

EXERCISE:

# Speaking the Unspoken

FORMAT:

GROUP  
EXERCISE

TIME: 30 MINREQUIRED MATERIALS: ONE BLANK CARD PER PARTICIPANT, A METAL BOWL, MATCHES AND WATERSUMMARY:

*This is a very powerful exercise that can shift a group and build a deep connection between participants. It is intended to help participants talk about the issues that they are holding back. While it was initially developed to talk about unspoken fears, it can be used for any issue that facilitators want to draw out from the group.*

KEY EXPLANATION POINTS:

- Hand out one piece of paper (or small card) to each participant. Then ask them to write down their deepest, unspoken fear (using one word or a few words). Tell them not to hesitate, and emphasise that the answers will be anonymous. When finished, they should put the paper, folded, in a bowl in the middle of the circle.
- The facilitator mixes these up, and then asks everyone to select one piece of paper randomly from the bowl. Once all of the participants have one in their hands, tell everyone to take a deep breath. Each person then reads their paper aloud. After all have been read, they are returned to the bowl.
- Next, the facilitator offers one (or several) participants the opportunity to set the papers alight. Wait in silence while they burn. Then put out the fire with water and take the bowl out of the room.
- Follow this with a simple breathing exercise. This is important to ensure that the exercise closes properly.
- Afterwards, the facilitator offers a brief reflection, for example, in the case of an unspoken fear:

This is the strategy – how we deal with fear. We name it. We extricate it from our bodies, from our nightmares; we bring it into the light of day. We share it – with people we trust. We look at it, together, in a safe place.

And, just as we looked at threats, we look at where our fears come from, the ‘why’, the ‘who’ and the ‘what’.

This is a safe place, which we have created together – where we can hold each other’s fears, where we listen, with love and respect. We understand that our fears are common and shared. And that together, we release them.

FACILITATION NOTES:

- This is a very challenging exercise, but it is very powerful. If it is used, take care to make sure there is time after the reflection for reactions.
- Ensure that the exercise is used once there is enough trust within the group and that there is enough time afterwards to work with any emotions triggered – this means that, ideally, it occurs on the morning of Day Two – in the middle of the workshop.