**Tree of Life Exercise**

*Adapted by Shelja Sen from original work by Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo and David Denborough*

Reflect and make your tree. Think creatively about what materials you use. This could be completed on a piece of paper inside, or in the sand sitting outside under a real tree!

**ROOTS - HERITAGE:** Where you come from (i.e. village, town, country); your family or community history (origins, family name, ancestry, extended family); culture, - language, religion, favourite memories, dance from childhood, songs, your favourite place at home; a treasured song or dance, or valued objects, maybe sports clubs or leagues that you follow or belong to.

**GROUND - PRESENT:** Where you live at present; what are some of the activities that you choose to do and that you enjoy day to day.

**TRUNK - VALUED SKILLS:** What gets you through hard times? How do you respond? What survival skills do you use? What you give value to, care about? This may include skills and abilities in physical acts, practical experience (like cleaning), skills of caring, kindness, honesty, etc. What would a particular friend (or someone who cares about them) say about you? We might include something that our community or a group we belong to cares about, or something that our group of friends is good at.

**BRANCHES - HORIZONS:** Shared hopes, dreams and wishes: for others, for yourself, for wider community. Is it possible to trace the history of these hopes/wishes: how long have you had these hopes? Where did these hopes come from? How have you held onto them? Did anyone introduce you to these hopes or help you to hold onto them?

**LEAVES -PEOPLE:** People who are important to you - alive or may be people who have passed on. These may be people who are close to you or who have influenced you directly. You may also include heroes, acknowledge pets and invisible friends.

**FRUITS - LEGACIES BEQUEATHED TO US:** The contributions others have made to your life. These may include gifts like patience, or courage. Or you may be material gifts that have been significant to you.

**FLOWERS - LEGACIES WE WISH TO LEAVE:** You can also represent the contributions you have already made or want to make in future. These may be similar to the gifts you have been offered yourself. Alternatively, you may be things you were never offered in your lifetime and that you wish to offer somebody else. You may have learned the value of certain gifts precisely because you did not have access to them.

**COMPOST- PROBLEMS** - Compost heaps transform rotten stuff into rich and nourishing fertilizer for our lives