

Practical tips for climate advocacy and action for local communities

Chapter 1: General tips for participation

This list of tips includes those we believe can help you in any of the situations that are common for young climate activists. We have divided them into three stages: tips for before you participate, during your participation and after you participate.

Before:

Read and research the topics to be covered or discussed. Participatory spaces can address climate change and climate action issues that are complex or have many elements that need to be considered. By doing a little research beforehand, you can find out what data exist, what work has been done on the subject, what progress has been made (find out what your local area, country or region is doing) and what the main challenges are. You will then be able to provide better ideas, comments and proposals. In addition to research in books or on the internet, you can talk to leaders and experts in the field and prepare specific questions on the issues you want to learn about. You can always cross-check the information you have found or obtained to make up your own mind.

Identify the most important messages. It is important to be clear about the main messages you want to convey in order to better prepare your intervention or your contributions. Core messages form the focal points of your cause. You can take the opportunity to transmit these in any space in which you are invited to participate. The main messages include the target audience, the issue your cause focuses on, and the action you are seeking to take as a call to action.

During

Be yourself. We often feel nervous when participating and thinking about what we are going to say makes us forget to be ourselves. It is very important to remember at all times that your personality and your passion is what will motivate people to join your cause. Being yourself also means using phrases and words you normally use and dressing the way you feel most comfortable.

Make good use of your time. It is important to try to use the main messages you have defined to better guide your intervention. Also include the messages that emerged from the consultation with young people and adolescents. Try not to stray from your central message, especially if time is limited (check the timings for your speech and any questions), for example, in a question and comment section at an event.

Stay calm. We know that these kinds of intervention are always going to cause nerves and stress, but it is important to stay calm. Take a deep breath and focus on your core messages. Your mission is to get your message across! It is okay if you did not say something you planned to say or if you got something wrong in your speech. You can stop and continue the sentence without any problem. You will get better with practice. If possible, look for a familiar face or contact; that way you will feel more confident. What to do in an environment with people who deny climate change? You should know that you are under no obligation to expose yourself to complex environments to defend the climate agenda. You have every right to choose the spaces in which you participate, depending on your safety, judgement and time availability. If you choose to engage in denialist contexts, it is important that you are able to debate on the basis of rigorous data and information, identifying myths or falsehoods. Avoid using technical language and always be respectful. Remember that you can leave the space whenever you want.

Create respectful spaces. It is important that spaces for participation are respectful. You may not share all the same ideas but it is important to respect those who think differently. If a conflict arises, you can try to get the parties involved to talk and, if the situation persists, you can ask them to leave to avoid escalating the conflict.

After

Follow up. In general, there is usually a report following an event, conference, panel or meeting. You can request this so that you know what the results and conclusions were. In addition, you can check if they are really including your contributions or the contributions of the other young people and adolescents; if not, you can request that they be included by sending an e-mail to the authority or person in charge of the report. You can also meet with other young people to discuss the final report or key messages that came out of the activity. Follow-up is one of the most important actions in climate action!

Share what you learn with others. You can share the report (if available) or any other resource. Another option is to share your notes or what you or other young people and adolescents remember about the activity. You can set up a format for sharing information, adding the date, meeting place, participants' names, agenda and agreements reached. You can use your social networks to share the most important messages or spread them among your close groups in person. Communicating your input can motivate more people to participate and also serves as feedback to the people you consulted with beforehand to gather their opinions.

Reflect on your participation. It is always important to recognize where you can improve: it will then become easier and easier to participate in climate action forums. You can ask the people who organized the activity, acquaintances and other young people for feedback on your participation. You can also value the participation of other young people. Remember to make constructive comments with respect and empathy. Reflect on what you

learned; perhaps they mentioned topics you had never heard of or considered. Think about what was discussed and look for more information to continue learning. Events, panels and interviews are often recorded or streamed on social media. You can watch the recording to identify what your strengths were and where you could improve.

Chapter 2: Organizing events for climate action

Brief description

You can organize events to help you move towards your climate cause goals. Events can bring together more young people and adolescents to create joint proposals, speed up actions or exchange experiences. You can also invite climate change leaders or authorities in your community or country. These events could be workshops, talks, Local Conferences of Youth (LCOY) or panels, to name just a few. The virtual format even allows you to easily attend events with people in other countries, allowing you to make new contacts, expand your network, including people who are more difficult to connect with, and enrich your experiences and points of view.

Before

Form an organizing team. You can find other young people and adolescents to form a team that will be in charge of organizing the event and assign responsibilities to each of them. You can include people with different profiles: the more diversity in the team, the better. It is important to ensure gender parity and to include people who form part of groups that have been historically excluded, and you should take their needs and views into consideration.

Establish the objective, the target audience and the results you hope to achieve. On this basis, the activities and people responsible for them can be planned. It is important to pay particular attention to defining the methodology, especially if it is a virtual event with groups.

Set a budget. You may need money to hold the event and cover some expenses such as hiring a space, transport, accommodation, refreshments, communication costs and simultaneous interpretation into other languages or sign language, among others. Having a clear budget will help you approach organizations or institutions that have funding and apply for financial or other assistance. Decide what kind of support you want for your event and what kind of allies you are looking for. Make sure they really share your cause. That way you can avoid getting resources from organizations involved in greenwashing.

Establish mechanisms to make your event inclusive and participatory. If the event is virtual, you can conduct consultations outside of the meeting or send messages to young people to gather their opinions. If the event is in person, you can seek financial support

to mobilize people who do not have resources to travel. You can also have interpreting and sign language services or generate mechanisms to attract the views of more people indirectly. Sometimes it is not easy to get funding, so it is important not to get frustrated and try to make the event as inclusive as possible within the means at your disposal.

During

You can apply interactive dynamics that allow people to build trust and have a space to participate. You can use different tools for this: provide space for each person to introduce themselves and explain their reason for participating or working on climate action; or use a live survey or a quiz game. You can find many free and paid resources on the internet that can help you make the space more dynamic and encourage people to get to know each other better. Try to make activities interesting and entertaining to encourage participation. It is a good idea to try the activity beforehand.

Take notes on what participants say. It is important that the organizing team has people who are responsible for taking notes on the different opinions and proposals that arise during the event. They can use sheets or a virtual application, such as jamboard. Recording the event is always a good idea.

Try to make the event participatory. You can have general spaces and smaller or thematic dialogue groups that allow you to address different topics. If the event is digital, you can have virtual break-out rooms but make sure that each room has a sufficient number of people and is diverse, so that the conversation is enriching and constructive. If the conversation does not flow, it is always good to share your own ideas to encourage others. If it is virtual, you can enable a whiteboard where opinions can be shared, in addition to chatting. Do not force anyone to speak: it is important that participation is free and voluntary.

Livestreaming. You can stream the event live through social networks or highlight the most important points as they happen. You can also create a hashtag and invite participants to use it in their posts.

After

Organize the notes or data collected during the event. This way you will be able to structure the content that was created. You can do this through an Excel document or similar, or you can also do it in a notebook.

Hold working sessions with the organizing team to finalize the final event report. It is important to write a short document with the main points that were addressed. In some cases, a declaration or memorandum may also be created. You can use these sessions to polish the writing and give structure to the document. You can also hold an evaluation session with the team to consider lessons learned and possible

improvements for future events.

Use the report you produced to “make news”: you can post some of the results on your social media or even write press releases to community, local or national media.

Send thanks to those who participated. It is good to provide a certificate of participation, as this will motivate them to continue supporting your cause. This certificate can be signed by the organizer and by the organizations that supported your event. You can share the summary document setting out the most important points, as well as the recording, the presentations and the contact details of the panellists and the organization. You can also send an online form to gather feedback. It is very important to recognize the work of those who participated as volunteers.

Develop a plan of action. You can include the most important actions you are going to implement based on the outcomes of the event. The event should not be seen as an isolated activity: it should serve to unite efforts and advance the climate cause. You can develop the action plan with the organizing team and include new organizations.