CIVICUS EVENT PRINCIPLES

CIVICUS

Who We Are

CIVICUS is a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world. Founded in 1993, CIVICUS strives to promote marginalised voices, especially from the Global South, and has members in countries throughout the world.

The outlined Event Principles aim to guide CIVICUS and CIVICUS partners in planning and executing inclusive, equal, sustainable, transparent, diverse and participatory events. You will find some tips and tools below to assist you and a final checklist you can evaluate your event with.

Why are there event principles?

Practice what we preach. Our events and organizations work to advocate for these principles so we must make sure we are the leader in implementation.
Purposeful Initiative. Rather than be reactive we need to take initiative and act with purpose to promote these principles.
Practical Implementation. Although we understand most of these concepts theoretically, we need to consider practical recommendations that we can easily implement and measure.

Event Principles Overview:

1. **Inclusion:** making sure that people affected by our work are represented in our events

2. **Equality:** reflecting gender equality and non-discrimination in our panels

3. **Sustainability:** being environmentally conscious and minimising harm to the planet

4. **Transparency:** sharing our successes and failures so that we contribute to a learning environment

5. **Diversity:** bringing together diverse stakeholders to discuss complex problems

6. **Participation:** providing space for event attendees to engage in meaningful dialogue

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1. Inclusion

Making sure that people affected by our work are represented in our events.

Including marginalized groups: one that is denied involvement in mainstream economic, political, cultural and social activities such as women and girls, children and youth, older people, people with disabilities, people with mental health impairments, ethnic and religious minority groups, indigenous populations, LGBTQI, rural and urban disparities and refugees and migrants. This is a non-exhaustive list.

Participant/Delegate Selection

When inviting partner organizations, how do you encourage diverse participation?
- Create an open call within an organization for people to submit interest
- Provide selection criteria which enables strong individuals with diverse backgrounds
- Try to find representatives that can contribute to different discourses (intersectional lenses)

Suggested Considerations in Selection Criteria
- **Diversity and inclusion**: region/country representations (especially locations far from the event or for activists or networks with limited access or voice), type of experience of participant (e.g., policy officer, communications professional, community organiser, youth activist, etc.), type of voice (e.g. INGO, national CSO, grassroots, social movement, informal network, etc.);

- **Value**: participants' work reflects the value and mission of CIVICUS. Their work, and their respective organisations' work has a good track record;
- **Potential for future collaboration**: organisations, movements and individuals that have partnered with CIVICUS in the past or demonstrate willingness to work in partnership with CIVICUS programmes and activities in the future;
- **Gender balance**: especially ensuring public facing roles (speakers, facilitators, panellists, etc.) are gender balanced as much as possible;
- **Professional networks and knowledge sharing:** whether the participant is able to share expertise and knowledge with other participants, and bring learnings or collaborations from the discussions back to their organisation/communities;

Tokenism

How do you avoid inviting participants tokenistically?
- Ensure that their participation is meaningful by providing space and adequate time to share their unique experiences
- Respectfully including input to shift the overall narrative of outcomes or conclusions of the event
- Realize that although they are representing a marginalized community, they are an individual with individual experiences and should not feel pressure to speak on behalf of their community. Their participation is doing just that.
- Reach out beforehand to see the roles they would like to play and the areas they would like to participate in.

Inclusion Tips
- Identify the different areas that would best be spoken about by those affected
- Reach out to organizations that work with affected or marginalized populations and request connections or nominations of individuals
- Create and use selection criteria
- Engage in conversations with participants beforehand to see what else can be done
- Ensure the venue is accessible (easy to find, ramp and/or elevator access, easy to navigate)
- Ensure different types of translation (whisper, headsets, sign language, apps)
- Create a safe space by reading out a code of conduct or set of standards before the meeting begins (zero tolerance)
- Encourage those who have different language capabilities to participate in their native tongue and be patient
- Encourage a gender balance in participation
- Find ways to overcome geographic barriers
- Make sure the opening/lead facilitator in the session is from local populations
- Encourage more participants coming from community based people's organization
- Find ways to overcome barriers relating to travel documents for grassroots activists

2. Equality

Reflecting gender equality and non-discrimination in our panels

Why equal and diverse representation is important
- Changing narratives and discourse from the usual outputs
- Providing equal opportunity to participate and learn

Gaps and Challenges
- More opinions of men in power who are called on to speak as experts

- Privileged populations have had more exposure to public speaking and are thus more confident in taking public facing roles
- Cultural contexts are not reflected in panel type events as some people may feel comfortable in speaking freely where others wait to be called on, giving more speaking time to some people over others

Addressing Power Dynamics
- Having a strong moderator is key to neutralizing power dynamics
- Make sure to share the space
- Be aware of power dynamics (if someone is constantly interrupting or invalidating someone) how can you shift the situation?
- Equal representation, equal opportunities to participate and equal time given

Equality Tips
- Encourage partners to send diverse participants reflecting an intersectional lens
- Provide opportunities for diverse participants to receive training or exposure on public speaking and panel debates
- Ensure moderator/facilitator is strong and aware of power relations and dynamics. Create strategies for equal participation and neutralizing power dynamics
- Measure how equal your panels actually are with tools like the Gender Timer: http://arementalkingtoomuch.com/ which helps you measure speaking exposure based on a binary form of gender

3. Sustainability

Being environmentally conscious and minimising harm to the planet

In order to connect voices around the world, civil society needs to address its carbon footprint from the international travel and consumption patterns. We need to increase digital connectivity, local participation, and rethink what it means to connect and participate internationally.

Paperless Events
- Instead of flyers to promote your event use recycled items (e.g. pens made from recycled waste with your logo) or innovative handouts if you would like to move away from solely digital marketing
- Avoid printing unnecessary items such as copies of the agenda, or easy to find information online. Make sure this is on a slide or on a chalkboard that people can easily reference to. Make use of emailing participants beforehand or after so that they have information directly
- Avoid using flip charts and instead invest in chalk boards or white boards that are reusable.
- Increase your digital presence including social media and online interaction
- Use a QR code to share information. Use a QR code generator to hyperlink a website or document and ask your participants to download a QR scanner app on their phone. That way as people enter they can scan the code and have whichever document (agenda, publication) downloaded directly for their reference.

Example of a QR Code

Sustainable Consumption
- If serving food to participants, be mindful of sustainable consumption at the conference
- Consider serving vegetarian meals and ensure all food is grown and sourced locally and organically
- Ensure food served is local and supports local businesses and farmers
- Work with local markets to serve items in surplus rather than difficult to find food sources (e.g. Items that need to be flown in)
- When buying materials (custom t-shirts, coffee etc.) - ensure they are fair trade and supportive of smaller economies
- Create a waste management strategy (recycling, compost, waste reduction strategies)

To see our full plan on sustainability, please see our Annex

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4. Transparency

Sharing our successes and failures so that we contribute to a learning environment

How do we include those who are not physically attending and keep the contents of the meeting open and transparent?
- Take <u>live notes</u> online and share the link with meeting participants so that people can follow the discussion and see which language is used when recording decisions. This also lets people who are unable to attend physically to follow the discussion.
- Depending on the number of participants and type of event set up, you can also continue editing open live notes so that participants can share the note taking responsibility and collectively frame the narrative. Can also record further questions and action points
- <u>Live streaming</u>: If there is a strong connection it is quite easy to live stream events using even a cell-phone and Facebook. Live streaming helps include those unable to physically attend and can allow others to participate remotely if live, through comments directly on the stream. This also ensures that the contents of the meeting remain transparent and if decisions are made, the discussion is available for context.
- <u>Live updates</u> can be done easily on social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.) to highlight important quotes, decisions, and action points. You can have a designated person to post officially, or keep it open to participants using a particular hashtag or tagging the official account.
- <u>External questions</u> can be included through each of the above options. Someone can be monitoring questions from the live notes, live stream, or live updates so that external concerns can be addressed.

How can we capture the learnings as best as possible?
- Have designated note takers (more than one person) to capture the overall discussions and small group discussions
- After every discussion include Action Points which helps summarize next steps
- When capturing conclusions make sure to capture the inputs that have led to (and were opposed to) the conclusions so that the context is not lost

How can we share the learnings to wider civil society?
- Statements- create a joint statement on behalf of event participants
- Declarations- create a declaration or mission that event participants agree on implementing

- Sharing of notes to networks- once the notes are finalized share it widely with organization and participant networks and publish the notes on social media or websites

How do we ensure failures are captured as a learning exercise?
- Failures are just as important to learn from as successes
- Make sure the space is safe so people can share failures
- Find the best way to capture learnings from failures rather than focusing on the failure itself
- Failure circles can be quite educational with every person sharing a failure relevant to the meeting's objectives

How do we encourage an open transparent process?
- Make sure objectives of the meeting are set at the beginning of the process so that everyone participating can engage with that objective in mind instead of working on behalf of individual agendas

5. Diversity

Bringing together diverse stakeholders to discuss complex problems

When inviting partner organizations, how do you encourage diverse populations?
- Create an open call within an organization for people to submit expressions of interest
- Provide selection criteria which enables strong individuals with diverse backgrounds
- Try to find representatives that can contribute to different discourses (intersectional lenses)
- Ensure that experts and affected populations are reflected by the participants (for example if on trade, include trade unions and other bodies) region/country representations (especially locations far from the event or for activists or networks with limited access or voice), type of experience of participant (e.g., policy officer, communications professional, community organiser, youth activist, etc.), type of voice (e.g. INGO, national CSO, grassroots, social movement, informal network, etc.)

Diverse Participation:
- Although you may have diverse voices in the room and have different participation methods, you still need to ensure that the diverse voices are being heard in the discussion
- Have a strong moderator to encourage diverse participation
- Have interventions from diverse sectors/participants prepared in advance and provide opportunities for these to be shared.
- Understanding that speaking during the event is not the only type of participation and that people may be able to express themselves and share their experiences in alternate ways as well (writing thoughts, abstract theory artwork etc.)
- Include as many perspectives as possible on the topic so that a multi-faceted, intersectional and sustainable approach can be adopted

6. Participation

Providing space for event attendees to engage in meaningful dialogue

Meaningful Participation:
- Different Event Set ups
    - Panel Discussion: Panels are usually set up to hear presentations from a specific group of people who have been pre-selected and have prepared interventions. This model is great to encourage diversity if the chosen panel reflects different viewpoints and backgrounds. This model does not provide very much space for event participants to participate and add to the narrative as there is usually a short amount of time left after the panel presents, and if there is a Q&A afterwards it still focuses on the presenters' viewpoints.
    - Presentations of report or findings: This set up focuses on sharing the findings of a recent report, publication or project by the organizing partner. These presentations are usually quite in depth focusing on methodology, project implementation, results and analysis. The participation in this event usually falls on Q&A, however to increase participation presenters can use this opportunity to get input on the project and results and include these comments into the project narrative.
    - Moderated Debate: A moderated debate invites presenters from different backgrounds and sectors to offer their opinion on the event themes and uses a moderator to ask questions and help share the space so that the different viewpoints can be heard and presenters can engage in professional and friendly debate. This is similar to a panel discussion but gives even less of an opportunity for audience participation as they are more of an audience rather than participants.
    - Open Discussion: This format is somewhat difficult to moderate and predict as it mainly relies on the participation of the event attendees. By providing themes or questions to begin the discussion, the participants can usually decide what to discuss and the direction of this discussion. This is great to focus on audience participation, however is difficult to control and encourage productive participation.
    - Small Group Discussions: This event set up is usually in conjunction with one of the above set ups where participants are asked to form smaller groups to increase individual participation. These small groups discuss similar or different themes and topics as each other and usually present the inputs of the small group discussions to the larger group.
    - Fishbowl discussion: Fishbowls involve a small group of people seated in a circle, having a conversation in full view of a larger group of listeners. Sometimes the discussion is a "closed conversation" among a specific group. More often, one or more chairs are open to "visitors" (i.e., members of the audience) who want to ask questions or make comments. Although largely self-organizing once the discussion gets underway, the fishbowl process usually has a facilitator or moderator. The fishbowl is almost always part of a larger process of dialogue and deliberation.
- Mixed Formats: It is probably most effective to mix and match different types of event formats to maximize each benefit and to increase participation of event attendees. For example, if you have a 90 minute session you can use 15 minutes to introduce the background on a project or publication analysis, 35 minutes in small group discussions forming a position, 20 minutes of small group presentations to the larger group, and 20 minutes of larger group discussion or debate based on the small group presentations and overall themes.

Space to Participate + safe space to participate
- Code of Conduct: To ensure participants feel safe to participate in your event, introduce a code of conduct at the very beginning of your event creating rules to abide by. You can either prepare these in advance or spend 5 minutes co-creating these with the event attendees. Some of these can include: No yelling or shouting, respect everyone's personal experiences and opinions, no interrupting etc. It may be

beneficial to keep this up on the white board so that people are reminded throughout the session and the code is easy to reference. Please also keep in mind and share the ICSW Code of Conduct.

- Have a Strong Moderator to facilitate your event. Work with your moderator to encourage diverse and respectful participation from the attendees, with the ability to control interruptions and space dominators. Having a strong moderator enables the attendees to focus on productive participation rather than focus on protecting themselves and managing difficult personalities. A strong moderator also ensures that the event runs on time and everyone who would like to participate gets the time and space to.

Meaningful Participation:
- Depending on the number of participants and time constraints, have everyone introduce themselves to initiate immediate participation.
- If co-creating a narrative, make sure that participation is being properly recorded, even if it is contradictory to original plan or proposal
    - Tip: live editing/note taking
- When participants share, provide a response or validation so that everyone feels heard and understood
- Provide time for small groups or pairs so that everyone gets the chance to share their experiences

Event Principles Checklist

Before the Event
- ✓ When sponsoring participants or speakers, I have used an open, inclusive and transparent selection process
- ✓ I have created a transparent selection criteria to support my choices for participants or speakers
- ✓ I have committed to supporting participants or speakers that are from marginalized populations and grassroots communities
- ✓ I have encouraged a diverse representation amongst all of my participants or speakers to represent different populations and areas of expertise
- ✓ I have invested time to coach less confident speakers to build their presenting capacity

Setting up the Event
- ✓ I have coordinated with my diverse participants and speakers to ensure their participation is meaningful and not tokenistic
- ✓ I have reduced waste by finding alternate sources to paper in sharing materials
- ✓ I will be using whiteboards and/or chalkboards instead of flipcharts
- ✓ I have ensured all food provided is grown and sourced locally and organically
- ✓ I have ensured that translation is available for all of my expected participants
- ✓ I have chosen a strong moderator and have worked with them in advance to share the space and to neutralize power dynamics
- ✓ I have set up my event using a mixed format to maximize meaningful audience participation

During the Event
- ✓ I have created and read out a code of conduct or ground rules for the workshop
- ✓ I use QR codes or projectors to display the agenda or other items I would like to share
- ✓ I encourage those with different language capabilities to participate just as much as native English speakers

✓ I or the moderator ensures everyone is feeling safe at all times and are monitoring individual participation
✓ I am having someone at the event use social media to include a digital presence of the event
✓ I have coordinated live notes or live streaming of the event to ensure an inclusive and transparent process
✓ I have ensured that the time allocated for audience participation is not cut short and is the focal point of the event

After the Event
✓ I have made sure everyone's participation has been recorded and shared
✓ I have created action points and tangible next steps from the meeting
✓ I have shared or published the contents of the meeting through: note sharing, statement/declaration, posting video of workshop etc.
✓ I have evaluated myself based on the meeting regarding the event principles of: Inclusion, Equality, Sustainability, Transparency, Diversity and Participation

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ANNEX

International Civil Society Week – Sustainability Plan

Holding an international conference comes with a big environmental footprint. Flights, ground transportation, accommodation, catering and meeting space all require natural resources. CIVICUS and PIANGO are conscious of International Civil Society Week´s impact and have developed a sustainability plan to make the conference more ecologically sustainable. Below is an overview of the eco-efficient measures being adopted by International Civil Society Week:

- **Measure our impact** – we are producing an environmental report to quantify the amount of carbon, water and waste used before, during and after the conference.
- **Offset carbon emissions** – we will be supporting carbon offsetting programs based in Fiji to help offset the carbon emissions produced by conference air travel. Delegates will have the opportunity to visit and volunteer at a local mangrove project for half a day to help plant mangroves and learn about the important role of Mangrove in sequestering carbon, fostering fisheries and providing a natural barrier to storm surges. On top of delegates giving their time, conference organisers will also be making a financial donation for each ICSW delegate to help scale a number of carbon certified mangrove projects in Fiji.
- **Going paperless** – the conference will not be handing out paper based meeting materials. Instead all materials will be made available by our conference mobile phone application and website.
- **Eating local** – we will be working with caterers that use seasonal and local menus, that will help us minimise the need to import food. All meals will also include lots of vegetarian options.
- **Water efficiency –** we are working with accommodation providers that use water efficiency measures. The conference will also use local filtered water, instead of bottled water.
- **Recycling –** When possible we will be using reusable materials for meals and meetings. For disposable materials, we will be providing recycling receptacles and

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