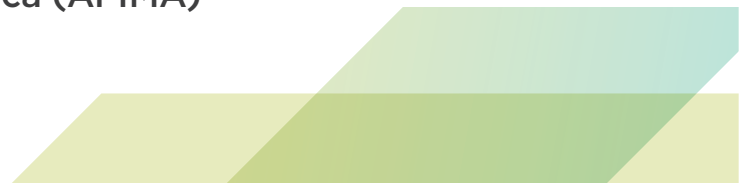




# RESILIENT ROOTS

A trauma resilience activity for CRS-WARO  
Action for the Protection and Integration of  
Migrants in Africa (APIMA)





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**NOTES:**

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# RESILIENT ROOTS

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**WORKSHOP PURPOSE:** To help participants gain an identity and vision of their lives that balances positive and negative experiences, in order to provide a sense of personal direction and hope for the future.

**TIME:** Approximately five hours with a tea break or lunch in between. (Do not rush the activities: give the participants time to reflect on their experiences).

**NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AND SET-UP:** Approximately 20, ages 15-30 years. Arrange the chairs in a large circle.

**MATERIALS NEEDED:** Large sheets of paper (flipchart size) for each participant, pens, markers of different colors, crayon, tape, name labels.

## ACTIVITY ONE:

### INTRODUCTION



#### MATERIALS

Labels for everyone to write his or her first name. A ball made of paper and tape around it (or any other lightweight materials)

#### ACTIVITY

As participants enter, have them sign in and give them a label on which to write their first name only.

To start the workshop, welcome everyone and ask them to stand in a circle. Toss the paper ball to one participant and ask that person to say their first name, where they come from, and what is their favorite animal. Then that person throws it to another who does the same before tossing it to a third person and so on, until everyone is introduced.

**Then the facilitator says:** *“Let’s find out some things that all of us have in common. I will start by saying, ‘Everyone who is wearing something blue should take one step into the middle of the circle.’”* (Give a chance for people wearing something blue to step inside the circle. Then they should return to where they were before.) The facilitator says, *“Everyone who is wearing something red should take one step into the middle of the circle....”* Continue with a few other examples, for example - *“Everyone who knows how to cook Cassava”, or “Everyone who is wearing sandals” and “Everyone who enjoys playing football.”* End with something that you know everyone will like, such as *“Everyone who likes to eat rice.”*

## ACTIVITY TWO:

### PURPOSE AND GROUND RULES



**Then the facilitator explains:** *We will spend about four hours together today, doing some drawing together, some sharing and some other activities. Everything is voluntary. You don't have to say or do anything you don't want to. But one rule should be, everything that we do hear about another person in this room,*

*should stay in this room. It is confidential, meaning that it is private and should not be told to anybody else. Is that okay?*

*Now, what other ground rules do you want to set for our time together today? (Get some answers and write them on a flip chart.)*

## ACTIVITY THREE:

### DEMONSTRATION



**Facilitator says:** *This activity, Resilient Roots, teaches us about our roots, where we come from and who we are. It teaches us about our strengths so that we can be more confident and powerful. It also shows us our branches, where we are going with our lives.*

- 1. Everyone stand up and be a tall tree. Show me how you can make your body into a tall tree.*
- 2. What is at the bottom of the tree that goes into the ground? (pause - get responses) The roots. Show me the roots. What are the roots of the tree for? (get responses) Feel the roots of the tree. Let your legs and feet stretch deep into the ground and make you strong.*
- 3. Going up the tree, what is next? (get responses) The trunk. Show me the trunk. What is it for? Feel the strong trunk of the tree - it has its good years*

*and bad years but it keeps growing. It grows taller and taller over the years and moves the tree towards the sky.*

- 4. And what part of the tree reaches up into the sky? (get responses) The branches. Show me the branches of the tree, reaching to the sky. What are the branches of the tree for? They carry fruit, so nice to eat, and leaves to give us shade.*
- 5. And now show me the leaves of the tree. What do they do? They keep us cool in the heat of the afternoon.*
- 6. And now show me the fruit of the tree. So nice to eat on hot days.*



**LEAVES:** My talents, skills and achievements

**BRANCHES:** My hopes and wishes

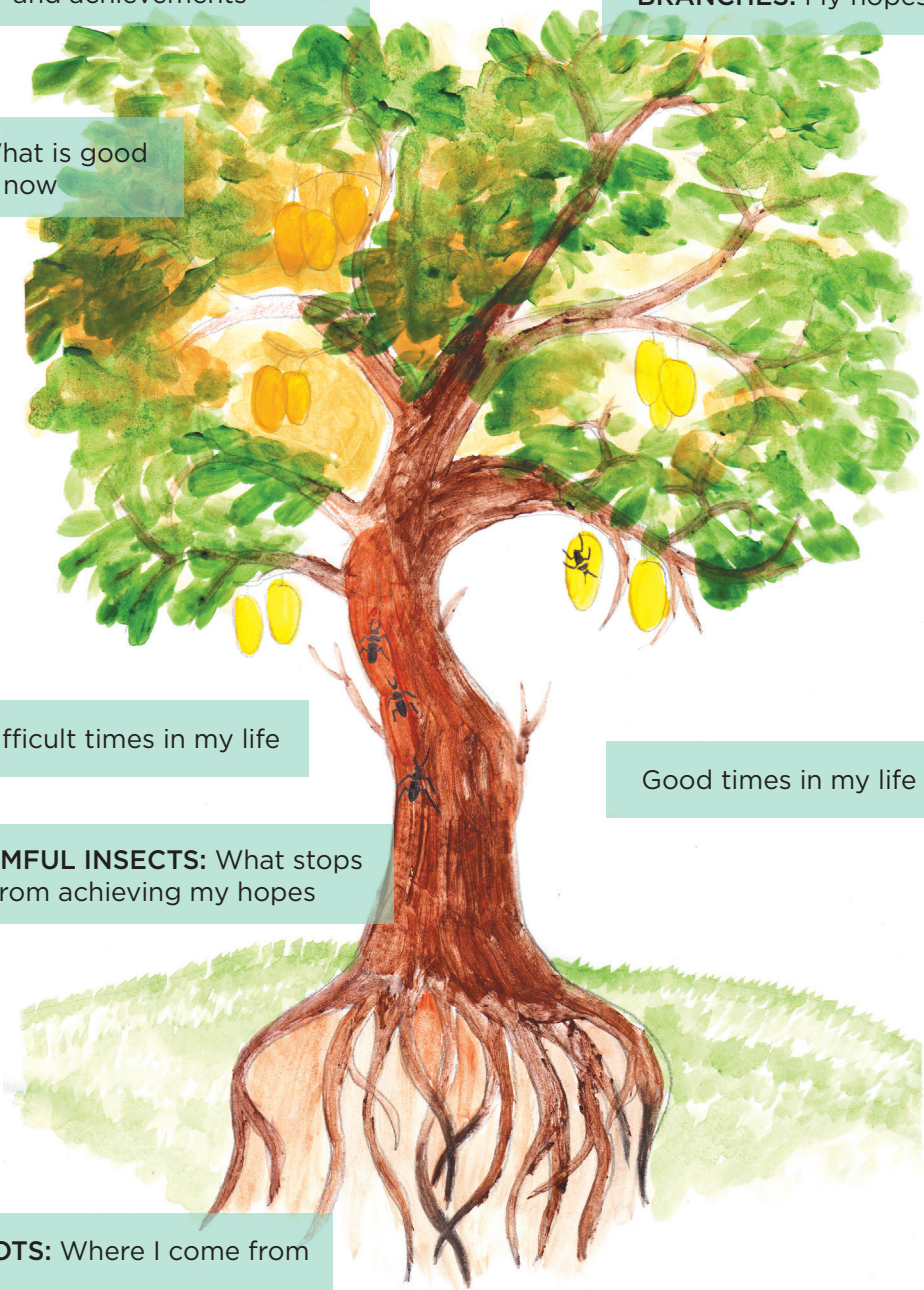
**FRUIT:** What is good in my life now

Difficult times in my life

Good times in my life

**HARMFUL INSECTS:** What stops me from achieving my hopes

**ROOTS:** Where I come from



## ACTIVITY FOUR:

### DRAWING THE TREE



**Facilitator says:** *On a large piece of flipchart paper each of us will draw our own tree. (Distribute a large piece of flipchart paper to each participant, sharing out the colored pens and markers.)*

The facilitator shows the cover picture of the Resilient Roots to participants. (Alternative: Facilitator draws each part of the tree as he/she speaks.)

**Facilitator says:** *This is your Tree of Life that talks to you. It is divided into three parts: the ROOTS, the TRUNK, and the TOP, which consists of the branches with their leaves and fruit.*

You will need to ask specific questions for each part of the tree. Wait until the participants have completed that section of the drawing before moving to the next set of questions. Walk around the room and observe the tree drawings to ensure that the participants understand.

1. Draw the **ROOTS** and write where you come from, and where your parents, relatives and ancestors come from. What town or village do you come from? What town or village do your parents come from? What town or village do your grandparents come from? These are your roots. Roots can also be the people who have loved you and helped you in your life. No matter where you travel in life, your roots are in this ground, in this place.

2. Draw the **TRUNK** and, on the right side of the tree, write down some of the good events in your life. What made you happy? What are the times you celebrated? On the left side of the tree, write about some of the difficult times in your life. If you had a very difficult time in your life, you can show it as a scar on the tree or a broken branch. See yourself climbing the tree, from the roots to the trunk and now the branches.
3. Draw the **BRANCHES**. On the branches, write your hopes and wishes for the future.
4. On the **LEAVES**, write your talents (what you are good at), skills (what you are able to do), and achievements (what you have accomplished). What are you good at? (Examples: I am strong; I am good at taking care of others; I am a good listener)
5. On each branch draw the **FRUIT** - the fruits are the good things in your life now. The fruits can also be people who help you, love you or inspire you now (teachers, religious leaders, even someone you have never met).

**TIP:** Remind the participants that they can use a symbol or picture, if writing is difficult for them.

6. Finally, draw the **HARMFUL INSECTS** that are the obstacles in your life. These are the things in your life that stop you from achieving your hopes. They may also be the beliefs about yourself that interfere with your growth, such as thinking you are worthless or stupid.

## ACTIVITY FIVE:

### THE SHARING



#### INFORMATION FOR THE FACILITATOR

The objective of the Sharing is for participants to develop a positive view of themselves and to build hope for the future, based on their skills, achievements and what they have learned from their lives so far, despite its difficulties and disappointments. The Sharing should be done at least twice, preferably three times – the first time with guided questions and the second (and third times) without.

Have the participants sit in pairs, preferably with someone they don't know so well. Give them enough time (about 10 minutes for each person) to tell the other about his or her tree, starting from the roots and working upwards. (If there is an odd number of participants, the facilitator or another adult should join as a participant.) This is an important part of the workshop, as much of the therapeutic value inherent in Resilient Roots occurs during these listening and telling segments.

**NOTE:** At any time, if you sense that participants are feeling a bit restless, you can interject a quick energizer activity (2-3 minutes) or the grounding exercise below.

#### FIRST SHARING

To initially guide this sharing, the facilitator should ask participants to describe their tree to the other member of their pair in accordance with the prompts that are listed below: first one person tells about his or her tree, and then the other does the telling. Remind participants that it is important to listen carefully to the other person without interrupting, until they are finished.

**NOTE:** This means the prompts have to be said twice. – first for one member of the pair, and after that person is completely finished, then for the second person. Remind participants that they only need to tell as much as they are comfortable. But allow enough time for participants to finish sharing before moving to the next part of the tree.

#### PROMPTS

- *Tell me about your **Roots**, where your parents lived when they were growing up and the home of your ancestors.*
- *Tell about the **Trunk** what are the times or events you have found to be difficult in life and those that have been good? What lessons have you learned from these experiences?*
- *Describe your **Branches**, that reach up to the sky. These are your hopes and wishes for the future. What are the messages of hope in your life – when life gets hard what do you tell yourself to continue on?*
- *What about your **Leaves and Fruits**? Who are the important people in your life? How have your talents and skills helped you in your life? (For example, you may say: patience has helped me to get through difficult times and wait until things change for the better; when I don't know what to do I seek help from others; in the*

face of misery I can laugh and that helps me find a solution).

- *Do you have **Insects** on your tree? What do they represent? These are things you have to watch out for, in the future.*

**NOTE:** If a participant becomes upset while telling their story, have the one of the staff meet with the individual during this session. If several people are triggered by what another person is saying, have everyone come into a circle, and hold hands. The facilitator emphasizes that in this workshop we are all together. We all have pains and joys in our life and we share them here. A referral for counseling or follow-up support may be provided, as needed.

After the sharing, ask for some feedback: *How are participants feeling? Was this difficult to do, or easy?*

Get a few responses before moving on.

Explain that we will be doing this again with a new partner, giving about ten - twelve minutes for each participant, but this time without the prompts. Encourage participants to tell their stories deeply, starting from the roots and working upwards, and with more detail than before- as much as they feel comfortable.

**GROUNDING EXERCISE:** What can I see, hear and touch (can be inserted at any time if participants seem restless or anxious)

When we have strong feelings about things, it is important for us to feel like we are connected to the earth. This grounding exercise helps to do that:

**Facilitator says:** *Sit comfortably with your feet on the floor. Keep your eyes open. Now, name to yourself four things you can see. Name four things you can hear. Name four things you can touch. Touch them. Name three things you can see. Name three things you can hear. Name three things you can touch. Touch them. Now name two things you can see. Name two things you can hear. Name two things you can touch. Touch them. Now name one thing you can see. Name one thing you can hear. Name one thing you can touch. Touch it. Take a big breath in and let it out slowly. How do you feel?*

## SECOND SHARING

Ask participants to find a new partner - again someone they don't know so well. One partner in the pair should speak first, sharing the same way they did before, but going a bit deeper into what they share, if they are comfortable. Remind participants that they should listen with full attention. After each person is finished, the other can ask questions. After 10-12 minutes, ask the pairs to switch speakers.

At the end, ask the group for some feedback: *How are participants feeling? Was this more difficult to do compared to the first sharing, or was it easier?*

Get a few responses before moving on.

## THIRD SHARING

Explain that we will be doing this one more time with a new partner, giving about fifteen minutes for each participant.

Ask that participants find a third partner, and encourage everyone to tell their stories even more deeply (15 minutes each), starting from the roots and working upwards.

After the participants are finished, ask the group for some feedback: *How are participants feeling? Was this more difficult to do compared to the second sharing, or was it easier?*

## OPTIONAL GROUP SHARING AND CLOSING THIS ACTIVITY

As an optional addition select a few volunteers to present their trees to the larger group. Keep these presentations fairly brief.

After all the sharing, ask everyone for feedback. *How are you feeling? Was it easier to tell your stories or to listen to the other person when that person was sharing? Did you hear some themes or about some experiences that were similar to yours? Do you feel different now than when you started this workshop a few hours ago? In what way? Does anyone have any other comments or questions?*



Explain to participants that they are free to tell their own stories to other people, as much or as little as they want, but remind them that the stories they heard from other participants should remain confidential.

**Facilitator then concludes:** *We all have fears, and bad things can happen to any of us. But we are not alone. We are connected to others. We have so much in common. We all experience happiness and pain. All of us have had disappointments and we suffered in some way.*

*But that's not all. In addition, we all have skills and strengths to help us overcome obstacles. We all come from somewhere; we all have roots that remind us of who we are. We share the same soil and water. And like a tree, we can heal ourselves and if our branches – **our hopes** – are cut, we can grow strong, new ones. We can draw our strength from those who came before us, from our faith, from our families, friends and teachers, and from the people who have helped us as we grow.*

Ask for comments. Then continue.

## ACTIVITY SIX:

### THE WALKING



**Facilitator asks:** *What can happen if a tree stands alone in the field and suddenly, there is a big storm? (Spend a couple moments getting information about what can happen. For example, the tree can lose a few branches. It can lose all its leaves. It can fall down or die.)*

Then, ask participants to hang up their tree pictures next to each other on the same wall. Invite them to look at each of the trees, in a kind of gallery walk.

1. **ASK:** *What do you see? After some answers are given, explain: When there are a group of trees together, they form a forest. If there is a storm in a forest, some of the trees may still get hurt, but overall the forest is more likely to survive.*

*This is also true for people. Our lives are like a part of a forest when we all support each other and grow together, connected in a way that makes us stronger.*

2. **SAY:** *Let us walk up to the forest and look at each other's trees. See how big and strong our forest is. See how well our trees grow together. We are not alone.*

Ask for comments. Then ask for everyone to sit down.

## ACTIVITY SEVEN:

### DEEP BREATHING



These exercises can be used at any time during the workshop or afterwards. It is recommended that at least one of the deep breathing exercises (full belly or long breath) be used at this point in the workshop.

#### PUMP BREATH EXERCISE

**BREATHE!** In this exercise you are like a water pump. Put your fists next to your shoulders, facing outwards with your arms bent. Breathe in, push arms up straight up over your head, fists into the air. Exhale, pull fists back to shoulder height, saying the word "Ho!". Do this three times rapidly and you will feel energized.

#### FULL BELLY BREATHING EXERCISE

**BREATHE!** Put both your hands below your belly button. When you breathe in, feel your belly expand and get bigger. When you breathe out, feel your belly get flat again. Do

this exercise three times. Say to yourself "BIG Belly!" when you breathe in and "SMALL belly!" when you breathe out. Feel your feet on the floor. Feel your breath in your belly. How do you feel?

#### LONG BREATH EXERCISE

**BREATHE!** Take a deep breath in (to the count of 3) and now breathe out slowly like you are breathing out through a straw or whistling silently (to the count of 4). Let's do it again. Feel your feet on the floor, take a deep breath in (to the count of 3) and breathe out slowly (to the count of 4). Just concentrate on breathing out slowly. How do you feel?

## ACTIVITY EIGHT:

### THE SAFE PLACE INSIDE US



#### PURPOSE

When we feel overwhelmed by life there is always a safe place we can go inside us. **VISUALIZATION EXERCISE:**



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## DIRECTIONS

**Facilitator says:** *We have learned a lot about ourselves – how all of us are made up of good and bad experiences, and that we all have skills and talents and people who love us or we look up-to. In addition, we have learned how to calm ourselves down by deep breathing.*

*Now we will learn that there is a “safe place” we can always go inside us. A place where we can find peace and comfort, no matter how difficult how life is. It is a place where we may want to plant our tree, or else the tree is nearby.*

## FACILITATOR NOTE

Read the Visualization story below. Ask everybody to close their eyes and cross their arms, putting their hands on the opposite shoulder (left hand on right shoulder; right hand on left shoulder). See image

While you are reading the story ask everyone to repeatedly tap one shoulder then the other with their hands. This is known as “the butterfly hug” because your hands tap your shoulders like the wings of a butterfly and at the same time you are giving yourself a big hug. Instruct the participants that they should continue tapping their shoulders throughout this activity. The purpose of the butterfly hug and the tapping is to allow our brain to experience intensely the words of the safe place activity. The tapping increases the feeling – it deepens the experience.

The facilitator should read the Visualization story below in a soft, slow voice to help people relax. Pause briefly between paragraphs. Let the words sink in.

1. **VISUALIZATION: Facilitator says:**

*Close your eyes. Take three deep, slow breaths. Feel yourself relax. Now think of a SAFE PLACE, a real place that you can go to. It may be inside or outside. If you can't think of a real safe place, then imagine a place. This is a place where you feel so good and so relaxed. You are now standing in this safe place. Maybe your tree is near, or it is giving someone else some much-needed shade and protection.*

- **Smell** the air. What can you smell? It might be the grass or cooking smells from the kitchen or something else.
- **Feel** the ground or the floor under your feet.
- **Hear** the sounds – the trees, the birds, voices, traffic or other sounds.
- **Taste** the air – there is a good taste in your mouth.

■ *Keep your eyes closed. In your mind, look around this safe, relaxing place. Look in front of you. Look to each side. What do you see?*

■ *In your mind, enjoy this place. Feel how peaceful this place is. Notice any feelings you have in your body – do you feel relaxed? If you have pain or tension in any part of your body, focus on this for a moment as you take some deep breaths. With each breath you feel more and more relaxed. This is your SAFE place. You can go there anytime you want just by closing your eyes and taking three deep breaths. With each breath, feel yourself relax more and more. How comfortable you are, how content and peaceful you are. Enjoy it. (Wait one or two minutes allowing everyone to enjoy themselves.)*

*Now it is time to come back to this room. I will count to three and you will open your eyes. One – you are feeling energy in your body. Two – you will go back to this safe place whenever you want. Three – open your eyes, feeling awake, alert, refreshed.*

2. **DISCUSSION:** *How does it feel to have a place inside yourself that is safe and relaxing? Remind participants that this safe place is always there for them. Nobody can ever take it away. It is where you are free*

*to go, whenever it begins to feel a little whenever you need a weekend get away.*

3. **ASK:** *Are there any follow-up comments?*

## ACTIVITY NINE:

ENDING



To conclude, go around the circle and ask every participant to mention one thing they learned or the enjoyed in the day's activities. (Do not force anyone to speak if that person does not want to.)

Thank everyone for coming. Tell the participants they can take their trees with them, if they want.

### ADAPTED FROM:

**Singing to the Lions:** *A facilitator's guide to overcoming fear and violence in our lives by Jonathan Brakarsh with Lucy Steinitz, CRS, 2017 (crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/singing-lions)* with additional input from **Tree of Life:** *A workshop methodology for children, young people and adults Global edition, REPSSI and CRS, 2016 (crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/tree-life andrepssi.org)* Artwork by Marika Matengu.



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