

Experiences of power, conflict, and violence

There are multiple kinds of violence deeply connected with how power operates. Here, we'll consider some different forms of violence, an awareness that can guide our strategies and ways of organising.

Materials: a case study (Guardians of the River, or another case study the group is familiar with), or the timeline created in Chapter 2.

Handout: *Power, conflict, and violence*.

Plenary: Introduce the activity. Form groups to review the Guardians of the River case study, their timeline, or another case study of their choice. (Choose just one.)

Small groups: Review the case study or timeline to identify five examples of the use or threat of violence that blocked change from happening.

- What was the violence or threat of violence? Who was behind it, and why?
- What impact did violence or threat have in the short and long-term (years later)?
- How did activist groups adjust their strategies in response to violence or the threat of violence

Plenary: For discussion, ask:

- Why are we always surprised when our change efforts – whether inside our organisations and communities or challenging the dominating forms of power – create conflict and even provoke violence?
- What does this quote mean to you in terms of your work and the history you stand on?

Plenary: Share the handout *Power, conflict, and violence*, and review the definitions, asking for examples to make sure participants have a common understanding. If some participants have directly experienced violence, prepare a safe space and provide support for the psychological and emotional impact of remembering.

Small groups: Identify two examples of each type of violence described in the handout from your own work or the case study or your timeline. For each example, discuss:

- How does this type of violence work to maintain unequal power?
- What impact does it have on your life and your change work?

Plenary: This analysis links to the previous discussion about how power operates differently in the intimate, private, and public realms of our lives. Facilitate an exchange of examples and thoughts from groups. Ask:

- Which of the types of violence are most common in your context?
- How do these forms of violence work to maintain unequal entrenched power?
- What impact do these forms of violence have on our organisations and change work?
- What are the ways we can build safety and care into our organising and organisations to protect against and counter violence?