

Session 1: *Opening*

TIME: 15 MINUTES (only *Welcome Session*); 60 MINUTES (*Welcome and Opening Ceremony*).

ACTIVITIES:

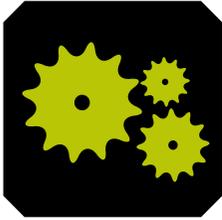
The opening session is composed of two activities: a welcome from workshop organisers and an optional opening ceremony led by the facilitators.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

- to connect participants to the history of integrated security workshops, helping them to feel part of a larger movement of women human rights defenders globally and giving them a sense of the depth of experience underpinning the workshop method;
- to set a tone of respect for each other and to mark clearly a transition from 'everyday life' to the space of the workshop; and
- to set immediately expectations that the workshop method is unusual (active, peer-to-peer learning)

ADAPTATION NOTES:

- the *welcome portion* of the opening should be tailored to participants' traditional means of showing respect. In some cultures, a light and brief welcome of a few minutes by any organisation representative is adequate. In other cultures, a welcome would be much more elaborate – *who* opens an event and *how* are extremely important in sending clear signals of respect for the participants and the workshop itself; and
- the *opening ceremony portion* is adaptable – it can range from a simple, yet effective, act, such as lighting a central candle to a more elaborate ceremony. In selecting and designing the act or ceremony, remember that first impressions matter. The ceremony should ground participants in the space and begin connecting the group.



EXERCISE:

Welcome

FORMAT:

PRESENTATION

TIME: 15 MIN

REQUIRED MATERIALS: NONE

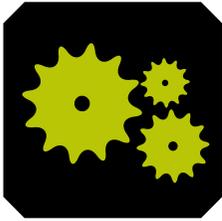
SUMMARY:

Representatives of the workshop hosting organisation(s):

- *welcome participants;*
- *introduce facilitators and supporting staff; and*
- *describe briefly the background to the workshop.*

KEY EXPLANATION POINTS:

- this integrated security workshop is grounded in years of collaboration with women human rights defenders from all over the world;
- this has been part of the Defending the Defenders Project, a partnership between Front Line, the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation and Urgent Action Fund
- during the second phase of this project, the integrated security workshop method was tested and developed through a series of workshops run from 2007–11;
- more than 300 women human rights defenders from over 50 countries in Africa, Asia, the Balkans, the former Soviet Union, Latin America and the Middle East have participated in these workshops;
- this workshop is a continuation of this process;
- these are not your typical security workshops. Instead, they embody feminism in action, meaning that they are challenging, flexible, and full of surprises. They are about partnership, dialogue, respect, responsibility, and creating our own safe space together; and
- this is a space in which to make time for ourselves, for our worries, our thoughts, and our hopes – and come away with new ideas and strategies for staying safe and well.



EXERCISE:

Opening Ceremony

FORMAT:

GROUP
EXERCISE

TIME: 45 MIN

REQUIRED MATERIALS: CANDLE(S) (OPTIONAL), ADDITIONAL MATERIALS FOR CEREMONY (OPTIONAL, SEE BELOW).

SUMMARY:

As appropriate, facilitators mark the opening of the workshop with an opening ceremony.

KEY EXPLANATION POINTS:

- In many past workshops, we have opened with a simple ceremony. This is intended to:
- mark the beginning of our work together;
- ground us in this space, to help leave the stresses and strains of our outside world behind, clear our minds and bring us together. To create a safe space; and
- to connect us – to the other human rights defenders who have been a part of past workshops, to each other, and to the elements that sustain us.

FACILITATION NOTES:

- Simple openings could include:
- asking participants to take a moment of silence to give thanks for the safe arrival of all, or to honour loved ones;
- lighting a candle in the centre of the workshop space to signal a beginning; and
- an alternate, playful opening could include tossing coloured balls (soft 'stress' balls are ideal) to all participants and asking them to hold on to them for later exercises.

Examples of more elaborate openings include:

- **Nepal 2008:** lighting candles and laying red poppies in a bowl of water. One participant, who was pregnant with twins at the time, lit the first candle.
- **Colombia 2008:** distribution to each participant of individually designed cards with a picture and description of the Mayan symbol corresponding to their birthday.
- **Kenya 2008:** after lighting a central candle, participants greeted and welcomed each other by pouring water and laying a rose in individual bowls. The exercise was completed with a 'hara breathing' exercise (see page 106).