

# Washing Line of Social Change

Purpose: This exercise is designed to get participants thinking about how social change happens, what are the necessary conditions and relevant factors. It may be used as an ice breaker to introduce the theme or as a follow up to an activity such as video about a social change event/ campaign, discussion about an article or to build upon an idea storm.

Time: 45 minutes as described below (follow up to video); as an ice breaker it could be as short as 10 minutes

Preparation: string, bits of paper large enough to fold and hang on the line (or paper clips or clothes pegs), a space wide enough to stretch the string and a way of tying it up

## Description of Exercise:

- Introduce the topic of social change either with a video, an idea storm or through a discussion. Ask participants to think of social change movements/events that have compelled us forward towards building a more just society, e.g., women's suffrage, abolition of slave trade, etc.
- Distribute bits of paper to the participants, ask them to fold it in half, and on one side write a social change event which they will then hang (or drape over) the 'washing line' in chronological order.
- Allow about 10 minutes for participants to think of their event, to hang it up, to have a look at everyone else's event.
- Once everyone has contributed to the washing line, ask participants to break into pairs, or small groups, to take one event off the line and spend 20 minutes discussing/identifying
  - 1. who are/were the primary actors (the activists, the 'opponents', allies)?
  - 2. what sort of change are/were the activists trying to bring about?
  - 3. what tools or methods (mass mobilisations? boycotts?) are/were used?
  - 4. what social change events came previously that may have helped their cause?
  - 5. what future social change events would this movement influence/help?
- Bring participants back to plenary and ask for feedback from each group. The facilitator may choose to do this group by group, or collect information question by question thus highlighting similarities or advances made possible by previous social change. Allow about 15 minutes for plenary and facilitator's wrap up.