance of the children necessary.

Further, popularity of arts, games or sports simply vary from place to place. Cultural preferences differ, just like the common music instruments or the culture trends.

It is your responsibility, being a facilitator, to check whether or not session plans are appropriate and suitable in a particular culture. Your challenge consists of making adaptations, if necessary. Naturally, stakeholders are the main source of information if it comes to local use of creative activities.
5  Structuring I DEAL

An I DEAL cycle consists of a series of (at least 4) thematic modules. Each thematic module consists of a number of sessions (between 2 and 5). Below, an example:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module: Identity and Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 1: Who am I?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 3: Which are our strengths and difficulties?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 2: Who are we?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 4: Where do we want to go as a group?</td>
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(Module of choice)

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<th>Module: Future</th>
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<tr>
<td>Session 1: Looking back</td>
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<td>Session 3: Closing party</td>
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<td>Session 2: Looking forward</td>
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In each session, children are offered a range of creative group activities clustered around a sub-theme. Activities consist of the creative arts described in chapter 2, combined with group discussion and home assignments.

In general, goals are to address feelings, problems and behavior of the children in a practical and relevant way, and at the same time providing opportunities to digest and or adapt these feelings, problems and behaviors.

The next paragraphs describe an I DEAL intervention in more detail, followed by more information on sessions and the variables to take into account when planning a cycle and corresponding sessions.

5.1  Duration of I DEAL

Duration of a complete I DEAL cycle depends on the number of selected thematic modules number of sessions per week, practical circumstances and preference of the stakeholders.
A session usually takes 1.5 hour. Each thematic module will consist of 2 to 5 sessions. A minimum number of modules to be chosen is three. In general not more than five to six thematic modules will be covered in one cycle. With a frequency of one session a week a complete I DEAL cycle, will take 12 to 20 weeks.

5.2 Different phases in I DEAL

One could divide the I DEAL cycle into three phases: startup, run and closure.

The startup module will usually be the Identity and Assessment theme. You can use this first module to get to know the group and to assess the children’s interests and needs. It is important to get acquainted, to work on group cohesion and to make the children build trust in themselves, in the others, and in the facilitators. In this phase the participants of the group, under guidance of the facilitator, choose the other thematic modules of the I DEAL intervention.

In the second phase you run the additionally chosen thematic modules.

During the last phase it is important to prepare the group for the coming closure of the intervention. Therefore, the last module will always be the Future theme.

5.3 Selection of modules

The selection of the modules you want include in the cycle depends on the choice of the group, but you can take into account the group characteristics mentioned in chapter 4:

1. the problems and needs of the children of the group;
2. age of the children in the group;
3. gender of the children in the group;
4. the setting (school, institute, camp);
5. group size;
6. local practice.

These characteristics partly delimit the possible success of your work. A small group of children with the same age, already together in a class will probably advance better than a heterogeneous group.

5.4 Structuring a session

A clear structure provides children with a feeling of safety. One therefore should follow a more or less fixed path through each session. For each session we present a session plan, which guides you through the session step by step. You find these in separate documents, organized by module. General instructions on structure:

Welcome
A session should have a clear beginning, to bring the group together and welcome everyone.

Warm up game
Warming up prepares the children both physically and mentally for the session. It activates or relaxes their bodies and clears their minds. In order to warm up, we generally play an introduction game. The session plan suggests you an introduction game to play. This should take 5 minutes on average.
Main part
The activities of the main part revolve around the theme of the session and on achieving the set goals. Usually, we start the main part by discussing a homework assignment. Then we introduce the session theme, mostly through a game and/or group talk. The session theme (sub-theme) is further explored through exercises, discussions, short individual or group assignments. These, again, are described in the separate modules. The duration of the main part is flexible - on average it lasts for 50 minutes.

Evaluation and ‘Assignment for next week’
In most of the sessions, a small home assignment will be given toward the end of the session. The assignment is related to the theme at stake. Through the ‘assignment for next week’ we strive to connect the sessions more closely to the daily lives of the children.

Accompanied with this comes a short evaluation. Just ask the children what they liked and disliked about the workshop. Homework assignment and evaluation should take about 5 to 10 minutes. In the last session of a module, the evaluation is more extensive (see the session plans).

Cooling down
At the end of a session, you will have to make the children ready for stepping back in their daily life. Appropriate closing games are presented in the session plans.

The cooling down is a clear ending of the workshop. Just like a clear starting point, a clear closure of the session provides for structure and safety.
6 Modules

The first module *Identity and assessment* and the last one *The future* will be the same for all groups. The other modules will be chosen by the group and the facilitators, depending on the needs and preferences of the group. Below we list the themes (modules) you can pick from.

6.1 *IDeAL modules*

**Start module: Identity and Assessment**

Who am I? Why am I? What do I believe in? Where do I belong? Developing a clear sense of 'self' is an important process one is going through when growing up. Besides, what is the identity of our group? Who am I within this group? Which are the group rules? What are we going to do, where do we want to go?

In this first module the group will determine which of the available I DEAL themes are most relevant to them.

**Module: Dealing with Emotions**

Emotion is an affective state in which joy, sorrow, fear, hate, or the like, is experienced, as distinguished from reason or will. Emotions are human beings' 'thermometers' as to what is really going on around them. Emotions lead us. Thus, human beings are led by more than just reason (thinking). Often we first have an emotion, then we think, and then we act.

In this module, we learn how emotions function, and how we can cope with them.

**Module: Peer Relations**

Through relations we learn how to function in society. We develop an awareness of how others regard us. We learn how to control our own behavior to make it acceptable for others. Relations also provide us with the warmth, the emotional and physical support that we need as a human being.

In this module we will focus on the child's relationships with peers. The term *peers* refers to all those children that appear in the child's environment with whom he/she has a certain relation, and who are in the same age group. Peers can be friends, brothers, sisters, and classmates.

**Module: Relations with Adults**

Through relations we learn how to function in society. We develop an awareness of how others regard us. We learn how to control our own behavior to make it acceptable for others. Relations also provide us with the warmth, the emotional and physical support that we need as a human being.

Especially the caregivers in our lives, but also other important adults like teachers, are vital in this respect. During childhood we depend on them to provide us with our needs, and they serve as role models. At the same time, growing up is also a process of learning how to function on our own. In this module we look at how to deal with difficulties in our relations with important adults, and how to foster the positive aspects of these relations.

**Module: Conflict and Peace**

We often associate the word 'conflict' with large-scale armed clashes: war, rebels, and fighting. However, conflicts can also be small and less violent: quarrels with friends, parents, or teachers. Conflicts may even exist within yourself.
This module addresses those smaller conflicts and help searching ways to deal with them.

**Module: Rights and Responsibilities**

Children have rights. These rights are universal; they apply to all children in all situations all over the world. The rights are stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Various parties have responsibility to strive for the fulfilment of these rights, like the government, caregivers, but also children.

Being aware of our rights and responsibilities can be the starting point for smaller or bigger action in our own lives. We cannot only claim rights, but also have responsibilities. For example, we have the right to give our opinion, but also have the duty to listen to others. We have the right to participate, but also have the responsibility not to single out others.

This module is about the dilemmas that come with claiming rights and assuming responsibility.

**Module: Prejudice and Stigmatization**

Having (fixed) ideas about other people can sometimes help us to ‘organize’ our world. It is human to have prejudice about certain things or people since we cannot ‘know’ everything and everybody. But after prejudice comes judgment and stigmatization. The latter two can seriously harm other people while this could be avoided by taking on a different attitude.

Breaking through prejudice and stigmatization is not easy, but in this module we try to; by looking at that kind of prejudice and stigmatization that is relevant to the group, and at alternative approaches.

**Last module: Future**

The Future is the time ahead; those moments yet to be experienced. In a (post) conflict setting there is often much attention for the present and the past, which makes seeing a horizon and perspectives difficult. Still for young people it is important to have a sense of future prospect. After having been a group for a number of sessions, this is also the module to close the intervention with. So recapturing and celebrating what is learned and saying goodbye in a good way is naturally part of this module.

Note: other modules can be added, depending on the needs from the groups.

**6.2 Extra BIG DEAL modules**

BIG DEAL works with the same themes as the above mentioned I DEAL themes, but adaptations are made to suit the older age children. Moreover, there is an additional module for BIG DEAL, particularly suited for adolescents.

**Module: Boy-Girl Relations**

Through relations we learn how to function in society. We develop an awareness of how others regard us. We learn how to control our own behavior to make it acceptable for others. Relations also provide us with the warmth, the emotional and physical support that we need as a human being.
Relations with the opposite sex become more important for us throughout adolescence. It is not easy to find out or know how to behave towards the opposite sex, what to take into account. With this module we look at similarities and differences between the sexes and stimulate respectful interaction.

6.3 Icons

In the separate documents on each module, you will find the following icons:

- Read Instructions
- Group talk & discussion
- Exercise
- Assignment
- Note for facilitator

6.4 More information

We hope this Introduction helps you to start using I DEAL or BIG DEAL in a successful way. The only way to really mastering the method is: to try it in reality. We wish you success in that!

If you have any questions whatsoever, feel free to contact War Child Holland at:

elise@warchild.nl or info@warchild.nl