



African Climate Reality Project

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RAISING AWARENESS ON CLIMATE REALITY THROUGH INTERACTIVE THEATRE

TIPS & HINTS

WHAT IS 'INTERACTIVE THEATRE'?

Interactive theatre describes a wide range of participatory, non-traditional theatre practices that are usually conducted in spaces not designed for theatre, with and for populations that would not typically constitute mainstream audiences. Interactive Theatre employs a variety of processes to define issues, clarify objectives, build skills, and rehearse practical action by engaging participants in interactive theatre techniques and exercises.

Why use interactive theatre for youth outreach on climate reality?

Interactive theatre is particularly valuable to educate the youth and communities in general, given its special ability to engage and connect with the chosen audiences.

- Theatre is live and human: it uses voice, speech, language, the body and emotion. It brings life and human reality to the audience as well as players. It makes people think and respond.

“ We are all actors playing different roles in our lives, and the world is our stage. ”

- Theatre activities can create space for storytelling and discussing because they can convey information and still remain popular and entertaining too. They are an effective method to raise awareness and generate meaningful discussions on social challenges faced by the community.
- It is relatively easy to create a play which is readily accessible to most communities, since there is no need for complicated or expensive technology or equipment.
- Interactive theatre performed live can deliver a message that its audience will remember because the audience itself is involved, but also because it is uniquely rooted in many peoples' cultures - it is culturally appropriate and relevant given that it uses the local dialect, humour and local cultural expressions.
- Interactive theatre gets audiences to discuss difficult issues in the open that they would otherwise be uneasy about in personal life. In the open and in fictitious settings, audience can take ownership of issues and their solutions. After collectively debating the challenges and identifying some problematic behavior of the players, people are often motivated to avoid similar behavior of their own that they might have been unconscious of before.
- It also builds participants' confidence in public performance, improves self-esteem and creates a healthy social attitude.

Formats

There are various formats possible for applied theatre activities, for instance:

- **Drama in education:** the approach uses drama as a teaching and learning medium, to raise awareness on key social, developmental or environmental issues which aim to bring about positive changes in peoples attitude and behaviour. The play / stage show / performance is put together by members of the particular community or builds on their knowledge and experience. Drama performances can be conducted in a village hall, in a park, at the market place or under a tree in a village ground. The actors involved in the drama are from the target group: because they spend time researching/reflecting on the issues to dramatize and performing it to audiences, the process will highly likely have a profound impact on their lives.

- **Image Theatre:** using still images to explore abstract concepts such as relationships and emotions, as well as realistic situations. Participants quickly sculpt their own or each other's' bodies to express attitudes and emotions. These images are then placed together and brought to life.

Image theatre is a flexible tool often used to explore for exploring issues, attitudes and emotions. No one has lines to learn or has to 'act' in front of others. Imaging can enable students to explore their own feelings and experiences in a less forbidding way than that offered by improvisational techniques.

- **Forum Theatre:** There are two parts – the Theatre and the Forum. The Theatre part presents a short play which shows a problem or difficult situation encountered by a certain community (it can be a town, a high school, youth, etc.) that needs to be changed. The Forum part is about solving the problem with help from the spectators. Audience members ("spec-actors") are invited to share ideas and/or replace an actor on stage to show what alternative strategies and attitudes are available for the community to to change the situation. Other actors respond in character, trying to maintain their oppressive or exploitative power. The performance ends with a dialogue, where the public is invited to express themselves on different aspects of the play, and share what they have seen and learned.

Forum Theatre provides a means for testing solutions in action. The audience makes and evaluates all choices. The play contains some neutral characters, initially not being part of the issue. But the spectator can change them and make them act to solve the situation presented in the play. This way, Forum Theatre, points out less-known problems and helps one envisage what he/she is capable of, even if they are not involved directly in the issue.

- **Playback Theatre:** is a unique type of performance where members of the audience come on stage and tell true stories about themselves, which the players then re-enact on the spot. Sometimes funny, sometimes moving, playback performances seek to empower the teller and create a community among the audience.

PLAN YOUR ACTIVITY – STEP BY STEP TIPS

Step 1: Identify your audience(s)

For this Youth Climate Month, **our primary targets are youth audiences.**

- School / university
- Youth from a church
- Youth group (ex.: scouts, sports clubs, etc.)

Preferably identify a youth audience who is not already sensitized and/or engaged on environmental issues.

Secondary target audiences can be the local communities, if you want the young participants to present their performance to a broader public.

Step 2: Chose the format of the theatre activity

This will partly depend on your audience.

Whichever format you think is most appropriate, it will need to start by selecting a small group of youngsters to prepare/perform the theatre acts, and an introduction on climate change (see Step 4 below).

Step 3: Set a time for the activity

The time needed to run the activity will depend on the format chosen, but on average you will need **half a day** for a successful engagement.

If you want the youngsters to perform to a broad audience (community for instance), you may want to plan for the performance to take place end of afternoon, or during the weekend.

Step 4: Facilitate the interactive theatre activity

Drama in education	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select a small group of youngsters – 5 or 6 – from your target group, who will be performing the drama in front of the whole group / a larger audience.• Find out the level of understanding they have of climate change.• Do a small introduction to them of what is climate change – using the facts and information from the Climate Reality presentation.• Help them develop a script for a short play (max. 10 min) about climate change. The goal is for the play to explain what climate change is, how it mainly affects the community, and invite the audience to think about ways to address it or adapt to the changing environment / climate.	15 min 20 min
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather the audience (ex: school, church community, village community...), and perform the play.	1 hour 20 min
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At the end of the performance, open a dialogue with the public. Invite them to share what they have seen and learned through the play, express themselves on what they understand about climate change and how it affects them, and discuss what action can be taken.	45 min

Image theatre	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select a small group of youngsters – 5 or 6 – from your target group, who will be performing the drama in front of the whole group / a larger audience.• Find out the level of understanding they have of climate change.• Do a small introduction to them of what is climate change – using the facts and information from the Climate Reality presentation.• Identify a number of topic / issues relating to climate change that you want them to act out and reflect on (see below). Write them on pieces of paper.• Distribute the topics to the participants of the small group (individually or in pairs, depending on the topic), and ask them to create physical images in response to the topic they got. They should do this quickly, without pre-thought.	15 min 20 min
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather the audience (ex: school, church community, village community...) and invite the participants to seat in a circle.• Invite the youngsters from the small group to step into the centre of the circle and “sculpt” their image, either individually or in groups (“sculpting” each other into a shape and putting these shapes together). This is most effective if done without talking.• Ask the audience what they think each image represents, and facilitate a discussion on the topic: what are the causes, how it affects them, what can be done about it.	10 min 15 min 1 hour
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At the end of the performance, open a final dialogue with the public. Invite them to share what they have seen and learned through the activity, express themselves on what they understand about climate change and how it affects them, and discuss what action can be taken.	45 min

Forum theatre	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a small group of youngsters – 5 or 6 – from your target group, who will be performing the drama in front of the whole group / a larger audience. • Find out the level of understanding they have of climate change. • Do a small introduction to them of what is climate change – using the facts and information from the Climate Reality presentation. • Help them develop a script for a short play (max. 10 min) about climate change and the challenges it represents for the community. The goal is for the play to explain what climate change is, how it mainly affects the community, and invite the audience to think about ways to address it or adapt to the changing environment / climate. 	<p>15 min 20 min</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather the audience (ex: school, church community, village community...), and perform the play. 	<p>1 hour</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite the audience to summarise what they have observed, discuss what they think the main problem is, and express their opinions about what they have seen. Give the audience time to discuss amongst themselves and adjust to the idea of expressing themselves in front of one another. • Initiate the replay of key scenes where audience members are invited to replace the main character and act out what they think the character should have done in the situation (give the spectator some element of the character's costume, like a hat, to wear while they perform). • Facilitate discussion about the various solutions proposed by members of the audience and asks questions like, "Does this happen in real life?" or "Is this possible?" 	<p>20 min</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of the performance, open a final dialogue with the public. Invite them to share what they have seen and learned through the play, express themselves on what they understand about climate change and how it affects them, and discuss what action can be taken. 	<p>1 hour</p> <p>30 min</p>

Playback theatre	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a small group of youngsters – 5 or 6 – from your target group, who will be acting the stories from the audience. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather the audience (ex: school, church community, village community...). • Find out the level of understanding they have of climate change. • Do a small introduction to them of what is climate change – using the facts and information from the Climate Reality presentation. 	<p>10 min 15 min 30 min</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask volunteers from the audience to come to the stage to tell stories about climate change and how it affects them. • The small group of actors then creates brief theatre pieces on the spot that enact each story told by members of the audience. The actors must not follow any narrative programme, but rather bring their dramatic skills and their humanity to embodying on the stage the concerns and experiences of audience members. 	<p>1 hour</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of the performance, open a final dialogue with the public. Invite them to share what they have seen and learned through the play, express themselves on what they understand about climate change and how it affects them, and discuss what action can be taken. 	<p>30 min</p>

Examples of climate-related topics / issues

- Atmospheric pollution from human activities / emissions of greenhouse gases
- Fossil fuels
- The greenhouse effect
- Global warming / rising temperatures
- Harsh climatic events (droughts, floods, etc.)
- Challenges for agriculture
- Water scarcity
- Renewable energy
- Energy efficiency
- Carbon sequestration by trees
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QUERIES

If you have any question regarding the organisation of an interactive theatre activity to engage with the youth and communities, please contact Teboho Mosehle at teboho@trees.org.za or +27 11 656 9802.