The Association for Progressive Communications Women's Rights Programme

Our feminist principles of participation

This document has been developed as a guide for ourselves and partners hosting learning and capacity building events, such as Take Back the Tech campaigns, Feminist Tech Exchanges and conversations around the Feminist Principles of the Internet. We have produced this in a spirit of collaboration and co-ownership to encourage creating spaces both online and onground, that are framed as feminist and facilitate safety and fun for all as well as promoting and upholding principles of diversity, creativity, inclusivity and pleasure. We come from many communities, cultures and faiths and embody a beautiful diversity of physical, social and psychic realities. Through creating safe, fun and caring spaces, we enable engaged participation, deeper learning and the possibility of growing dynamic, responsive and caring movements.

These are the framing principles we value and apply in the spaces and events we co-create.

:: Create a safe space for all participants.
:: Be respectful.
:: Be collaborative and participatory.
:: Recognise and value diversity.
:: Respect the privacy of participants.
:: Be aware of language diversity.
:: Handle disagreement constructively.
:: Embed politics and practice of self and collective care

The Principles in Action

Create a safe space for all participants.
As far as possible, for example through an online survey, get to know your participants beforehand. Ask for specific needs they might have such as physical access, dietary requirements, particular travel fears or safety requirements. Ideally the venue should have light and air, be quiet and be free from surveillance and interference from non-participants. During the event, gently encourage participants to be open about subjects which might cause them distress and to take responsibility for alerting facilitators if they feel uncomfortable.

Be respectful.
Negotiate with participants at the start of the event about what is needed for a respectful and nurturing environment. Encourage deep listening – meaning that we give our full attention to each other. Acknowledge that there are things that our privileges allow us to take for granted – for example, able bodied people don't always notice ableism, white people don't always notice racism.

Be collaborative and participatory.
As trainers/facilitators be well prepared, open and aware of your own agenda for the event and make your goals apparent to the participants. Have processes where expectations from participants and trainers are negotiation and agreed upon -- for example, use smaller groups if some people are not comfortable speaking in plenary. Ground learning in women's lived realities and use methodologies that prioritise participant voices and experiences. Recognise that everyone brings learnings to the table.

Recognise and value diversity.
Acknowledge differing levels of privilege in the room as well as our multiple identities. Ensure that intersectionality does not make people feel more excluded and 'different but encourages the harnessing of diversity of identities and experiences as an opportunity for learning, exchange and enriching the space. Help people recognise that a discussion on ableism or racism is not necessarily targeting the able bodied or white people in the room as perpetrators of discrimination and encourage people to listen, think and explore systemic discrimination.

Respect the privacy of participants.
Ask for consent on photographs and directly quoting participants / giving attribution for documentation. Agree on the use (or not!) of social media. Co-develop a privacy agreement for the event. If there are discussions on sensitive issues such gender-based violence, racism, homophobia or transphobia, recognise that some participants may not be ready to speak about these things. Do not push discussion about personal experiences if this causes distress. Always ensure there is a trained person available to support participants who have experienced trauma.

Be aware of language use and respect language diversity.
Acknowledge the languages of all participants and as far as possible offer interpretation/translation. As a rule, everyone should speak clearly and slowly, and feel comfortable asking about acronyms or terms that are not understood. Ask that people think about the language they use and not to use terms that might be oppressive or offensive to others. Request that people be open if they feel offended and use these as learning opportunities. Content may involve technological terms or language that is considered academic and that could be new to some participants. Challenge the tyranny of technological terms! Make content understandable and intriguing and emphasise taking control of and growing a full understanding of how technologies actually work.

Handle disagreement constructively.
Act fairly, honestly and in good faith with other participants. Encourage empathy and take the time to rectify any disagreements, any uncomfortable or hurtful words or behaviour that may occur. Create an atmosphere of openness and facilitate space for apologies and/or explanation if needed.

Embed politics and practice of self and collective care
Acknowledge that self-care is different for different people and depends on who we are and where we are located in our lives and contexts. Self-care and collective care impact each other. So make time for people to breathe, connect with bodies and hearts, through ritual or embodied practice, to release any tension or anxiety. As holders of space, be mindful of and try and clear any stress in the room so that people can show up to the collective and participate fully. Invite participants to suggest self-care practices.

We encourage people to read APC's Sexual Harassment Policy can be found here:
https://policies.wiki.apc.org/index.php/APC_Sexual_Harassment_Policy