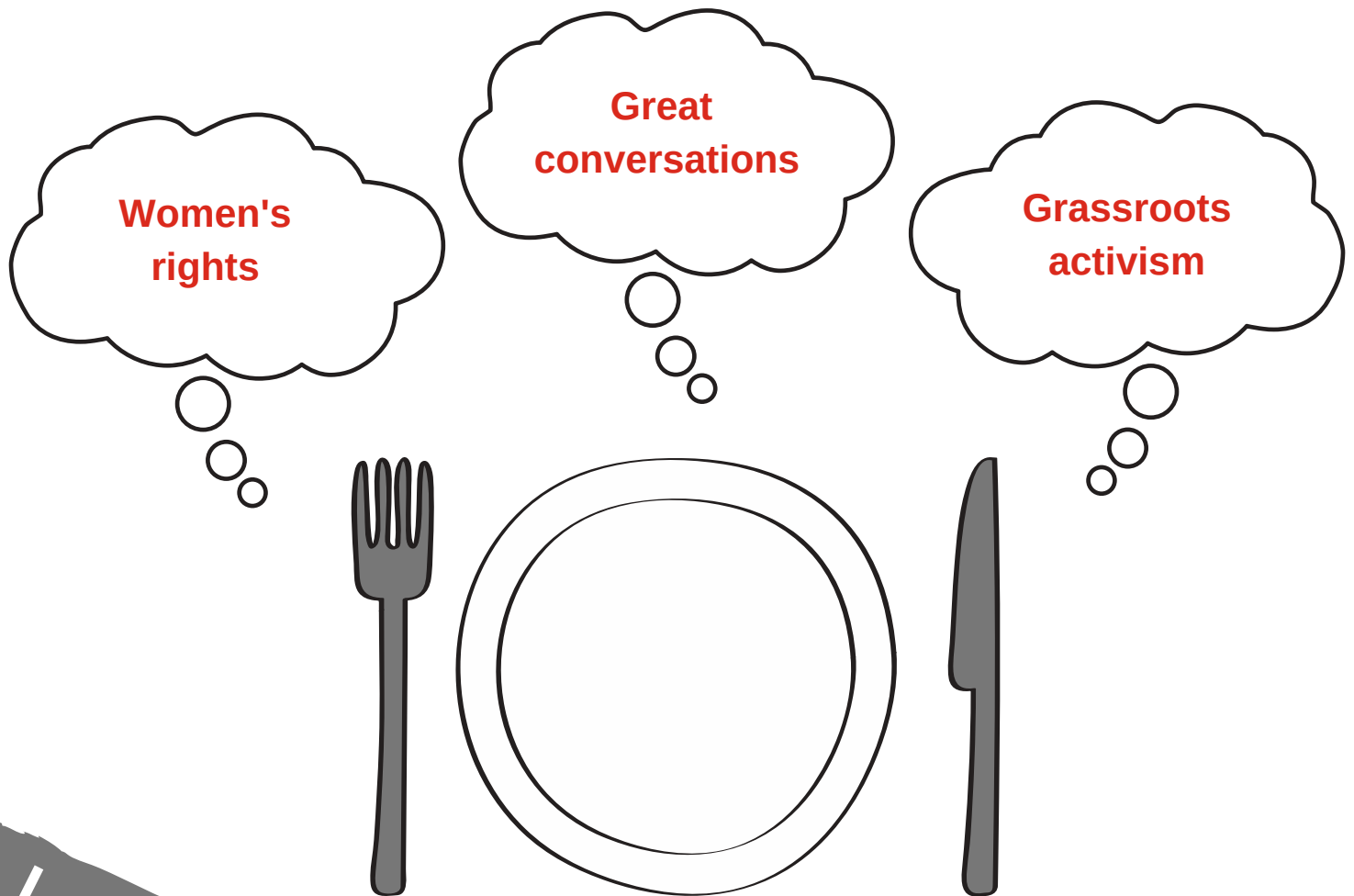


Activism over Dinner Toolkit



Love activism?

Love food?

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WHAT IS ACTIVISM OVER DINNER?

Activism over Dinner is an event format designed by ActionAid Australia to bring people with similar interests together over a shared meal with the purpose of engaging them in our campaigns. The event aims to create a fun, safe and engaging space where local activists and community members new to our movement can come together to learn and share ideas. Activism over Dinner is designed to deepen the commitment of attendees, with everyone encouraged to sign a pledge to take further action at the end of the night.

This guide has been created to help you to plan to hold an Activism over Dinner and includes sections on deciding whether this is the right event for you and your group, setting objectives, arranging logistics such as choosing venues, recruitment and designing an agenda.

While this guide has been written using examples from ActionAid Australia's Transform Trade for Women campaign, the event format can be easily adapted for other campaigns, including ActionAid Australia's Fossil Fuels Campaign. Please see the Activist Toolkit section of ActionAid Australia's website for the latest activist briefing on the Fossil Fuels Campaign, or get in contact with the Community Organising Manager or Campaigns and Organising Officer to discuss how this guide can be modified for other campaigns.



Photo right: Activists at the first-ever Activism over Dinner in Newtown

THE PURPOSE OF ACTIVISM OVER DINNER

If you are considering holding an event like an Activism over Dinner, it's important to think about what the purpose of your group putting on this event would be. Broadly, Activism over Dinner has four main aims:

1. To recruit new members to your group;
2. To deepen the commitment of existing members;
3. To build connections between participants based on shared values and experiences;
4. To encourage participants to take further action after the event.

Holding an Activism over Dinner might be helpful for your group if you are looking to strengthen connections between group members or if you are looking to build up your group – all in a fun and casual setting.

Activism over Dinner is a simple format that is designed to move people towards action on a campaign, and the night culminates with participants being asked to make a pledge.

What is a pledge?

A pledge is a commitment to take action on a campaign. At the end of the night participants have a pledge card where they can say how they want to take the next step in the campaign, or what skills they can offer up to create change on an issue.

Setting objectives

Once your group has decided to hold an Activism over Dinner, before you begin planning the logistics, the first step should always be to set SMART objectives for the event as a group.

SMART objectives are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time-bound

For example, 'to grow the group' is not a SMART objective – it is too vague and difficult to measure. 'To have 10 new people and 10 existing group members attend the event' is a SMART objective because after the event you can compare your objective with what happened on the night – it is specific and measurable.

Some things to consider while you are setting objectives include:

- How many people you want to attend
- How many people you want to make a pledge before they leave
- How many group members you want to commit to organise the event
- What investment you are able to make in terms of time and resources

Make sure to record your objectives so that you can refer back to them after the event. A good place to do this is in ActionAid's Event Proposal Form which you should complete during planning for your event. This form is also the place to request budget if you have any expenses related to printing, venue hire or other costs. We recommend completing the form at least one month in advance to ensure that you have enough time to plan and promote the event. Please return the form to the Community Organising Manager or Campaigns and Organising Officer so that they can support you to reach your objectives.



Photo above: Activists at Activism over Dinner event in Parramatta

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A VENUE?

There are a few important things to keep in mind when choosing a suitable venue to host your dinner. The first point is accessibility. Make sure that your venue is in an area which is central for the people you will be inviting and try to find somewhere that is easily reachable by public transport. Check if the venue is accessible for those who might have a disability. Ensure that you include the venue's accessibility when you are advertising for the event, including the name of the closest bus or train stop.

Accessibility also extends to the cost of the dinner you will be asking participants to pay. Make sure the restaurant has affordable options for all budgets so that you don't discourage people from attending if the restaurant is too expensive.

The second key thing to consider when choosing your venue is the menu and what dietary requirements are catered to by the restaurant. Please consider guests who might be vegetarian, vegan or unable to eat foods with gluten.

Finally, you will need to consider the requirements of the event itself. You will need to find a venue that is willing to host a large group of people, and that won't be too noisy. Activism over Dinner is designed around conversation and if the restaurant is too loud it will be hard for your guests to follow what you are saying. Consider dropping in to the venue to see it for yourself so that you can get a sense of the space, menu and their style of service.

The Events and Outreach Team are also able to support you to find a suitable venue, you can get in contact with them on Eventsvolunteer.au@actionaid.org.

HOW TO GET A GOOD TURN-OUT

Once you've decided on the venue and date for your Activism over Dinner, you need to think about ways that you will promote your event. Recruitment is key to your event – you may have planned everything else perfectly but if no one shows up on the night there will be nothing you can do to fix it. Making a recruitment plan is a crucial step in hosting a successful night. Here are some ideas for how you could promote your event:

Call on your connections

Don't underestimate the power of your personal connections! Inviting friends and family and encouraging them to spread the word through their networks about your event is one of the most effective ways of getting numbers through the door. Having conversations and personally inviting people – from your best friend to someone you've only spoken to twice in class- is a great way make people feel more connected to your event and more likely to want to go.

Social media

Social media is one of the easiest ways to get the word out about your event to a large number of people in a short amount of time. Creating a Facebook event is one great way to do this, particularly when it is created through the ActionAid Australia account which can reach thousands of people. To get an event put up online, please fill out the Facebook Event Template and then send it to the Community Organising Manager or Campaigns and Organising Officer. Please make sure to allow up to two days for your event template to be processed in the office. We recommend having the Facebook event online at least two to four weeks before the planned time to ensure enough time for promotion.

Once the event is live, make sure to invite as many people as possible and encourage them to click attending and invite their friends so that more and more people see the event. It's helpful to also post in the relevant local ActionAid Facebook group, and to do some research to find any other pages and groups whose followers might have similar values and interests. For example, search for economic justice groups, women's collectives or feminist groups. A lot of these pages will have supporters who might also be interested in your event, and often these pages are more than willing to promote an event if you reach out to them.

Market stalls

Another great way to reach out to your community is through setting up a stall at a local market. There is no better place to engage people, have conversations and - for those who seem enthusiastic to find out more about ActionAid's work - invite them to your event! This method might not be convenient for all groups – you might not have a local market in the right time period or your group might not have capacity to attend – but for those who have the opportunity it's a great way to invite people in person.

Make sure you have a petition or sign-up sheet so you can follow up with the people you chat to at the market afterwards, and have a flyer so that you can give people something in paper to remember the event.

Flyering and posters

Finally, flyers and posters are another way of engaging with members of the public who share similar values to you and the group. Create eye-catching, simple flyers and posters which convey the idea behind Activism over Dinner (ie. delicious food and women's rights), the issues that will be discussed and the key details of the event and distribute them in strategic parts of your community. This might be a local café or community centre, or via noticeboards at your gym or library. If the event is being held by an ActionAid university group, it could also be useful to put flyers up promoting the event around campus.

Remember, however, that while flyers and posters are great visual recruitment tools, they generally don't create the same personal connection that face-to-face conversations do. Try to use them in addition to some of the other methods described above.

Again, the Events and Outreach team are able to assist with promoting your event – you can get in touch with them to discuss recruitment on Eventsvolunteer.au@actionaid.org.



MEET CLAIRE

Claire held the first-ever Activism over Dinner in 2017 for the Inner-West Sydney group. She booked a room at Lentils as Anything in Newtown, which has a pay as you feel policy. She promoted the event at Newtown Festival by having a stall with flyers on it. Through face-to-face conversations many locals found out about the event and came along. She also had a Facebook event that she promoted through her own networks and amongst relevant Facebook groups. The night was a huge success with 25 people coming along to discuss tax justice for women and pledge their support!

ON THE NIGHT: RESPONSIBILITIES AND RUN-SHEET

It's important to have a plan for your event so that everyone involved is clear about what their responsibilities are and when they will be needed. Establishing this before the event will help you to see any gaps in your planning and will help to ensure that everything runs smoothly on the night.

Some key responsibilities to assign beforehand include:

Facilitator: this person will be responsible for hosting the night, guiding participants through the sessions and delivering the script. This person should be confident with public speaking and comfortable talking about the campaign, as well as able to bring the conversation back on track if it veers off topic.

Restaurant liaison: assigning a specific person to manage the dealings with the restaurant is crucial. You don't want to be mid-way through a great conversation and be interrupted by a waiter or the meal – make sure that someone is responsible for ensuring that interactions with the restaurant and its staff run smoothly.

IT support: if you plan on having a power-point, find someone willing to be responsible for ensuring that the technology works on the night and fixing a tech issues that come up. You don't want the facilitator to be running around looking for cables when they're meant to be talking!

Photographer: this is quite obvious, but make sure someone is taking photos throughout the night. You might want to share these via social media afterwards.

Data officer: someone should be responsible for collecting the signed pledge cards at the end of the night so that in the rush to pack up any important information isn't lost or accidentally thrown out. This person should also make sure that the information is sent to the Sydney office.

Mingler: other group members who aren't assigned the above roles should mingle with guests throughout the night and make them feel comfortable and welcome in the space. Try to avoid a situation where group members who already know each other end up sitting next to each other.

These are just a few examples of roles that you should consider when planning the night. While some roles will need one person dedicated to them throughout the night, one person could also be responsible for a number of the roles as long as they have the capacity to do so.

Once everyone knows their roles and responsibilities, it is important to plan out a run sheet for the night so that everyone is on the same page in terms of what needs to be done and when. A sample run sheet is below, but we encourage you to adapt it to best suit your needs:

WHEN	WHAT	NOTES
6pm	Set up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group members arrive 30 mins before dinner to set up - Aim to have everything (including power-point, materials etc.) organised before guests arrive.
6.30pm	Guests start arriving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome and greet guests as they arrive - Ensure everyone has a seat and can see - Encourage casual chat between guests and make sure people have something to drink
6.45pm	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acknowledgement of country (an example script is provided below) - Thank guests for coming - Introduce yourself and run through the itinerary for the night - Explain food options and how/when people will order
6.50pm	Icebreaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get people in groups of 2-3 - Explain the icebreaker game - Bring the group back together and get everyone to introduce themselves and why they came
7pm	Introduce ActionAid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce ActionAid as an organisation - Outline our values and aims - Tell your story of why you initially got involved with ActionAid and why you stay involved - Encourage conversation about ActionAid and why people chose to attend the dinner, including the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why did you come here tonight? 2. What activism have you been involved with in the past? 3. Why are you interested in ActionAid?
7.15pm	The current campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain the current campaign - Emphasise why the issue is important for women's rights, including with a case study - Explain what has been done before and why it is important for people to get involved - Encourage people to reflect on the current campaign, what they found interesting or surprising and what resonates with them personally

WHEN	WHAT	NOTES
7.25pm	Tactics and actions	- Explain what people can do to support the campaign, including with examples of what people have done so far
7.30pm	Dinner and introducing pledges	- Introduce the concept of the pledge, hand out pledge cards and encourage guests to think about what they personally can pledge during dinner - Dinner will be served
8.15pm	Report back and sharing	- During dinner encourage guests to discuss the following questions: 1. What skills can you bring to the movement? 2. What will you pledge to do after tonight to support the movement? - Encourage guests to also ask questions of group members - Everyone shares their personal pledge with the whole group
8.30pm	Wrap up	- Ask for any final questions from guests - Thank everyone for coming - Take a group photo! - Clean up



*Photo right: Activism over Dinner
Parramatta*

FACILITATION TIPS

Facilitating a group of people you haven't met before or don't know very well can be nerve-wracking and even experienced facilitators can find it challenging. Below are some tips to help both new and experienced facilitators navigate an Activism over Dinner:

1. Remember that people are there to learn about ActionAid, not critique your facilitation style.

The overwhelming majority, if not all, of the people who attend your event will attend in good faith, they will genuinely be there to learn and meet new people. If you pause for a few seconds too long, or mess up a line, don't worry because everyone will just be grateful to learn more about ActionAid, women's rights and activism.

2. Prepare, prepare, prepare! Preparing beforehand is something that all facilitators can do, regardless of their level of experience. This will mean different things to different people. For some, knowing that their other group members are handling the IT or the restaurant might make them feel better, while for others it might be reading through the script a few times beforehand or even rewriting it in a way that makes better sense to them. It might also help to rehearse in front of a mirror, or do a run through with a friend.

3. Don't underestimate the power of an icebreaker. Bringing a group of people together who are meeting for the first time isn't easy and can feel awkward when guests first arrive. Icebreakers are so important to encourage people to come out of their shells and feel more comfortable in the space. Have faith in the power of the icebreaker to make everyone feel more relaxed!

4. Think of yourself as a guide. Activism over Dinner is designed to take people on a journey from problem to solution to action, and you as facilitator are their guide. Allow conversation to flow naturally so that people can find similarities and common areas of interest, but remember that there is a certain path that you need people to follow so don't be afraid to bring any off-topic conversations back on track.

5. Encourage inclusive discussion. It's natural that some guests will speak more and some people will speak less, but it's your job to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute something to the group discussion. You might want to prepare some more open questions if some people seem hesitant to speak up – What brought you here tonight? Why are you passionate about women's rights?

6. Don't let difficult questions throw you. Occasionally you might have a guest who asks you a difficult question or something you don't know the answer to. Don't panic! With some questions, it might work to put the question back to the group – what does everybody think about X's question? It's always okay to respond that you don't know the answer but will follow it up after the event. If the person continues asking you the same question, you can suggest that you discuss it personally during dinner or after the event. If you think that someone is being particularly difficult and that they are only going to derail the night, remember that as a last resort you can ask them to leave.

SAMPLE SCRIPT FOR TRANSFORM TRADE FOR WOMEN CAMPAIGN

This script is a guide to help you with some ideas about how to talk through all of the agenda points and discuss the Transform Trade for Women campaign. Don't feel like you have to memorise this script word for word – it's more important that you personally reflect on your experience with ActionAid and feel comfortable with what you are facilitating than for you to deliver the script perfectly.

Materials:

- Transform Trade for Women Activist Briefing
- Pledge cards (see additional resources)

Introduction

Welcome everyone and thank you for coming tonight! I want to start off the event by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the <insert name> people – and our pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging. As we share our knowledge, learning and ideas today we also pay respect to the knowledge and traditions of the <insert name> people. This land was never ceded and always has been and always will be Aboriginal Land.

My name is <insert name> and I am a volunteer with the ActionAid <insert location> group. I will be facilitating tonight and I'm really looking forward to creating a safe and engaging space with you all where we can learn more about ActionAid, our current campaign and how we can all contribute to creating positive change. The agenda for today will run through an introduction to ActionAid, our current Transform Trade for Women campaign, some tactics and actions for that campaign, followed by dinner and pledge-making!

I encourage you to ask questions and share your thoughts throughout the night, but please remember to be respectful and considerate of the other people who have come tonight. <Insert name> will be taking photos throughout the night, please let me or the photographer know if you don't want your photo to be taken.

We will be having dinner tonight at <insert time> and this is how we will be ordering: <insert procedure for ordering food>.

Icebreaker

I know that some of you have come with a friend, but we hope by the end of tonight that you will get a chance to get to know everyone in the room – particularly those you haven't met before. So we're going to begin with a get to know you exercise.

Break into pairs – try to partner with someone you don't know – and spend the next five minutes finding five things you have in common and five differences.

After five minutes... How did everyone go? Could each pair share something interesting that they learnt, whether a similarity or difference?

Introduce ActionAid

I can see that we have a mix of old and familiar faces here in the room tonight but we're really hoping that by the end of the night that we all leave with an understanding of who ActionAid is, our values and our approach.

Has anyone here heard of ActionAid before? Does anyone want to share a little about what they know about our work?

ActionAid Australia is a human rights and social justice organisation with a focus on women's rights. We're a part of the wider ActionAid federation which works in over 45 countries around the world. We stand with women and support them to take action to claim their human rights by collectively confronting the injustices that they face.

Our work is guided by feminist values and analysis and we recognise that patriarchy and poverty are inextricably linked. We therefore believe that a feminist approach is essential to ending poverty and injustice.

I became involved in ActionAid when I was going looking for opportunities to get active on issues that are really important to me. I am a passionate believer in fighting for women's rights around the world and when I saw that ActionAid were campaigning on issues of climate justice and economic justice for women I really wanted to get involved. So I registered to attend a training where I learnt all about community organising and campaigning and have been active with the local <insert name> group since then.

I really like volunteering with ActionAid because they offer a lot of opportunities to work with other likeminded people in my community to create real change and stand in solidarity with women around the world. Campaigning gave me the opportunity to do something tangible about things which often seem really big and intimidating, like poverty and injustice.

I'd love for everyone to now take a minute to personally reflect on why they came tonight, what experience they have with activism or campaigning and why they're interested in finding out more about ActionAid. Once you've had a moment to think and if you feel comfortable doing so, share your thoughts with the person next to you.

The current campaign: Transform Trade for Women

Keeping in mind why we campaign in the first place, we're going to spend some time discussing ActionAid's current campaign which is focused on the impacts of 'free trade' on women's rights. As a part of the ActionAid Federation, we committed to work on a global campaign that would bring all Federation members together to work on the theme of women's decent work, unpaid labour and public. At ActionAid Australia, we decided that our focus should be on trade deals, because that's where we have some really exciting opportunities to effect change and work with local women's organisations and unions.

Who has heard of free trade/free trade deals before? Maybe you've studied it at university or heard about deals like the Trans-Pacific Partnership in the news?

Basically, free trade agreements are defined by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as "international treaties that reduce barriers to trade and investment." In Australia we have already entered into 11 FTAs with 7 still under negotiation. Globally, there are more than 3,000.

Yet there is increasing recognition globally that in reality, trade deals are rigged in favour of corporations – in effect, they are about increasing the rights of large corporations at the expense of people. We know that free trade has already had significant impacts for women's rights and gender equality around the world. Also we have some copies of the latest Activist Briefing for this campaign for you to take home so don't feel like you have to be an expert on the issue after this session!

So why is 'free trade' a women's rights issue?

1. Undermining public services: FTAs reduce government revenue by reducing and/or eliminating tariffs and encourage governments to privatise public services, all of which have a critical impact on providing basic services to communities. Public services are a critical part of ensuring that women's basic needs are met, and increasing gender equality. Public services reduce women's unpaid work and increase their ability to access decent work. If a family member becomes sick, for example, having a quality public hospital nearby can mean the difference between having to take care of the family member for however long they are sick and being able to catch a bus to school or having to walk.

2. Threatening women's access to decent work: Women in low income countries are often smallholder farmers or involved in local businesses, which are hit the hardest when FTAs force countries to allow these sectors to be flooded by large multinational companies. These companies also often threaten women's land rights as they look to buy large amounts of low cost land. FTAs also encourage large multinational companies to open operations in highly feminised manufacturing work like the garment sector, driving down wages and undermining worker's rights.

3. Increasing exploitation of vulnerable groups, especially migrant women workers: FTAs often have chapters which increase the amount of temporary migrant workers, generally people who come from low income countries to work in countries of the global north like Australia. While in theory temporary migration can provide an avenue for women from low income countries to earn higher salaries, in reality, these women often end up in poorly paid sectors where they are more vulnerable to exploitation. Research has found that migrant and refugee women working in Australia have been frequently underpaid, received incorrect leave entitlements, were unfairly dismissed, bullied and harassed and suffered from bad health due to their work. And due to the conditions of these temporary worker visas, if women want to leave their employer due to exploitation or rights violations, they often face deportation.

4 Prioritising corporate interests over public good: A final way that FTAs pose a serious threat to women's access to decent work and public services is through the 'Investor State Dispute Settlement', which effectively allows multinational corporations to sue governments if the government threatens their profits.

For example, if a government tried to introduce an initiative to subsidise the price of a crop grown by a women's collective, technically a foreign corporation who is importing that crop could sue the government for threatening their ability to profit from their imports. There have already been numerous ISDS cases throughout the world which have resulted in governments paying millions of dollars to foreign corporations for nothing more than attempting to regulate in the interests of their people. Ecuador was ordered to pay \$2.4 billion dollars to an oil company after it ordered the company to clean up its toxic waste in 2012. This figure was equal to its entire health budget for the year.

So we know that FTAs are a serious threat to women's rights and gender equality globally, but what can we in Australia do about it?

We have an exciting opportunity coming up with Australia currently in negotiations with the 10 ASEAN nations as well as China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). This trade deal will impact over half of the world's population and over 30% of global GDP. Knowing the concerning impacts that FTAs are already having globally, we have an important opportunity to put pressure on the government to influence the negotiations and ensure that no deal is signed unless it reflects our concerns. Again, don't feel like you have to memorise all the details for this campaign, we've printed copies of the latest Activist Briefing so that you can take it away and look back over it in your own time.

How is everyone feeling about the campaign? Is this an issue that you've heard much about before, or is this new to you? Do any of the impacts resonate with you personally? Take a few minutes now to discuss with the person next to you!

Tactics and Actions

Our local group has been working on this campaign for <insert amount of time> now, and we've done some really exciting things. We started by doing a petition blitz, getting X signatures at our local community market and began raising awareness in the community about the women's rights implications of trade deals like RCEP. We are planning on holding a film screening of a documentary about the impacts of free trade in Asia and the Pacific at our local community centre, and we have also requested a meeting with our local MP and are hoping to request more with local senators! So, we've been doing lots of exciting things but with many more coming up in the future.

Handout pledge cards... We have these pledge cards for you all, and we're hoping that by the end of dinner you will all have had a chance to fill one out with at least 1 but hopefully 3 things that you commit to doing after you leave tonight. Everybody's pledge card will be different based on how much time you have and what you're willing to do, so I really encourage you to have a think about how you can contribute to the campaign. This might be something as simple as signing a petition, or something that requires more time like joining our local group. Make sure you think about all of the tactics we've just discussed and whether you might be interested in doing some of those.

Dinner and Introducing Pledges

It's now time for dinner, but we'd love for you all to think and discuss your thoughts about what you want to commit to doing after tonight, including:

1. What skills can you bring to the movement?
2. What will you pledge to do after tonight to support the movement?

Now let's eat!

Report Back and Sharing

Thanks everyone for great discussions over dinner and for filling out your pledge cards. We're going to take some time now to share with everyone what you've been discussing in small groups over dinner. We'll go around to everyone, and if you could share:

1. One thing you've pledged to do after tonight; and
2. One thing you will take away from this Activism over Dinner.

That just about brings us to the end of the night. Thank you so much to each of you for coming and for contributing to making this a successful event. It's so exciting to think about all of the amazing things you have pledged to do after today. Before we leave, I just wanted to share a few things with you:

- Please join our local Facebook group for updates: <insert link>
- Come to our next group meeting on <insert date>.
- If it's okay we'd love to take photos of all of your pledge cards so that we can support you to do them going forward.

Would everyone mind if we took a group photo?

HOW TO KEEP PEOPLE ENGAGED AFTER THE EVENT

Keeping your guests engaged after they have attended your event is key.

The most obvious way to follow up is through the pledge card. Each person will have hopefully committed to taking one or more actions following the event, so making sure you have a plan for contacting them about their pledge will ensure you have a reason to get back in touch.

Encourage guests to join your local ActionAid group to keep updated with news and events, or think of what other events your group is organising that you can invite them to on the night. If your group has regular meetings, announce when your next meeting will be and invite people to it.

For people who seem particularly enthusiastic, you might want to consider having a one-on-one intentional conversation with them over a coffee or meal to see what skills they have and whether they might be interested in stepping up their commitment in the group.

FURTHER RESOURCES



Head over the activist toolkit section of our website to get the latest activists briefings and resources for your event.

PLEDGE CARD

Name:

Email:

Number:

Post code:

I pledge to:

- ☐ Join my local ActionAid group
- ☐ Have a one-on-one catch up with a local ActionAid organiser
- ☐ Get 20 petition signatures

Other: _____

Feel free to talk to our organisers for help



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