

# SESSION 1:

## Imagining a Better World

(Approx. 3 hours in total)

### Session Objectives

- To propose a holistic vision of what we want our world to look like
- To formulate pragmatic goals that will mobilize our support

### Workshop Evaluation Tool: What do I want to learn in this workshop?

*(Approx: 30 min.)*

Ask the group to share all of the reasons each one of them is participating in the workshop. (This list should be kept by the facilitator and used as a tool to determine if participants' expectations are being met.) Group members should address:

- what they hope to learn,
- what they want to experience,
- what they want to come away with at the end of all the workshop sessions.

You may choose to ask participants to share their responses in writing on individual sheets of paper as well. One option is to collect participants' responses and return them at the end of the ten sessions of the workshop. Participants would then get a better gauge of what they learned over the course of the sessions.

If group members are shy and/or seem reluctant to begin engaging with the workshop and their expectations, sometimes it helps to conduct a warm-up exercise first. You may wish to conduct this evaluation tool exercise after the exercise, "What are my dreams?" which follows below.

# 1.1

## Exercise: What are my dreams?

(Approx. 45 min.)

Read aloud the following biography of Nobel Prize winner Wangari Muta Maathai and the letter below from a young woman in Brazil. The Circle Activity that follows is meant to introduce participants to one another, as well as spark conversation. While all of the group activities in this handbook can be conducted with participants seated in a closed circle, it is not required. Circle Activities such as this one, on the other hand, are specifically intended to be more participatory, with the seating arrangement providing the chance for all the participants to face one another and support one another. In Circle Activities, everyone has a turn to participate, including the facilitator.

**Biographical Note on Wangari Muta Maathai**

In 2004, Dr. Wangari Muta Maathai, became the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for “her contribution to sustainable development, democracy, and peace.” Maathai’s tree planting campaign in her native Kenya was not popular when it first began. “It took me a lot of days and nights to convince people that women could improve their environment without much technology or without much financial resources,” she told the BBC. The Green Belt Movement, which she founded in 1977, went on to campaign for education, nutrition and other issues important to women. Maathai’s former husband was reported to have once remarked that she was “too educated, too strong, too successful, too stubborn and too hard to control.”

Next, ask a volunteer to read the following letter from a young admirer.



Wangari Muta Maathai  
The Greenbelt Movement Headquarters  
Nairobi, Kenya

Dear Dr. Maathai:

I am a high school student attending the Escola da Imaculada Conceição in Brasilia. I recently received an award for my report on the deforestation of the

*Amazon rainforest. In my report I made recommendations to the government of Brazil to help protect the Amazon rainforest.*

*I am writing to you because I have been greatly inspired by your life's work to save the eco-system of your country and all of Africa. Some days I feel ready to take on the world and to do whatever it takes to bring my ideas to the attention of government officials. Other times, I just feel like a girl in school who no one will ever listen to.*

*My country is poor, and people are using the resources of the Amazon rainforest to help themselves feed and support their families. But there are also big corporations doing a great deal of damage. In my report I show that over 50% of the Amazon rainforest could be cleared or damaged by drought in the next 20 years. The world needs the Amazon rainforest to absorb all the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere. And when the forest is destroyed, less moisture goes into the atmosphere and rainfall declines everywhere. Brazil needs the Amazon rainforest, and my family, and one day my own children, will need the Amazon rainforest.*

*My father wants me to go to the university next year, but my mother does not. I want to continue my schooling because I think if I know more, there is more that I can do to help my county. My friends tell me to “calm down” all the time, that there is nothing that I can do. I am scared that they are right.*

*Thank you for being a role model to me and for giving me the courage to speak up. I just do not know what I should do next to save the rainforests in Brazil.*

*Yours truly,*

*Eliana*

### Circle Activity

Once participants have arranged themselves in a circle, ask each participant to do the following: *Introduce herself*, *share* one big dream she has for the world, her country, her community, or her family, and *offer* one piece of advice to Eliana.



### Questions for Group Discussion

- Why do you care about politics?
- Can you make a difference?
- Do you have a responsibility to make a difference?
- Do you want political power?
- Does everyone have political duties and responsibilities as a citizen? What do you need to do—what is the appropriate level of political participation—to be a good citizen?

## 1.2

### Exercise: What sort of women do we want our leaders to be?

(Approx. 20 min.)



#### Circle Activity

Ask each participant to name a female role model and explain why she chose that woman.



#### Questions for Group Discussion

- Why do we want women in decision-making?
- What are some of the challenges women politicians face?

## 1.3

### Exercise: “I have a dream that...”

(Approx. 45 min.)

Ask a volunteer or two from the group to read aloud the following narrative about Martin Luther King, Jr.’s famous “I have a dream...” speech and the excerpts that follow.

On August 28, 1963, American civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered an historic speech to over two hundred thousand supporters. Coined by many as the “I Have a Dream” speech, Dr. King’s vision for the future reverberated with people of all races, creeds, and classes.

Standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on a hot summer day, Dr. King spoke words that would inspire generations of young people to hope, and also to participate in improving their society.



### Excerpts from Dr. King's speech:

*"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'"*

*"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."*

*"I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood."*

*"This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day."*

*"Let freedom ring. When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!'"*



### Team Activity

Divide the group into four or five teams. Choose from among the following topics (feel free to change or add topics), and assign one topic to each team:

- Dreams for our Government
- Dreams for our Schools
- Dreams for our Health and Welfare
- Dreams for our City
- Dreams for our Children
- Dreams for Women
- Dreams for Peace
- Dreams for our Environment
- Dreams for Families Everywhere
- Dreams for our Granddaughters' Granddaughters

Each team should have a large piece of paper and pen to record their discussion. For ten minutes, team members should brainstorm what their dreams are,

relating to their topic. Each team writes down all of their dreams, big or small, those that might be possible and those that seem impossible.

When the time is up, reconvene the whole group. Ask team members to tape their team's list of dreams to the walls. Ask a volunteer from each team to report back to the group about their discussion and to read her team's dreams.



### **Questions for Group Discussion**

- Where do we want to be in the future? What kind of a world do we want to build ethically, morally, spiritually?
- What new arrangements of power are we seeking?
- What next? What new ideas are we proposing?
- What values do we wish to preserve?