

ACTIVITY 2:

Trends analysis

What does 'trend' mean to us? Which trends stand out?

Materials: Flip chart paper, markers, handout: *What we're up against*

Plenary: What do we mean by a 'trend'? Invite responses and discussion. Explain that trends are not only the events and changes we experience in our daily lives and work but also larger patterns – social, economic, political, technological, cultural – that reveal a correlation of forces at play. When the specific and the general are somehow connected, this is a trend.

Identifying global trends may seem abstract, but it helps connect our local and specific situation to a broader range of forces. To begin, ask what new realities or recent incidents may indicate larger shifts and trends. For example:

The denial and violent rejection of election outcomes, such as the January 6th assault on the US Capitol in Washington, DC in 2020 or the violent protests following Bolsonaro's election loss in Brazil in 2022–23

The growing dependence on digital technology for access to information, services, and connection – a lifeline for some but excluding others who lack access while increasing our vulnerability to disinformation and surveillance

Increased attacks on environmental defenders and journalists as conflicts escalate over natural resources and territory

Renewed political conversation and mobilisation about racial justice and the legacy of colonialism, as well as backlash against these discussions

The rising political visibility of women and their rights, for example in Iran and around abortion rights in the US, as well as sustained political backlash and internal conflict, particularly related to the rights of trans women

The growing numbers of people displaced by extreme weather and climate crisis

The extreme consolidation of wealth at the expense of everyone else's stability and basic needs

In pairs: Scan the news on your cell phone, magazines, or newspapers to identify and share headlines from news sources or announcements by governments or influential institutions such as the World Bank.

Plenary: Share headlines and discuss:

- Do these headlines make sense in relation to your own lives?
- Are similar events, challenges, or changes happening in other countries too?
- What shifts – political, legal, social, cultural, demographic, climatic, technological – are changing day-to-day life and the near future?
- Consider political, economic, legal, social, cultural, demographic, climatic, and technological changes happening in your context: what's new and different?

The same trend can be both positive and negative. Digital technology, for example, connects us and enables us to expose abuses of power and share ideas globally. At the same time, it makes us vulnerable to surveillance, misinformation, and the mining of our private information.

Small groups: Using flip charts and markers, identify the five key trends affecting your context. Draw and label a graphic to show:

- the five trends your group identified
- the relative influence and potency of each trend (indicated by size on your graphic) in your context
- the connections and overlaps between these trends
- two elements that characterize each trend in your context and globally
- Draw or show three examples to explain the activity.

Plenary: Post the groups' graphics on the wall. For a few minutes, everyone views them. Then each group has a turn to explain two of the trends they identified.

Synthesis: If possible, enlist a resource person to share their insights. Alternatively, share background articles or videos related to the context or geographic region.

Some critical trends

Authoritarianism, dictatorships, coups, and political extremism

Xenophobia, racism, othering

Religious nationalism and fundamentalism

Ethno-nationalism

Militarism

Extractivism and resource grabs

Climate change and extreme weather

Backlash and misogyny, anti-feminism, anti-gender

Corporate capture of the state

Neoliberalism

NGO-ization

Racism and colonialism within organisations

Rising economic inequity, insecurity, consolidation of wealth

Repressions and attacks on activists, defenders, civil society, and democracy

Plenary: For each of the main trends that groups identified, invite concrete examples and experiences. Together, clarify the definition, dynamics, and impact of that trend.

How do we understand or experience the trend in our context?

How are the trends connected to one another? What historic roots do they share?

Where can we see examples of communities and movements resisting these trends or offering alternatives and change?

Discuss how people are pushing back against and organising to change the consolidation of power and wealth. For example, as corporations and billionaires concentrate more wealth and wield more political influence, workers are organising, striking, and, in some countries, gaining power in their industries and, importantly, the political process. The push and pull between different interests in highly unequal systems and societies drives the work of movements and other change makers.

Ask: what do these trends mean for the ways we organise ourselves to mobilise and change power?