



Icebreaker: How has climate change affected your life? developed by Eliot Levine, WWF

Objective: Participants get to know one another by sharing their experiences with climate change and how it has affected their personal and professional lives.

When to use: This exercise should be used near the beginning of a workshop. It works well for large groups (20 or more participants). It replaces the often-used activity of self-introductions, which is typically not suitable for large groups.

Time required: The icebreaker can be completed in 30 minutes.

What you will need: This exercise requires no materials

Preparation: No advance preparation is needed. Participants should be seated in small groups at square or round tables.

Instructions

When selecting seats at a workshop, participants often sit with people they already know. In this exercise we want participants to meet and learn about those whom they do not know. To ensure the objectives of the exercise are achieved, ask participants to move to different tables by following steps 1 and 2 below. If you are working with a group where all participants already know one another, skip steps 1 and 2. The exercise will still be effective to get people talking.

1. Ask participants to raise their right hand, if they already knew the person to their right before arriving at the workshop. While keeping their right hands raised, ask participants to raise their left hand if they already knew the person to their left before arriving at the workshop.
2. Ask all participants with both hands raised to move to another table where they see at least one person they do not already know. (This technique is not fool proof, but it does encourage breaking up clusters of people who are already familiar with one another.)
3. Once participants are seated, give them a few minutes to think of a response to the following question:

“How has climate change or extreme weather affected your life or the lives of people you know? You may draw upon experiences in either your personal or professional lives or both.”

4. After a few minutes have passed, ask participants to introduce themselves to others at their respective tables and briefly tell their colleagues the answer to the above question. Allow about 15-20 minutes for this to happen.
5. Stop the discussion and ask each table to select one response to tell all participants in the workshop. Participants may tell their own stories or tell a story of one of their colleagues at their table. Give each table about 1-2 minutes. Sometimes tables will want to talk about more than one experience. Allow this to happen only if there is enough time. If time is short and there are many tables, ask for 2-3 volunteer tables to speak explaining there won't be enough time to hear everyone's experience.
6. Conclude with observations on what was said and that climate change, increasing climate variability and extreme weather have become an important part of our lives.