



## 3 HOW TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES AND SPACES FOR NETWORKING AND VISIBILITY

Social capital has proven to offer great value to emerging activists who are very passionate about activism but do not know yet the entire ecosystem of actors and resources available. The CIVICUS Youth team curated a few opportunities throughout the year to meet and interact with the aim of facilitating

exchanges of knowledge and ideas, as well as provide feeling of solidarity and companionship among young activists across the world. Some of these opportunities were closed to the YAL or YAT only and others were open for CIVICUS membership and donors.

### LEARNINGS FROM PEER-EXCHANGES

- Unlike the 2020 Peer-Exchange festival, this year, all the Lab participants presented a skill or theme to their peers. YAL activists were keen to hear from their fellow participants (rather than having an external facilitator or the CIVICUS Secretariat lead the session). However, **levels of interaction and engagement were low despite the high turnout.** After the peer-exchange, only 5 activists of 11 responded the Net Promoter Scores survey.
- Even though we dedicated time towards ‘co-creating’ the peer exchange festival and had one-on-one check-ins to prepare the presentations, 9/11 participants still opted to deliver traditional PowerPoint presentations.
- Instead of only advising young activists to make their sessions interactive, the CIVICUS coordination team should have given them an agenda outline proposal to help guide them as they created their sessions. For example:
  1. Icebreaker (ask audience what they know about the topic)
  2. Intro the topic (what it is, why it is important)
  3. What have you learned
  4. What questions/challenges do you have and ask the audience for their ideas.
  5. Pair break out groups with pre-prepared questions. This lesson could be applied to future collaborations beyond virtual sessions.
- Meetings that start with personal check-ins or games like ‘Never Have I Ever’ or storytelling helped to break the ice and make members feel comfortable to participate in the exchange.
- Some YAT members were disappointed when we did not have our regular YAT meeting. They missed the space, and the chance of interaction and learning from others, so some created a WhatsApp game to be together during the same time of the weekly meeting, keeping the spirit of interaction. They were able to develop a sense of community and wanted to maintain in touch. Thus, as important as it is to do projects together it is as well to create a sense of community and a space where people can enjoy being with one another and remain curious to know more about their stories and life journey.



SOME YAT MEMBERS MISSED THE SPACE, AND THE CHANCE OF INTERACTION AND LEARNING FROM OTHERS, SO SOME CREATED A WHATSAPP GAME TO BE TOGETHER DURING THE SAME TIME OF THE WEEKLY MEETING, KEEPING THE SPIRIT OF INTERACTION.

## Cohort 2021



### LEARNINGS FROM OPEN EVENTS

- Expanding the young activists' networks sometimes can be one of the most valuable assets to increase their social impact.
- Regardless of the different backgrounds we all come from we face similar challenges and share similar passions to tackle those, maintaining ongoing connection carries a nurturing effect.
- Regardless of the amount of effort and resources invested in planning, promoting the events well in advance, sharing the invitation in multiple platforms and languages, open networking events were not very well attended. Of a database with 3400 members, 100 approximately register and 0 to 10 attended. There were the usual suspects showing up in our sessions.
- After two of the open networking events, two different donors reached out to some of the participants to explore future collaborations. One is now signing a funding agreement with the event participant.
- Well attended events had an intergenerational target, such as the 'Reimagining the Future of Funding for Youth Action', to celebrate 2021 International Youth Day with over 100 participants. Most of the attendees were NGO practitioners or funders used to virtual events modalities. For a young grassroots activist attending an event might require taking some time off from school or work or from his community centre where they work directly with their constituents.
- Events that are co-hosted and where each organization/network invites their constituents are more likely to have a higher turnout rate. Similarly, if a young person sees the value of an event, they would be the first promoters and go ahead and invite friends, networks colleagues, and other partners.
- Networking events must have a content section for people to feel their time is being well invested. Meeting people just for the sake of meeting people does not work if there is no further structure to it.
- Participants enjoy events where there is not a one-sided type of interaction but where they can actively contribute and their presence there is important.

In the fourth and final part of the series, we will...