



# LEARNING ACTIVITIES

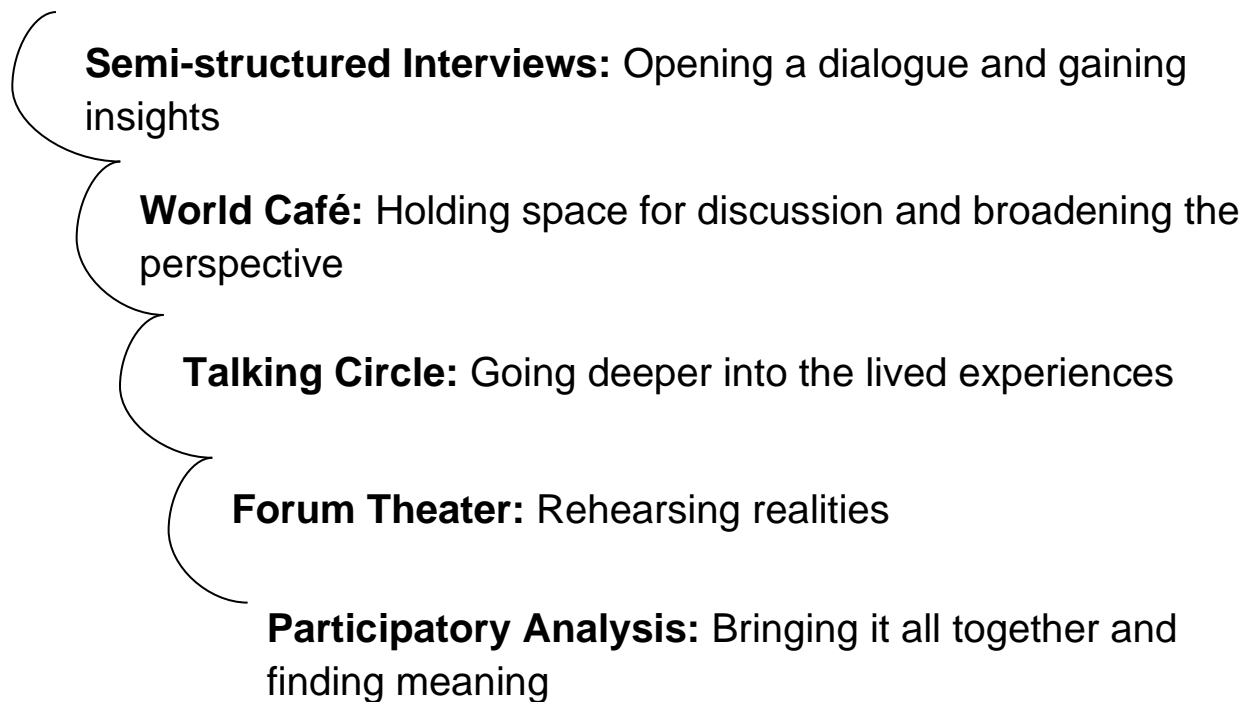
*A companion guide for the Lively-hoods Learning Agenda*

## EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN LIVELIHOODS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The following learning activities are designed as a research journey to develop knowledge, insights, and new paths for exploration at the intersection between livelihoods and human rights.

Running all activities means completing a cycle. Once a cycle is complete, a new one can start to develop further knowledge or go deeper in the themes and questions that emerged in the previous cycle. We first summarize and define the purpose of the proposed research activities. In the appendices, we describe each tool in more details and include some tips.

The image below shows the suggested sequence to run the activities. They can also be implemented in a different order or as self-standing activities.



These learning activities were designed for a Participatory Action Research project with a team of ten youth co-researchers (18 to 25 years old) based in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone to investigate how human rights and livelihoods intersect in the lives of young people in West Africa.

If you are interested in structuring a deeper participatory research process, we invite you to bring together a group of 8-10 young co-researchers and organize all or some activities together. For example, you can each carry out two to three interviews, collaborate to organize the other group activities, and conclude with a data analysis session.

## 1. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: OPENING A DIALOGUE AND GAINING INSIGHTS

In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer asks open-ended questions instead of following a rigid and formalized list of questions like in a more traditional interview setting.

**How it works:** Semi-structured interviews allow for more intimate conversations and a reflexive dialogue where themes are surfaced and discussed organically by both/all participants. They provide an opportunity to explore, reflect, and learn in conversation with others interested in exploring similar topics.

They also work to collect data, allowing the interviewer to learn about someone else's perspective, story, current reality, and aspirations. Interviewing and hearing other people's experiences might bring new ideas and nurture already formed ones.

**Who to engage:** Reach out to some young people in your community that inspire you and invite them to take part in a one-hour conversation.

Find a possible outline for a semi-structured interview in appendix 1.

### Analyzing your interviews to identify top themes.

Once you have carried out your interviews, it can be interesting to read through your notes. You can start to see common themes emerge across your data. Sit down with your notes and identify the themes you see coming up repeatedly. Once you have identified your themes (we suggest working with no more than four to five themes), assign a color to each theme. Read your notes again, using those colors to organize your notes under each theme (this activity is called *coding*).

This method is called *thematic analysis*. It is used to find patterns and analyze qualitative, often narrative, data. It is an active and iterative process in which one or more people use their subjective experience to make sense of the data.

Find more info [here](#).

## 2. WORLD CAFÉ: HOLDING SPACE FOR DISCUSSION AND BROADENING THE PERSPECTIVE

The World Café is a simple format for hosting dialogues with a larger group. It allows a big audience to learn, discuss, engage, and contribute to multiple topics. It involves setting up four or more stations in a room (we suggest no more than five spaces). Each station will need someone to host the conversation.

**How it works:** You can use the four themes we share in the *Lively-hoods Learning Agenda* for the stations, or you can use the themes that emerged through the analysis of your semi-structured interviews. Use each station to host a small group discussion on one theme. The person(s) hosting the conversation can share a case study or story followed by key reflective questions inspired by the stories to spark discussion. It's useful to share stories or case studies that bring aliveness, depth, and more intimacy to the themes, grounding them into reality. You can use some of the reflective questions in the *Lively-hoods Learning Agenda* and/or design your own.

**Who to engage:** This activity works well with a mixed group of young people and other community members, ideally with young people facilitating the conversations. We recommend a maximum of 30-40 people so that everybody can participate actively, and each small-group conversation can stay intimate and meaningful.

The World Café approach combines participatory principles and processes to host and document large group conversations. You can read more in English about the seven [design principles](#) of the World Café and the [process for hosting](#) a dialogue. Some World Café [resources](#) are available in other languages. We summarize the seven design principles here.

### **1) Adapt to the context**

Pay attention to who should be part of the conversation and what themes or questions will be most pertinent.

### **2) Create hospitable space**

When people feel comfortable to be themselves, they do their most creative thinking, speaking, and listening. Consider how your setup contributes to a welcoming atmosphere.

### **3) Explore questions that matter**

Knowledge emerges in response to compelling questions. Find questions that are relevant to the real-life concerns of the group. Powerful questions help attract collective energy, insight, and action.

### **4) Encourage everyone's contribution**

It is important to encourage everyone in your meeting to contribute their ideas and perspectives, while also allowing anyone who wants to participate by simply listening to do so.

### **5) Connect diverse perspectives**

As participants carry key ideas or themes to new tables, they exchange perspectives, greatly enriching the possibility for surprising new insights.

### **6) Listen together for patterns and insights**

Through practicing shared listening and paying attention to themes, patterns, and insights, we begin to sense a connection to the larger whole. Encourage people to listen for what is not

being said along with what is being shared.

### 7) Share collective discoveries

The last phase of the Café, often called the “harvest,” involves making the patterns of wholeness visible to everyone. Invite a few minutes of silent reflection on the patterns, themes, and deeper questions experienced in the small group conversations.

Find a step-by-step guide to hosting a World Café in appendix 2.

## 3. TALKING CIRCLE: GOING DEEPER INTO THE LIVED EXPERIENCES

Talking circles originated with the leaders of the First Nations of North America. They are an educational activity that encourages dialogue, respect, and the co-creation of knowledge. At Recrear, we draw inspiration from these practices to hold space for active learning and the sharing of personal stories. In the context of participatory research, talking circles allow participants to engage in deep listening and generate knowledge and new understandings linked to the personal experience of each participant and how they connect to the question or topic researched.

The subtle energy created from the use of this respectful dialogue process provides communion and interconnectedness. The basic principle of a circle is that when everyone has a turn to speak, when all voices are listened to in a respectful and attentive manner, the learning environment becomes a rich source of information, identity, and interaction.

Adapted from <https://firstnationspedagogy.com/talkingcircles.html>

There are different ways to facilitate a talking circle. At Recrear, we offer three guidelines:

- Speak from the heart (not judging what is shared).
- Listen from the heart (not judging what is received).
- Engage in deep listening<sup>1</sup> (focus on listening until it's your turn instead of preparing your own speech).

**How it works:** Participants are invited to sit in a circle facing inward so that everyone can see each other. You can offer a prompt—for example, tell a personal story of how each person relates to the topic of livelihood as a human right. Anyone can start the circle. Then, it will go clockwise so that everyone has an opportunity to share. Whoever does not want or need to speak can pass. Invite participants to be mindful of time so that everyone can speak and share (you can suggest,

---

<sup>1</sup> You can learn more about different levels of listening in this video from Otto Sharmer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLfXpRkVZal>

for example, that each person speaks for a certain number of minutes). Explain that when their turn comes, participants can take a deep breath and just connect with what is alive in them and give it a voice.

**Who to engage:** Depending on your context, you can host this activity with only young people, or create a space for a mixed group of different young people and other community leaders.

## 4. FORUM THEATER: REHEARSING REALITY

Forum Theater involves using theater techniques to investigate social issues. This theater form is accessible to everyone—you don't need to be an actor to participate! It's interactive and it allows participants to explore different options for dealing with an issue.

The goal of Forum Theater is to break the barrier between performers and audience, asking them to act as equal. Forum Theater was invented by Augusto Boal in the early 1970s. His goal was to help people identify their "internal oppressions" to make them visible and begin to overcome them.

It enables participants to try out different strategies in a situation applicable to their everyday lives. The subject matter is of immediate importance to the participants and should be based on a shared life experience (in this case, regarding the theme of livelihoods and human rights).

Forum Theatre allows a group to go deeper into the reality of a specific topic or question researched. By acting, the participants get to have an embodied experience of the issue being explored. They get to uncover new layers, insights, and knowledge.

**How it works:** A group of participants prepares and enacts a short play showing some kind of problem or challenge (in this case, related to the theme of livelihoods and human rights). The play should be without a specific ending, leaving space for different outcomes. The play is performed once and then replayed multiple times (e.g., usually two but up to three times if needed). During the iterations, any other participant from the audience (called spect-actors) is allowed to step forward and take the place of one of the characters acting in the scene. Any or all of the actors in the scene can be replaced.

As a spect-actor steps into a scene, they immediately step into the character they are replacing. But they can impact the course of action by changing the situation to enable a different outcome in the play. Several alternatives can be explored by different spect-actors stepping into the scene during the second or third iteration. All the other actors in the scene remain in character, engaging with the spect-actor/s and improvising their responses to enact and explore a different outcome.

A facilitator (called the Joker) remains outside the scene and observes how the play unfolds, the interaction of each actor, and how interventions affect the outcomes of the scene.

**Who to engage:** Try out this activity with young people only and invite the group to share experiences with authenticity and humour.

## 5. PARTICIPATORY ANALYSIS: BRINGING ALL TOGETHER AND FINDING MEANING

Participatory analysis is a method to make sense of data that involves inviting a group of people (co-researchers, research participants, and/or research stakeholders) into the analysis and meaning-making processes. The participants infuse their perspectives and experiences into the analysis so that data can be interpreted collectively. This approach to data analysis has several advantages:

- It builds trust among participants by making their voices heard and valued.
- It makes the interpretation process more nuanced as it allows for more perspectives to surface.
- It provides a space to discuss and inspire research participants to transform research insights into action.

**How it works:** Participants gather and review their research documentation (such as workshop notes or interview notes) to identify emerging themes. At this point, participants can share their proposed themes and agree on a few of them. Then, they organize their notes under the selected themes as outlined in the thematic analysis above.

At this point, working in small groups, participants can discuss data under each theme, allowing the ideas and concepts that are repeated to surface highlighting patterns, helping to make connections between different information, and extracting key insights. Once this group work is complete, participants can share the outcome of their analysis with the whole group and invite a broader discussion. The small group can capture the key insights or new understandings gained through this discussion and add it to the data collection to enrich the learning process.

There are many ways to do participatory data analysis. Consult Recrear's [research lab](#) to find some activities you can use!

**Who to engage:** Try this activity with a group of up to ten people who have been more actively involved in the research process.

## APPENDIX 1: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

### How to prepare

1. **Prepare your questions ahead of time**, and then stay creative.
2. **Schedule interviews in advance:** Make sure you brainstorm a list of a few people to interview in case the first person you asked is too busy.
3. **Record your interview (with consent!):** We recommend recording the interview in some way because it can be hard to take notes while interviewing. You'll need to agree on this with your interviewee before your interview begins. Make sure you specify that this audio is for your notes, and you will not be using it in any other way without their consent. Most smartphones have recorders; otherwise, you can download an [app Voice Recorder](#). Make sure you test the device and record it in a noise-free place first.

### Tips for the interviewer

#### Take advantage of the semi-structured interview format:

- In a semi-structured interview, you define a few questions, engage in a dialogue, and remain curious.
- Ask any follow-up questions that you find interesting to deepen the conversation. Make sure the person you interview can also share their questions and ideas.
- If your interviewee shares something fascinating, use the follow-up questions to get more details.
- Allow for a conversation that mindfully moves between content and emotion.
- Be mindful of time. If you agree to an hour-long interview, try to honor that. If it looks like you may go over that time, make sure to check with your interviewee first.
- During the interview, make sure to:
  - a. **Listen.** Try not to interrupt. Wait for a pause, then ask follow-up questions.
  - b. **Transition.** Move between topics (e.g., “I’d now like to talk with you about X topic now”).
  - c. **Paraphrase.** Make sure you are getting it right. Repeat what you are understanding to confirm it is correct. You might ask: “Is it correct to say that...” or “Did I understand correctly that you are saying that...”

### Outline

1. **Is the interview anonymous?** Yes/No
2. **If no, name of the interviewee:**
3. **Date of your interview:**
4. **What is the interviewee’s relationship to you?**
5. **Notes on the interviewee’s responses to your questions:**

*(Feel free to include them in bullet points)*



- *Question 1: How do you sustain yourself? Do you sustain other people (e.g., family members, siblings, or peers)?*

- *Question 2: Would you say you are able to sustain yourself financially and also work toward your dream? If not, what are the obstacles for that to be possible?*

- *Question 3: What do you think are the main challenges that young people face in your region/country to sustaining themselves?*

- *Question 4: What does it mean for you to have work that advances your human rights?*

- *Question 5: What kind of skills or abilities would you need to improve your capacity to create/access dignified work (e.g., work that advances your human rights)?*

- *Question 6: Design and add your own question here*

- *Question 7: Design and add your own question here*

- *Question 8: Design and add your own question here*

**TAKE A MOMENT TO TAKE NOTES AFTER YOUR INTERVIEW**

**6. General observations on the interview:**

*(What was the context? Did you enjoy the conversation? How did you feel listening to the experiences of the person you are interviewing? Is there anything else you want to flag?)*

**7. What are the two or three most interesting reflections or findings from this interview?**

*(Make a short summary of what you found most interesting, what caught your attention, what stimulated your curiosity, and what made you feel like you have learnt something new about your question)*

## APPENDIX 2: WORLD CAFÉ STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

- **How to prepare:** Ahead of the World Café, identify at least one person to host each theme station. Meet with them to share and discuss the themes, stories, and reflective questions for each station. Agree on who is hosting which theme. Ideally you can also assign a notetaker at each station; otherwise, ask hosts to take some notes.
- **How to set up the room:** On the day of the World Café, set up your room so that there is some space in between each station (as the room might get loud with lots of conversations). If you can, print out the stories and reflective questions or include some pictures while sharing the stories.
- **How to run the activity:**
  1. Ask participants to select a theme they are interested in discussing first; let them know that they will be able to visit each theme station. Ask them to go to the station of their interest. Allow at least half an hour for each round so that people have enough time to engage in fruitful conversations at each station. You will need at least two hours for this activity.
  2. Once the first round is over, ask participants to move clockwise from one station to the next. Repeat three times. We recommend giving participants a break after the first two rounds.
  3. At the end of the four rounds, you can invite participants to debrief together. Ask each host to make a brief summary of the discussions held at their station. You can also ask participants to share a few insights they gained (e.g., ask what was most surprising for them or what they learned).
- **How to debrief from this activity:** After the World Café, bring together all the hosts (and notetakers) and review your notes from each station. Invite each host to share what they have learned and discuss the new insights generated for each theme.

## APPENDIX 3: FORUM THEATER STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Here is how to organize a Forum Theater activity. Before starting, the group should identify a facilitator for steps one through three. The facilitator takes on the role of the Joker when the plays are shared in steps four through seven.

1. **Introduction:** Introduce the theme of livelihoods and human rights (you can use the mother question on page ... of the *Lively-hoods Learning Agenda* or any question you'd like to explore further). You can also share the four themes you identified with previous activities (or you can use the one we present in the *Learning Agenda*). Ask participants to divide into groups according to which theme they are interested in exploring.
2. **Sharing stories in small groups:** Once participants are in their groups (you should have four groups), ask them to each share a brief personal experience / memory / recurrence on the theme they are exploring. Explain that they should only share stories they are comfortable exploring with others. Each participant shares in a circle for a few minutes. After sharing stories, the group can select a story they find particularly relevant; alternatively, they can invent a new story that combines aspects of different stories that were shared.
3. **Storyboarding:** Once the story is identified, the group can decide how to enact their play. Ask them to identify the characters, the setting, and how the story unfolds in each scene. Divide the story into six scenes. You can use cardboard or other paper to storyboard each scene. The group should also decide who is going to play each character. Do a short rehearsal of the play to make sure everyone knows what they are supposed to do. You don't need to allocate much time for this (half an hour is normally enough); the idea is not to arrive at a perfect play, but something that is raw and can be molded and adapted.
4. **Performing a play:** After bringing all the participants back together, ask if any group is ready to perform their play. The rest of the participants sit as the audience. After the first enactment, the Joker can summarize the main points of the play. Then they can introduce the concept of "spect-actor" and invite participants to engage with the play by stepping into the scene.

Participants can tap the shoulder of the actor they want to replace and once they are in the scene they should immediately enter in character. The other actors should remain in their character as they interact with the new course of action by way of improvisation.

Then, the Joker can invite the group to perform their play again.

5. **Replay:** At this point, the Joker should be ready to observe and facilitate the interactions in the play (we recommend choosing a second person to support the Joker). Now, all participants are allowed to step into the scene by tapping the shoulder of the character they want to replace. The play can be repeated multiple times (e.g., usually two but up to three times if needed). In each iteration, the Joker can also make visible the dynamics they observe between actors and spect-actors. As the play is re-enacted, if you notice that no one is stepping in to replace the characters, the Joker can stop the play at salient points. The Joker can invite participation by summarizing what's happening and asking if anyone has a different strategy or course of action they would like to try out.

6. **Debrief:** Once the performance is over, you can get all the participants to debrief together. Invite everyone to share what they observed and how they felt. Invite the perspectives of the audience, the characters, and the spect-actors. Both the people engaged in acting and those observing will have useful insights. The Joker can also share their experience. Make sure to note the main points shared during the debrief so that you can revisit them and share with the group after the activity. You can also ask participants to help the facilitator to take notes.
  
7. **Repeat:** Once the first story has been performed and analyzed, you can now invite another group to share their play and start the process again. We recommend taking breaks in between each group and possibly spreading groups across multiple days (e.g., two groups on the first day and two groups on the second day).