

## THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

### INTRODUCTION

Stories are powerful tools for connection and learning, making them invaluable when working with groups. They transcend simple information sharing, engaging our emotions and fostering a shared understanding. By interlacing experiences and insights into narrative form, storytelling creates a more memorable and impactful learning environment, encouraging reflection, empathy, and a sense of community within the group.<sup>2</sup>

Storytelling is important for building agency so that those who are marginalised and silenced can claim their power, advocate for their rights and challenge dominant patriarchal narratives.

### WHEN AND HOW TO USE STORYTELLING

“For any group that is marginalized and whose stories are not heard or valued, storytelling is an effective way for people to empower themselves by sharing their own stories in place of the stories told about them. It also allows us to build community and solidarity in our organisations and movements — as we hear each other’s experiences and understand better how we can learn from and relate to one another in the fight for justice. The more women’s stories are told and shared, the more it will become the norm that women’s stories are important and valuable. By telling our stories, we affirm their importance and create more space for others to tell theirs.” [https://werise-toolkit.org/en/system/tdf/pdf/tools/Storytelling-Circle\\_0.pdf?file=1](https://werise-toolkit.org/en/system/tdf/pdf/tools/Storytelling-Circle_0.pdf?file=1)

### TOOL TO ENCOURAGE STORYTELLING

#### **STEP 1:** Telling our stories Introduce Process:

- Each of you has a story to tell and in the next exercise we want to capture some of these stories, at the same time as we use this as an opportunity to practice listening and documenting her stories. Unfortunately, in the time we have we will only be able to get stories from half the group as the other half will be listening and documenting.
- Have them practice a storytelling methodology in pairs. One will be the storyteller, the other will listen carefully and document the story through note taking. Use the guide to help the teller tell her story. 2 Guiding questions/statements: • What is in my heart right now? • Who I am today? • I realised that life was different for me as a woman or girl when... • The story I want to share is... • I used my power within when... (or if not familiar with terms – what did I do to change the situation?)

#### **STEP 2:** Reflecting on the experience:

- How did those telling their stories feel? Did you feel safe, supported? • How did those listening feel? Were you moved? Were you able to resist intervening with your own experiences? • What did listeners have to do to ensure they were supporting the teller? • How would we make the space ‘safe’? • What did you have to do in order to document/ take notes? • What was missing? What did you need to hear more of? Was sufficient context given to help someone outside of the group to understand the story?

Facilitator ensures the following points covered:

- This is a limited process, ideally everyone should have adequate time to tell their whole story (what is in their heart right now), time for listening.
- What happens next: weaving the stories together: collective analysis, production of herstories/our stories (what form, for what purpose?).
- Importance and ethics of documentation, fact checking with storyteller.

[https://werise-toolkit.org/en/system/tdf/pdf/tools/Storytelling-Circle\\_0.pdf?file=1](https://werise-toolkit.org/en/system/tdf/pdf/tools/Storytelling-Circle_0.pdf?file=1)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.harvardbusiness.org/what-makes-storytelling-so-effective-for-learning/>