

ACTIVITY 2:

Rivers of Life

Materials: Large pieces of paper (A3 or half of flip chart) and coloured markers for each person.

Plenary: Introduce the activity. Invite people to draw a river to show the key moments that have shaped your lives and the pivotal experiences (positive or negative) that have awakened you to injustice, inequality, power, or liberation.

Individually: Think about the experiences that have shaped your life and made you who you are. Draw a river that traces your life journey. Zoom in on four or five key moments of awakening about oppression, injustice, inequality, power, struggle, or liberation. These experiences may have been difficult or joy-filled; they may have been individual or collective. Show these pivotal moments either along the river itself (for example, as streams flowing into it, bends, rapids, waterfalls, dams, swamps, or reflective pools) or along the shore (for example, people, experiences, conflicts, bridges, turning points). Use images, colours, and as few words as possible.

Small groups – or if time allows in plenary: Take five-minute turns to show and discuss your river. Only share what you want to and hold each other's words in confidence.

- What was it about each experience that was so important?
- How did these experiences impact and change you?
- How have they shaped who you are today?
- What insights, values, and visions do you bring from these experiences to this collective?
- Are there any particular cultural symbols that represent this for you?

Agree on moments or experiences that you found in common to share with the larger group.

Plenary: Each group briefly shares insights or common experiences. You can keep details confidential.

- What did you learn about yourself in this activity?
- Did you have any 'aha' moments listening to other people's stories? (Don't give details of someone else's story – only your own moment.)

As a facilitator, draw out the ways in which the heart, mind, and body all shape our experience, memory, and knowledge.

- How do these experiences in our hearts, minds, and bodies affect our leadership and change work now?
- How do they affect our wellbeing, spirit, and energy?
- What insights can we draw from this about our particular contexts and histories?

Repeat or continue this exercise if you like, to enable people to show where their rivers are heading, for example by drawing many streams joining together towards the ocean or diverging streams forming a delta with many ways forward.