


THEME II. DISCOVERING WHO WE ARE



Facilitator note: In order to move through life and to cope with all the unpredictability, fears, and daily stresses, we need to know and feel our roots, otherwise we can become lost to ourselves. We need to know where we have come from and where we are going.

ACTIVITY 2: The Tree of Life

Purpose	To help give each participant an identity and vision of their lives. (120 minutes with a tea break in between)
Materials needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Large sheets of paper (flipchart size) for each participant• Pens, markers of different colors, crayons
	
	120 MINUTES

Facilitator says: *Let's start by discovering more about ourselves because this will help us with our fears. We will discover who we are and our strengths. The more we know about ourselves and our strengths, the less we can be scared or intimidated by others.*

Part 1: Acting (10 minutes)

Tip: You may leave out this section with older youth and adults if you think they will not enjoy it.

Facilitator says: *This activity, **The Tree of Life**, teaches us about our roots, where we come from and who we are. It teaches us about our strengths so that we can be more confident and powerful. It also shows us our branches, where we are going with our lives.*

1. *Everyone stand up and be a tall tree. Show me how you can make your body into a tall tree.*
2. *What is at the bottom of the tree that goes into the ground? (pause - get responses) **The roots.** Show me the roots. What are the roots of the tree for? (get responses) Feel the roots of the tree. Let your legs and feet stretch deep into the ground and make you strong.*
3. *Going up the tree, what is next? (get responses) **The trunk.** Show me the trunk. What is it for? Feel the strong trunk of the tree - it has its good years and bad years but it keeps growing. It grows taller and taller over the years and moves the tree towards the sky.*
4. *And what part of the tree reaches up into the sky? (get responses) **The branches.** Show me the branches of the tree, reaching to the sky. What are the branches of the tree for? They carry fruit, so nice to eat, and leaves to give us shade.*
5. *And now show me **the leaves** of the tree. What do they do? They keep us cool in the heat of the afternoon.*
6. *And now show me **the fruit** of the tree. So nice to eat on hot days.*



Leaves: My talents, skills and achievements

Branches: My hopes and wishes

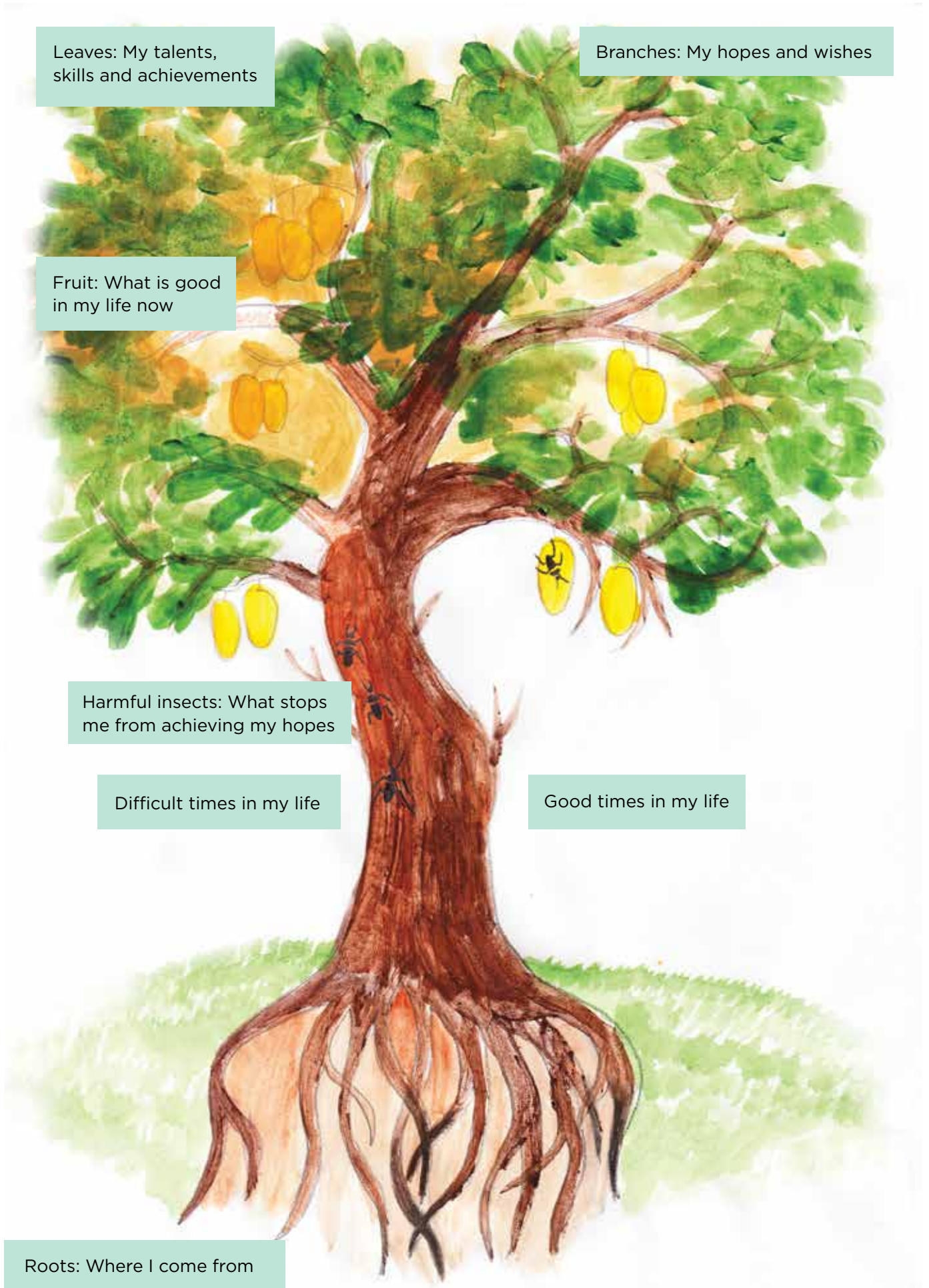
Fruit: What is good in my life now

Harmful insects: What stops me from achieving my hopes

Difficult times in my life

Good times in my life

Roots: Where I come from



Part 2: Drawing (50 minutes)

Facilitator says: *On a large piece of flipchart paper each of us will draw our own tree. (Distribute a large piece of flipchart paper to each participant, sharing out the colored pens and markers.)*

The facilitator shows the picture of the Tree of Life to participants. (**Alternative:** Facilitator draws each part of the tree as he/she speaks.)

Facilitator says: *This is your Tree of Life that talks to you. It is divided into three parts: the **ROOTS**, the **TRUNK**, and the **TOP**, which consists of the branches with their leaves and fruit.*

You will need to ask specific questions for each part of the tree. Wait until the children have completed that section of the drawing before moving to the next set of questions. Walk around the room and observe the tree drawings to ensure that the children understand.

1. *Draw the **ROOTS** and write where you come from, and where your parents, relatives and ancestors come from. What town or village do you come from? What town or village do your parents come from? What town or village do your grandparents come from? These are your roots. Roots can also be the people who have loved you and helped you in your life. No matter where you travel in life, your roots are in this ground, in this place.*

Tip: Remind the participants that they can use a symbol or picture, if writing is difficult for them.

2. *Draw the **TRUNK** and, on the right side of the tree, write down some of the good events in your life. What made you happy? What are the times you celebrated? On the left side of the tree, write about some of the difficult times in your life. If you had a very difficult time in your life, you can show it as a scar on the tree or a broken branch.*

See yourself climbing the tree, from the roots to the trunk and now the branches.

3. *Draw the **BRANCHES**. On the branches, write your hopes and wishes for the future.*
4. *On the **LEAVES**, write your talents (what you are good at), skills (what you are able to do), and achievements (what you have accomplished). What are you good at? (Examples: I am strong; good at taking care of others; I am a good listener)*
5. *On each branch draw the **FRUIT** – the fruits are the good things in your life now. The fruits can also be people who help you, love you or inspire you now (teachers, religious leaders, even someone you have never met).*



Optional: *Finally, draw the **HARMFUL INSECTS** that are the obstacles in your life. These are the things in your life that stop you from achieving your hopes. They may also be the beliefs about yourself that interfere with your growth, such as thinking you are worthless or stupid.*

Part 3: Discussion (45 minutes)

Have the children either meet in pairs and ask one another questions **OR** select a few volunteers to present their trees to the larger group. Keep the presentations fairly brief.

Tip: Presenting is optional as some children may not wish to share their drawing. If many children wish to present, several could present on each morning of the workshop.

Tip: You can conduct this like an interview using the questions below or allow the presenters to talk about their tree in any way they wish. Be sensitive to the timing, however, and don't have just one or two children dominate the discussion. The objective is for the participants to develop a positive view of themselves – of their talents, skills and achievements – despite life's difficulties.

Discussion topics to create a positive story of your life:

- *Tell me about your **Roots**, where your parents lived when they were growing up and the home of your ancestors.*
- *Tell me about the **Trunk**, what times or events you have found to be difficult in life and those that have been good.*

Tip: For teenagers and adults, ask what lessons they learnt from these experiences?

- *Who are the important people in your life? How have your talents and skills helped you in your life? (For example, patience has helped me to get through difficult times and wait until things change for the better; when I don't know what to do I seek help from others; in the face of misery I can laugh and that helps me find a solution).*
- *What are your hopes and wishes for the future. What are the messages of hope in your life – when life gets hard what do you tell yourself to continue on?*

Tip: If a child becomes upset while telling their story, have the resource person meet with them outside during this session. If several people are upset by what another person is saying, have everyone come into a circle, and hold hands. The facilitator emphasizes that in this workshop we are all together. We all have pains and joys in our life and we share them here.

Facilitator says: *We all have fears, and bad things can happen to any of us, but we are not alone. We are connected to others. We have so much in common. We all experience happiness and pain. We all have skills and strengths to help us overcome obstacles. We all come from somewhere; we all have roots that remind us of who we are. We share the same soil and water. And like a tree, we can heal ourselves and if our branches – **our hopes** – are cut, we can grow strong, new ones. We can draw our strength from those who came before us, from our faith, from our families, friends and teachers, and from the people who have helped us as we grow.*

Part 4: Walking (15 minutes)

Ask everyone to hang up their tree pictures next to each other on the same wall to make a forest. Invite them to look at each of the trees.

Facilitator says: *Our lives are part of a forest where we all grow together, connected to one another. Let us walk through the forest and look at each other's trees. See how big and strong our forest is. See how well our trees grow together. We are not alone.*

Tip: If possible, keep the trees on the wall throughout the workshop. Tell the children they can take their trees home at the end, if they want.