



TIPS FOR TELLING A TALANOA STORY

At its core, the Talanoa Dialogue is about stories. To date, more than a thousand stories have been collected, many of which detail innovative and inspiring action that is taking place on the ground. The Fijian Presidency wants to make sure that these stories are shared as widely as possible, in order to inspire others to action and to spread the message that, although time is running out, the target of the Paris Agreement is still obtainable.

- COP23 Chief Negotiator Luke Daunivalu

BACKGROUND

The Fijian and Polish COP Presidencies are overseeing a year-long process called the **TALANOA DIALOGUE** that aims to take stock of collective efforts to reduce emissions and build greater resilience – in line with the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement – and to help countries prepare updated or new Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs. Ultimately, the aim is to help countries achieve maximum ambition in implementing and improving their NDCs.

The **TALANOA DIALOGUE** approach represents a radical departure from the formal negotiating process by creating an open and inclusive space where countries, cities, businesses, investors, civil society, faith-based organisations, indigenous communities, youth groups and others can share their ideas and experiences and learn from each other without fear of finger pointing or recrimination.

The **TALANOA DIALOGUE** invites all stakeholders to organise events and to submit written inputs that respond to at least one of the three central questions of the Dialogue:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to go?
- How do we get there?

Talanoa is about telling stories and listening to the stories of others. In the context of the **TALANOA DIALOGUE**, these stories should have the ultimate goal of inspiring increased climate ambition and accelerated action. Telling a **TALANOA** story isn't difficult, but it is different from the types of presentations, statements and discussions that are often associated with panel discussions and roundtables.

With that in mind, we thought it would be useful to provide a few tips that can help you shape your Talanoa story.

WHAT IS TALANOA?

But first, a little background on *talanoa*. *Talanoa* is a traditional word used in Fiji and some other Pacific islands to reflect a process of inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue. The purpose of *talanoa* is to share stories, build empathy and to make wise decisions for the collective good. The process of *talanoa* involves the sharing of ideas, skills and experiences through the art of storytelling.

During the process, participants build trust and advance knowledge in an open and positive atmosphere. Blaming others and making critical observations are inconsistent with building mutual trust and respect, and are therefore inconsistent with *talanoa*.

10 TIPS FOR TELLING A TALANOA STORY

Below, you will find ten tips for shaping your TALANOA story.

- 1) **TELL A STORY.** In Fiji and other Pacific islands, the process of exchanging stories is called *talanoa*, but every culture has its own version of storytelling. *Talanoa* is about sharing stories, not delivering statements, making presentations or defending negotiating positions. Ultimately, a good story needs characters, conflict and a strong conclusion. Consider beginning your story by introducing the key characters (yourself, your community, your organisation, your country, etc.). Then find a story (or multiple stories) that introduces the challenge(s) you face, are facing, or will face (Question 1), shares your vision for your country/ family/ community/organisation (Question 2) and/or considers innovative ways to overcome this/these challenge(s) (Question 3).
 - a. A single TALANOA story does not need to address all three questions. Oftentimes, due to limited time, participants chose to focus on telling a story that responds to the third question of “how do we get there?”
- 2) **LEAVE THE POWERPOINT AT HOME.** The idea of the DIALOGUE is to share stories in an open, safe and informal environment, so please leave the PowerPoint and handouts at home. While you are free to reference external documents and studies, please consider sharing your TALANOA story as you would share a story at home with your family, at work with your colleagues or at a social event with your friends. If your story ignites a spark, you may be asked to provide more detail or answer questions through follow-up discussions.
- 3) **SHARE YOUR PERSPECTIVE.** The most effective stories spring from something close to you. Consider sharing a story that relates to your own experience, not that of others. Whether the story highlights a shared experience or introduces a new perspective, personal stories trigger reactions that lead to empathy, understanding and respect. Oftentimes incorporating personal experiences and anecdotes can help bring the story to life.
- 4) **FOCUS ON AUDIENCE.** Think about both your own motivations for telling a story as well as the needs and experiences of the audience. What connects you to the audience? Do you share similar experiences, are you familiar with the same concepts and do you speak the same “language”? Do not assume the audience knows everything that you do and try to



avoid jargon. Determining your relationship to the audience will help you determine what story to tell.

- 5) **BE THOUGHT-PROVOKING.** Try to choose a story that is inspiring, thought-provoking, and where possible or relevant, features innovative approaches and solutions. Is the audience already familiar with your story? If so, consider revisiting your story to add a new angle or insight.
- 6) **PROVIDE CLEAR TAKEAWAY.** The goal of the **TALANOA DIALOGUE** is to share stories for a purpose. What is the key message, idea or challenge you want to leave the audience with? What will they take away that's of value? Having a clear conclusion or takeaway to your story is important for framing follow-up discussion.
- 7) **KEEP IT BRIEF.** Your story should be brief. In most contexts, approximately 5 minutes. The point is to present a concise, compelling story that points toward a useful conclusion for the audience. It can certainly allude to broader principles, experiences or findings, but this is not the opportunity for an exhaustive repetition of policies, programs and studies. Think about the stories you tell in your personal life to share information and experiences with friends, families and colleagues.
- 8) **AVOID FINGER POINTING.** *Talanoa* is not the time to point fingers or blame others. Again, it is about sharing your own experiences, skills and ideas that relate to one of the three central questions of the Dialogue. Please do not adopt a tone that is confrontational, threatening, abusive, defamatory, obscene or offensive. Instead, be constructive and build on each other's stories.
- 9) **SEND A MESSAGE TO POLITICAL LEADERS.** In addition to thinking about the needs of your audience, also consider the message you want to deliver to political leaders who will meet at COP24. The political Talanoa at COP23 will discuss the key messages arising from the preparatory phase of the Talanoa Dialogue.
- 10) **IT'S YOUR STORY.** Above all, it's your story and ultimately, it's up to you how to tell it. The tips above are merely suggestions for your consideration.