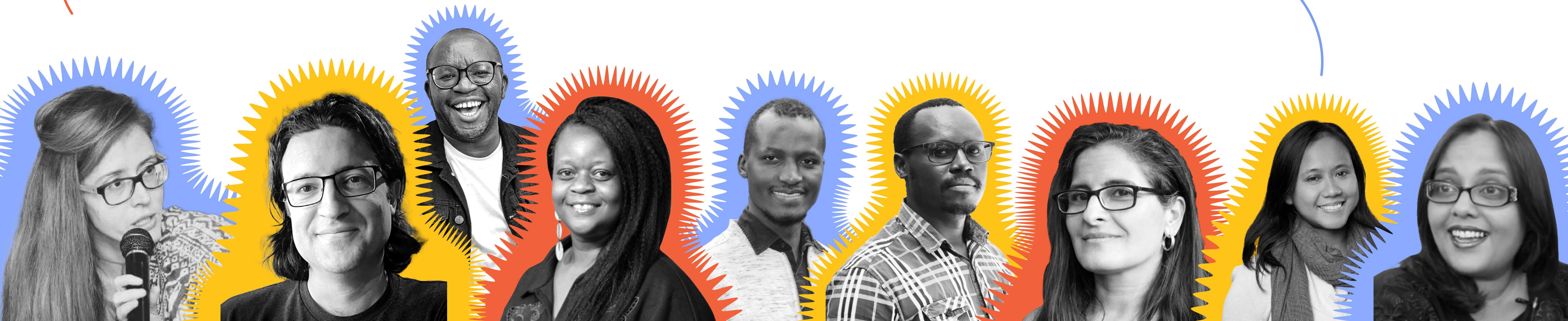Better conversations about

Ethical Storytelling

Bringing together different perspectives from the development, humanitarian, and philanthropic sectors.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this guide...

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Storytelling is in the spotlight.

More than ever, the non-profit sector is reflecting on ways to shift power to the countries and communities where aid and social impact work takes place.

What this shift means in practice isn't always clear. Much of the conversation surrounding the localization agenda comes down to funding. Less attention has been placed on the profound cultural and organizational changes needed for power to change hands.

Communications is an essential but often overlooked component of a successful transition. Used in the right ways it can accelerate positive change, but too often it reinforces a problematic status quo.

In their attempts to build momentum for action, organizations' communications have often resorted to using tools and techniques that distort reality, oversimplify complex issues, and flatten people's experiences.

Furthermore, organizations have (perhaps unintentionally) centered the Western gaze,

perpetuated harmful stereotypes and fuelled unequal power dynamics between donor and recipient countries.

There are few now who would disagree that these practices are holding back progress and are reducing the safety and agency of the people whose stories are told.

But the sector is now at an impasse, having to confront and change practices that were once considered standard, without always having a clear roadmap for a better way forward. How to curtail the problematic aspects of storytelling while simultaneously leveraging its power to achieve of positive change?

"I can't neglect my own personal barrier… There has been a process for me of addressing and accepting my own bias as a white person sitting in the Global North."

– Clare Spurrell, Director of Strategy & Communications at CARE International Secretariat

"You take away my voice and soul when you misrepresent me."

– Chilande Kuloba-Warria, Founder of Warrande Advisory Centre
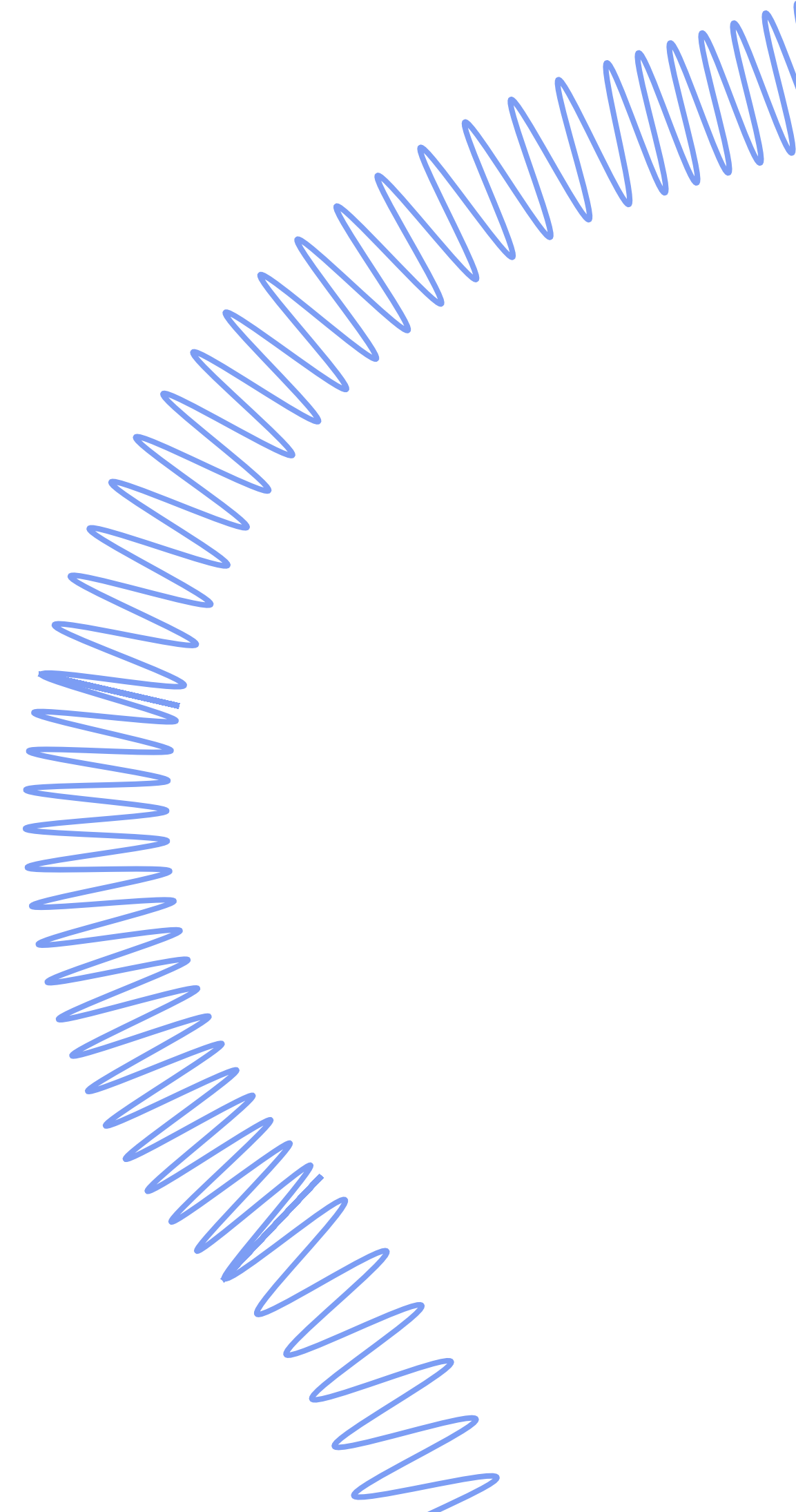
This guide was created to meet that moment.

We brought together experts and people with lived expertise to create a different type of guide. We've sought to de-center the conversation from higher-income countries (the so-called 'Global North') and partnered with contributors from a wide range of backgrounds.

Our aim is to inspire more and better conversations about ethical storytelling – not just to impart one-way 'guidance' on you, the reader. To this end, the style of the guide is conversational. It is the product of a series of rich and engaging conversations between the authors and contributors – all of whom are navigating the challenges of ethical storytelling every day.

The conversations have been translated into six chapters and a series of videos that you can find here.

By taking this approach, we hope to make the subject accessible to all audiences and to facilitate deeper engagement with the issues and the ways we can all apply them in our work.

In particular, the conversational approach makes it possible to:

1. Explore grey areas.

Where possible we aim to provide clear single-minded guidance. But often definitive 'right' answers don't exist or haven't yet been found. Unlike some guidance, we have chosen to lean into the grey areas, highlighting tensions and exploring the complex and non-linear nature of change.

2. Make room for plurality.

We believe it is essential to speak to the multi-layered aspect of this topic. Ethical judgments matter most at times when there are other competing imperatives (practicality, effectiveness, etc.) We've made space for debate, conversations and exchanges between people whose priorities sit in different parts of the process.

3. Provide practical advice.

We've aimed to provide practical advice and case studies to help practitioners put theory into practice; the discussions not only deal with what the issues are and why they persist, but also how to set about tackling them within your organization.

Our own definition of 'storytelling' has evolved as a result of this work. We've broadened our understanding of storytelling as a core competency for individuals and organizations alike, whose reach extends way beyond the realm of communications and fundraising activities.
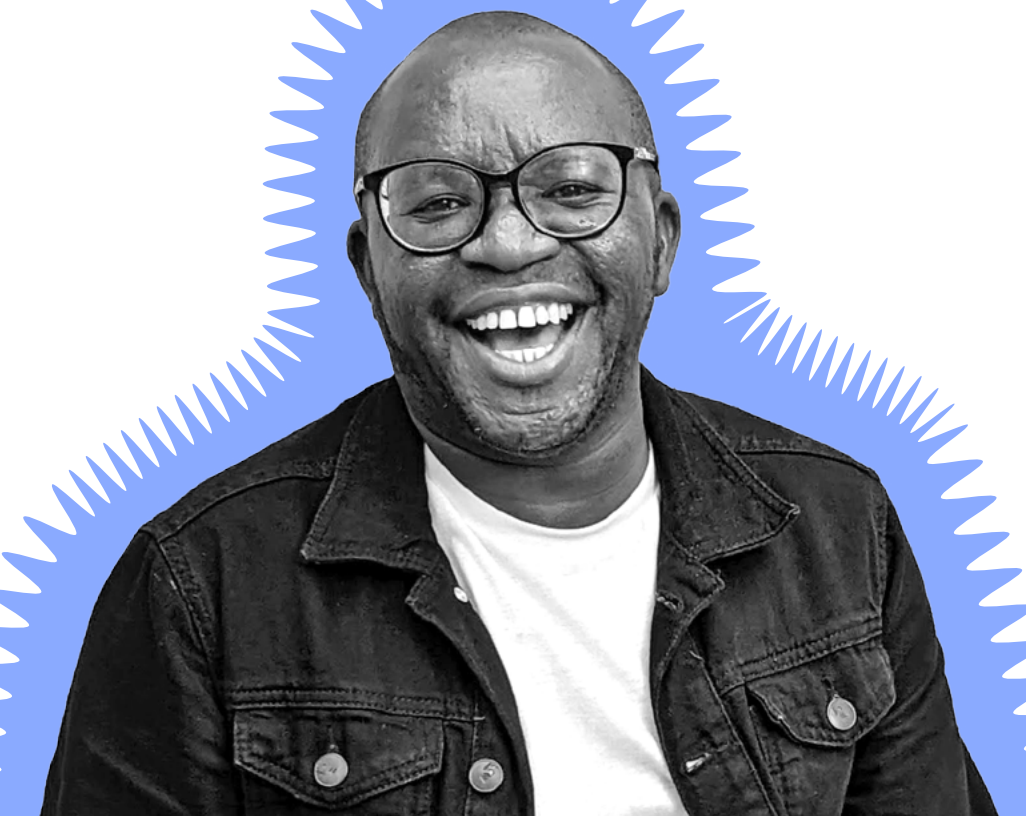
We hope this guide will have a similar impact on you.

And we hope you will join the conversation **here**.

"Talking about this feels like therapy!"

– Levis Nderitu, Director of Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, PATH

Levis Nderitu

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Chapter 1

Why should we tell ethical stories?
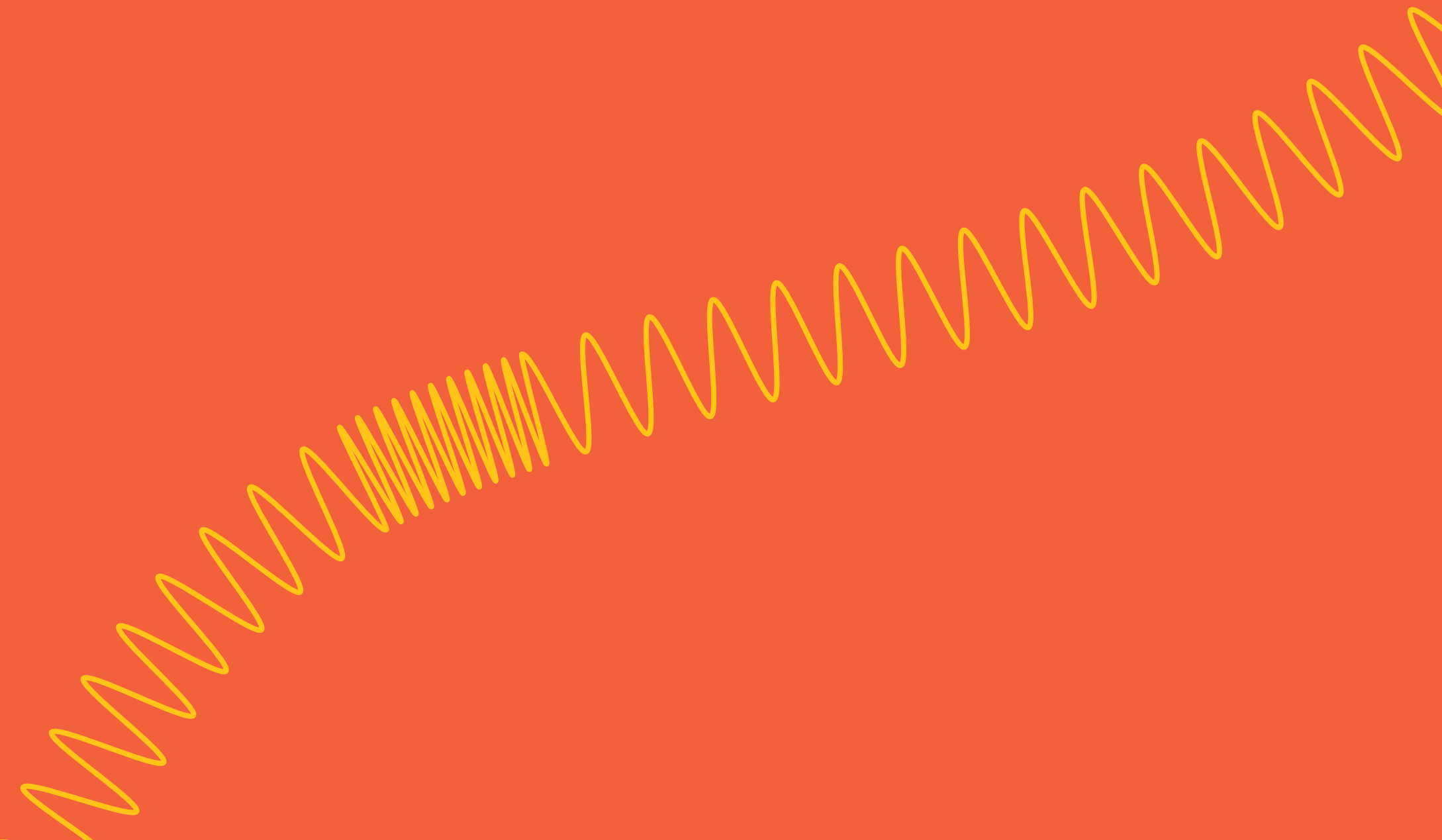
"We all believe 'Nothing about me without me.' Core to that principle is <u>how we represent each other.</u>"

– Chilande Kuloba-Warria, Founder of Warrande Advisory Centre

"To poison a nation, poison its <u>stories.</u>"

– Quote recalled by author that allegedly comes from a letter written by King Leopold II of Belgium to the missionaries traveling to Congo in 1883 to spread Christianity

How to change why and how we tell stories?

To understand the mechanisms through which good intentions can lead to flawed storytelling, we must first look at the underlying power dynamics that shape the relationships between the countries that send and receive international aid.

Chilande Kuloba-Warria is the Founder and Managing Director of a technical support facility called the Warande Advisory Centre, based in Nairobi, Kenya. With over 20 years of experience providing strategic leadership, management and technical assistance to local, national and international CSOs in sub-Saharan Africa, Kuloba-Warria has a knack for fostering thought-provoking conversations and tackling difficult questions with warmth and humor.
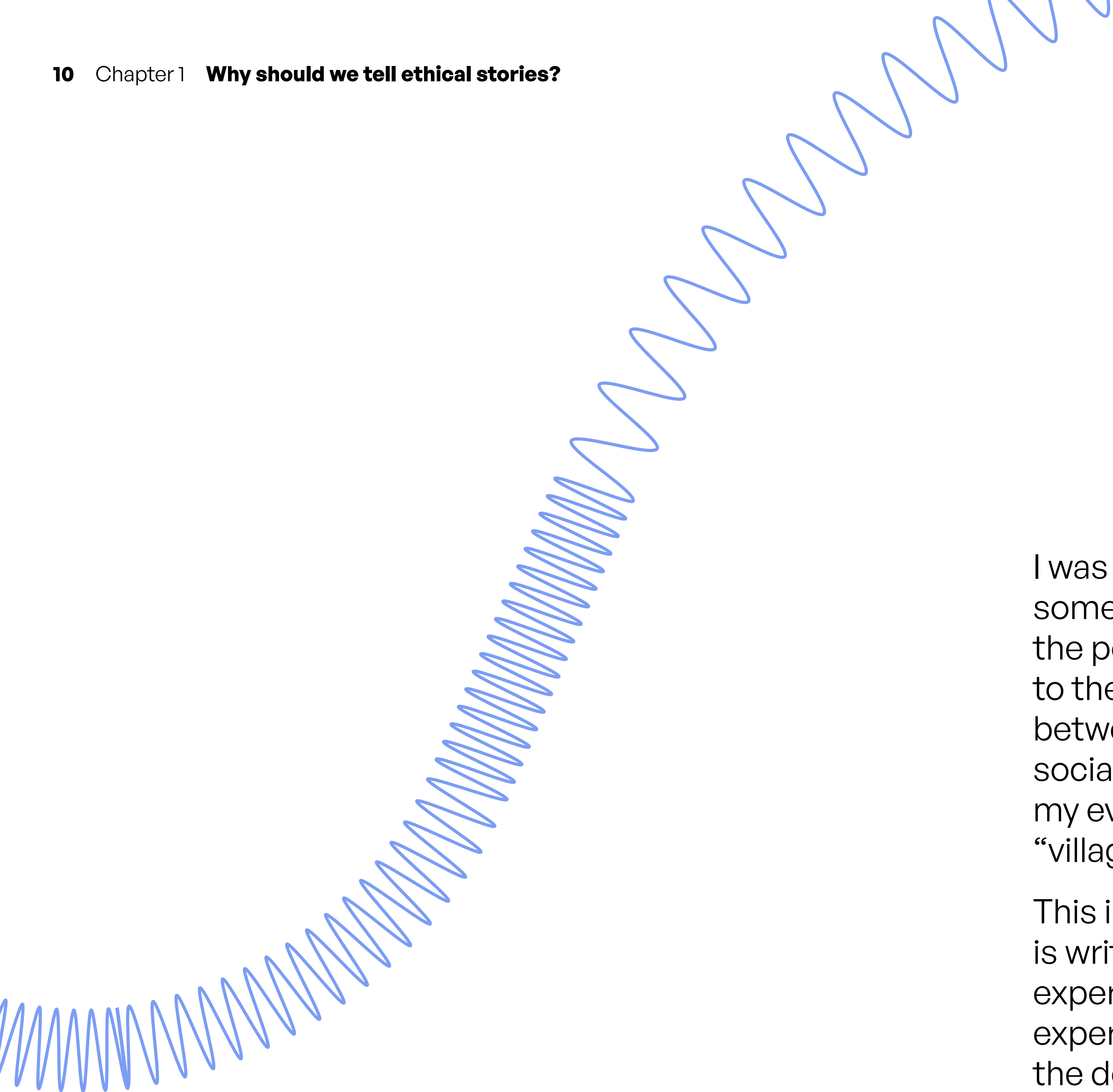
In this deeply personal chapter, Kuloba-Warria draws from her memories and experience growing up in a culture steeped in traditional storytelling to reflect on the way colonialism has shaped communications in the social impact space, and propose a different way forward.

Note: We've included quotes from community members who took part in consultative workshops held in 2022 in the leadup to this toolkit. The workshops were held anonymously so that participants could express their views more freely. Their names have been kept hidden throughout this toolkit in accordance with their preference.

Chilande Kuloba-Warria

I was born in an African community in Western Kenya, somewhere near the slopes of Mount Elgon and overlooking the peaks of Mount Tororo in Uganda, then later moved to the capital city of Nairobi and shuttled back and forth between the two communities as part of my upbringing and socialisation. Stories were and continue to be a big part of my everyday life, used dynamically by the members of the "village" that raised my generation for various purposes.

This is the experience that informs this chapter, which is written as a reflective piece that draws on my natural experience with stories, and compares it to how I have experienced stories in my professional life as a key player in the development and humanitarian sector on a global scope.

Storytelling lessons from my culture

The Nigerian Novelist Ben Okri famously remarked:

"To poison a nation, poison its stories. A demoralised nation tells demoralised stories to itself. Beware of the storytellers who are not fully conscious of the importance of their gifts, and who are irresponsible in the application of their art."

Storytelling is a powerful medium that has been used since the beginning of time by societies at various stages of their evolution, right from when they were perceived to be "illiterate" and "backward," to date.

Why stories were told in my culture

My early years of life in rural Bukusu culture were spent typically with my grandparents, mainly my paternal grandmother. She would often gather us as children and tell us stories, whose purposes depended on her mood and our behavior.

Storytelling to teach

I recall vividly the stories about "the boy who ate the elephant's rumps," "the hare and the leopard," "the hare who steals a hen" (the hare basically was always a main feature in my community but we never asked why,) "the woman and her daughter of clay" (a story on a mother's excess love and the consequences of disobedience,) "the hyena who ate his protector"(a story about trust,) "a dying old woman who earned bride wealth for her sons" (showcasing the love and resilience of a mother,) "the thirsty intruder" (with lessons about trust…)

The stories were many! They taught us what the society expected of us. Some of them, especially those involving the hare, were pure entertainment, as we learnt that to be clever and cunning was something we should all aspire to if we are to survive in this world. We learnt of the undesirable traits in our communities and were also encouraged to be our best selves through the stories of brevity and prowess we were taught.
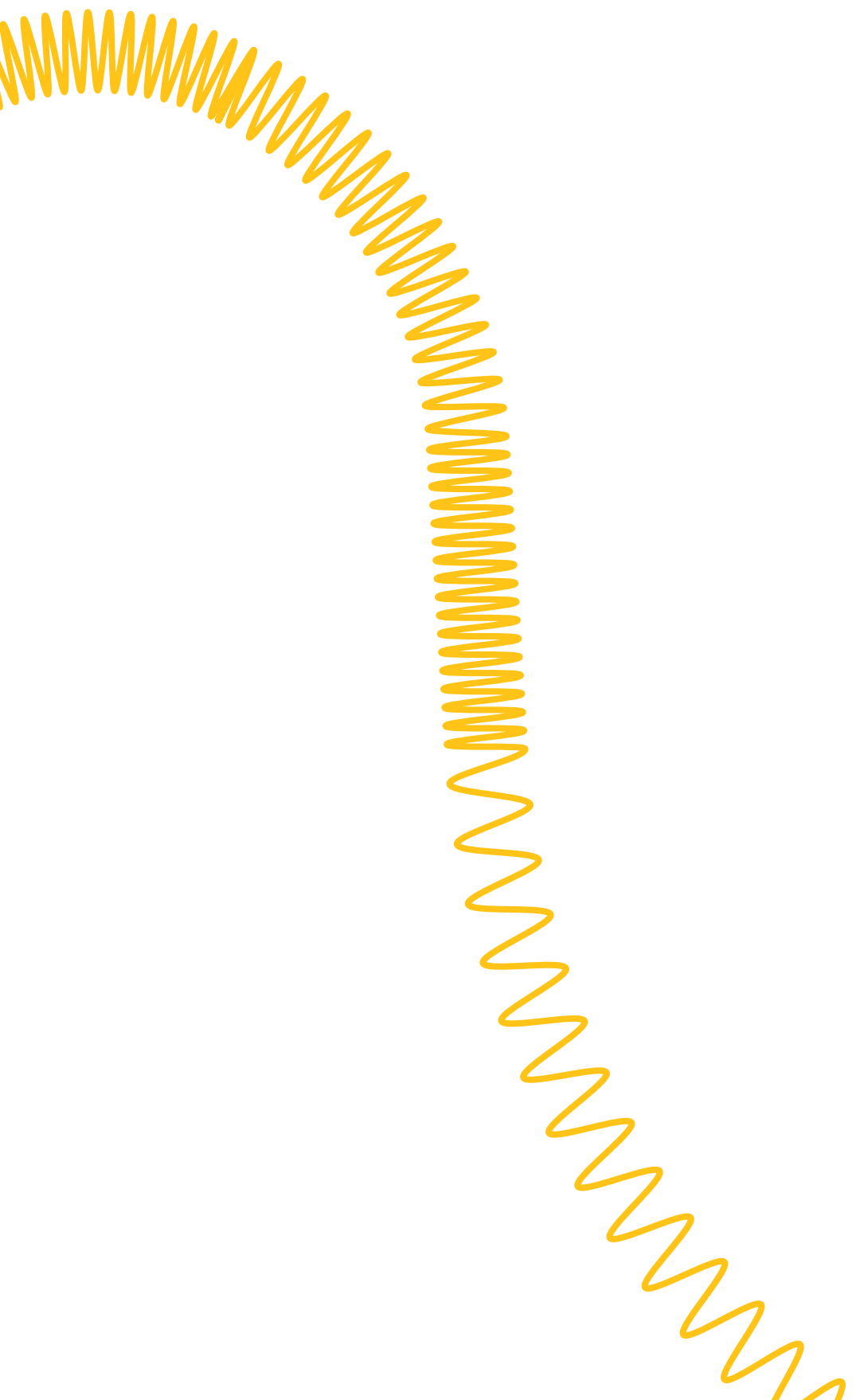
Storytelling to entertain

Perhaps the most famous Bukusu folk tale is the one of "Mwambu and Sella," which, now that I am older, is strangely similar to the princess stories we learnt later on. The story tells of a brave soldier who rescued the most beautiful girl in the land. She had been sacrificed by the community to a mysterious monster that lived in a high mountain nearby, in exchange for receiving rain that had been elusive for many years in the country. After Mwambu killed the dragon, rain returned to the country, people rejoiced, and the king married Sella to Mwambu in a pompous wedding ceremony.

In these stories, Sella was described as "really charming: she had a symmetric, tender frame and a mellow voice. She had eye-catching shapely legs, moon-white teeth, bewitchingly gentle, sparkling eyes, ghee-soft lips, egg-shaped breasts, and when she walked, her motion was graceful like that of a goddess. Indeed, she was the epitome of beauty itself, and every young man in the country aspired to court her."

Mwambu rescues Sella from the monster.
Source: East African Development Library.

I especially would like to draw your attention to the poetic and romantic description of Sella. Of course, this was before these very traits described above were deemed "strange," "weird" and "undesired," and all manners of negative descriptions used by the supremist colonialists who looked different. However, I am leapfrogging this conversation, let us pin this for later.

Storytelling to uplift

Many a times, my grandmother would gather us around after a long day of studies and, especially when one of us — or all of us — had been scolded by our parents, she would tell us a story that would have educational value and give us hope. Stories that involved the cunning hare would always involve a protagonist who made a bad choice or erred in some way.

Eventually, they would find their way, or were welcome back into the fold by the village, especially after learning their lesson. The stories that I recall were told with punctuations of poetry, songs, and dramatization with gestures, voice variations, or movements all for our enjoyment. The storytelling that I recall, and that nurtured my love for stories, was an art!

In conclusion of my musings, let us reflect back to the statement from Ben Okri: "To poison a nation, poison its stories."

The question of why stories were told in the past was simple: it was to uplift, encourage, instruct, inspire, or caution, all with an aim to keep the peace and prosperity between communities and within them by encouraging positive behaviors and inspiring the young to cultivate certain desirable qualities. Basically, stories were told towards progressing a society. I have no recollection of stories that were told to retain a negative notion of a person. Even when a story was told of an undesired trait, the moral of it was always to reinforce positive behaviors. Basically, stories kept us alive and spurred us to evolve and expand.

When the development sector gets it wrong

As the world opened and communities started interacting cross-culturally and then internationally, storytelling became increasingly complicated. Critical aspects such as intentions, language and cognitive biases begun to influence stories. Storytelling simply

to ensure the preservation of cultural norms, practices, and traditions within a community, has morphed into a tool that conveys a message, to meet the need and/or respond to an external audience. The dynamics have therefore changed significantly because:

The audience has changed

Stories are now told to a "new," "outsider" or "strange" person, who has come into the community with expectations. In the past, we went to listen to a story with no expectations other than being interested in what our grandmother had to say. The message was crafted skillfully based on what our grandmother had observed during the day, or had been told about us or about a community incident.

Intention and expectations are pre-determined

Now, the proverbial "grandmother" must find out what the "listeners" want to hear and then tell the story accordingly, so that the listener leaves "satisfied." It means the storyteller must first find out what message is being sought, and then relay the stories in a way to meet these expectations.

Why we tell stories in the development sector

Stories today are told with a certain external interest in mind. In the development and humanitarian sectors, the evolution of development cooperation and humanitarian actions, which have largely been influenced by the international community, have influenced the stories being told about communities today.

Storytelling to appease key stakeholders

Traditional stories centered the young minds, the next generation, and societies' aspirations for their future in their development. They were carefully crafted to keep communities alive and thriving. Stories of today center the one who we want to influence in service to our often self-centered needs, be they to gain a new partnership, get additional resources, etc.

This shift can be explained by colonialism's impact on the stories that are told to and about societies in nations in the Global South. This is best depicted in this extract I recall from a discourse I was a part of it recently.

We discussed this quote that allegedly comes from a letter written by King Leopold II of Belgium to the missionaries traveling to Congo in 1883 to spread Christianity:

"Reverend, Fathers and Dear Compatriots; The task asked of you to accomplish is very delicate and demands much tact and diplomacy. Fathers, you are going to preach the Gospel, but your preaching must be inspired by first, the interest of the Belgium government state" (emphasis mine.)

We all felt like this philosophy has sadly continued to date.

In correcting this lopsided viewpoint, it is important to find a balance that honors those whose stories need to be told and those who need to hear the story. The best scenario is to have a win-win situation where the storyteller's message is well represented alongside that of the one who needs to hear the story.

Who needs to hear	Why they need to hear	What they need to hear	What is shown to them
International Funders/ resource providers	So they can retain their funding, and even increase their resource allocations.	Their money is "rescuing" people in dire need of their support	Radical transformations (the "before" and "after") and the gratitude of the nations.
International governments	So they can keep allocating more taxpayer money to these "disadvantaged" communities.	The disadvantage persists, and so they must keep prioritizing these countries.	Statistics, images that show the "disadvantage," and the change they are making.

↑ Click here to listen to a clip from **Chilande Kuloba-Warria's** interview with **Gertrude Kabaszi,** Executive Director at Yamba Malaw that focuses on:

The power dynamics partners have experienced from funders.

To hear the interview in full, **click here**.

Storytelling to center the Western perspectives

"Global South" communities are often labelled in comparison to what an outsider deems to be different from their norm. Words such as "marginalized," "disadvantaged" or "vulnerable" are used, even when the communities themselves do not always see themselves as such. Development practitioners from the "Global North" have often used terms that are informed by supremacist attitudes, using their foreign standards of living as a reference, and neglecting to honor the norms of the communities they are visiting.

"The pictures we take are not representing the villages now. When I go to my village now, I see there's electricity, and children are dressed better…. But why aren't we representing that change?"

- Gertrude Kabwazi, Executive Director at Yamba Malawi.

Let us go back to the story of Sella depicted above. Her description of remarkable beauty is in stark contrast to the now-famous story of Sarah Baartman, who was enslaved and taken to Europe, where her body was put on display

for paying audiences. She was considered a "freak" for having large buttocks — a trait that in many African cultures is considered a mark of beauty.

Indeed, they do say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and this sad story is a depiction of this.

In the development and humanitarian sector, these biases, misconceptions and stereotypes have been informing how stories are told, from the look and feel of photography to the tone of voice of the narrations about the situations encountered by the "Global North."

Moving forward, we should listen keenly to the descriptions that the local communities use, take time to understand the cultures and ways of life of the people, and follow their lead on decision-making. We should honor their stories by depicting them in a way that retains their dignity and truth, and eliminates misunderstandings as much as possible.

A hand-colored etching featuring a caricature of Sarah (Saartjie) Baartman by William Heath. Source: British Museum

↑ Click here to listen to a clip from **Chilande Kuloba-Warria's** interview with **Gertrude Kabaszi** that focuses on:

The negative and static representation of communities.

To hear the interview in full, **click here**.

How we can tell better stories

In the development and humanitarian sector, storytelling must take into account multiple stakeholders while upholding the dignity and authenticity of the subject of the story. To better achieve this we can bridge the two cultures of storytelling we have talked about so far.

In the following pages we outline three ways in which storytellers can bridge different cultures of storytelling:

1 **Broadening the diversity of stories told**
2 **Choosing language mindfully**
3 **Avoiding deficit framing**

"**I think our goal is how to find stories that bring back a dignity that isn't always granted by society and that bring back a sense of joy and opportunity.**"

– Peter Torres Fremlin, Author of Disability Debrief, and freelance writer and speaker.

How do we balance authenticity with dignity when telling stories?

↑ Click here to watch **Chilande Kuloba-Warria** lead a discussion with **Chloe Namwase** (Communications Executive at Wezesha Impact), **Jennifer Katiwa** (Country Director at Jitegemee Children Program), **Monica Nyiraguhabwa** (Co-Founder and Executive Director at Girl Up Initiative Uganda), **Patience Musiwa Mkandawire** (Founder and Executive Director of Fount for Nations) and **Arinolah Elizabeth-Nite Omollo** (Kenya Country Representative at Warrande Advisory Centre).

To see the discussion in full, **click here**.

01

Broadening the diversity of stories told

Instead of only choosing to tell stories that prioritize the funder, we can choose to share a diverse range of stories. There are countless purposes our stories can have, including but not limited to: to educate, to train, to entertain and to communicate a message.

It is especially important for some of the stories we share to allow communities to share advice and stories for program improvement and evolution. Too often the community perspective is not taken into account despite their unique knowledge of the place and its needs but creating space for stories driven by their expertise can change this.
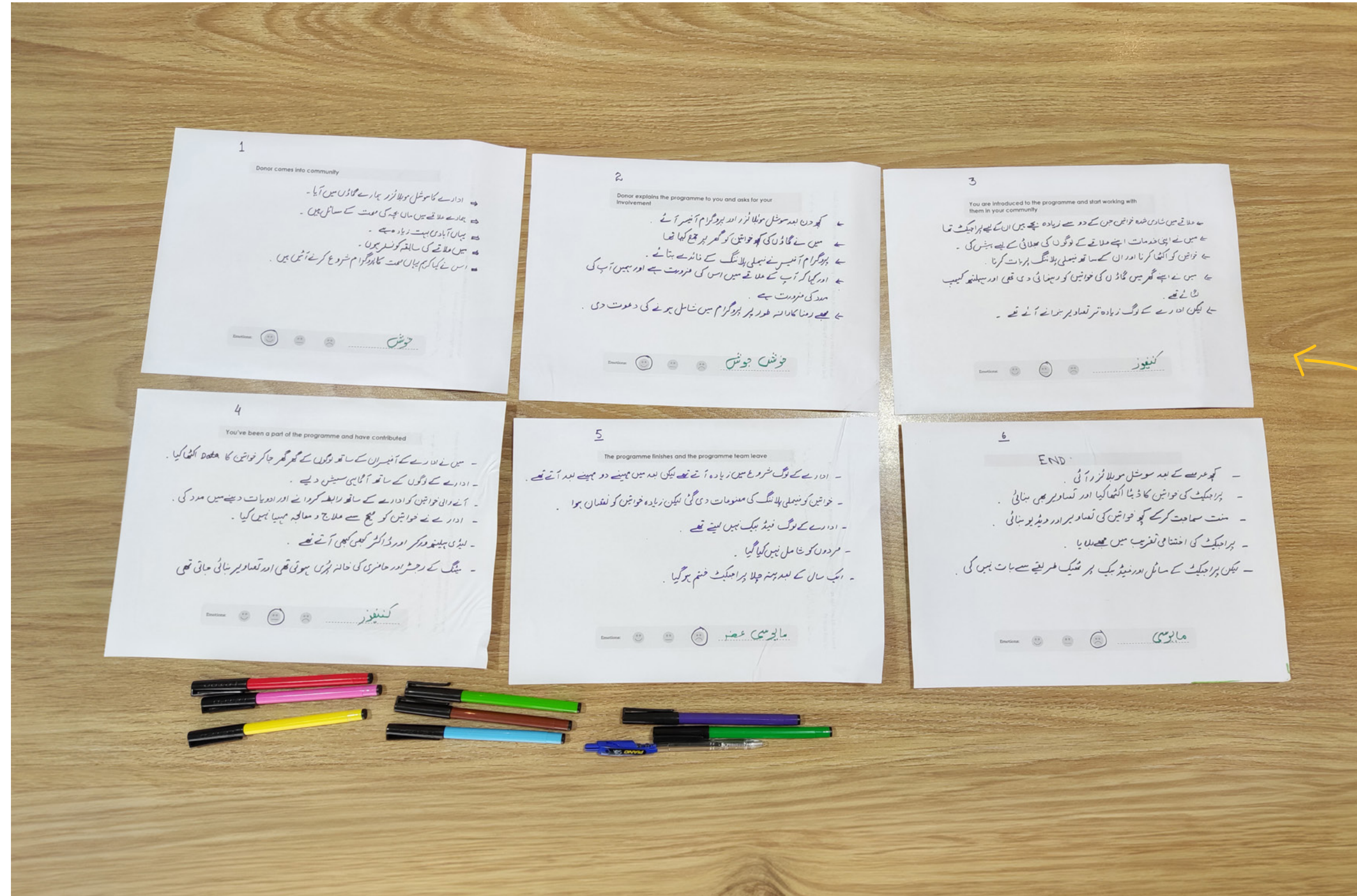
"Good stories surprise us. They make us think and feel. They stick in our minds and help us remember ideas and concepts in a way that a PowerPoint crammed with bar graphs never can"
— Joe Lazauskas and Shane Snow, The Storytelling Edge.

"Once the project started rolling, they did not pay any heed to the community's opinion."
– Workshop participant in response to a journey mapping exercise, conducted by ICARUS (Pakistan) in 2022 on behalf of MCSWS for this toolkit.

02

Choosing language mindfully

One of the barriers to how we communicate in the sector is the language we use across all our communications. Language is a very intimate, contextual and personal aspect of how societies work, and communicating messages about and for a society must take this into consideration. In my society, we joke that "English came by boat" to illustrate the foreign nature of this medium of communication that is often used in professional spaces. It is the same for the other languages used, such as French, Portuguese, Spanish and other languages that are not native to the Global South. As a result, depending on the histories of a people, words can easily cause old wounds to bleed and pains to emerge. Words can minimize as much as they can uplift.

Below is a sample of how words can mean different things in different contexts:

* Workshop participants in response to a language analysis exercise, conducted by ICARUS (Pakistan) in 2022 on behalf of MCSWS for this toolkit.

What the sector says:	What people hear:	What people tend to prefer:
Poor	"I would feel bad hearing such words for my community because people of my area are not really poor. So that will be devastating for them to seen or heard and referred to as poor."	People/ families with low income.
Minority	"This words creates such a devastating and painful picture of people belonging to different religions and cultures, because they are given less value in society. I would like to use words which represent their identity, which are specific."	Naming the specific group instead e.g. 'people from a Black Caribbean background/ Black people' or if they need to be grouped, then words which address the systemic factors like 'seldom-heard' or 'under-represented', are preferred to words with a negative connotation.
Marginalised	"It's not about marginalisation, it's about structural inequalities. Pakistan is poor due to misuse of the nation's finances and resources."	People who have experienced X (systemic issues) or people who are underserved.
Beneficiary	"It has a paternalistic and colonial association to it". "These people can earn a better living but are still suffering in same part of their life because they are lacking support and resources. Most of these people do not even ask for help. Make them self-reliant."	Naming their role in the community e.g. 'a hardworking father' 'leader of the community initiative', or their role in the project.

What are some missteps that partners from other countries have made?

↑ Click here to watch **Chilande Kuloba-Warria** lead a discussion with **Chloe Namwase** (Communications Executive at Wezesha Impact), **Jennifer Katiwa** (Country Director at Jitegemee Children Program), **Monica Nyiraguhabwa** (Co-Founder and Executive Director at Girl Up Initiative Uganda), **Patience Musiwa Mkandawire** (Founder and Executive Director of Fount for Nations) and **Arinolah Elizabeth-Nite Omollo** (Kenya Country Representative at Warrande Advisory).

To see the discussion in full, **click here**.

Organizations are encouraged to create and maintain a living "language dictionary" or glossary that is reviewed periodically as the sector continues to evolve.

This table can be used by your organization to start the "language dictionary" by recording how the people you work with and feature feel about certain words used to represent them, and what they'd prefer.

Other ongoing debates evolve around more commonly used terms today such as:

- "Local." In some contexts, this term has a negative connotation of being "lesser than" or "primitive."

- "Proximate leaders" is controversial where leaders in Global South communities are just leaders, and there is no need to distinguish them further. However, they can be "proximate to the issues/challenges/communities." This is an example of how seemingly innocent words can be received negatively. This word is often only used when centering the Global North, and makes a distinction that is not necessarily positive for all, or even necessary.

- The very terms "Global North" and "Global South," as well as "developed" versus "underdeveloped" need to be used contextually, always keeping the audience in mind, and making time to understand what is acceptable in each context.

03

Avoiding deficit framing

Words such as "vulnerable," "under-skilled," "incapable," etc., can lead to continued prejudice about a people, and a psychological and physical disempowerment.

In being mindful about this potential pitfall, we must look out to ensure that our stories are not doing more harm, for instance by spreading propaganda, by victimizing a population or person, or by perpetuating power dynamics that can lead to blurred truths, skewed validity, inaccuracies, or disempowerment amongst other harmful results.

↑ Click here to listen to a clip from **Chilande Kuloba-Warria's** interview with **Gertrude Kabaszi** that focuses on:

How the pity narrative is overutilized in storytelling.

To hear the interview in full, **click here**.

"Our community has highly educated work-oriented women and men. In our community we are liberal."

"People view our community as we are not productive and just waste time. They perceive our community as less educated, less aware and knowledgeable."

– Workshop participant in response to a journey mapping exercise, conducted by ICARUS (Pakistan) in 2022 on behalf of MCSWS for this toolkit.

Instead, using Asset-Framing® can help us recognize the capacities and the potential of a society or community in how we describe them. Asset-Framing® is a methodology developed by **Trabian Shorters** (the author of Asset-Framing®, Founder and CEO of BMe and social entrepreneur) that helps communicators develop narratives based on strengths and agency when talking about a community.

There are excellent examples of applying asset-based language in the following guides:

The HERE to HERE Language Guide: A Resource for Using Asset-Based Language with Young People

Understanding Asset Framing

"I want to see Bangladesh portrayed in a positive way. Our country is not helpless anymore."

– Interview Participant in response to questions on the impact of stories told by the sector, conducted by BRAC (Bangladesh) in 2022 on behalf of MCSWS for this toolkit.

Sarah-Jane Saltmarsh,

Head of Thought Leadership and Content at BRAC, shares her perspective on the power of more positive stories:

Telling stories in a manner designed to evoke pity, contrary to popular belief in the sector, does not increase effectiveness. Conversely, a 2021 study by Development Engagement Lab showed that positive appeals increase the efficacy of campaigns or the feeling that development makes a difference. Respondents who received a positive appeal were also more likely to sign up for email communications, which has knock-on effects for activating new supporters. Authentic and dignified storytelling is an opportunity to educate, make social change, and give audiences ways in which to think differently about challenging topics, and it activates the powerful emotion of hope, which commercial brands such as Nike have effectively used for years.

To conclude, here are factors to consider when thinking about why and how to tell a story:

01

What change would you like to see at a personal and/ or organizational level as a result of the stories you are about to tell?

02

Have you clearly defined communications objectives?

03

Is there a level of empathy, understanding and reflection that you would like to trigger with your stories?

04

Are there ethical issues, especially those that could demoralize or disempower the subjects of your stories?

05

Is there an emotional trigger that the story can elicit, and are you ready for the repercussions?

06

Are there aspects that can demoralize another audience? After all, a happy outcome for one person can highlight an unfulfilled outcome for another.

07

Does your story reflect the views of the diverse members of the community of interest — even those with contrasting viewpoints, and those who are often excluded?

08

What are the ethical considerations, especially regarding the power dynamics at play between the two parties? Does the person telling their story fully understand the consequences of having their names published, and their story circulated? Have you determined and communicated to the interviewee how the story will be shared?

09

Does the story omit details, exaggerate, or even make up some of the issues being presented?

10

Are we telling the story in an inclusive and accessible manner?

11

Are we only relying on a word-based communication? Or open to more diverse forms of communication (e.g. art, poetry)?

Chapter 2

How can we make the case?

"The moral and business concerns are not mutually exclusive. That has oftentimes been a misconception – sometimes organizations understand it as they have to choose one or the other."

– Victor Mark-Onyegbu, Grants Lead at Africa No Filter

"There are business challenges which have to be a part of the conversation, and you have to accept the business reality around that."

– Clare Spurrell, Director of Strategy & Communications at CARE International Secretariat

"We've continued to say something to please someone — to get money most of the time — and that has dented how a society is seen."

– Chilande Kuloba-Warria, Founder of Warrande Advisory Centre

How to win over decision makers

From our discussions, we heard that improving on ethical storytelling is not just about the craft or the production process. It's often about having critical conversations with staff and senior leadership about the risks and necessities of adopting new practices, so that new organizational practices can be put into place.

Change management is something **Levis Nderitu** and **David Verga** know well.

In his role as Director of Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at PATH, an international NGO that works to accelerate health equity worldwide, Nderitu has practiced the art of holding difficult conversations many times over. As Head of Brand and Creative at PATH, Verga is responsible — among many other tasks — for disseminating ethical storytelling practices across an organization that spans several continents.

In this chapter, Nderitu and Verga draw from their respective roles to offer practical advice to those wanting to initiate change from within. They introduce three different ways to engage team members and senior leadership in the process of implementing ethical storytelling practices.
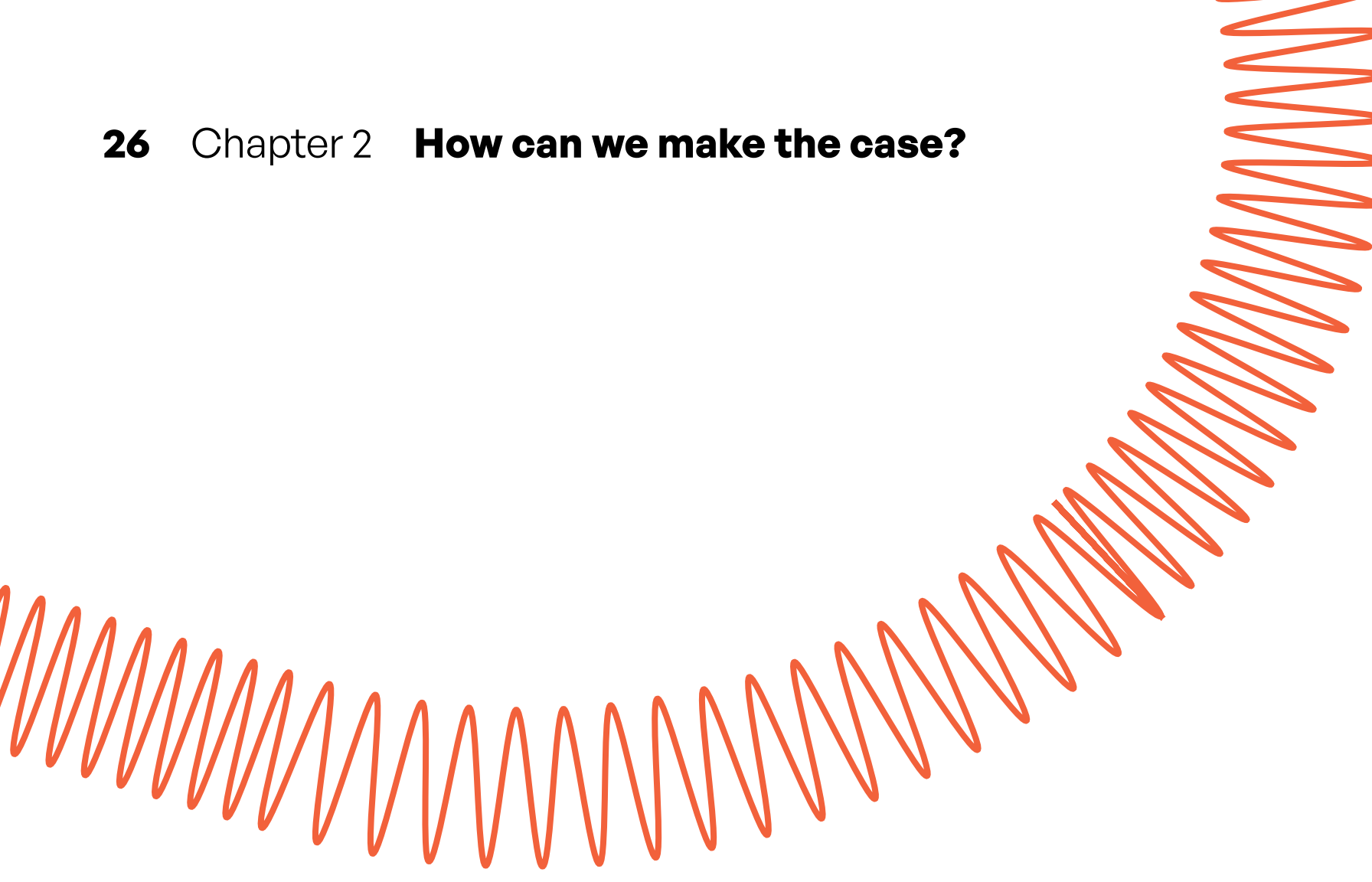
Note: We've included quotes from community members who took part in consultative workshops held in 2022 in the leadup to this toolkit. The workshops were held anonymously so that participants could express their views more freely. Their names have been kept hidden throughout this toolkit in accordance with their preference.

David Verga
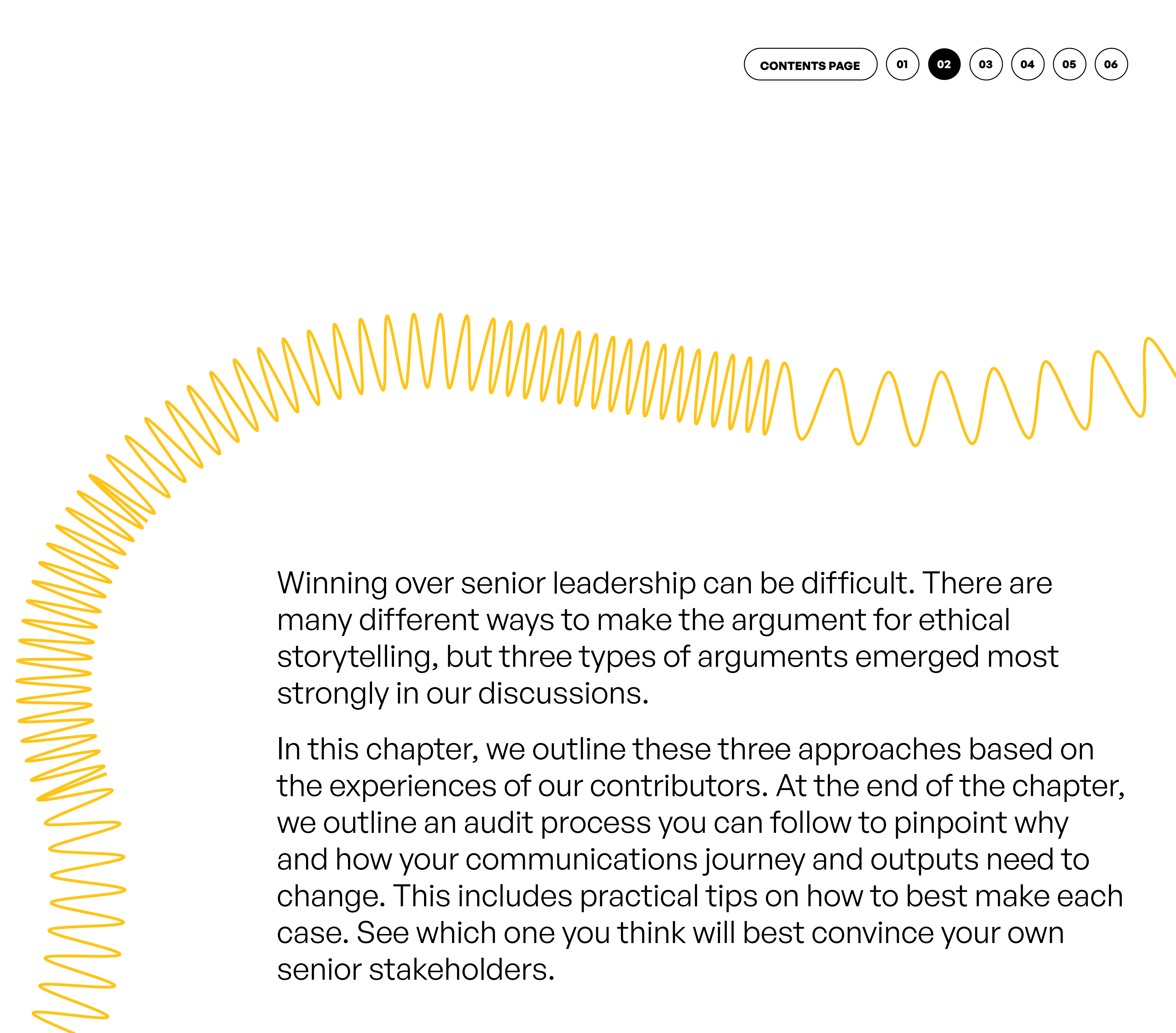
Levis Nderitu
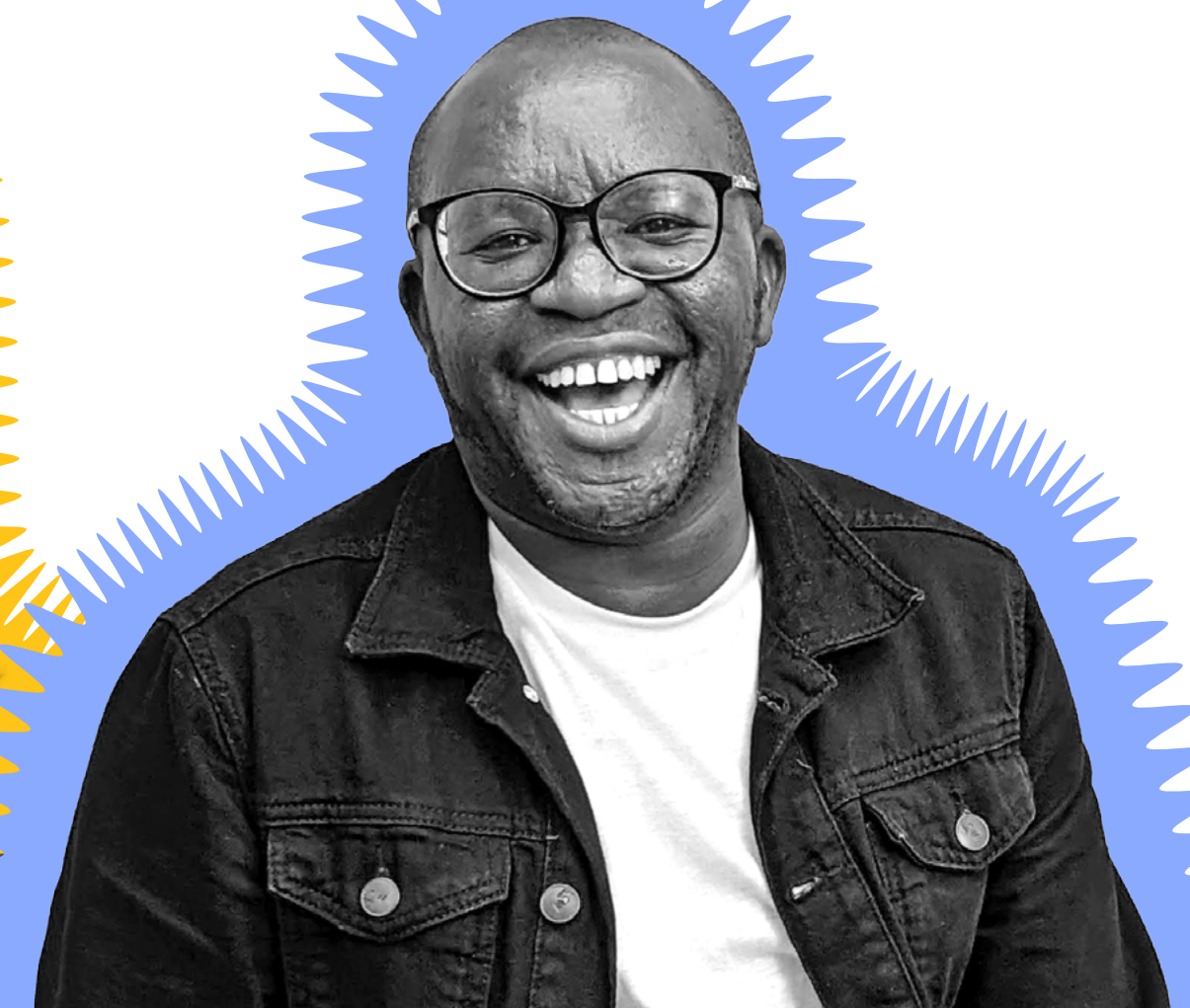
"Resistance oftentimes comes from decision-making stakeholders, those at the management or senior level."
– Victor Mark-Onyegbu, Grants Lead at Africa No Filter.

Winning over senior leadership can be difficult. There are many different ways to make the argument for ethical storytelling, but three types of arguments emerged most strongly in our discussions.

In this chapter, we outline these three approaches based on the experiences of our contributors. At the end of the chapter, we outline an audit process you can follow to pinpoint why and how your communications journey and outputs need to change. This includes practical tips on how to best make each case. See which one you think will best convince your own senior stakeholders.

01
The Business case

Senior stakeholders may think ethical storytelling is at odds with their financial, reputational, and impact-based goals. This case is applicable when organizations can actually better achieve their goals through ethical storytelling.

This case is often most relevant for high-level decision makers such as a board of directors, directors of philanthropy, communications, finance, or any institutional leader responsible for budgeting.

An open conversation about the tensions and nuances of the business case.

How do you balance the business goals of an organization with the moral goals of the sector? Is this balance possible?

The business case takes into account the financial and reputational risks faced by organizations (especially if fundraising is key to their survival). But the conversation also needs to include non-financial considerations, which the moral and sociocultural case can address. You can pair one or more of these cases together. This way, you can demonstrate the effectiveness of ethical storytelling with numbers, but you don't lose the humanity of why you're seeking change.

How do you convince leaders to choose ethical storytelling?

⟵ Click here to watch **Levis Nderitu** lead a discussion with **Chilande Kuloba-Warria**, **Clare Spurrell** and **Victor Mark-Onyegbu** that explores the question above **and dives into the tension between the moral and business case.**

To see the discussion in full, **click here**.

How do you justify change when it risks losing funding?

Leaders often fear that changing messaging will result in losing donors. You may hear pushback like, "This messaging has always worked" or "This is the way we've always done it." People may allege that "the data suggest our methods are fine."

There is often perceived tension between the stories that communicators think donors want, and the stories community members

actually want to tell. In reality, many donors are becoming more responsive to ethical, well-rounded storytelling, not less. By demonstrating this evolution of donors, leaders can see that now is the time for communications to shift.

Another approach to highlighting why ethical storytelling is relevant to them is to illustrate how their goal is hindered by not thinking about the long-term consequences of communications:
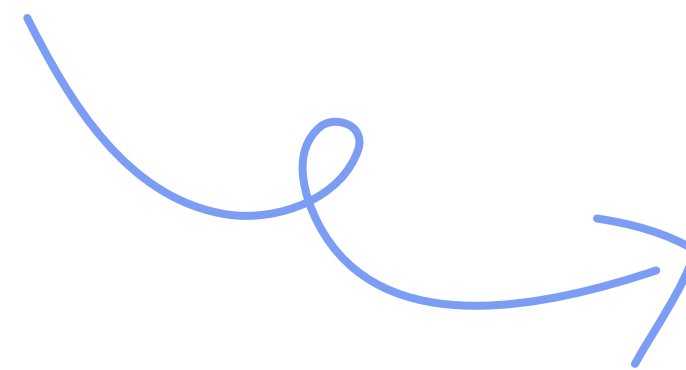
Reflection Prompts

Leaders are often guided by what they believe donors are looking for. How might you show them that donors value ethical storytelling more than ever?

"**Global perceptions of local challenges are influenced by the images non-profits broadcast. One-dimensional images intended to elicit an emotional response by conveying "poverty" or "suffering" undermine long-term progress by implying the communities being shown can't help themselves. These images deter large-scale investment and perpetuate the false and harmful narrative that communities need "saviors" rather than partners.**"

– David Verga, Head of Brand and Creative at PATH.

When you can use the business case to advocate for change

Ethical communications are beneficial for business because they lead to:

"There are long-term and net benefits for the reputation of organizations. This becomes an asset of the organization in the future"

– Victor Mark-Onyegbu, Grants Lead at Africa No Filter

1 **More effective communications**
There is an assumption that more ethical communications can't be as effective, but research by Jess Crombie and David Girling (2022) shows it can achieve the same fundraising as current methods, and potentially even more. As audiences and priorities are changing, people are looking for communications and messaging that steer away from white saviorism and traditional power dynamics, and uplift new voices.

Click here to access research from **Jess Crombie & David Girling (2022)** that shows how ethical storytelling is more effective through data.

2 **Long-term reputational growth through keeping up with industry norms**
With the development sector becoming more conscious of the need for power shifts and ethical approaches, it has become important for organizations to update storytelling practices to keep up with industry norms.

"My approach has been to present the need for new and ethical storytelling as an imperative, as an inevitable approach if organizations are to be considered responsive to the contemporary concerns of today."

– Victor Mark-Onyegbu.

3 **Better and more sustained impact**
As communities feel better represented and heard when ethical communications are created, they are more likely to trust the organization. This trust leads to more impactful programs, because community collaboration and advice are vital for success, and stronger relationships give you the legitimacy to operate in the community in the long term.

"Many organizations reached flood-affected areas and started distributing food items and tents but they did not do any homework on what is actually needed. Many of my relatives are among flood victims and they told me that they are in need of mosquito repellents, medicines, and clean drinking water but relief organizations are just providing tents and used clothes."

– Focus group in response to questions on community involvement in programs, conducted by ICARUS (Pakistan) in 2022 on behalf of MCSWS for this toolkit.

Ultimately, improving impact, strengthening bonds with communities, and applying a progressive, reciprocal, and ethical approach to communications leads to reputational and business benefits for organizations.

Levis Nderitu
Director of Global Diversity,
Equity & Inclusion at PATH

Victor Mark-Onyegbu
Grants lead
at Africa No Filter

Chilande Kuloba-Warria
Founder and Managing Director
at Warande Advisory Centre

Clare Spurrell
Director of Strategy & Communications
at CARE International

When organizations are timebound, how do they still tell stories respectfully?

→ **Click here** to watch Levis Nderitu lead a discussion with Chilande Kuloba-Warria, Clare Spurrell and Victor Mark-Onyegbu.

To see the discussion in full, **click here**.

02

The Sociocultural Case

The sociocultural case is for you if the senior stakeholders you work with do not see cultural understanding is vital to build sustainable relationships and maintain authenticity.

This case is for internal or external use and is particularly important for organizations working across sociocultural divides, for country directors, and for the executive directors of these organizations.

Reminding stakeholders that there can be different and equally valid perspectives on an issue is sometimes essential to making the case for ethical storytelling.

"**While advocating for complex attitude change towards sexual and gender minorities for example, I realized that people could understand the business case. They debated the moral case, that our idea of what's right is <u>universal across cultures.</u> To me, what was missing was the nuanced sociocultural case, which recognizes the <u>distinctiveness of societies and cultures.</u>**"

– Levis Nderitu.

An open conversation about the tensions and nuances of the sociocultural case.

Is the sociocultural case enough to convince leaders?

For those managing budgets and bottom lines, this case might not be compelling on its own. People far removed from impacted communities and from story-gathering and storytelling processes are unlikely to be convinced that the trust, authenticity, and engagement offered by these changes are worth the great time and expense required.

It may work well to combine this case with the business case to respond to their concerns and place the sociocultural benefits in the bigger picture of becoming a more sustainable organization.

Why does ethical storytelling matter?

↑ Click here to watch **Levis Nderitu** lead a discussion with **Chilande Kuloba-Warria**, **Clare Spurrell** and **Victor Mark-Onyegbu**.

To see the discussion in full, **click here**.

Is the time required to learn a new social and cultural landscape worth it as an organization?

On the one hand, it is a process that deserves a high-level commitment, which might hinder some organizations.

"It requires committing to lengthy growing pains. From a change management point of view, there are serious operational, financial, and human resource changes that can take years to realize. Plus, organizations lose economies of scale when they distribute staff and resources more equitably across the places where they work. But if your organization can't currently afford to restructure your comms teams and get local people telling local stories, should you tell those stories at all?"

– David Verga.

But on the other hand, there should at the minimum be a mindset shift towards greater collaboration and cultural understanding.

This is key because in one culture, one way of portraying or speaking could be considered right, whereas in another, it could be considered wrong.

It's all about taking the time that you can to speak to those from the culture and adapt based on their expertise.

"We were presented to them as a problem. Africans were a problem, the problem was the Africans and how we do things in our culture. [And] if we are the problem, there's no way you can invite the problem to the table."

– Chilande Kuloba-Warria.

"We want to be represented as traditional people. For example, if we are being represented as farmers on any platform, we don't want them to dress us up in formal suit rather show us in cultural clothing. They shouldn't perceive us of having less knowledge or education."

– Workshop participant in response to a Mini Me exercise, conducted by ICARUS (Pakistan) in 2022 on behalf of MCSWS for this toolkit.

When you can use the sociocultural case to advocate for change

1 **The risk of isolating communities due to a lack of cultural understanding**
Without adequate sociocultural context, nonprofits risk alienating the very communities they seek to support.

This can happen when they erase or omit parts of a community's story or when they perpetuate harmful power dynamics and neocolonial power structures (even if this is done inadvertently).

It can also happen when a storyteller tells stories only from their own perspective or enforces their own ideas of what is right or true onto those being represented. Global or international nonprofits are especially susceptible to harmful communications missteps because the cultural divide between staff members and communities can be so great.

2 **The risk of misrepresentation due to simplistic or linear portrayals**
Human beings are nuanced and complex; that needs to be reflected in the stories that are told about them. Who are they? What makes them unique individuals?

When we don't tell stories with that kind of nuance and intersectionality, our narratives are just stereotypes and propaganda. Stories should honor people by presenting them in a well-rounded context. When communicators tell stories that present people in the context of their lives, we deepen trust and strengthen community engagement, and in so doing, enhance the potential impact of our programs and organizations.

"Every story, every person, everything has positive and negative sides. If you **only show the negative side, without truly representing their struggle, that creates a negative impact."**
– Interview Participant in response to questions on the impact of stories from the sector, conducted by BRAC (Bangladesh) in 2022 on behalf of MCSWS for this toolkit.

"You take away my voice and soul when you misrepresent me."
– Chilande Kuloba-Warria.

Reflection Prompts

- Are you aware of the tropes, conventions and stereotypes that are often associated with the subject you are communicating?

- And are you finding thoughtful ways to deviate from them where appropriate?

03

The Moral Case

The moral case showcases how better communications enable us to fulfill our duty to those we ultimately seek to serve.

This case is particularly effective for building broad support within a mission-driven organization.

"There are <u>two camps</u>: one is, we must tell ethical stories, we must not do harm, and the other one is, we must really raise money so that we can do good. And those two camps being entrenched in the absence of a third way, where we can hold the complexity of those priorities and <u>honor both of them</u> without needing to come into conflict around it all the time."

– Michael Kass, Founder of the Center for Story and Spirit.

An open conversation about the tensions and nuances of the moral case.

## If your communications are already raising money for a moral cause, does the ethical approach matter?

"The ends justify the means". You are likely to encounter this troubling, but often-used excuse for perpetuating harmful communications. The thinking goes something like, "If we're raising money to help solve a problem, it doesn't matter if the communications are ethically questionable."

The real motivation behind this argument is path-dependence. It can lead to unintentionally reinforcing harmful narratives about those represented because of a hyper-focus on creating "sob stories" that evoke pity and guilt in donors.

In the long run, this does not work toward the goal of empowering communities, and it avoids putting in the effort to see if more ethical communications can be more effective, which could lead to an even stronger impact. A balanced approach is the best way to acknowledge business realities while prioritizing the moral.

"Show the good parts of Black communities… not just the negative parts that "help" your false narrative."
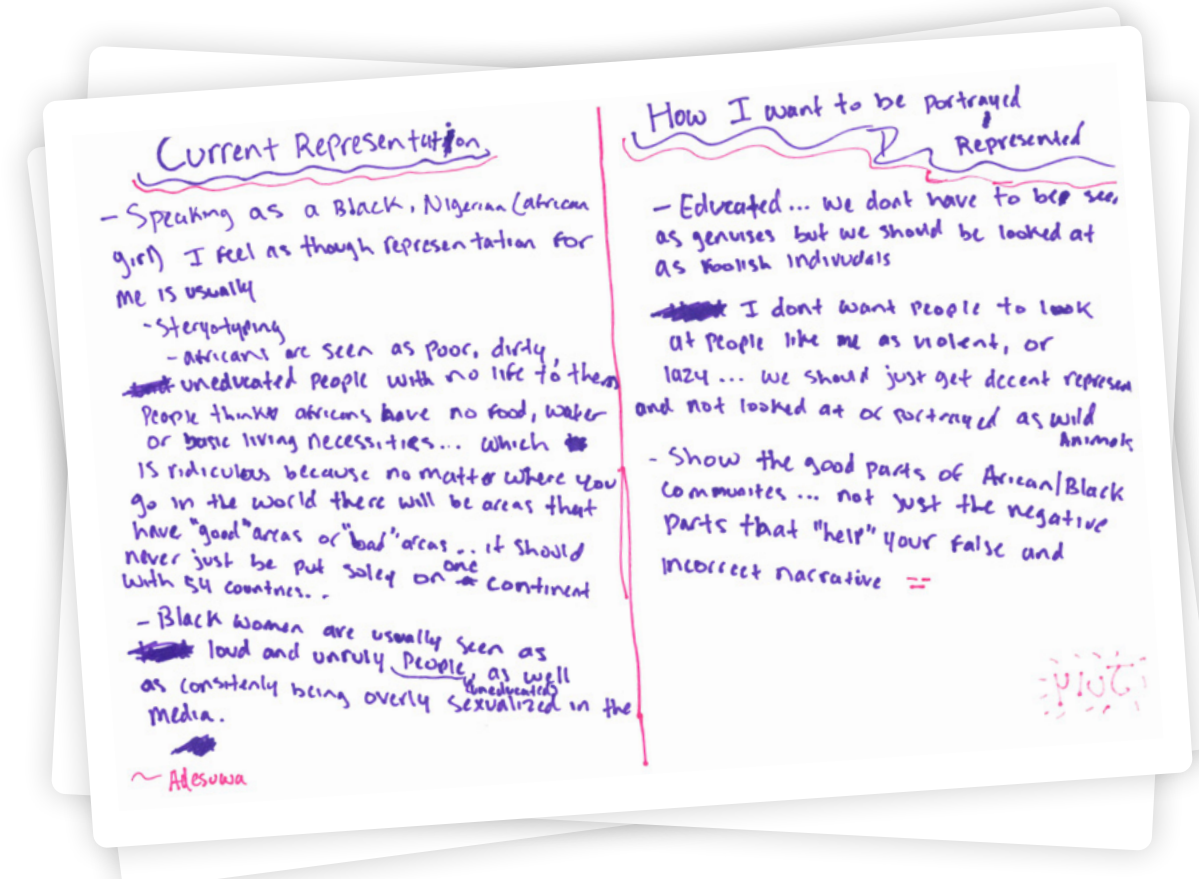
Is the moral case enough to convince leaders?

For those managing budgets and bottom lines, the moral case alone might simply not be compelling enough.

People far removed from impacted communities and from story-gathering and storytelling processes are sometimes not convinced that the trust, authenticity, and engagement offered by these changes are worth the time and expense required.

It may work well will often work best to combine this case with the business case to respond to their concerns and place the moral benefits in the bigger picture of helping you achieve your organization's wider goals.

When speaking to leaders, be cognizant of the fact that each person is at a different stage of their learning journey. This fact should never stop you from advocating for change, but keeping it in mind can help you create allies rather than opponents.

People do things for their reasons, not yours.

When you can use the moral case to advocate for change

There is more than one way to make the moral case. Some approaches that our contributors have found effective in the past are:

1 Encourage stakeholders to consider the cumulative impact of negative tropes

"The effect of stories over time makes it morally imperative to adopt harmless practices. Stories become the narrative of the place and people. If you look at what narratives have done to Africa over time you can see the negative consequences of stereotypes."

– Victor Mark-Onyegbu.

2 Consider the transformative power of positive stories

The way we talk about things becomes the way we think about them. That means in addition to doing great harm, communicators can do great good.

Editorial standards, brand standards, and organizational policies can all be updated to protect privacy and dignity, account for inherent power dynamics, and limit potential harm.

"I want more people to know about my journey and be inspired to help 10 other Cynthias like me."

– Interview Participant in response to questions on being featured in stories by NGOs, conducted by BRAC (Bangladesh) in 2022 on behalf of MCSWS for this toolkit.

Reflection Prompts

Where do your stakeholders' priorities lie? How might you start with their concerns before emphasising your own?

The Process:
Audit. Identify. Assemble.

This three-step process offers guidance on how to present your case to senior stakeholders in a compelling way. It will help you understand why and how your communications journey and outputs need to change, and how you can approach decision-makers with this information most effectively.

01

Audit your communications

First, conduct an initial review that includes:

- **All communications standards and guidelines.** Start with your brand and/ or editorial standards. What rules govern the use of imagery and the gathering of consent? What rules govern the descriptions of your work, or of community members? Your organization may also have official policies related to the safeguarding of community members, partners, and staff. What policies and organizational values are already in place that could support your case for more ethical storytelling?

- **All communications from a set time period.** It's unlikely you'll have the time to look at everything publicly available, so focus on the last three, six, or 12 months. Try to review all the different types of communications and the different channels where they are shared, rather than reviewing everything your organization has ever published. As you review, note (1) where and how your organization's communications are falling short of current standards and policies, and (2) any areas of potential harm that could be addressed by modifying or adding to current standards and policies.

"[CARE] committed to doing an audit of our image database. For example, we looked at how many images were taken by white men from the Global North, and how many photos were taken by women, and the level of deep consent. We also introduced subjective questions of 'Is this image empowering or dignified? Does it represent our mission?"

– Clare Spurrell.

- **All metrics for performance.** How does your organization measure the success of its communications?

What goals have you and your colleagues been optimizing toward? Do those goals reflect community concerns or priorities?

Next, gather input from others and outline recommendations:

- **Gather input from others.** Once you've done the work of assembling an initial audit, share the draft with fellow communicators, colleagues, and — if possible — community members. Gathering input across your organization's departments, geographies, and cultures is essential. Terms, concepts, and standards will be perceived differently across cultures and languages.

Note: this initial input is to identify areas of harm and the general direction your communications need to evolve. It is not adequate for guiding a years-long evolution — it is just to get you started and "make the case" for change.

- **Identify the next steps.** After a comprehensive audit, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the volume of changes you feel your organization needs to make. Remember that this is a journey and, whether personal or institutional, journeys take time. Divide the changes into short-, mid-, and long-term categories. Be transparent with your colleagues about where the organization needs to head in the long term, but be realistic about what can and must be accomplished in the year ahead.

- **Start by stopping harm.** If you're not sure what to prioritize, start by stopping harm. It takes no time or resource to stop using harmful imagery or telling stories "about people without people," whereas it can take years to develop truly ethical, contextual, community-informed communications. Both are essential in the long term, but if you can stop harm today, do it!

What are practical steps organizations can take towards ethical storytelling?

↑ Click here to watch **Levis Nderitu** lead a discussion with **Chilande Kuloba-Warria**, **Clare Spurrell** and **Victor Mark-Onyegbu**.

To see the discussion in full, **click here**.

Click here to access an audit checklist made by David Verga.

02

Identify decision-makers and tensions

Now that you've gotten initial input and consensus, identify the decision-makers you'll need to convince, and keep in mind the tensions they will face.

For example, you'll likely need permission and funding which will involve:

- The executive team and/or board of directors.
- Program and/or project leads.
- Philanthropy and/or communications leads

Executives, board members, and leaders will likely face tensions around:

- Budget management and the "bottom line."
- Entrenched donors (don't "upset" the money.)
- Risks of communicating sensitive topics.
- Managing third-party content creation.
- Institutional and team bandwidth.

03

Assemble your case

Now that your audit is complete and you've gathered input, outlined and prioritized the next steps, an identified decision makers, it's time to make your case. Will you use the business, sociocultural, or moral case?

Or a combination of all three? Use your experience as a communicator to determine what will be most effective for your specific situation and audience. Below, we offer advice on how to best make each of the three cases to stakeholders.

In order to best make the...

Business case

Review your current comms budget. Determine what is spent on story gathering and storytelling, then develop an estimate for what a more ethical approach might cost in the short and long term. Use data and numbers and research. Find other organizations that have made successful transitions and maintained — or even grown — their donor base since implementing more ethical storytelling practices. Show them the cost is worth the benefit, especially when fundraising is the prime aim.

- Demonstrate the risk of NOT changing. Unethical story-gathering and storytelling practices increase risk to our clients, reputation, and institution. Showing examples of the reputational damage organizations experience because of unethical communications and sharing the sector standard of more ethical communications are powerful ways to demonstrate the cost of not changing.

- Frame it as evolving your approach to align with shifting donor preferences. Stories and images that spotlight suffering without context are beginning to push donors away rather than draw them in.

- Increasingly, donors are expecting to receive ethical stories and are channeling their donations toward organizations that operate and message in ethical ways.

- Ask trusted donors for quotes about their desire for different stories and/or develop a small focus group to test current and new messaging.

"The landscape of funders is evolving to one that is more <u>socially aware</u>."

– Victor Mark-Onyegbu

Sociocultural case

- Take a hard look at your organizational chart and note potential gaps in lived local experience. The most effective way to bridge sociocultural divides is to remove them altogether by employing communicators in and from the places where organizations work. Sometimes communicators must even ask themselves, Am I the right person to tell this story? Or is someone with lived experience a better choice?

  "Many team members were local and were speaking Saraiki local language so it made us trust them."
  – Workshop participant in response to a journey mapping exercise, conducted by ICARUS (Pakistan) in 2022 on behalf of MCSWS for this toolkit.

  "Or if it's being bold and saying 'actually I'm not capable of telling this story and I would like to help you restore your sense of agency, and if you feel like you're able to do it, write it yourself.' That would be a powerful way to uplift."
  – Raquel Thomas, Operations Associate at Grantmakers for Girls of Color.

- Highlight successful examples. Collaborative and contextualized storytelling often results in more innovative and effective nonprofit communications.

- Ask community members for feedback about your organization's current communications and what they think of the images and the narratives, and how things might be more authentically presented.

- Learn about cultural differences through those with lived expertise. For a better understanding, you can have open conversations with staff or community members from the culture and incorporate learnings into the communications process.

Moral case

- Emphasize the importance of shifting power from the organization to the community, and how this shift leads to better communications as well as more impactful programs and sustainable progress.

- Provide historical, social, and cultural context. Become a student of the historical, social, and cultural contexts that surround your organization's mission, and the communities it seeks to support. Many mission-driven sectors and organizations have complex histories rooted in, or echoing, colonial power structures.

- Present as a chance to further your organization's mission and values. Demonstrate how evolving your communications could better align them to, and even further advance, your mission and impact.
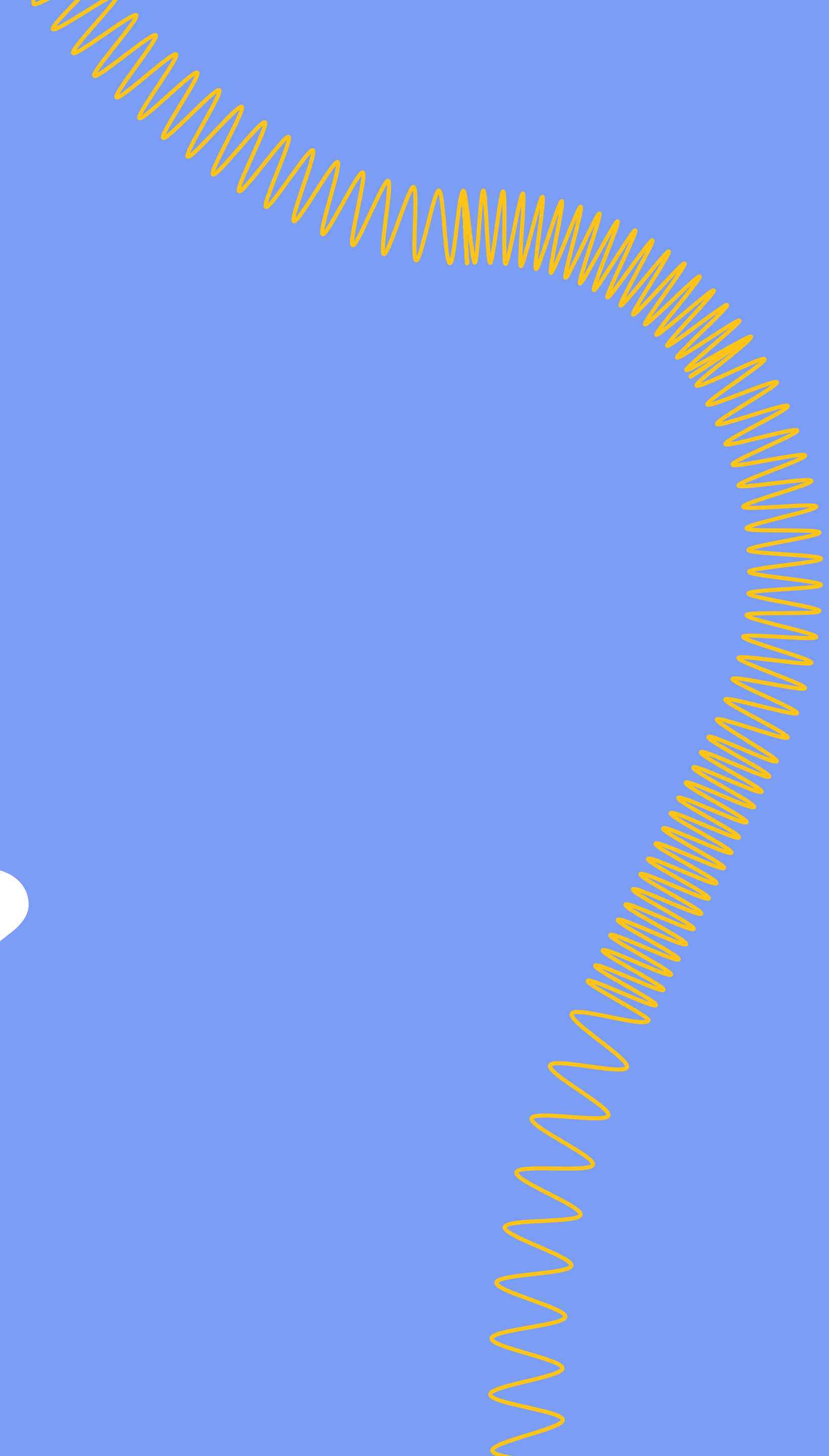
Click here to access a PowerPoint deck tool which will help you make the case you choose to your senior stakeholders. The deck, which is for you to adapt and build out, includes an explanation of each case, its implications, questions for reflection, quotes from expert voices and place for a case study.

For further inspiration on how to make your case:

For help making your case, draw on messaging and momentum from global movements like Black Lives Matter and worldwide institutional progress in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Draw on your own institutional values, goals, and mission. Gather quotes from community members, fellow communicators, funders, and partners. And, of course, use the templates in this toolkit to help organize your thoughts and share a succinct but impactful executive summary.

Chapter 3
How do we build trust?

"**Storytelling is sacred**, it's how we keep the dead living, and the living thriving. It's how we show up as **our most authentic self.**"

– Fatou Wurie, doctoral candidate at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

"**We should have gone back** and shown the story to the villagers. We should have communicated how we intended to use it, and even if we weren't going to using it, we should have explained the reason why. I would like to go back and **apologize** to the village worker for not getting back to him."

- Shalini Moodley, Co-Founder and CEO of MetroGroup

How can we build sustainable relationships

Content production is a critical step in the communications process, and it's where so many ethical principles are being put to the test.

For more on how this toolkit and its chapters came to life, head to the introduction, where you'll find information about our process engaging with community members, international development professionals and communications experts.

Constrained by project requirements, timelines, budgets and logistics, production teams may end up making decisions that can put their relationships with communities under strain.

This chapter explores the challenges that often arise at production time by bringing two seasoned professionals working on different sides of the process – a production company and a funding organization respectively – into dialogue.

Shalini Moodley is the co-founder and CEO of MetroGroup, an advertising and communication agency in the Democratic Republic of Congo, who's well-versed in navigating the challenges of media production under challenging circumstances. She's joined by **Diah Dwiandani**, who works for the Ford

Foundation in Indonesia as special assistant to the regional director and communications specialist. With over 15 years of experience, she's an experienced communications professional who's passionate about bringing communities at the center of the storytelling process.

Moodley and Dwiandani draw from personal experiences to offer helpful insights on how donors, NGOs, media agencies and communications professionals can build processes that uphold the safety and dignity of the people whose stories are told, and enable stronger relationships to take root.

Shalini Moodley

Diah Dwiandani

I am Shalini Moodley, co-founder of the advertising and communication agency MetroGroup. I have been living and working in the Democratic Republic of Congo for 16 years, of which 10 have been spent with the agency, where storytelling is at the backbone of many of our projects.

There is a saying in the local language in Democratic Republic of Congo: *"Yo mutu oko bongisa mboka"* ("It is not you who will make the country better.") When you live in such a politically corrupt environment, it's very common for people to get arrested, harassed and sometimes killed for telling their story. But it's also critical to get it right, as people don't feel like their stories have been told in a dignified way, and don't trust the people coming to tell their stories.

I have had to learn along the way the special nuances to responsible storytelling, the subtle dos and the critical don'ts that can kill the project, jeopardize the authenticity of the story, or more importantly, of the person telling their story.

I have met some amazing storytellers on this journey, and their approach to responsible storytelling has inspired me and given me some great insights and guidelines. In this chapter, Diah and I will explore ways in which we build trust in communities by going through the different phases of the project by drawing from our own field experience and sharing some of the insights we've learned from other storytellers.

Introducing Project X

Throughout this chapter, I will use a project that MetroGroup recently finished as an example, which I will call Project X.

The client, a foreign company, approached us to produce a docu-series on one of their programs being implemented in Congo. The client wanted to show how this program had an immediate impact on people's lives, and show the hope and excitement people have for the future. One of the main focuses was building infrastructure in very remote parts of Congo. The client had invested millions of dollars, brought in equipment, and employed thousands of people from local communities to help get the program moving.

I remember when I got the call from the client, it was one of the biggest deals for MetroGroup. I literally would have said yes to just about anything the client requested. And that right there was the start of my problems, the need to make the client happy at any cost.

My journey of getting Project X completed highlighted and taught me the many complexities that come from storytelling. It is a good example of the balancing act between local communities, funders and donors, and local governmental institutions. It also taught me the importance of building trust in order to tell people's stories with dignity and respect.

Section 1: **The Brief**

"Storytelling is sacred, it's how we keep the dead living, and the living thriving. It's how we show up as our most authentic self. It can permeate artificial boundaries of race, borders, gender, language, and unequal power. It is the language of the heart, reflecting the breadth of our humanity as individuals and as a collective."

– Fatou Wurie, doctoral candidate at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

The Planning Process

It takes time to build relationships with communities. It takes time to carry out research. It takes time to build a story, and that is why proper planning and scheduling is a key part of the process. Many problems can arise without proper planning.

I had to learn this the hard way when MetroGroup started with project X. The planning and scheduling process needs to be factored in at the very beginning stage of the NGO program, and unfortunately with Project X this was not the case.

The brief stated that MetroGroup had to follow the evolution of the program through the eyes of the locals. We had to document the challenges of rolling out a program of this magnitude in one of the toughest terrains in the world, and to capture the logistical challenges and the sheer determination of the people and their hope for a better future.

We immediately sent out a crew to the program's location for scouting. But upon arrival, we learned that the local organization was not aware of the docu-series project. They were very surprised when my team showed up to do the scouting. This caused some tension between the local organization on the ground and MetroGroup. It took a few days for the local organization to align with headquarters, as they needed permission to take some time out of their normal work schedule and be with my team. This is not a good start to the project, and the local organization had voiced their frustration at how they had never been part of the communication process.

To my surprise, my team also discovered that the first phase of the program was almost done. We had gotten in quite late in the game. We missed the logistics, we missed the "action and drama" the client wanted us to capture.

Learnings:

- It's extremely important for the NGO's program team, both at head office and on the ground to be involved in the storytelling process. It's also ideal to get the agency's involvement at the start of the program. It sometimes feels that the storytelling aspect is an afterthought, as opposed to being part of the program. When an agency is pulled in at the last minute, the rushed job has a big impact on the authenticity of the story.

- Another learning point here is scouting. Before one even takes out the camera, we need to understand the environment and know the political climate. If we had gone with an entire crew and equipment to start shooting without scouting, there would have been additional budget costs. If we had included the local team during the briefing phase, we would have known that phase one was in completion. It would have also helped to build a better relationship with the local organization on the ground. Scouting also helps to remove some of the assumptions when going into a project.

Dealing with assumptions

Assumptions were a big problem with Project X. They weaved their way into the brief, and as the agency, we felt we needed to meet the client's expectations. Some of the assumptions were that the program gave people hope, that it had an immediate impact on people's lives, and that the local people knew what the program was about and how it would impact them in the future.

These assumptions can lead to an agency manipulating a story just to make the client happy, and in so doing, losing the trust of the communities whose stories we are trying to tell.

The following excerpt is from an interview we conducted with the village leader.

"Nous n'avons pas encore vu le changement dans notre village, parce que nous avons toujours une grande souffrance. Nous avons pas l'eau potable, nos femmes peuvent accoucher dans la brousse, elles ne le font pas dans des maternités parce que les centre de santé se trouvent très loin de nous. Pour quitter ici jusqu'à Nsangana, elles font 15 km. D'ici à Munkamba, elles font 7 à 8 km. Mais quand la femme commence le travail, le temps d'arriver au centre de santé elle accouche en cours de route. Parfois tu peux tomber malade et manquer comment trouver un médicament pour guérir. Ici nous souffrons énormément. Nos enfants étudient dans des huttes, nous n'avons pas d'écoles. Nous avons parlé avec nos frères, les ONGD et le gouvernement mais pas de changement jusque-là."

"We have not yet seen the change in our village, because we still have great suffering. We do not have drinking water, our women give birth in the bush, they do not do it in maternity hospitals because the health centres are very far from us. From here to Nsangana, it is 15 km. From here to Munkamba it is 7-8 km. But when the woman begins labor, by the time she gets to the health centre, she gives birth on the way. Sometimes you can get sick and miss out on finding medicine to cure it. Here we are suffering enormously. Our children study in huts, we don't have schools. We spoke with our brothers, NGOs, and the government but no change so far."

Photo provided by Shalini Moodley on behalf of MetroGroup to show their crew at work during this project

"We spoke with our brothers, NGOs, and the government but no change so far."

After conducting this interview, it became apparent that the local community was not even aware of the purpose of the NGO's program. The village leader did not know what the long terms goals were, and what kind of impact it was expected to have on the community in the future. He did not see an immediate change, and because the suffering of the locals is so deep (something the client and agency could not comprehend) this program had no immediate benefit to their daily lives.

Halfway into the project, we had to change the story which led the budget to increase. This is usually where the stories get compromised to fit an existing narrative or fit the budget.

*The name of the village leader is not shared for anonymity purposes

Reflection Prompts

- When gathering stories or capturing content, do you consider how you will engage with a community in advance?

- Have you considered the how this will affect the quality of your output and its chances of being effective?

Learning:

Conducting market research on how people felt about the program would have given us better insights to build the brief. Even when there is a constraint in budget, a roundtable with key opinion leaders (village leader, teachers, doctors, farmers) should be done so that the production team understands the environment they are getting into. The village leader would have been more open, and possibly a bit more optimistic had he known what the project entailed, or had we built a relationship with him before we arrived.

This excerpt is from an interview we conducted with a group of local fishermen.

"Il n'y en a pas. C'est vide. Les poissions ont diminué. On ne sait pas pourquoi il n'y en a pas dans l'eau. Mon nom c'est Mutedi Simon, je suis pêcheur. Nous cherchons d'autres travaux à faire. Les poissons ont diminué sur l'eau. Il n'y a pas de travail. Quand il n'y a pas de poissons, il n'y a pas de travail à faire. Nous restons vides. Chaque jour nous allons voir à l'eau matin et soir mais il n'y a rien."

"There are not any. It's empty. The fish have decreased. We don't know why there isn't one in the water. My name is Mutedi Simon, I am a fisherman. We are looking for other work to do. The fish disappeared in the water. There is no work. When there are no fish, there is no work to be done. We remain empty. Every day we go to the water, morning, and evening, but there is nothing."

The fishermen, like so many other villagers, shared the same opinion. They were not optimistic, they were not hopeful. It's hard for a hungry man to be hopeful and cheerful.

Learning:

My team and I were not ready for the difficulty and hopelessness that the community were facing. We had been sent to capture a story of hope and there was no hope to be found.

Ensure you understand the socio-economic climatae before attempting to define what your story might be – the current situation as well as the history.

Mutedi Simon
Fisherman
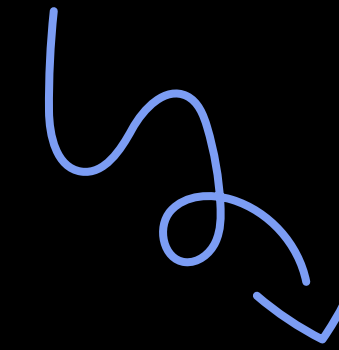
"The fish have decreased. We don't know why there isn't one in the water. My name is Mutedi Simon, I am a fisherman."

Checklist between the client and the agency during the brief stage

- Ensure the local program team provides their input for the brief.

- Conduct audienceresearch before the brief (this is important to understand where the starting point of a story should be.)

- Do not make any assumptions about the people, the place, and the environment. Go in with an open mind and an open heart

- Understand the local environment (the social, economic and political climate needs to be considered.)

- Conduct a roundtable discussion between the agency, the program team, the local program team and the marketing department.

- Include the storytelling component as part of the program, and start the process early, as capturing a story based on trust takes time.

- Scouting is extremely important. Understand the environment and history of the place and people before you even touch your camera.

Donor Perspective from Ford Foundation: **Building understanding and trust**

"Building relations from the beginning is important so we (communities) won't feel as if we are just being used for reporting and documenting purposes. When communications materials produced are shared with the community, it could motivate the communities to learn and grow."

– Michelin Salata, chair of AMAN's Indigenous youth community.

To read Diah's full interview with Michelin, **click here**.

At the Ford Foundation, we have been working with agencies that craft stories from the community, by keeping in mind that nothing and no one should be left behind. We make long-term investments with communications professionals and make the time to build trust between them and the community. Communications professionals should learn about the community they assist with. As donors, it is our role to create a safe space for them to understand each other, not trying to rush that, give them time to brainstorm ideas, letting things unfold.

One of the examples on how we do this at Ford Foundation is the annual communications workshop with Indigenous Peoples that we have been facilitating overtime. We bring together communications professionals, researchers, NGOs (mediators and interlockers.) Over time, it creates space for people to organically work together. We initially take the role of matchmaking, but after years of working, those kinds of connections happen organically. We don't think of investing in communications as a project, we think of it as a cohort and relationship building.

Section 2: **In Front of the Camera**

The following is an excerpt from our interview with the village worker.

"Pour moi, j'ai l'espérance que voir l'allure du projet. Je suis convaincu que le projet va penser à construire le village dans d'autres secteurs qui restent comme l'eau, l'hôpital, et d'autres secteurs comme construire de bonnes maisons, j'en suis très convaincu et j'espère. Moi, Ce projet m'a apporté d'abord la joie parce que je me retrouve allégé dans certains de mes besoins. Actuellement je n'ai rien d'autre si ça arrive ça va m'aider. Mon souhait est de quitter dans cette souffrance et jouir d'un bon travail car ici je me vois comme quelqu'un dans un cachot."

For me, I hope to see the pace of the project. I am conabout building the village in other sectors that haven't yet been improved like water, hospital, and other things like building good houses, I am very convinced, and I have hope. Speaking personally, this project brought me joy because it relieved me of some of vinced that the project will think my needs. Currently I have nothing else if this project happens it will help me. My wish is to leave this suffering and enjoy a good job because here I see myself as someone in a dungeon."

Learnings:

The villager was one of the main characters in the project, and when we left him, he was happy and was expecting more out of the project. He felt proud because we interviewed him, we lived with him, we ate with him. He trusted us, but we never went back to visit him, and we now regret this.

After having finished the documentary, we were informed that the NGO program was stopped, and that the film would not be published. We never went back to the villagers to show them their story, and we never informed them that the program was stopped. We went in, we got the story and we left, and that feels wrong.

We should have gone back and shown the story to the villagers. We should have communicated how we intended to use it, and even if we weren't going to using it, we should have explained the reason why. I would like to go back and apologize to the village worker for not getting back to him. And I want to ask him how he feels about what we did and how he would have liked his story to be told.

Photo provided by Shalini Moodley on behalf of MetroGroup to show the village worker they interviewed

Sharing one's story is an act of courage, hence the person sharing their story needs to be treated with respect and dignity.

*The name of the village worker was not shared for anonymity purposes

Reflection Prompts

Relationships we build on the ground risk being transactional if we do not make efforts for open and sustained communication. How might we start to integrate stronger feedback loops and long-term relationships into our way of working?

Donor Perspective from the Ford Foundation: **Co-creating stories with the community**

As donors, we do not usually go directly to the community, get our camera out and start rolling. In my previous work with a different foundation, we identified stories in the community by inviting civil society partners and third-party communication professionals to meet with us and share story ideas.

The next phase is planning and scoping visits to get to know the community, and to see what would be feasible in terms of visuals and storytellers. This is the phase where professional communicators start building trust and relationships with the community, with our civil society partners as facilitators.

The choice of the production agency is crucial. In one of our productions, we wanted to show the support provided to the community in terms of access to justice and litigation. We worked with a production house called WatchdoC to produce three documents that captured the community's experience and the learnings from a victim who became a paralegal.

WatchdoC is known as progressive production house that produces stories on community movements, and provides their films for free on the internet. Our shared values facilitated the collaboration between the CSO partner, the community, WatchdoC and ourselves.

Case Study: **WatchdoC Indonesia**

Read a snippet of Diah Dwiandani's interview with Ari Trismana (Director and Producer at WatchdoC Indonesia) on the importance of collaboration as a production house.

Diah   What makes WatchdoC different from other production companies?

Ari   WatchdoC is a production house that focuses on producing documentaries in collaboration with communities.

Diah   From that experience, what best practices can you share for other agencies or production houses who are also looking to work with communities on the ground?

Ari   Today's media have their own economic and political agenda. They would show up at some place, let's say a conflict zone, whatever that may be, but they're not there to be the voice of the community.

Trustbuilding is crucial because of this and, just as crucially, to build the people's capacity so that they can tell their own problems. It took WatchdoC a while to understand that.

So, we had this idea for a WatchdoC collaboration. It started as something very simple, that is to create a space for fellow documentary makers of any topic. There are great works out there, but the filmmakers don't know how to distribute and promote their works. So we simply provide our YouTube channel as a platform to share documentaries from filmmakers outside of WatchdoC.

Also, documentaries from village communities, made with the skills they have. We'd curate them, suggest improvement, addition, and refinement where possible for them to follow-up. Once the film is done, it gets published on WatchdoC's YouTube channel.

We have also tried to teach community members to document their issues on their own. But you need the knowledge to do that. Technical knowledge, like, how to shoot a scene, how to ensure you have good audio quality, and substantial knowledge, like how to piece stories together in an interesting way. We've done this several times with village folks. So, the participants of our audiovisual production training, that's what we call the program, can learn even with just their smartphones.

To read the full interview in Bahasa and English, **click here**.

Section 3: **Behind the Camera**

A picture is not always worth 1000 words. It is our responsibility to be respectful of the image and text we choose to use. Avoid images that harmfully stereotype the people or the community.

During the production of Project X, we came across a headmaster of a local village school. During his interview, he was polite and explained the needs for the school, but his body language told another story.

[Transcript]

– Quel rêve avez-vous pour votre école?

– Pour mon école je voudrais changer l'environnement de cette école.

– Dans quel point précisément ?

– Sur le point de la construction ; vous voyez que les enfants étudient sur les mauvaises conditions tel que vous le voyez mais je voudrais qu'il y ait un changement. Cet à dire nous, nous allons bien étudier seulement pendant la saison sèche mais quand il y a la pluie on étudie pas. Non non on arrive pas à terminer les programmes scolaires parce que comme la pluie nous dérange il y a un moment où nous écrivons dans nos journaux dans nos journal de classe que y a une rubrique d'observation si nous passons nous passons un jour (sans étudier parce que il a plu) nous allons revenir au prochain jour nous voulons que notre école soit modernisée encore qu'on trouve un peu le bâtiment, l'équipe scolaire, les ordinateurs, bon les choses importantes pour l'école. Ils peuvent nous aider.

– What dream do you have for your school?

– For my school I would like to change the environment of this school.

– On which point specifically?

– On the point of construction; you see that the children study under poor conditions as you can see but I would like there to be a change. That is, we study well during the dry season but when it rains, we do not study. No no we can't finish curricula because as the rain bothers us there is a moment where we write in our journals our class journal there is an observation section if we spend we spend one day (without studying because it rained) we will come back the next day we want our school to be modernized so that we find the building, the school team, the computers, well the important things for the school. They can help us.

*The name of the headmaster is not shared for anonymity purposes

In the background, my team noticed kids helping with building material.

Off camera, the headmaster was asked what the kids were doing. He responded: Building their future. As the days passed, he started trusting my crew and he told them that they had received funding to build a school from an NGO. It was just enough money to purchase some building materials, but not enough for construction. As they waited for more funding, nothing came through. He tried calling the NGO, but no one answered. As it turns out, the kids were helping to build the school themselves. The headmaster explained that he did not want to mention any of this during the interview, as he didn't believe things would change. He had lost hope and didn't trust people from outside the village.

Photo provided by Shalini Moodley on behalf of MetroGroup to show the situation the students were put in.
*The names of the students are not shared for anonymity purposes

Learnings:

My immediate reaction to the images was that we could use them in the documentary. It evoked sympathy for the children in the village. After many conversations with my business partner Matan and my team, we concluded that sensationalizing these images was going to feed into the narrative of "The donor or the NGO will save us." NGOs in the past have heavily relied on pity to sway the audience. We need to change this narrative. The images of the kids should be highlighting their strength, their problem solving abilities and their sheer determination to get an education – not that they are hopeless and need help. Trust and respect are at the very heart of storytelling. As the people behind the camera, we are responsible for building good relationships in the communities we work in. Without good relationships, there can be no trust.

Reflection Prompts

- There is a tendency to use photos that strongly evoke sympathy or pity. How can we show our teams that donors are starting to respond to authentic and/or empowering photos more?

- How can we move towards telling a wider variety of stories about the communities we work with?

Respecting local culture

Thomas, one of our team members at MetroGroup, always begins a village visit by meeting the village leader and asking for his approval. Thomas explains the nature of the project and how it will be used, and we always bring some gifts as a token of our appreciation and to thank him for welcoming us.

When we worked on Project X, my crew lived with one of the main characters for a few weeks. The village community began to trust my team, as they shared many meals together. In villages, sharing a meal together is where storytelling starts, it's part of the culture and history to tell stories while eating together.

Checklist for culturally-sensitive storytelling:

- Get all approvals from local authorities (sometimes it's not the law, but it is customary.)

- Use local crews or local assistance as much as possible, as its helps with community involvement.

- Transfer skills to locals to try to uplift the community.

- Get involved in some of the community activities, like playing soccer and sharing a meal together.

- Spend time in the village without a camera.

- Spend time getting to know the people.

- Offer gifts to village leaders and the community as a sign of respect.

- Provide water and refreshments to the interviewees.

Authentic storytelling means adopting a new approach that consciously tries to move away from harmful and stereotypical narratives. Getting ethical storytelling right means encouraging mutual respect, showcasing lived experience more accurately, and preserving the dignity of those whose story is being told and that is how we start to build trust.

Photo provided by Shalini Moodley on behalf of MetroGroup to show their crew spending time with communities during projects
*names of those featured are not shared for anonymity purposes

Case Study: **T2T**

Tracy and Matthew Hammond set up T2T Africa to help the battle against Malaria through strengthening food security. They partnered with the South African company called Real Gardening to start, and then with at least two communities in every country they expanded their project to.

Shared by T2T Africa with Shalini Moodley to show their team at work with communities
*names of those featured are not shared for anonymity purposes

To see the interview in full, **click here**.

← Click here to watch **Shalini Moodley** (co-founder and CEO of MetroGroup,) interview **Tracy** and **Matthew Hammond** (Founders of T2T Africa).

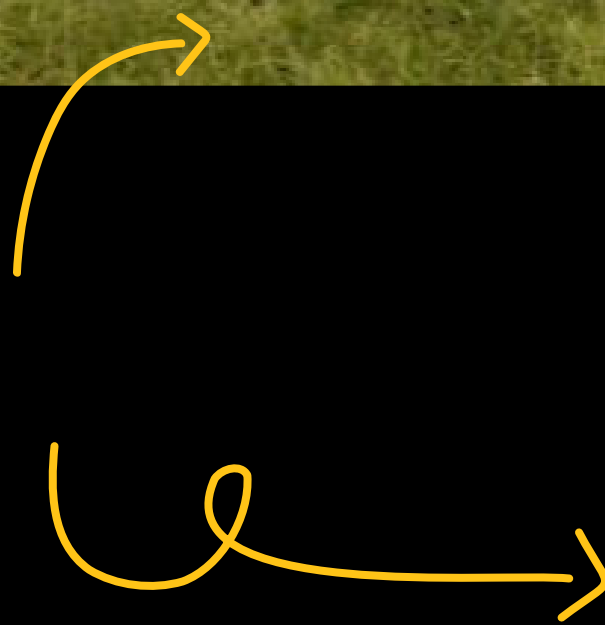## How to create sustainable relationships when setting up a project.

Shared by T2T Africa with Shalini Moodley to show their team at work with communities
*names of those featured are not shared for anonymity purposes

Donor Perspective from the Ford Foundation: **Safeguarding the safety of communities and storytellers**

In many aspects, donors have acted as facilitators, building bridges between local and grassroots communities and the wider public through strategic communications work. But what have donors done in terms of protecting community and communications professionals when a communications effort has gone south?

In many of the strategic communications work we do as donors, we learn that expecting the worst is the best path to take, which means we are compelled to do thorough preparations and planning before going to the field and taking our camera out. A safety protocol is almost always compulsory, especially for projects that involve investigation to dangerous sites, conflict or disaster-prone areas, and remote locations. Making sure you do your due diligence is a must so as to avoid putting yourself and the community in trouble.

''Risk analysis at the start of filming, actually from pre-production, is important and it's become our practice. We need to consult, and ask the consent of the storyowners. We need to discuss the possible impacts to them if their stories get told. They may be brave enough and willing to share their stories openly, like you can see them visually without any attempt of disguise. Still, we need to make sure. Is it safe to put the stories out?

It's important because it's not about being heroic.

We need to think ahead and ensure the longevity of a cause for the people. It's too easy to go big and then perish.

That's not what we want. So, we need to talk about the possible impacts of filming a certain issue. And to talk about it not just at the start. We need to be risk-conscious throughout the process.''

- Ari Trismana, Director and Producer at WatchdoC Indonesia

Case Study: **Development Dialogue Asia**

Read a snippet of **Diah Dwiandani's** interview with **Mardiyah Chamim** (Lead Consultant at Develoment Dialogue Asia) on the power of listening and trust.

Diah

> You have so much experience capturing the stories of traumatized individuals and communities because of disasters or other traumatic events like you mentioned. What's your typical approach when you get on the ground and meet with folks to capture their stories?

> I wouldn't rush into my questions. I would observe, participate in whatever's happening, like, go to the public kitchen and help out, or to the health station. I'd start with a light conversation before I do an interview. You don't want to rush an interview, that's rude. We don't know the mood, we don't know what they feel, and those are the first things to learn.

> I also think it's best to have a local activist with you, someone who works there, or a resident. Let them do the introductions. You don't want to ambush people. So, first step, read the room, and then adjust yourself. It takes time and won't happen at once. You may need one, two days, and that's fine. Build your trust.
>
> It can be a challenge if you're under a tight deadline. In that situation, having a local with you is even more crucial. They bridge our relationship with the source and can be a valuable resource about what to do, what's considered sensitive, what to avoid, things like that.

Mardiyah

To read the full interview in Bahasa and English, **click here**.

Checklist for conducting due diligence before production:

- Be certain of your goals. Ask yourself the question: Why do we need this production? What would the community see or understand from it? Will they find it useful?

- Preliminary meetings. Make sure you know what you are looking for in the area, and who to meet and interview. You will never have too much preparation.

- Make sure the parties involved – civil society organizations (CSOs,) communications professionals, local contacts – are briefed in detail about the goals and objectives of the project.

- Make sure you have a local contact in the area to facilitate your adaptation and introduce you to people.

- Create a safety protocol together with your civil society partners and local contacts, and make sure everyone involved in the project is aware of what to do when a safety protocol needs to be activated.

- Prepare a crisis communications plan.

- Be mindful of your own situation, and make sure you are in a good condition before jumping into the field. In the field, be of help instead of asking for it.

- Do not rush. Communities that have gone through a traumatic event are in a position that defies comprehension. Do not force them to tell their stories if they don't feel like it.

Case study: **Michel Lunanga**

Michel Lunanga is a Congolese-born native from Bukavu who grew up in the eastern city of Goma. He is currently the multimedia producer for Doctors Without Borders, a trainer for the Lens on Life project, and a communication and media coordinator for Camme DRC. He has collaborated with Doctors Without Borders, Getty Images, and Agence France-Presse.

Core to his work as a photographer is his approach to building trust with people.

Guidance on capturing visual stories

The following guidance was shared by Michel:

- Images of people in vulnerable situations should focus primarily on the reasons for and the context of a situation, rather than on an individual's suffering.

- Consider the dignity of the person who has been captured in the image. Does the image reinforce the trauma? Where appropriate, try to show women in the powerful position they often occupy within families and communities.

- Be careful when framing a photograph. Consider the angle of the photograph. Try not to take images from above, which look down on a person or group. Try to avoid taking a close-up photograph, especially of someone who is injured, ill, or dying.

↑ Click here to listen to **Shalini Moodley** interview **Michel Lunanga** (Multimedia Producer for Doctors without Borders).

The importance of deep consent and collaboration when sharing stories as a photographer.

To hear the interview in full, **click here**.

Shared by Michel Lunanga with Shalini Moodley to show him sharing images with those they feature
*names of those featured not shared for anonymity purposes

Shared by Michel Lunanga

Shared by Michel Lunanga with Shalini Moodley to show
the images he has taken when working collaboratively and
prioritising consent with those featured.
*names of those featured not shared for anonymity purposes

Shared by Michel Lunanga with Shalini Moodley to show him creating bonds with those he features.
*names of those featured not shared for anonymity purposes

Chapter 4
How should we measure success?
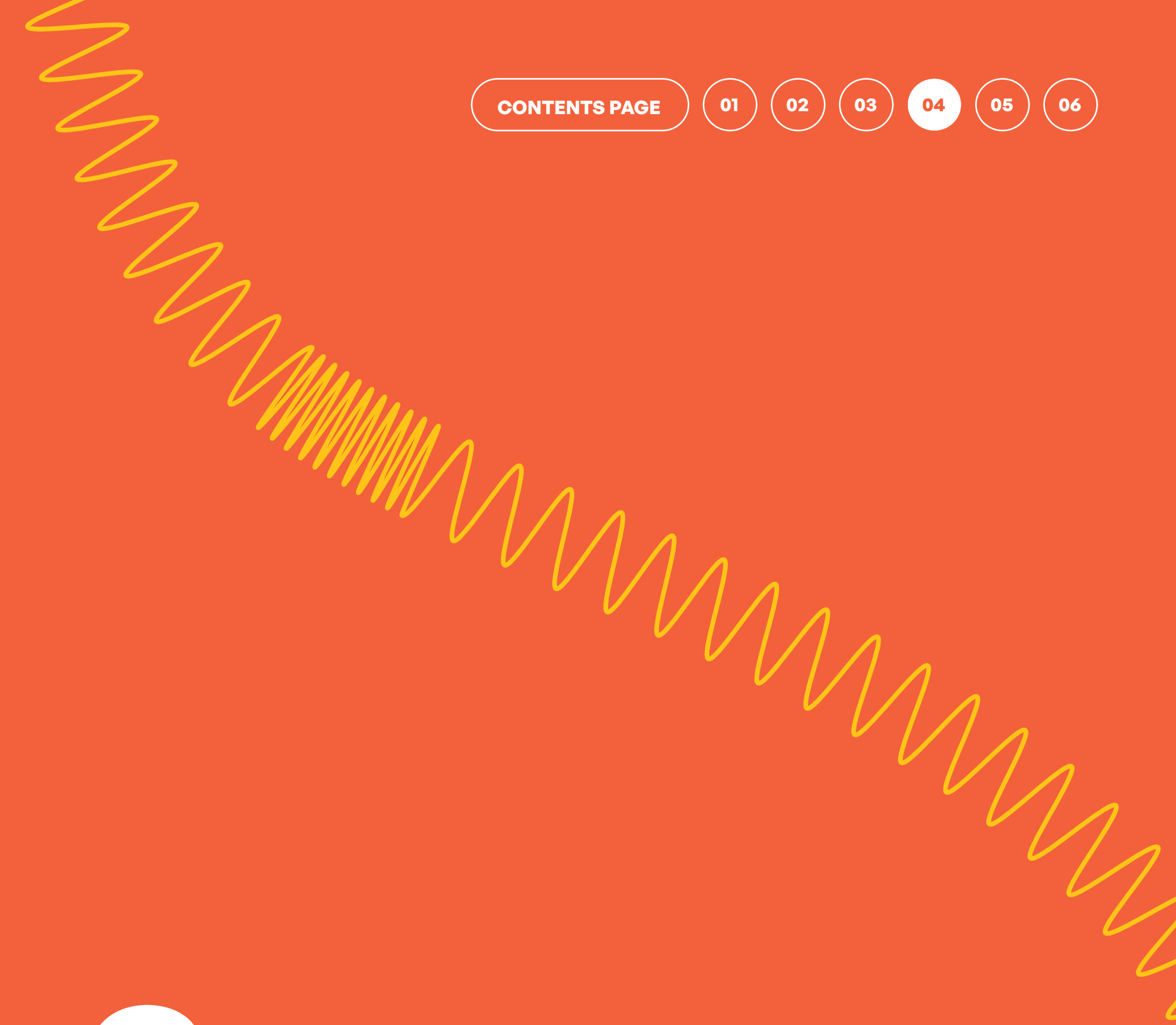
"**The story must be about a balanced will between the original content and the latest versions.**"

– Denis Koech, Co-Founder and Director of Programs at Budondo Intercultural Centre

"**Youth of Color have decision-making power over our grantmaking.**"

– Josefina Casati, Senior Director of Communications at Grantmakers for Girls of Color

"**By putting the voices of the communities we serve at the forefront, we are able to show the impact of our work beyond the numbers**"

– Denis Koech, Senior Communications Coordinator at Farm Input Promotions Africa

How can we tell more respectful stories while meeting organizational goals?

Communicators in the global development and social impact sectors are often tasked with meeting specific organizational objectives, whether that's demonstrating a program's effectiveness to meet reporting requirements or supporting fundraising campaigns. But those priorities are often at odds with what communities experience on the ground – and with their own vision for change.

Is it possible to tell respectful stories while also meeting organizational goals? How can organizations honor the experience of communities throughout the monitoring

and evaluation process? Are those priorities fundamentally at odds with each other?

To tackle this topic, we've sought the viewpoints from three social impact practitioners who work in close collaboration with communities to tell stories of change.

Josefina Casati is the Senior Director of Communications at Grantmakers for Girls of Color, an intermediary grantmaking organization with an explicit focus on girls, femmes and gender-expansive youth of Color in the U.S. and territories.

Denis Koech is Senior Communications Coordinator at Farm Input Promotions Africa, a nonprofit organization that works to improve the food security of small-holder farmers in Kenya and **Denis Muwanguzi** is the Co-Founder and Director of Programs at Budondo Intercultural Centre, a non-profit organization that provides affordable health services and works to improve livelihoods in rural Uganda. He is the former Learning and Impact lead at Mama Hope, a nonprofit that supports the work of 13 community-based organizations in East and West Africa, and in Central America.

Together, they make the case for redefining the sector's definition of success, and argue that centering the voices of communities in storytelling ultimately leads to better outcomes for all.

For more on how this toolkit and its chapters came to life, head to the introduction, where you'll find information about our process of engaging with community members, international development professionals, and communications experts.

Note: We've included quotes from community members who took part in consultative workshops held in 2022 in the leadup to this toolkit. The workshops were held anonymously so that participants could express their views more freely. Their names have been kept hidden throughout this toolkit.
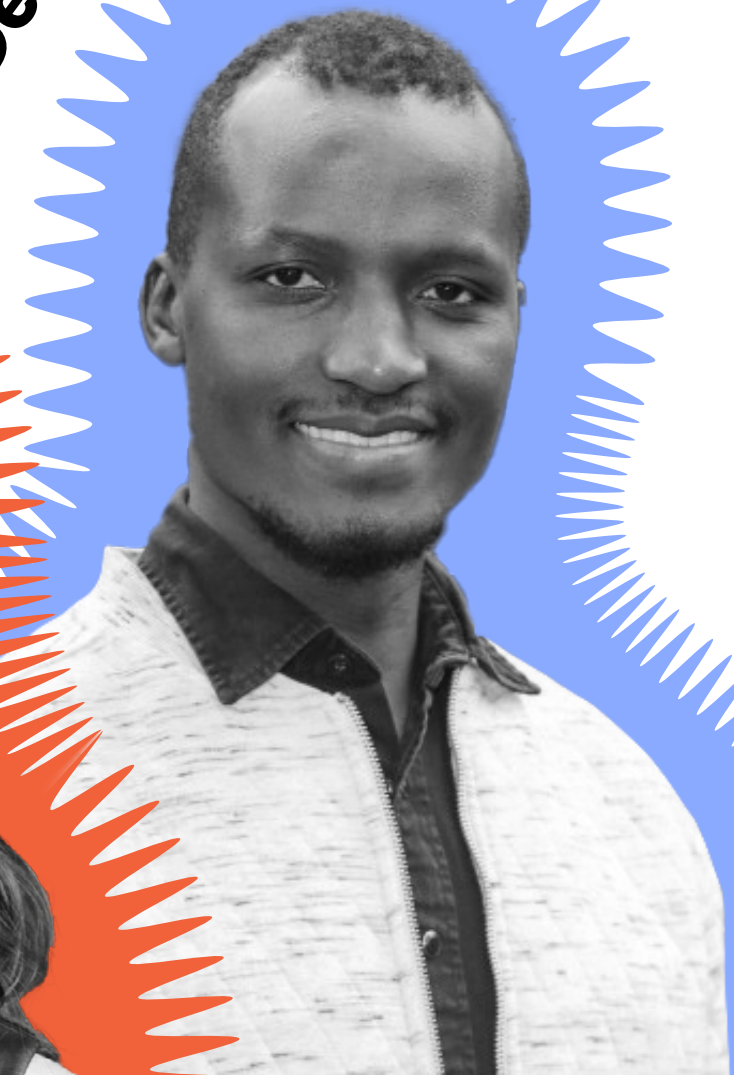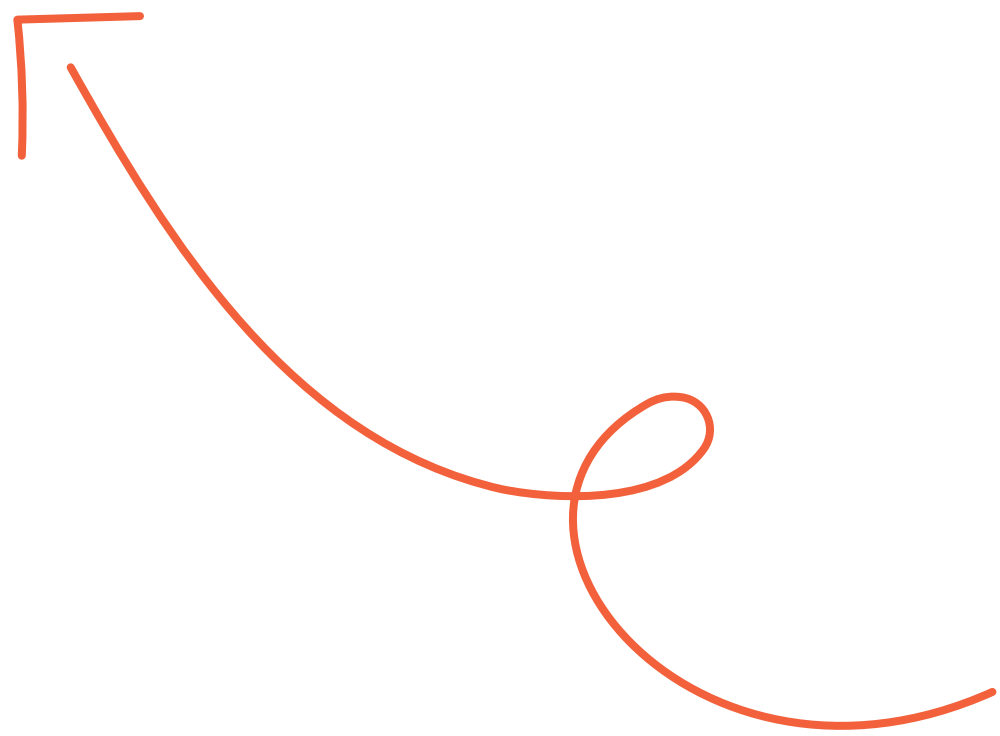
Denis Koech

Josefina Casati

Denis Muwanguzi

"As storytellers, it is our job to ensure that our stories center around the needs of communities."

One of the most common stories we tell in the global development sector is the story of impact. We have a duty to share with our funders, and with the wider public, accounts of how successful our programs have been in the communities we partner with.

But when measuring success and telling the story of impact, many of us find ourselves caught between different needs. The general audience would like to see how the community was supported; the donor needs to see that their funds were spent as intended; and the organization wants to build credibility and attract more funding. With all these competing priorities, it is easy to lose sight of what actually matters: ensuring that the community or individual feels that success is being achieved on their own terms.

As storytellers, it is our job to ensure that our narratives center around the needs of these communities. Our contributors argue that the funding and the support should follow that, rather than the other way around.

This chapter explores how defining and measuring success in global development requires, first and foremost, a deep understanding of the communities the sector exists to support.

In the first section we begin by questioning the way we have historically measured success in the global development sector, and discuss how funding requirements sometimes conflict with the process of telling stories respectfully.

In the second section, we provide learnings and practical tools to help us all take the next step on our journey to changing how we measure success.

Section 1: **Should we change how we measure success?**

From whose point of view are we measuring success?

The global development sector is largely white-led, by people who are not part of the communities. When it comes to measuring success, it's easy to default to historical processes of measurement that have been defined by donor organizations, without consulting those directly impacted to understand what true success means to them.

Some of these processes of measurement tend to:

- Rely primarily on the written word.

- Emphasize statistics and numbers over human impact, stories, and conversations.

- Be based on the belief that progress is determined by growth (bigger, more.)

Communities face several challenges with these methods of reporting. For example, those who are used to expressing success orally or visually are required to fill out reports, reducing the expanse of their experience to a few pages.

Too often the full community perspective is not respected before success is measured as well, and this ultimately affects how successful a project can be.

If a project can't scale, it is often ineligible for further funding, even when scale may not be what a given community or project needs to be successful.

Click here to read more from those with lived experience about how the focus on scaling often excludes African Innovators.

Additionally, there is little room for complexity or nuance, and therefore little room for experimentation and for the risk of dreaming big when it comes to project creation and implementation. Your project is either successful or not; it fits in this box, or it doesn't. As a result, organizations are engaged in constant numbers-driven reporting to donors and funders to attempt to fit into the necessary box.

Thus success is currently measured through the funder or donor lens while the partners are forced to adjust and compromise, but by involving communities affected from the start till the end we can change how 'success' is understood.

This is especially important because when communities face challenges such as crises, pandemics, and floods, they have lived experience in such challenges, and can provide working solutions. All they need are resources to enable them to implement the solutions they have. This applies in storytelling as well, and it is beneficial to create space for the communities to retain their power to tell their stories in their own words. When we do this, the perspective is more authentic.

Our work is ultimately about supporting them in creating a better life. As the ones affected, they know best if the program was effective, and can use their stories to convey this or to build future learnings.

Reflection Prompts

- Might your organization's approach to measurement be shaped by a western gaze?

- Does it prioritize quantitative measures at the expense of qualitative ones? Are complex human issues and experiences reduced to single and simple numbers?

- Is the judgment of the communities involved a factor in how success is measured?

- If not, how might you introduce new forms of measurement to decision-makers?

"The way he was also describing – I don't know if it's funding technique or what – but he was describing Mlali as a horrible place. That's not how we like the community to be portrayed. Somebody who hasn't visited Mlali would have a completely different picture. For me, the community is excellent, we've got excellent people, we've got brilliant kids with so much potential. I don't view it as people are poor. Just that they're limited with resources. The kids are limited with their opportunities to attend nice schools. People are limited with opportunities to get quality education. That's all. But if they're given the opportunity, they could be anybody. They'd be the best!"

– Dr. Kiliness Sekwiha, Founder and Director of Queen Elizabeth Academy.

How do we balance numbers with human impact?

For instance, does it make sense to tell a story about 2.5 million people having access to services? It might appeal to the narrative your audience is used to hearing – that large-scale interventions are inherently successful. But what if the community you're working to support doesn't need access for 2.5 million people? What if they need in-depth and long-term support for a group of 1000? Sharing a story about 2.5 million people having access to services also says nothing about whether the services were actually accessed, or whether the services are providing transformational impact.

"I would like support to develop an M&E framework that works for us and our integrated approach. What is recommended is the numbers of people. We are human beings and not just numbers"
– Ingrid Vilsenor, Founder and CEO of Tejiendo Futuros, Guatemala.

The value of impact numbers is not to be downplayed, but it cannot be the only major measure of success. This is where the power of storytelling as a reporting technique truly shines, and where it makes sense to allow for more authentic connection between the audience and the story.

Storytelling can enrich the reporting process by providing a behind-the-scenes look at interventions, and giving quantitative data a second life. By combining data and the voice of the storyteller, stories expound on outcomes and impact to provide more holistic and nuanced learnings.

Some organizations have enhanced the way they report impact by supplementing raw numbers with thoughtful storytelling .

This approach requires a significant investment in time spent in communities to listen to program participants narrate their experiences of program activities. Here, they can talk about shifts in quality of life, services accessed, household income and the ripple effect of project activities and outputs, in a way that prioritizes their lived experience.

"**Storytellers** have a vital role to play in spreading positivity, changing what people hear and **changing realities.**"
– Interview Participant in response to questions on the impact of stories told by the sector, conducted by BRAC (Bangladesh) in 2022 on behalf of MCSWS for this toolkit.

One organization that has done this well is the Future Economy Lab with their program: Abundantly Investing in Girls of Color, a project of Grantmakers for Girls of Color and SecondMuse Capital LLC. Their work engages the wisdom of girls of color ages 13 to 24, to envision a just and inclusive economy.

When given a proper opportunity, these girls offer a perspective that is authentic to their experiences, and in turn put forward more nuanced effective solutions.

Another example comes from A community leader in Mlali, Tanzania. He reported that measuring the impact of investments in communities is multilayered, and that any stories told should reflect that.

He described, for instance, the impact of the community school Queen Elizabeth Academy within their neighborhood beyond the valuable education accessed by children attending the school.

The diagram he used illustrated how financial capital flew from the school into the hands of construction workers, teachers and support staff, to families surrounding the school ecosystem.
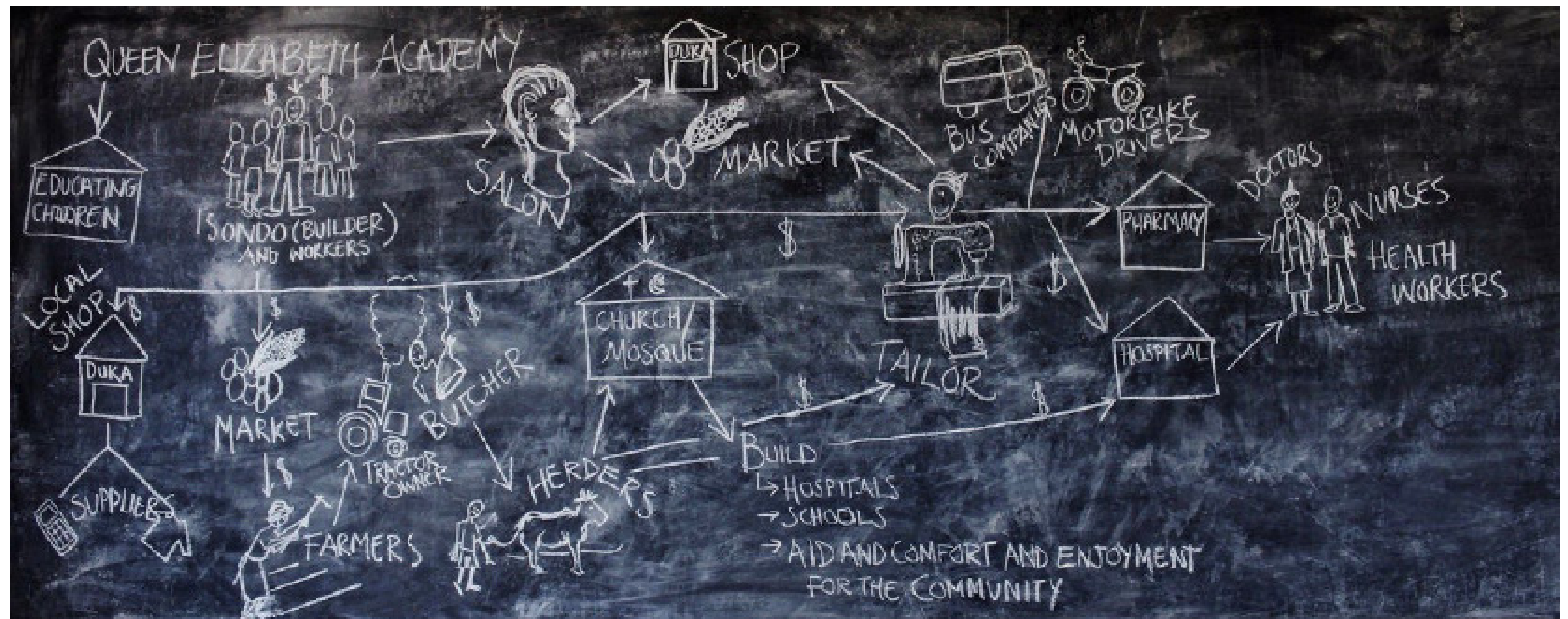
Caption: A flow chart illustrating financial capital flow within Mlali Community through funding and investments in Queen Elizabeth Academy.

"I believe it is time actors in the philanthropy world shifted from basic reporting to reporting that fully incorporates ethical storytelling. Data is important but ethical storytelling brings out the bigger picture behind an intervention.

By putting the voices of the communities we serve at the forefront, we are able to show the impact of our work beyond the numbers we reach. Storytelling also helps us to gain more insight into the needs of the communities we serve and hence adapt our interventions to their changing lives and needs."

– Denis Koech, Senior Communications Coordinator at Farm Input Promotions Africa
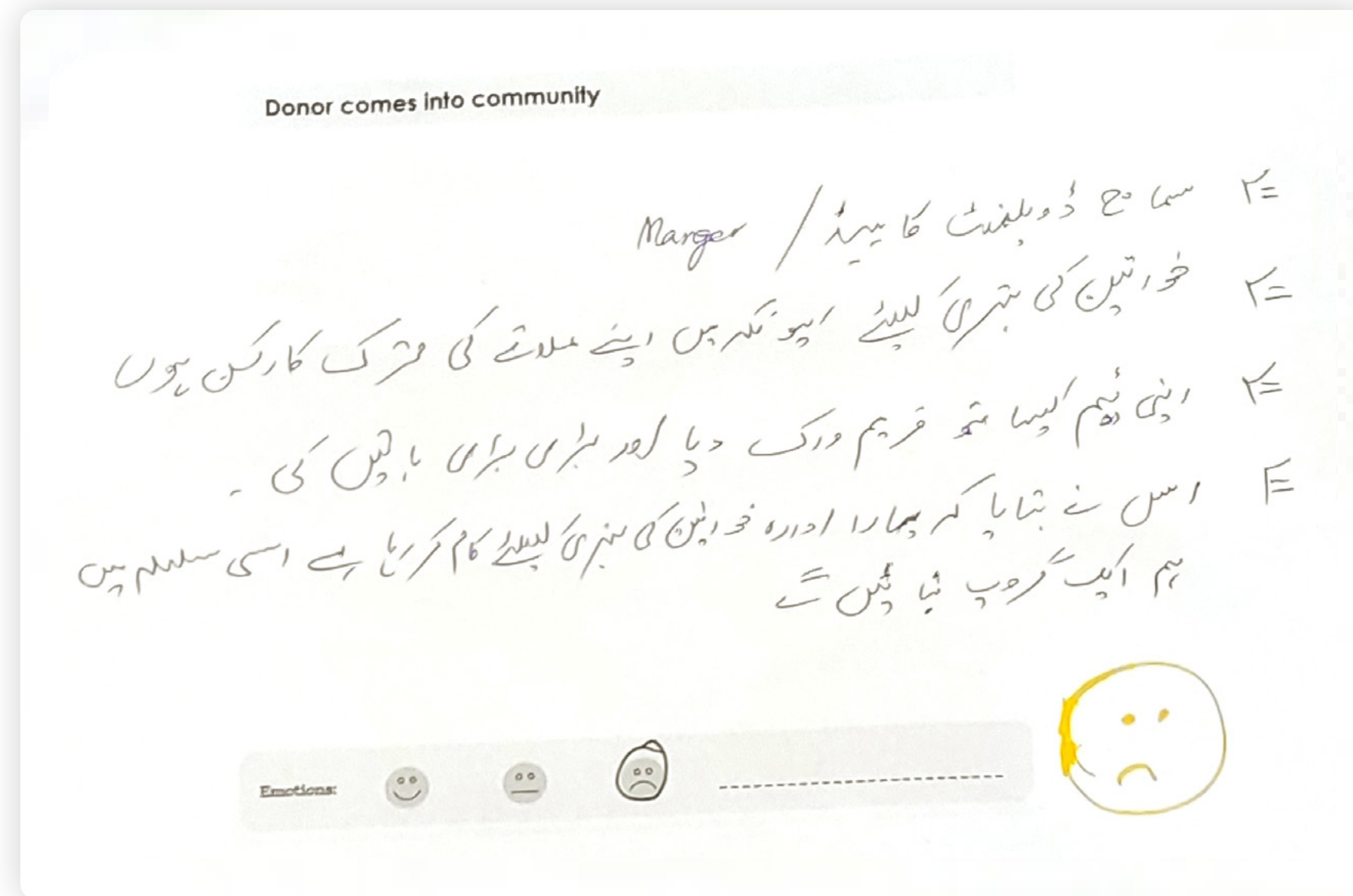
"To be honest, most of these organizations portray more than what they actually achieve": Workshop participant in response to a journey mapping exercise, conducted by ICARUS (Pakistan) in 2022 on behalf of MCSWS for this toolkit.

"At [Queen Elizabeth Academy] we're dealing with children from three to 14-15 and they've got different needs, and you have to face all of those. So you realize you need every kind of support – education, health, psychological help. We had some kids without parents, they would come to school, they're not happy. For a kid to be successful in education, it's a combination of other areas to be successful as well. At [a] family level, at [an] individual level."

– Dr. Kiliness Sekwiha, Founder and Director of Queen Elizabeth Academy

How can we balance the importance of short-term and long-term success?

Current measurement processes tend to overemphasize short-term impact, even if the program hasn't come to fruition yet, or might change course. But this comes at the expense of building trust with communities and local partners, who see their priorities for long-term change being overshadowed by the need to demonstrate short-term success to donors. While prioritizing the organization's achievement might fulfill donor requirements in the short term, this can ultimately harm relationships with communities, and jeopardize the sustainability of programs.

Reflection Prompts

Is the pressure to demonstrate short-term success on a project causing your organization to deprioritise longer term outcomes?

While measuring the short-term impact of programs is key, what if measurement went a step further? What if we moved towards sharing not just what has worked, but also what is in progress and what communities and teams hope to see?

Those organizations that have chosen to honor their relationships with communities in their communications have put processes into place to make sure their commitment is upheld at all times.

In practice, these approaches are beneficial because they enable program and communications teams to:

- **Make communications choices that prioritize the long-term goal**, even if it affects the short-term engagement when possible. For example, at Mama Hope, we stopped using images of children. This decreased engagement on social media in the short term, but gave us an opportunity to draw attention to an issue, and use it to advocate for our mission.

- **Update their mission and brand identity to account for the long-term.** If they have values that reflect the organization's goals, they can try and change processes to make sure our long-term vision isn't hindered for the short term.

Section 2: **Practical steps to change how we measure success**

Bringing donors on the journey with us

At Mama Hope, we firmly believe that the right donors will want to do the right thing, and that part of our job is sharing knowledge on how to do that. Our donors and funders deserve more credit. It's no understatement to say that many of them are also tired of the same old stories of pity and need.

If you want to do this too, it is essential to create a work environment that invites donors to be part of the conversation around change.

Also, encourage your teams to be creative in exploring how to express to donors that there are more ethical and effective ways of doing things, and create space for these learnings to be shared.

Grantmakers for Girls of Color is an example of an intermediary grantmaking organization that thrives on ethical processes and storytelling:

"At Grantmakers for Girls of Color (G4GC), we strive to create a philanthropic home for girls, femmes, gender-expansive youth of color under age 25 who are traditionally excluded from the sector. We recognize that, despite the challenges they face living at the intersection of sexism, racism and other forms of oppression, they are courageous leaders at the forefront of transformative organizing work.

They are influencing movements and efforts to achieve social justice, gender justice, climate justice, and economic justice. We recognize their brilliance and leadership, and are committed to listening to their wisdom, and to following their leadership. Youth of Color have decision-making power over our grantmaking, and they inform our policies, strategies, and communication platforms which makes our work more effective and impactful."

– Josefina Casati, Senior Director of Communications at Grantmakers for Girls of Color

How to shift towards a more ethical vision of success: Bringing donors with us.

- **Emphasize quality.** Help donors to reflect – do they really only care if more and more people are being supported each year, or do they actually care about the quality of that support? Do they really believe an organization is only successful if its numbers are growing each year?

- **Set expectations early on.** This helps create meaningful conversations around changing priorities. Global Advocates at Mama Hope are encouraged to share with donors from the beginning that although they are fundraising for one particular project, priorities often change in real time.

- **Include stories and videos in meeting sessions or reports.** This helps humanize impact and build the culture around curiosity and funder engagement. They can see the faces behind the numbers, and the stories behind the program.

- **Create space for their contributions internally.** Consider opportunities for decision-making power within the organization by the community being served. It can be a listening session, or a board seat. The goal to have their insights and wisdom influence the projects or outcomes is core.

- **Make switching to more ethical practices part of your overall mission.** If your mission leans into ethical practices, then it's easier to direct resources toward that goal. And it can bring new audiences in, because they'll understand and appreciate your stance.

Click here to watch a great example from the social enterprise Thankyou, in which they share positive changes with their audience and invite them to be part of the conversation.

"**We have the opportunity to lead the donors, we can lead from the front. As communication experts, we are enablers and amplifiers for people, we can do more. We can amplify their voices so they can become and do more.**"

– Levis Nderitu, Director of Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at PATH.

Bridge silos between comms and program teams

In most cases, there is a gap between communications and program teams in facilitating storytelling. They both have their own goals and processes. This can affect the success of both of their aims, because they may unintentionally intervene with each other. For example, the communications team may come in without an understanding of the program's work or environment, or the program team may not understand the role of the communications team. But when you bring them together, you can create a more ethical and fluid process.

How to shift towards a more ethical vision of success: Bridging silos.

- **Hire local communications staff.** This creates a more sustainable way of working by having staff closer to the programs team.

- **Include budget lines to gather feedback.** Have budgets that allow for program teams and members of whatever community you are working in to be part of the content collection and even the production process.

- **Create updated or new internal processes.** Frontline and content-gathering staff need to understand what communications, marketing and fundraising staff need, and vice versa. There should be open and transparent communication so that all teams are aware of each other's goals, and can find a way to mutually achieve them. This might mean setting up regular meetings or other processes that facilitate collaboration. This is a win- win situation, as collaborative teams tend to produce better program and communications work.
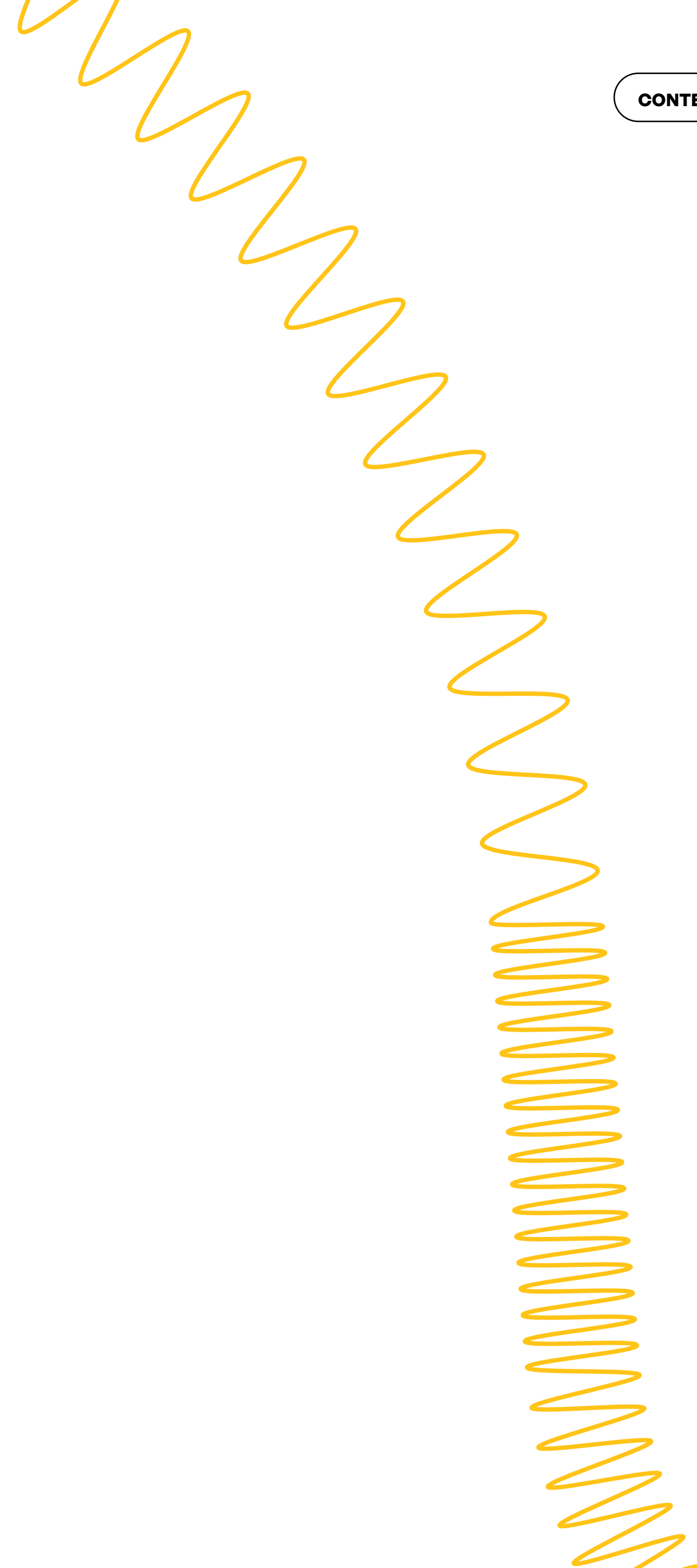
"**Our communications team is in <u>very close communication</u> with our programs team. They're always in communication with one another, so there's never sort of a handoff to the comms team or a handoff to the programs team, but instead they are communicating with our grantees and partners together about <u>how they want to be represented</u>. We also have a feedback process where they can always reach out and ask questions or raise concerns or offer suggestions on how we move in the future if they want. I would say it is an <u>active and ongoing process</u>.**"

– Maheen Kaleem, Vice President of Operations and Programs.

Ensure community perspective is at the heart of how you measure and portray success.

Because the whole purpose of the work and communications for it is to uplift and collaborate with those in communities, if we do not take their view as a defining factor of success, we lose the reason behind it all. When it is their stories, their home, their friends, and family that we talk about, how could we not have their point of view throughout to guide us?

"I find storytelling resonates with me a whole lot if I have been a part of its journey to publication. From co-creating the information about the impact in my community, editing and fine-tuning, to publication and launch. What I'm aware of is that each of the steps provides opportunities for either information authenticity or distortion. The story must be about a balanced will between the original content and the latest versions, understandable by the final reader. I think that what is often missed is that the storyteller is a reader too at the end, and a simple way for me to tell if the process was participatory is when I, as a story owner, recognize the origins of any line in a story."

– Denis Muwanguzi, Co-Founder of Budondo Intercultural Centre

How to shift towards a more ethical vision of success: Bringing in community perspective.

As we've discussed, the way we measure success should include the community voice as they are at the heart of the story and program experience. Below we've included a measurement framework your

organization can use and adapt that helps you quantify ways of measuring success from the community perspective. Through this, we can start to collect qualitative and quantitative data that can be integrated into our overall understanding of the effectiveness of our communications and programs.

Raquel Thomas
Operations Associate at Grantmakers for Girls of Color.

—→ **Click here** to watch Josefina Casati (Senior Director of Communications at Grantmakers for Girls of Color) interview Raquel Thomas (Operations Associate at Grantmakers for Girls of Color).

How to avoid misrepresentation and bring in the community voice when storytelling.

To see the interview in full, **click here**.

Case Study:
The Women of Nyamonge Present: Netball

This video came about when Mama Hope was working with a community in Western Kenya. We asked them "What is the story you want to tell?" They said they wanted to share about Netball, so that is what we did. This supported our Stop the Pity campaign in the sense that it broke away from the stereotype of the poor African women, and showcased this community as full and multifaceted. The Stop the Pity campaign launched Mama Hope to international notoriety. It has won a number of awards, as well as attracting a significant amount of donations and long-term, major donors.

Create a sustainable bond with those whose stories you are telling.

- **Stay for tea.** Take more time to understand and learn the stories of those whom you worked with, and are being represented. "Staying for tea" lets stories unfold organically, and can lead to a more holistic and true vision of success.

Click here to learn about the five principles of "Staying for tea."

- **Prioritize immersion trips.** We should meet the people we are sharing stories about. One-hour, once-yearly site visits aren't likely to create trust, space or the time for the human impact of any intervention to become apparent.

An example measurement framework to bring community perspective into practice

Example Measurement Framework				
Inputs	**Outputs**	**Outtakes**	**Outcomes**	**Impact**
Community engagement throughout storytelling process	**Which stories are told and how they're told**	**Community satisfaction with storytelling process & outputs**	**How stories are used to shape programme activity**	**Long-term trust and community involvement in programs**
% of people who feel they provided informed consent	Breadth of types of stories told by the organization	% of community members who feel accurately represented	No. community members who were consulted on programme goals / activity	The community feels the project was successful
% of people who feel they were fairly compensated	% of stories in which communities share advice	% of people who feel comms represent their community well	% who agree stories they share are providing insights to inform programming	The community feels motivated to continue to engage with the organization / programme
% of people consulted on which stories were told	% of stories where communities are shown to be shaping solutions	% of people who feel the story is true to how they wanted it told	No. of community members who have received programme support	No. of community members who recall change in funding due to their feedback
% of people who had full understanding of how their story would be used	% of stories in which community voices are heard / amplified	% of people who were asked for ongoing feedback on communications	No. of people who are satisfied with the programme support received	No. of community members who recall change in programmes due their feedback
% of people who had the chance to feed back on final communication materials	% of stories which feature the organization's vs the community's role		No. of community members who received access to relevant services	% of community members who trust organization to tell their story
				% who feel the programme has made a meaningful impact to their community / life

As we've discussed, the way we measure success should include the community voice as they are at the heart of the story and program experience. Above we've included a measurement framework your organization can use and adapt that helps you quantify ways of measuring success from the community perspective. Through this, we can start to collect qualitative and quantitative data that can be integrated into our overall understanding of the effectiveness of our communications and programs.

Conclusion

Storytelling is part of improving how we measure success, it can encourage a shift in vantage point so that people and communities end up determining what success looks like, on their own terms. Rather than bending to the demands of donors and funders, it is beneficial to amplify the voices and the requests of those being served.

In addition, it is necessary to involve donors and supporters in the conversation about the shift by sharing the reasons, broadening understanding, and inviting deeper questions.

The funders who are open to change and want to engage more thoroughly are the ones who are going to support you more effectively in the long run. Changing approaches in this way is rarely easy, but in the long run it is likely to be a positive experience for everyone involved. It helps capture more authentic narratives, deepen relationships, and can help us all reach our shared goal of supporting communities effectively.
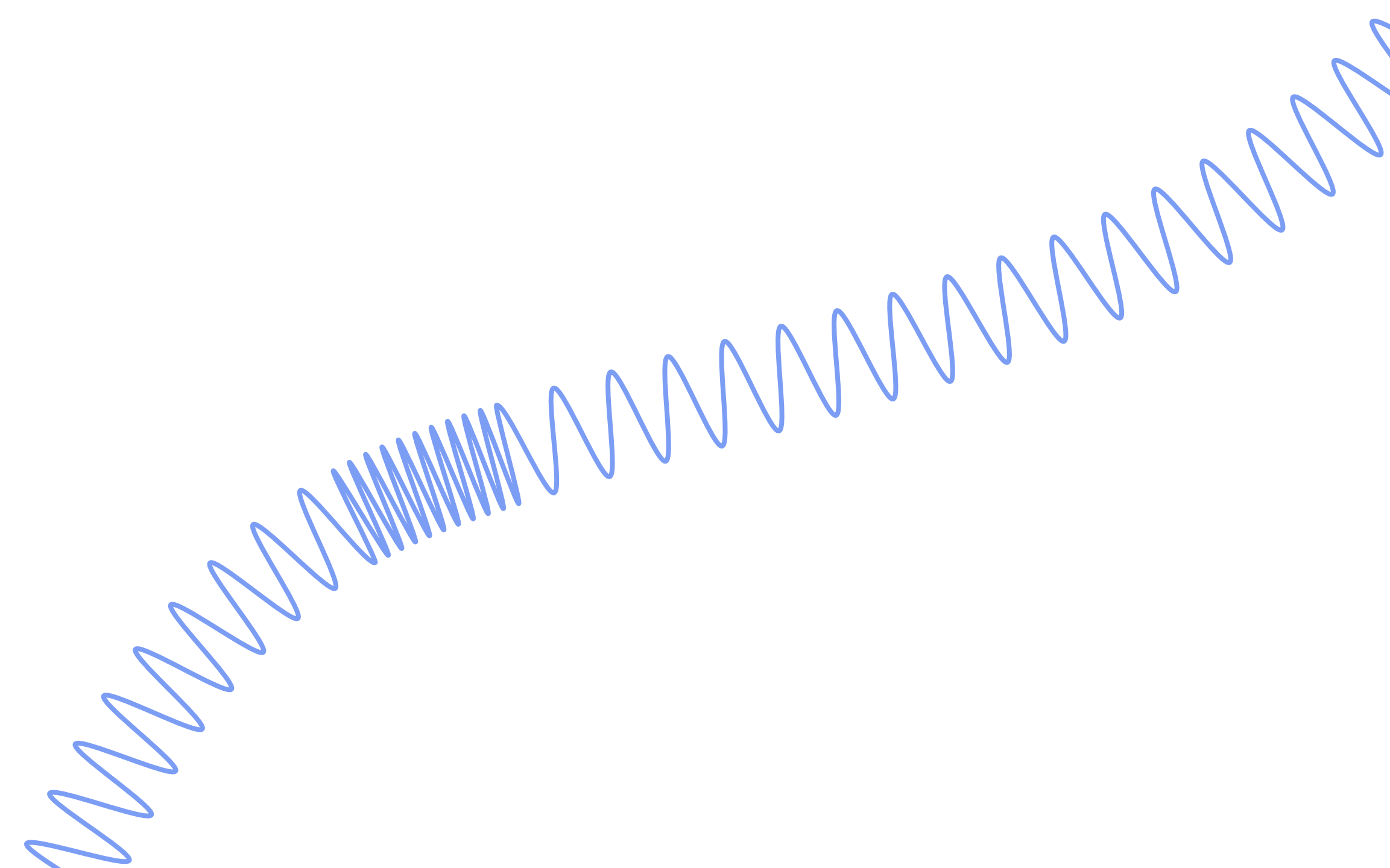
Chapter 5

How can we put it into practice?
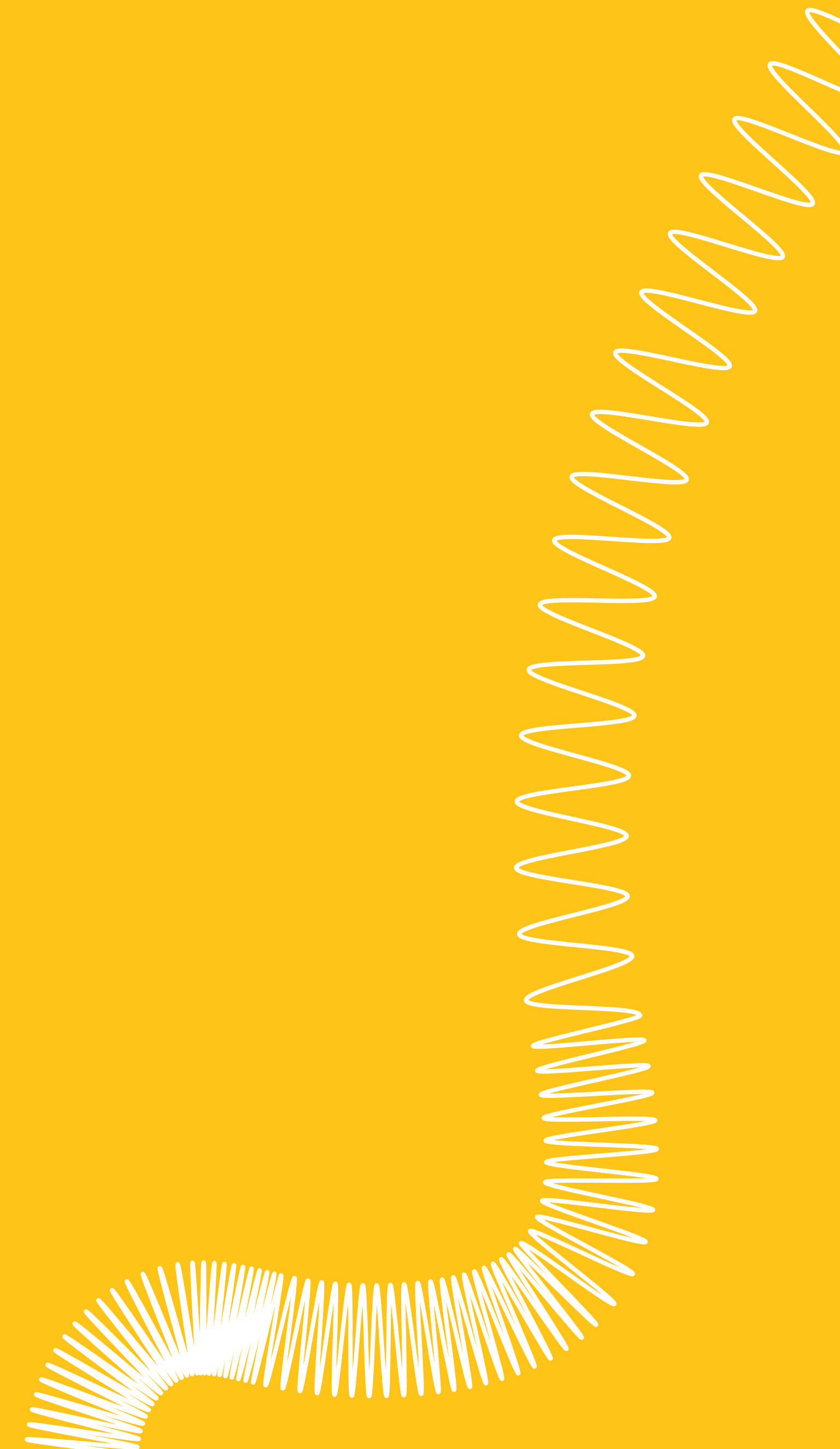
Part 1:
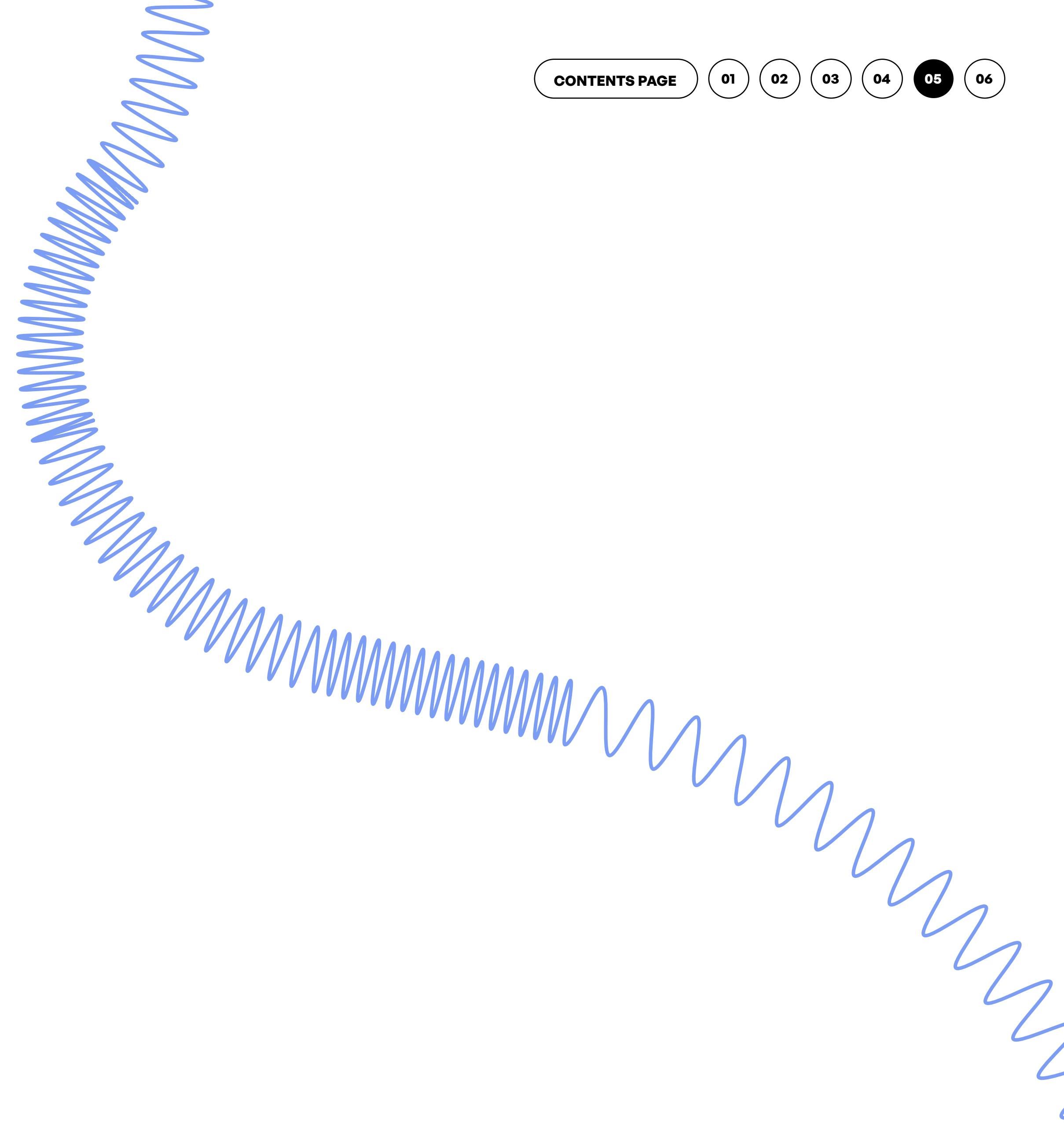# Tips and advice compiled from the four chapters

Learning and implementing new practices takes time. While each chapter takes a deep dive into the different steps of the storytelling process, the following tip sheet sums up the practical advice shared by authors throughout this toolkit in a format that's easy to use, share and adapt.

Chapter 1

How can we use better language in our stories?

Language can be used to perpetuate stereotypes and power imbalances, but it can also influence change.

We might talk about "charity" with the best of intentions, but a community could perceive this as a term that positions them as helpless or dependent.

We have a responsibility to consider how language will be received by different people, in different contexts, and to use alternatives that respect how they want to be represented.

Language should be adjusted based on the preferences of different communities. This means there is no single correct answer for which words to use, and no blanket rules that can be applied across situations.

In this table, we suggest alternative language based on what we heard from communities during our

consultative workshops. **Organizations may use this table to initiate discussions with the people and communities featured in their communications about how they would like to be referred to.**

Click here to learn more about the impact of language in Chapter 1. Here you will also see examples of how organizations have created guidelines around language use.

Will we still achieve our fundraising objectives without sharing negative stories?

Too often, communications tend to rely on negative or sensationalist language that fails to paint a representative and complete picture of a community.

This can lead to people or situations being described based on the problems they face, rather than their

potential. Instead, we can lean more into asset-framing to reach a balance of authentic struggle, resilience and hope.

Asset-Framing® is a methodology developed by Trabian Shorters (the author of Asset-Framing®, Founder and CEO of BMe and social entrepreneur) that helps communicators develop narratives based on strengths and agency when talking about a community, ensuring that the fullness of who they are comes through, not just their hardships. Refer to **his website** to learn more

about it, and to **Chapter 1** to read why we believe asset-framing is important in our sector.

Outside of these two sources, we recommend reading both of the guides below to learn more about asset-framing, and how you can use it in your communications:

Click here to read the CHCF guide, and **here** to read the Here to Here guide.

Chapter 2

How can I start a conversation in my organization about shifting our communications practices?

Use one or several of the following arguments to make the case for adopting ethical principles in storytelling.

- **The business case.** By applying ethical principles to their communications, we have the power to create more effective messaging, achieve better program impact, and fulfill our strategic objectives.

- **The sociocultural case.** Communications should reflect the cultural nuances and realities of the communities we work with. Communications and programming processes that respect cultural differences are vital to building sustainable relationships, with better outcomes for all.

- **The moral case.** Better communications allow us to fulfill our duty to those we ultimately seek to serve – people with lived experience.

To learn more about each of these cases, **click here**. You may choose a single case or a combination of different cases, and add some of your own ideas to build a comprehensive argument. Always approach your conversations from a place of empathy, trying to take into account the needs and perspectives of your stakeholders.

How do I build a comprehensive case to convince my stakeholders to make the change?

Follow our three-step process to support your case with compelling data.

- **Audit your communications.** Review your communications processes, standards and guidelines; assess your past communications outputs for a set time period; and analyze your current metrics for success. Once this initial audit is done, gather input from colleagues ensuring diverse representation across departments, geographical locations, cultures and viewpoints. Identify the next steps for the short, mid and long term, prioritizing shifts that can put an end to harmful practices.

- **Identify key decision-makers.** Decide whom to share your audit results and case with. Understand the tensions they face in their role, and tailor your argument accordingly.

- **Assemble your case.** Use supporting quantitative and qualitative data to build your case.

Click here to learn more about this process, or click here to access the **audit checklist** that will guide you through the first step.

Once you've completed the three steps, you are ready to present. _ to access a PowerPoint deck tool which will help you make the case you choose to your senior stakeholders. The deck, which is for you to adapt and build out, includes an explanation of each case, its implications, questions for reflection, quotes from expert voices and place for a case study.

Chapter 3

When initiating the storytelling process, what do I need to consider?

Oftentimes, organizations and the creative agencies in charge of content production neglect to include communities in the storytelling process.

Chapter 3 describes some of the negative consequences this can have on all parties involved. It

makes the case for bringing communities in as early as possible, and maintaining strong relationships throughout the production process.

Click here to see this checklist from Chapter 3, which captures actions that can be taken by the client and production team at the start of a storytelling project to shift towards more collaborative and trust-based relationships.

Beyond using consent forms, how can I make sure interviewees truly understand what they're signing up for?

While consent forms are important – and sometimes mandatory – they don't always guarantee that the person being interviewed understands what the storytelling process entails, or how the story will be used.

Language, literacy or cultural barriers can prevent someone from giving their consent by simply signing a form. Storytellers can use additional tools and practices to initiate conversations with interviewees around consent, in a way that guarantees their full and willing participation in the project.

Click here to listen to how Michel Lunanga (Multimedia Producer for Doctors Without Borders) goes beyond consent forms.

Chapter 4

What are different metrics we can use when measuring success?

Evaluation frameworks and communications activities don't always capture impact in a way that aligns with the community's own idea of success.

In Chapter 4, the authors invite us to think beyond commonly-used metrics to feature a broader range of perspectives in the monitoring and evaluation process.

This list includes a few examples of metrics you can use to measure and communicate success in a way that reflects the community's experience, such as storyteller satisfaction, community feedback, program objectives and solutions-oriented stories.

Click here learn more at the end of Chapter 4.

Example Measurement Framework				
Inputs	Outputs	Outtakes	Outcomes	Impact
Community engagement throughout storytelling process	Which stories are told and how they're told	Community satisfaction with storytelling process & outputs	How stories are used to shape programme activity	Long-term trust and community involvement in programs
% of people who feel they provided informed consent	Breadth of types of stories told by the organisation	% of community members who feel accurately represented	No. community members who were consulted on programme goals / activity	The community feels the project was successful
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% of people consulted on which stories were told	% of stories where communities are shown to be shaping solutions	% of stories where communities are shown to be shaping solutions	No. of community members who have received programme support	No. of community members who recall change in funding due to their feedback
% of people who had full understanding of how their story would be used	% of stories in which community voices are heard / amplified	% of people who were asked for ongoing feedback on communications	No. of people who are satisfied with the programme support received	No. of community members who recall change in programmes due their feedback
% of people who had the chance to feed back on final communication materials	% of stories which feature the organisation's vs the community's role		No. of community members who received access to relevant services	% of community members who trust organisation to tell their story
				% who feel the programme has made a meaningful impact to their community / life

As we've discussed, the way we measure success should include the community voice as they are at the heart of the story and programme experience. Below we've included a measurement framework your organisation can use and adapt that helps you quantify ways of measuring success from the community perspective. Through this, we can start to collect qualitative and quantitative data that can be integrated into our overall understanding of the effectiveness of our communications and programmes.

How do we create an impact report that includes qualitative and community-led data?

In Chapter 3, we learn about using a broader range of metrics to measure impact, and combining quantitative and qualitative data to build a more comprehensive picture of change.

But once those data have been collected, how do we share them in a way that's impactful and true to the community's experience?

It's all about balancing quantitative and qualitative data to create an impact report that shows the weight of both sides.

An example of this is Mama Hope's annual impact report for 2021-22, "The Power Within: Redefining Impact"

The organization added in a "partner stories" section to highlight the voices of community-led partnerships when measuring success. Denis Muwangazi, , the impact lead for Mama Hope, opens the report by explaining the decision-making process that led to this inclusion, and how the new section allows for a more authentic and relevant measure of success.

**Click here** to see Mama Hope's annual report (2021-2022).

Part 2:
Practical advice to address additional barriers

While our contributors have explored (1) why we need to tell ethical stories, (2) how to make the case for ethical storytelling to decision-makers, (3) how to build trust during program and communication work, and (4) how to talk about impact in-depth, these are not the only pain points that need to be addressed.

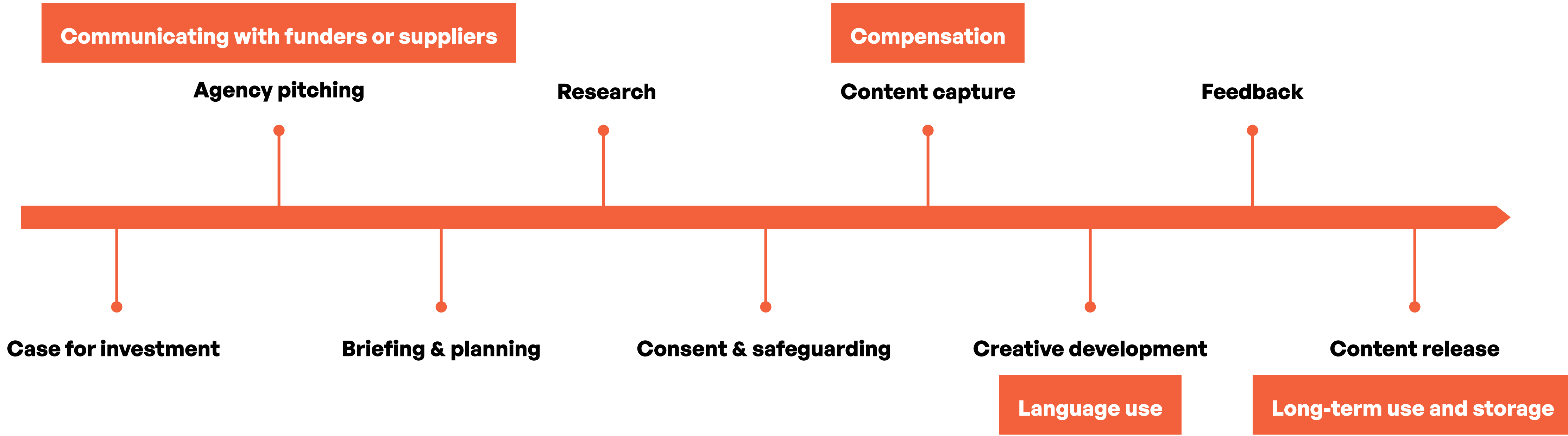This section focuses on four different areas of tension that were identified by participants in our roundtable discussions, offering guidance for embracing those conversations in all their complexity:

- Communication with funders or potential suppliers at the pitch phase;

- Language use during the creative development phase;

- Compensation during the content capture phase;

- Long-term use and storage after content release.
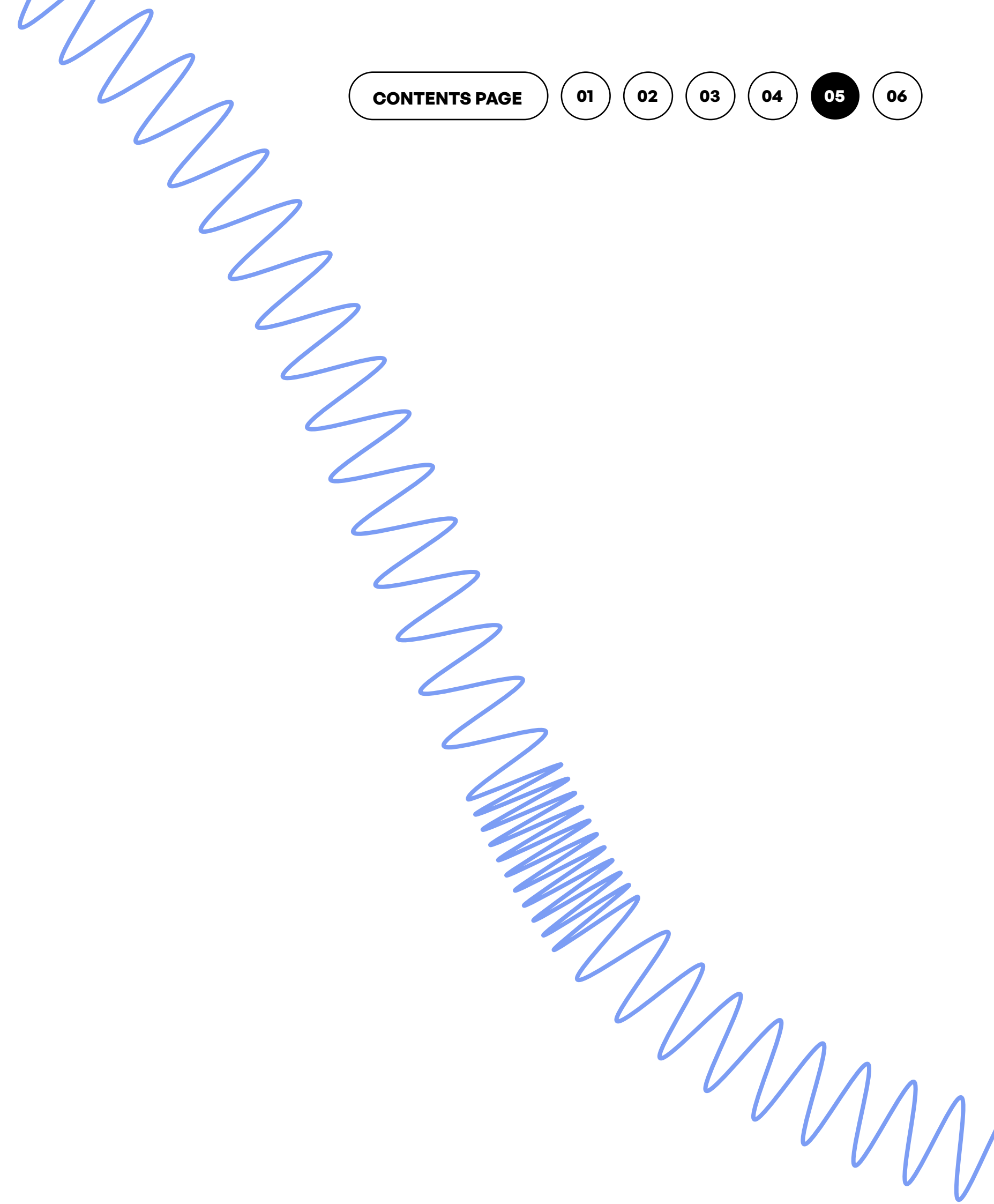
For each of these four key moments, you will find:

1 References to existing tools, as well as new tools we've created in collaboration with chapter authors to fill any gaps. You make adapt or re-use these tools to meet the needs of the situation you're facing.

2 Reflection prompts to assist you in decision-making during relevant parts of the storytelling process.

Communicating with funders or suppliers

Compensation

Agency pitching

Research

Content capture

Feedback

Case for investment

Briefing & planning

Consent & safeguarding

Creative development

Content release

Language use

Long-term use and storage

Communication between funders and potential suppliers at the pitch phase:

How do we approach early conversations in a way that makes clear the value we put in ethical storytelling when creating work?

Has this ever happened to you?

You work on the communications team at an agency that is pitching for a campaign by a funder organization. The funder has dictated objectives for the campaign in the brief that don't reflect the reality on the ground for the community, nor abide by your agency's respectful storytelling guidelines.

You want to push back as an agency, but don't know how to have this conversation without endangering your relationship with the funder.

As a funder: Ethical storytelling is important to you, and moving forward you want to work with agencies who know how to embody it.

You don't know how to make clear during the early phases that this is what you want in an agency nor how to find out their strengths in relation to it.

Different perspectives to keep in mind:

Funders are evolving with the times

"The landscape is evolving to one that is more socially aware. Our audiences and our funders are evolving. My approach has been to present the need for ethical storytelling as an inevitable approach if organizations are to be considered responsive to contemporary concerns of today."

Victor Mark-Onyegbu, Grants Lead at Africa No Filter

Sticking your ground

"I said to her, your story is too important to be watered down because they don't like it. We cannot change it to suit a funding narrative."

Chilande Kuloba-Warria, Founder of Warrande Advisory Centre

Benefitting funders

"it can be considered an invitation to funders to rethink"

Maheen Kaleem, Vice President of Operations and Programs at Grantmakers for Girls of Colour

Here is some guidance on how to move forward:

Questions to ask yourself and your team:

1 Have we considered what our key values as an agency or funder are when it comes to respectful storytelling, and how this plays into our brand identity and the services we offer?

2 Has our team made this clear to the organizations or funders we work with?

3 Does the brief we've given or received align with our values and if not, how can we change this?

A key tool to use:

Name: Criteria and questions to use as a funder or supplier during the pitch process
Created By: M&C Saatchi World Services
How to use: click here to access a list of:

- potential criteria you can set as a funder that helps you choose an agency that aligns with your values

- questions you can send to funders during the pitch process when you have a query or consideration related to ethical storytelling but do not know how to phrase it in a way that protects your potential partnership with them

Language use during the creative development phase:

How do we ensure that we use language that better represents people?

Has this ever happened to you?

You're writing a story about a community your organization has worked with to showcase the impact of the project.

You know established terms in the sector like "vulnerable" or "beneficiary" imply unequal power dynamics, but you don't know of any strong alternatives.

Different perspectives to keep in mind:

Consequences of harmful language

"You take away my voice and soul when you misrepresent me."

Chilande Kuloba-Warria, Founder of Warrande Advisory Centre

"I would feel bad hearing such words for my community."

Workshop participant in response to language exercise, conducted by ICARUS (Pakistan, 2022)

Avoiding a prescriptive approach

"It's understanding how that individual or community wants to be portrayed because I don't think it's going to be a one size fits all."

Daphne Moore, Communications Director for Walton Family Foundation

Evolving language

"This language changes over time as everything does."

Richie Siegel, Co-Founder and President of Inevitable Foundation

Here is some guidance on how to move forward:

Questions to ask yourself and your team:

1 Have I asked the communities we're working with about how they would like to be referred to?

2 Does the language I currently use reinforce savior narratives or harmful power dynamics?

3 Have I tailored the language I use to the community's preferences, rather than choosing one-size-fits-all terms?

4 Would I want to be spoken about with that language?

A key tool to use:

Name: Mama Hope's Internal Language Guide
Created By: Mama Hope
How to use: Mama Hope has kindly shared their internal language guidelines, **click here** to access them. The guidelines were created to encourage to be used a consistently ethical approach to outward- facing communications. These can be adapted based on conversations with the people you serve, as language should take their perspective into consideration.

While there is no one right answer, this guide can start as a strong point of inspiration to create your organization's own language guidelines.

Compensation during the content capture phase:

If you decide to compensate those sharing their stories, how do you create a fair approach?

Has this ever happened to you?

You're on the ground gathering stories from community members to use in your organization's communications.

Because the community members have taken the time and effort to share their stories and perspectives, and their input will be used for public-facing communications, you wonder whether you should be compensating them in some form.

There are currently no guidelines from your team on when or how to compensate them financially or otherwise for their contribution, so you're not sure what to do.

Different perspectives to keep in mind:

Power dynamics

"Sometimes they just say what they think you want to hear because they want to be paid and they don't have that trust with you."

Shalini Moodley, Co-Founder and CEO of MetroGroup

Time and effort

"Where we may need more than half a day from a single person's time, it may be appropriate to compensate individuals on a 'loss of income' basis."

Oxfam, Ethical Content Guidelines

Non-financial options

You can "provide food, transport refund, transferable skill workshops…"

Africa No Filter, How to Write About Africa

Here is some guidance on how to move forward:

Questions to ask yourself and your team:

1 What internal policies on compensation do we have for external consultants that we could apply here? (e.g. if they work for us for half a day, how much do we pay them?)

2 Has anyone from the community represented offered feedback on whether they would like to be compensated (financially or otherwise)? If so, have they shared how they would prefer to be compensated?

3 Do I believe the level of compensation is fair and commensurate with what I'm asking of them?

A key tool to use:

Name: Three-Step Compensation Process and Compensation Policy Guide
Created By: M&C Saatchi World Services
How to use: click here to access a three-step compensation process guide, that helps you more ethically and collaboratively write a compensation policy for your organization, and **click here** to access a compensation policy template that you can adapt for your organization's project.

Long-term use and storage after content release

When capturing imagery and stories from communities, how do you ensure deep consent if you're planning to use it for a longer period of time or in the future?

Has this ever happened to you?

Your team is about to visit one of the communities you are working with to capture content. You need to obtain informed consent from those who will be featured, and explain how their images would be used.

You are currently planning to use the photos in a campaign that runs over the next two years, but don't know if you'd want to continue to use them afterwards. You're unsure how long you have the right to store the images and use them. When asking for consent, you know it's best to communicate a length of time and type of use, but confused about how to approach this.

Different perspectives to keep in mind:

Ensuring transparency beyond consent forms

"Sometimes they just say what they think you want to hear because they want to be paid and they don't have that trust with you."

Shalini Moodley, Co-Founder and CEO of MetroGroup

Having backups for when consent isn't given or extended

"If we don't have consent, we don't use it, and we always have an alternative on deck to account for quick timelines."

Maheen Kaleem, Vice President of Operations and Programs At Grantmakers for Girls of Colour

Explaining emotional impact and checking in

"We don't know what it's going to mean for that family in a year or two, or in five years."

Anthony Ramos, Executive Vice President at Children's Aid

Here is some guidance on how to move forward:

Questions to ask yourself and your team:

1   Which measures have you taken, beyond using consent forms, to ensure meaningful consent from interviewees? (e.g. open dialogue guidelines)

2   Have you clearly communicated the consequences of publishing their image or words on the chosen platform? (e.g., not just the name of platform, but the amount of users and long-term impact)

3   Does your organization have clear guidelines on the timeline of content use? Are they flexible enough to be adapted to the person's preferences?

4   Do you have a system in place to collect, store and protect the contact information of interviewees, should you need to contact them to change the terms of use of the image? (otherwise, content needs to be deleted from all servers, and not used after date of expiry)

A key tool to use:

Name: Principle 8 on data protection of the Dignified Storytelling Handbook
Created By: Dignified Storytelling
How to use: click here to be taken to Principle 8 "I protect other's data like it's my own." It covers the importance of deep consent through transparent conversation with the person featured and guidelines on how to store data and set timeline limits for content. There is no one right path, but this guidance opens up internal conversations that help create policy and guidelines.

Chapter 6
How do we take this forward?

"We are here to amplify their voice."

– Lamea Tanjin Tanha, Founder and CEO of TransEnd
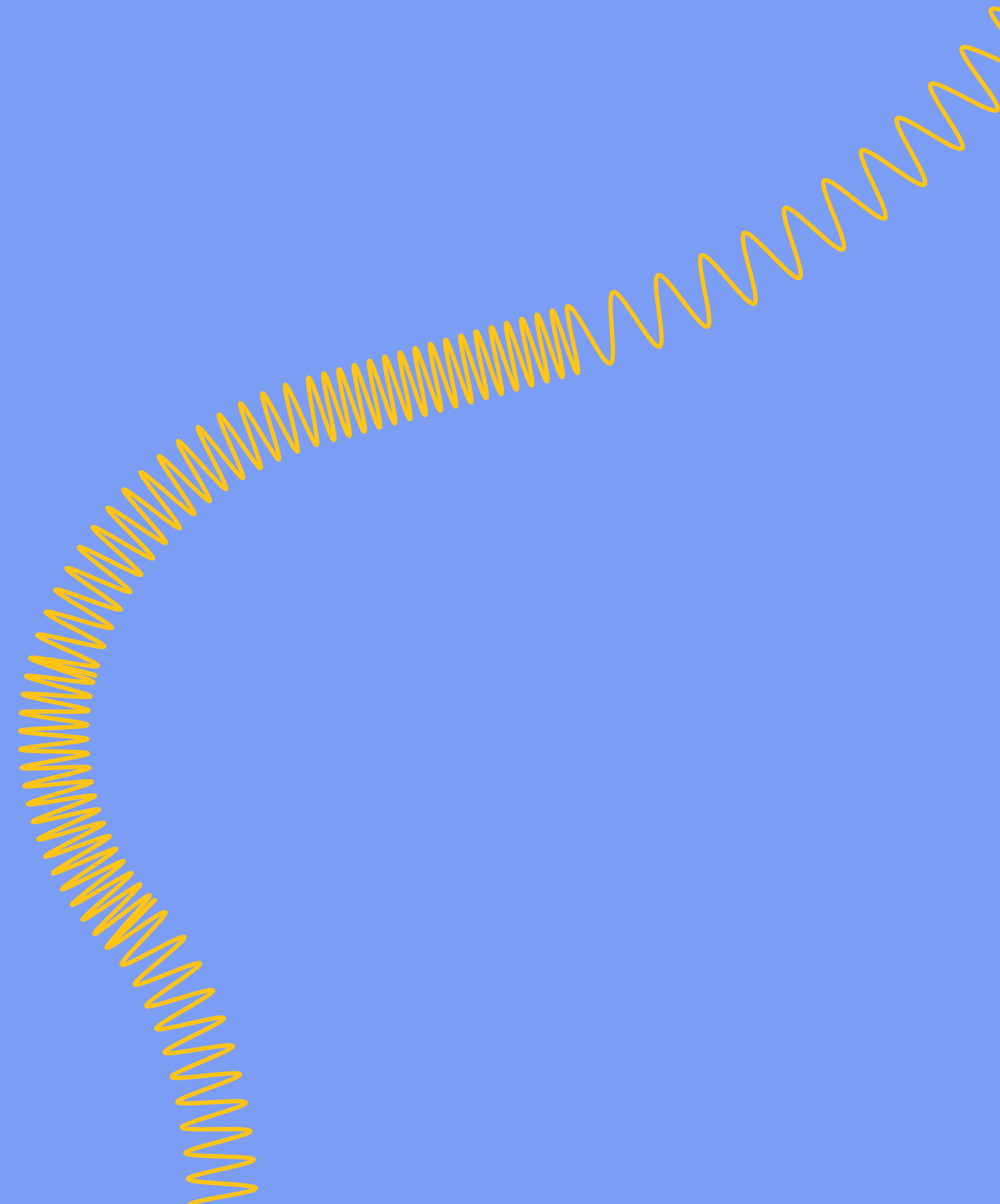
"I think our goal is to find stories that bring back a dignity that isn't always granted by society and that bring back a sense of joy and opportunity."

– Peter Torres Fremlin, author of Disability Debrief, and freelance writer and speaker.

"At the core of your work is the belief in the power in communities to change their own life"

– Sarah-Jane Saltmarsh, Head of Thought Leadership and Content at BRAC

How can we push the boundaries in storytelling?

While this toolkit's authors have shared helpful pointers on how to change communications practices, there are no rules that should dictate how organizations should move forward. Storytelling is and must remain a living art form that shifts and adapts to the ever-changing needs of its time.

Sarah-Jane Saltmarsh heads Thought Leadership and Content at BRAC, one of the world's largest NGOs. In this chapter, she offers inspiration from recent initiatives that have crossed the threshold of traditional mediums to tell stories of change in a novel way.

For more on how this toolkit and its chapters came to life, head to the introduction, where you'll find information about our process of engaging with community members, international development professionals and communications experts.

Sarah-Jane Saltmarsh
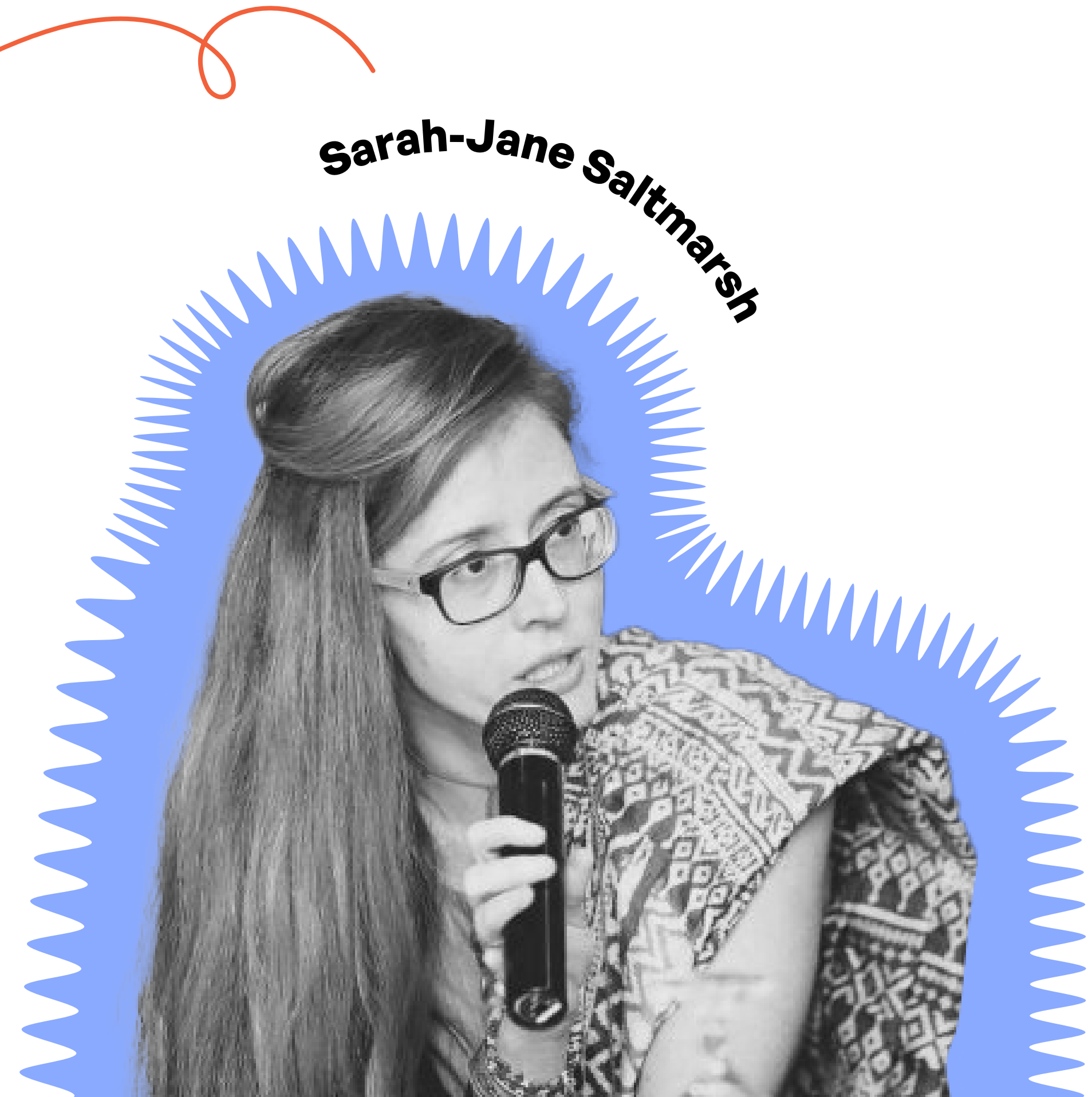
There is widespread recognition now that it's time for better storytelling. In addition to moral and ethical realizations, social norms are rapidly changing, younger generations have more exposure to information, and audiences across the world are demanding better.

We ask you to embrace the opportunity, and to recognize that the NGO sector never "gives a voice to" anyone. Every person already has their own voice – NGOs have often been bad at listening to them.

I want to explore two practices: person-centric storytelling and diversity in mediums. I'll outline what they are, and give examples to show how you can action them.

"The only reason TransEnd was born is <u>because of stories.</u> Before TransEnd, there were no organizations working for [Hijra community's] economic rights because of the absence of their stories. Through the sensitization program, we do a lot of social media campaigns, and we found this enormous reach, and saw <u>we're not alone.</u> We get the Hijra people to tell their stories. They were taboo in 2018 - people wouldn't look at them or talk to them. But when we showed stories like 'look they're human beings, they deserve these rights' then people started to be more sensitized. They have the power to empower themselves, we are just making the platform."

– Lamea Tanjin Tanha, Founder and CEO of TransEnd

Person-centric storytelling

"We have this African proverb that says 'Until the lion learns how to write, every story will always glorify the hunter.' That's the spirit of how the narrative I see needing to change because so far, a lot of pictures that are taken, a lot of stories that are written are written from an outsider's perspective. Very rarely do we see the voice of the very same communities that we are looking for. Why don't we see their voice? They can speak. There's a laziness about storytelling – it was sitting and talking to someone in a cushy office."

– Chilande Kuloba-Warria, Founder of Warrande Advisory Centre

"it's better when the story comes from first-hand instead of a second-hand account. It's about the relevance of the experience and the feeling shared with the audience. The emotion is more real when we give the voice to someone who has that experience, like indigenous youth."

– Michelin Salata in an interview conducted by Diah Dwiandani (Special Assistant to the Regional Director and Communications Specialist) for this toolkit (2022)

When a producer is involved, stories are co-created through a partnership between the person and the producer, in which power is purposefully shared.

The producer lets the story set the pace, respects the time and effort given by the person, ensures a safe, welcoming space, is perceptive and responsive to emotions, and leads with curiosity. The person in the story is fully informed, has adequate time to get prepared, and is in control of their story the whole time. Crucially, discussions cover not only the person's lived experience, but delve deeper into the analysis, strategy and insights from that experience. The focus needs to be on – and stay on – accurately capturing the person's raw, organic feelings and experiences.

"When I've been able to share with people in writing or poetry or however, things that I've been through that have really isolated me, that I've experienced in an individual way, and that I thought were just my cross to bear - when I found ways to share that with people and they've resonated with it, it's really transformative for both sides. It can take the thing that was isolating, exclusionary and was seen as othering, and can make it into a means of connection."

– Peter Torres Fremlin, author of Disability Debrief, and freelance writer and speaker

This is achieved by making space for granularity, investment in nuance, and a purposeful avoidance of linearity.

⟶ **Click here** to watch Sarah-Jane Saltmarsh (Head of Thought Leadership and Content at BRAC) lead a discussion with Lamea Tanjin Tanha (Founder and CEO of TransEnd), Peter Torres Fremlin (Author of Disability Debrief, and freelance writer and speaker) and Shakil Ahmed (Futurist at Ridiculous Futures and Country Lead in Bangladesh's EdTech Hub) that explores the questions:

Why do stories matter in our sector? What positive impact can we create when we tell stories collaboratively?

Shakil Ahmed
Futurist at Ridiculous Futures and Country Lead in Bangladesh's EdTech Hub

To see the interview in full, **click here**.

Inspiration station

Matagi Mālohi: Strong Winds

"Brown bodies moulding brown minds. Moving between healer and warrior, you are future ancestors carving visions of liberation we can't even imagine. You are matagi mālohi."

Matagi Mālohi tells the story of the Pacific Climate Warriors' journey to uplift their people and shape a narrative that paints them not as victims of the climate crisis but as leaders, healers, nurturers, artists, gardeners, growers, seafarers and navigators.

Combining activism, advocacy, art and storytelling, through stunning visuals and powerful poetry, this call to action puts the real, raw emotion of young people from the Pacific at the center of the story to give courage to keep pushing for change.

IlumiNative

"We were called stupid and primitive by the world's colonial forces, but the world can thank our people for 60% of global food sources. We have always known who we are. Scientists, artists, astronomers, deserving of dignity, overseers of 80% of the world's total biodiversity."

IllumiNative is a Native woman-led racial and social justice organization dedicated to increasing the visibility of – and challenging the narrative about – Native peoples. The organization aims to build power for Native peoples by amplifying contemporary Native voices, stories and issues to advance justice, equity, and self-determination. The organization's storytelling work is impressive in myriad ways, in its strength, diversity and authenticity of voices, its production quality and its holistic approach, blending powerful narrative through art, comedy, advocacy, research and music. A particular highlight is the "Setting the Table" short film, which pairs spoken word with stunning visuals.
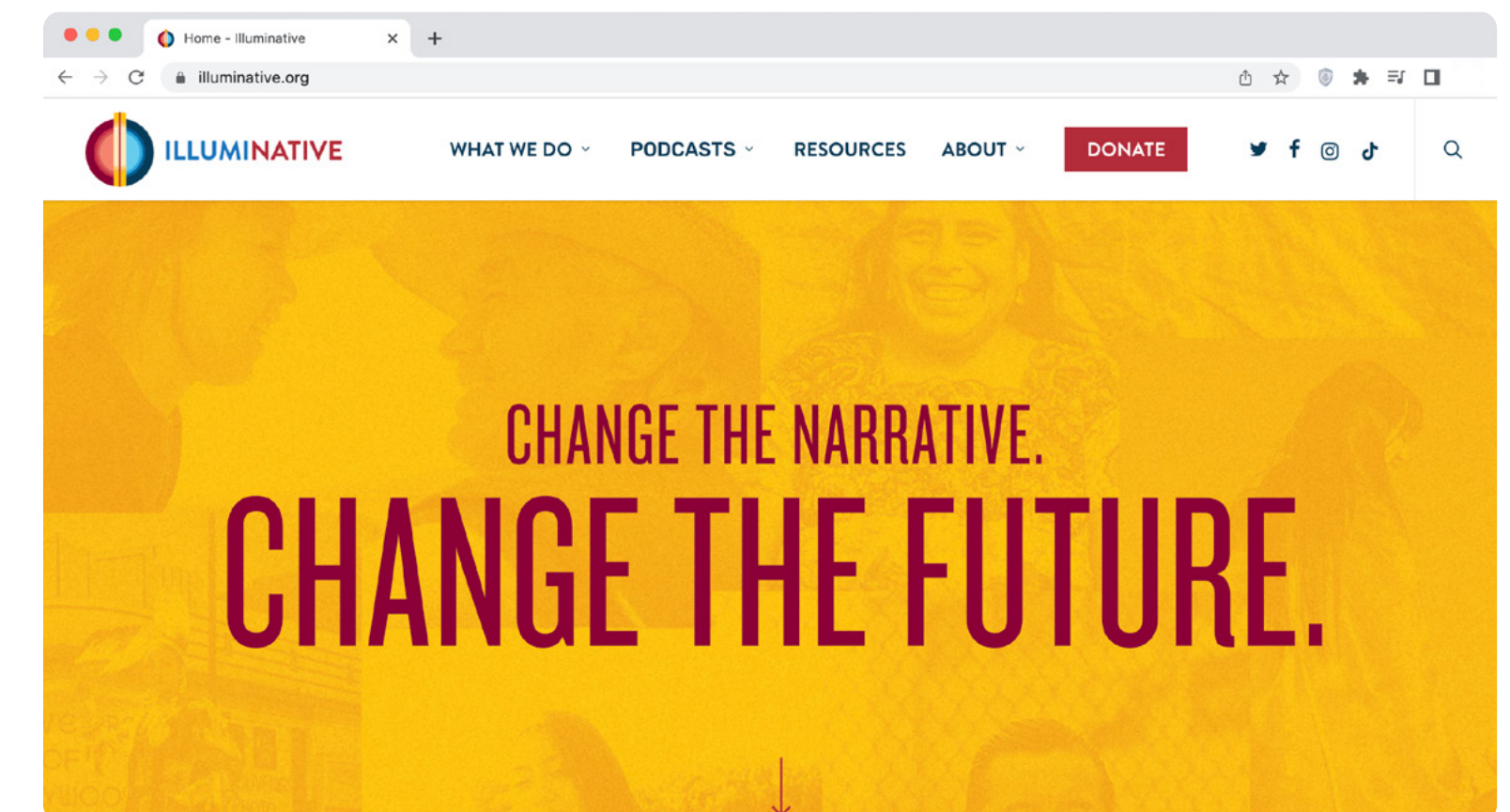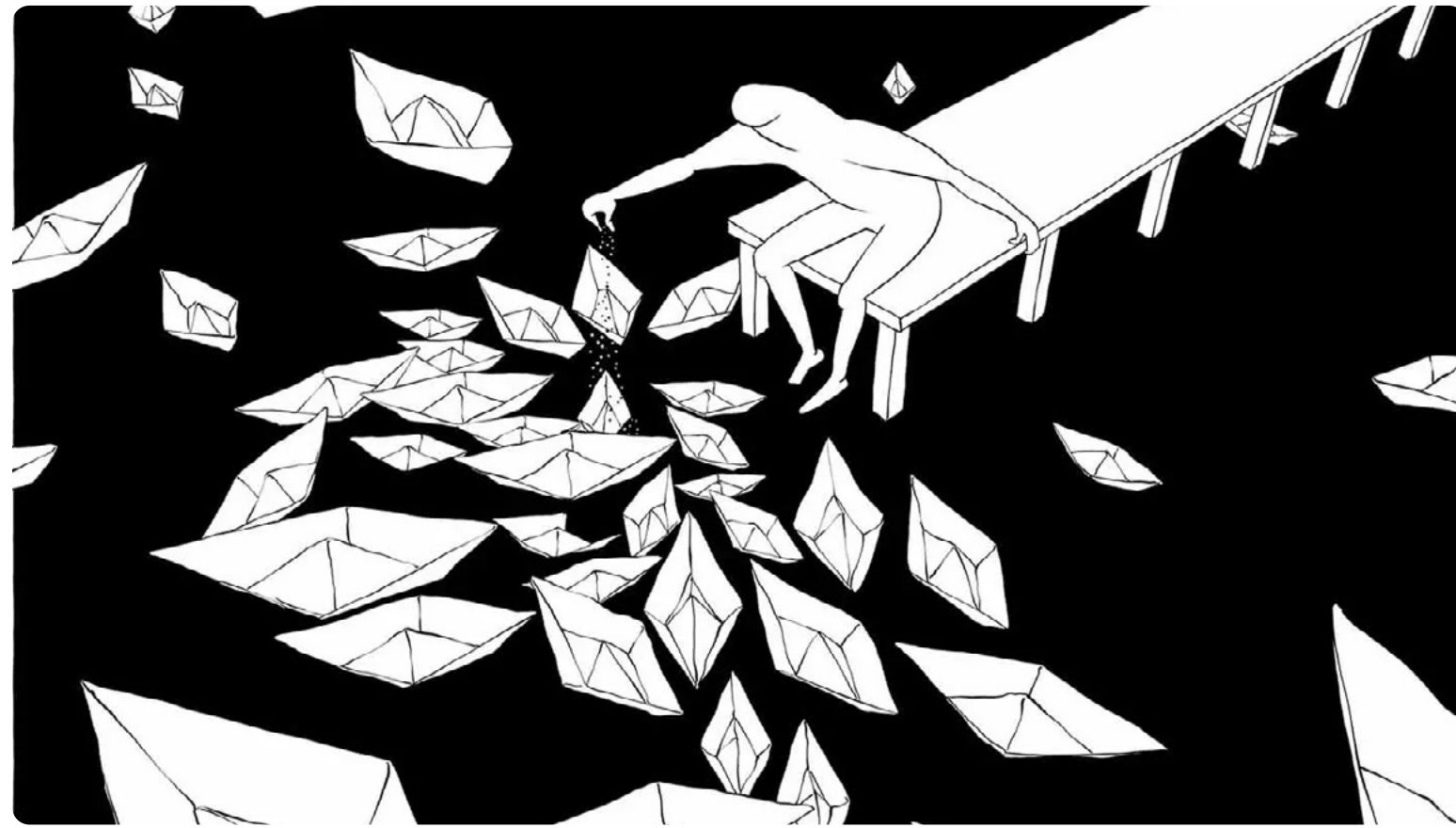
Flipping the Narrative

"UNHCR says refugees like me who are forced to leave their homes have three options to resume their lives: voluntary return to the place they've left, integration in their host country, or resettlement to a third country. For the vast majority of refugees, these so-called 'durable solutions' do not work. I know this because I am a refugee still searching for a 'durable solution'."

Narratives around migration and displacement in the media often fail to amplify the voices of the people most affected, instead reflecting the assumptions and agendas of those in the Global North. "Flipping the Narrative," a series by The New Humanitarian, puts the voices of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants at the center of conversations about the policies and events that shape their lives, challenging audiences to think about how policy and humanitarian responses need to change, and to question Global North-led migration narratives. The articles combine insights and analysis from lived experience with statistics and research to give the bigger picture of a failed system, and how it plays out in one person's life.

Always a way

Imagine watching a war unfold in your village at age 10; or being starved, beaten and held captive in a jungle in Malaysia; or becoming a single mother to eight children at 61 with no savings or house. Would you believe there is always a way to turn things around? This book contains real-life accounts of 50 people whose paths have been anything but smooth. But no matter what has happened, they have always found a way.

"Always a way" is the most extensive storytelling initiative BRAC has undertaken, engaging 34 storytellers and 11 photographers across 11 countries over 12 months to mark 50 years of BRAC. The aim was to create an anthology of hope and courage, a human testament that birth need not be destiny. We are surrounded by so many powerful stories at BRAC every day, and we wanted to pull a snapshot of them together to show people that poverty and inequality are human-made, so they can be unmade, and that embedded in every person is the potential to build a better life. What we ended up doing along the way was creating a blueprint for where we want to move as an organization in terms of storytelling.

Diversity in mediums

Stories all over the world are told in many different ways, through oral traditions, performance, poetry and visual mediums, but the development and social impact sectors generally stick to a limited range of mediums. This restricts the ability of people and communities to express themselves, reduces the relatability of stories to different audiences, and misses out on the power and potential of these traditions. Creating the space for people to express themselves in a wide variety of mediums encourages authenticity, builds on people's strengths, and results in rich creativity that widens the appeal of stories.
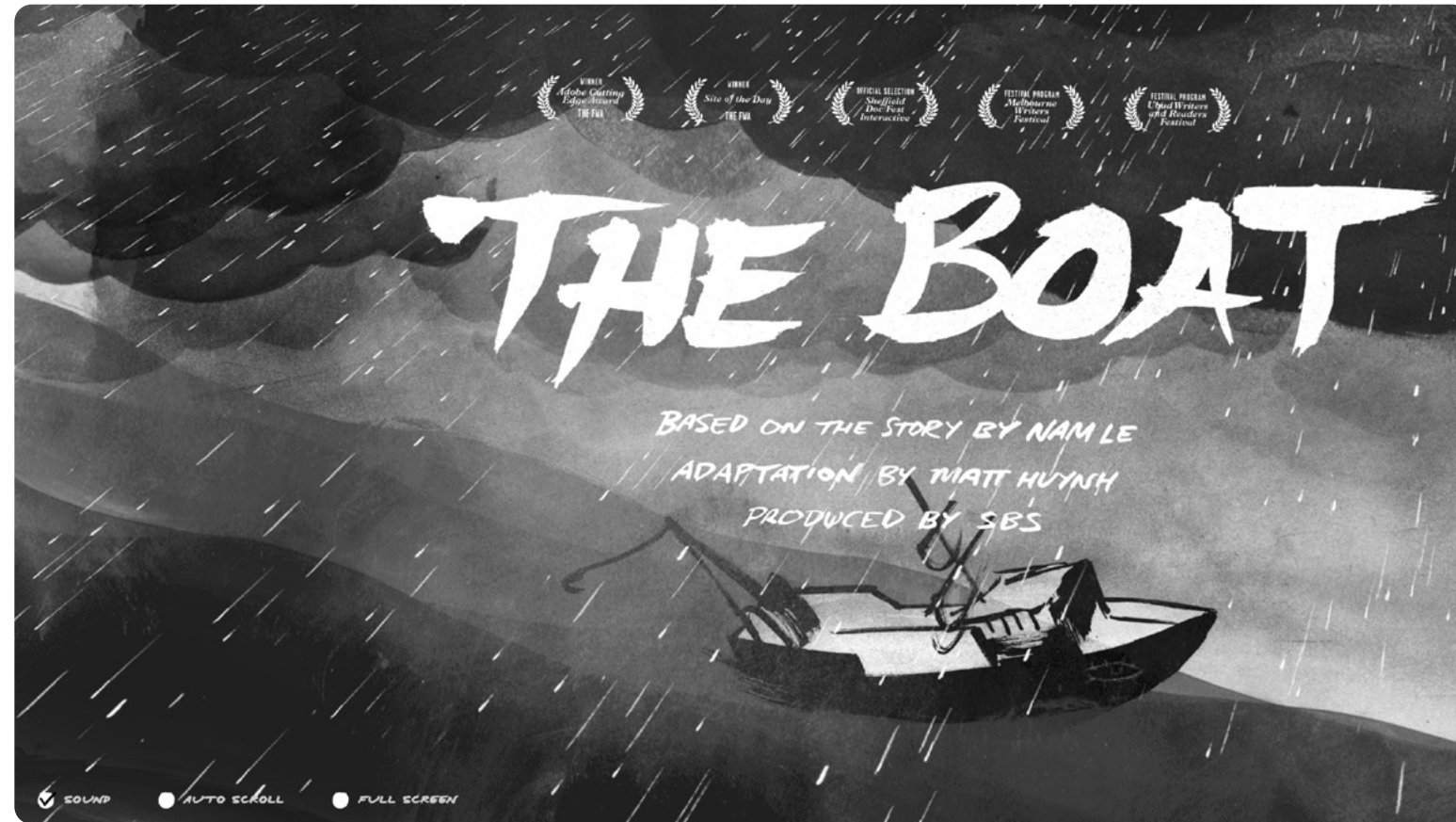
"**The story is not a monolith. What you know people from the Global North call story is not what people in the Global South may call story, and so the offer is both a challenge and an opportunity to invite and introduce different forms of storytelling and different approaches**"

– Michael Kass, Founder of the Center for Story and Spirit

← Click here to watch **Sarah-Jane Saltmarsh** interview **Peter Torres Fremlin** on:

How we can tell more creative and meaningful stories in our sector.

To see the interview in full, **click here**.

Inspiration station

The Boat

"Inside the hold, the stench was incredible, almost eye-watering. The smell of urine and human waste, sweat and vomit. The black space full of people. Bodies upon bodies. Eyes and eyes and eyes."

"The Boat" plunges audiences into a treacherous ocean voyage, through vivid graphics and haunting audio, partnering seamless animation with rough brush strokes. Matt Hunyh's interactive online graphic novel, designed to create an entry point into the conversation about refugees and asylum seekers, is based on Nam Le's short story about a 16-year-old refugee sent off alone by her parents after the fall of Saigon. His parents, like Le's, fled Vietnam after the war. "The Boat" forms part of SBS's commemoration of 40 years of Vietnamese resettlement in Australia. The production stands out for many reasons, including Hunyh's familiarity with the subject – one of his previous comics, *Ma*, tells the story of his parents' time in Pulau Bidong refugee camp in Malaysia. The human touch behind the smooth animation and the strength and relatability of the characters also contribute to making "The Boat" a striking work of art.

Forced Labour

An animation by the International Labour Organization takes audiences on a powerful journey into how people get trapped into forced labor. Lasting just over a minute, it uses muted colors, haunting music and no words or dialogue. Through generic scenes, familiar music and relatable figures, it captures how easy it is to get locked into modern-day slavery, and how impossible it can then be to escape from it, while deftly portraying the complex power dynamics and emotions of desperation and loneliness associated with the experience.

Art 350

This site offers resources on how to integrate art into storytelling to strengthen movement-building, innovate new forms of resistance and win positive change. A wide range of mediums are explored, from visual arts to performance and music, and it all feels fresh, young and powerful.

Fifteen Percent

"When I began this project and started to travel to take photos, I asked the people I met to tell me their point of view, to choose how they wanted to be photographed – how they wanted to be represented in order to challenge the stereotypes they face. What you see here is a collective project where each subject chose their own way to be represented. It is not only my work, but the work of everyone represented here."

Christian Tasso's art project aims to combat stereotypes by portraying the many facets and identities of individuals across the world, in an effort to celebrate diversity as a resource for the whole of humanity, and to bring together civil society organizations, missions, and the UN family to celebrate diversity and promote the human rights-based approach to disability. It involved one photographer, 2000 people, 14 countries, 1250 rolls of film and 15,000 photographs. The project stands out because of its authenticity and humanity, as well as its diversity. Too often, photography of people with disabilities strips dignity, but this series of black and white photos paired with quotes are subtle, real and arrestingly beautiful.

The Greatest

The woman without arms taps Assistive Touch on her iPhone with her foot, then browses images of makeup styles. In a dressing room, a man wearing dark glasses and a bow tie uses the magnifier detection mode on an iPhone to scan the room.

This advertisement by Apple shows how its products can support differently-abled people to lead more fulfilling and independent lives. Musicians, artists, athletes and parents with disabilities use Apple software features such as door detection, sound recognition and voice control to drive cars, identify items of clothing and take photos. Technology is at the forefront, while a song by the Marliya Choir (a group of female Indigenous singers in Australia) with lyrics inspired by quotes from Muhammad Ali plays in the background. What particularly stands out about the film, in addition to the fact that it has people with disabilities in lead roles, is that it portrays real people living full and fun lives, and just being themselves.

Conclusion

Better storytelling should include person-centric approaches, and embrace diversity in mediums, but it should also be part of broader reforms in communications, as is being pursued by initiatives such as **the Pledge for Change**, combining authentic storytelling with equitable partnerships and changes in language. And it shouldn't need to stop there. While communication traditionally follows programming in NGOs, good communications can also influence better programming, contribute to improvements in areas such as curriculum development, and encourage mindset change more broadly in development organizations. As a sector, we have a long road ahead, but there are a lot of great examples to inspire us – and endless untapped potential to realize.

"**As a sector, we have a long road ahead, but there are a lot of great examples to inspire us – and endless untapped potential to realize.**"
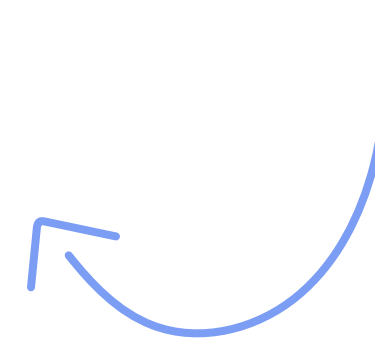
Closing Word

A Final Word

A Big Thank You

This guide was created to foster a much-needed conversation on what we mean by ethical storytelling, how we advocate for it, the challenges getting in the way of progress and how we can practically overcome them.

It was designed to be exploratory and discursive rather than didactic, recognizing that many of the things that will make the most impact are not solvable overnight, and we are all on different stages in our journey towards more ethical storytelling. Better, more open conversation about the key issues is an important step in the right direction.

This guide is the result of a co-created endeavour that involved participation from over 140 participants including representation from donors, international NGOs, civil society organizations, people with lived expertise, technical experts on ethical storytelling, as well as the wider research and communications sector.

We would like to profusely thank everyone who contributed, whether through the roundtables and interviews, research and resources gathering, and writing - especially our chapter authors who took the time and care to produce insightful and thought-provoking content.

What did we learn?

This closing word is not designed to recap all of the incredible content produced by the diverse array of contributors to this guide, but rather to provide reflections from M&C Saatchi World Services as the lead facilitator on the key take-outs that we took from the process and content that are influencing our own journey

towards more ethical storytelling, in the hope that it may inspire other organizations to leverage this guide to do the same.

The insights we gained from this guide definitely led us to reflect on our past communications and where we need to improve. For example, there have been times where we have prioritised aesthetics over ethics without conscious consideration – i.e. choosing an image because it was visually arresting but neglecting to share the context, such as where the image was taken, who it features (if they have given permission to use their name) etc. Part of getting better at ethical storytelling for any organization is an honest reflection on what

has gone before so you can understand and prioritize what needs to change, which is why a communications audit is one of the featured recommendations in the guide.
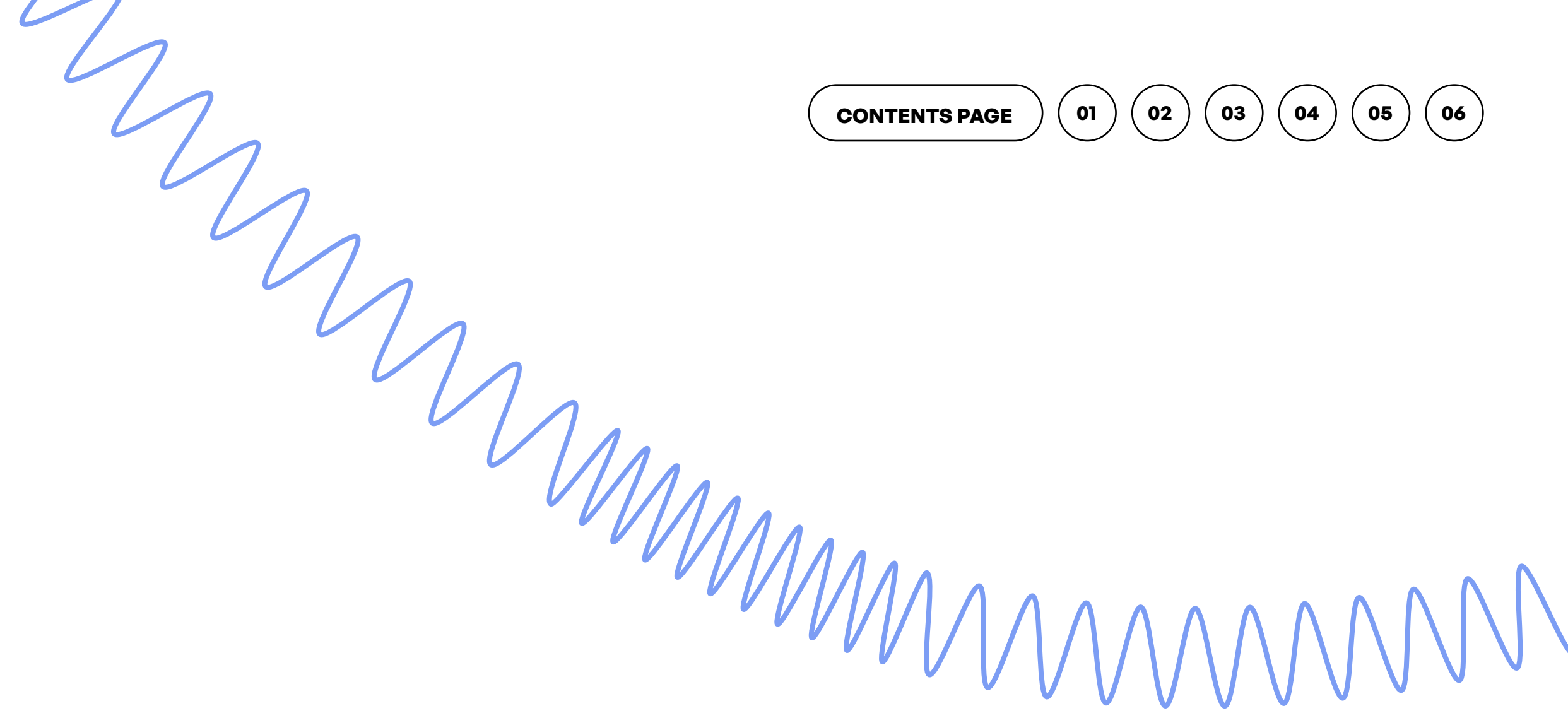
The guide has a wealth of insights and practical tools to support application. Below are some of the key reflections we have come away with as facilitators that are shaping our thinking moving forward:

01

We need to reframe what we mean by ethical storytelling: Ethical storytelling can be misinterpreted as telling the same type of stories, more ethically. However, there was broad consensus across the contributors that we need to rethink the type of stories we are sharing and why. Too often stories are focused on personal stories that either help demonstrate a challenge or the positive impact of a solution. There is an opportunity to widen the type of stories we are telling and put a greater focus on using storytelling to listen - providing a platform for people with lived expertise to share their opinions and ideas, as well as how they are playing a role in shaping solutions. In doing so, we are creating stories that portray the people we serve authentically and respectfully. We are also sharing stories that can support decision-making, help shape more impactful programming and build trust with communities. This is why there is both a moral and business case to expand the role of storytelling. The best outcome would be that we start to see more stories where the people our organizations were set up to serve are shown as people with lived expertise informing and collaborating on solutions.

02

Shared ownership necessitates relinquishing a degree of control: We spent time considering how this guide could complement existing guidance and tools already out there. We were originally planning to consult with a wide range of people, from technical experts to people with lived expertise, but take control of synthesizing all the insights and writing the guide. However, we noticed that whilst many guides are a result of consultation, often the final output is synthesized into one voice. We saw this project as an opportunity to explore what better ethical storytelling can looks like in practice, by sharing the writing amongst different contributors to capture a diversity of perspectives. This meant we had less editorial control over the final output, but we believe that the content is richer for the diversity of perspectives and advice it contains. We are now reflecting on how this affects our wider communications work. How do we balance desire for control with genuine shared ownership of the output? On many projects we leverage co-creation, but we also

have many projects where the content brief or script is already pre-agreed before the content capture stage. How can we create more space for input in these type of projects? For example, as well as capturing pre-agreed content, could we include time to capture responses to open-ended questions during content capture activities to elicit advice and opinions. For example, one question we could ask is 'if you could change or add one thing to the program you have participated in, what would it be?' The content generated can be used in internal communications to inform decision-making and program design and adaptation. This content can also be used in external communications to demonstrate how your organization centers and acts on the perspectives of the people they serve, shaping solutions with them, not for them. In our experience, many organizations are working in this way to develop programs, but this approach is often less evident in their external communications.

03

Let's focus on the moments that matter: Improving ethical storytelling can feel like a mammoth, overwhelming task. Most people don't have the time for this to be a top of mind consideration every day. Through co-creation with our 140 contributors, we identified the moments that matter from client commissioning to creative, production and content storage. If we focus attention on these moments, we believe we will see a disproportionate impact. For example, can more funders start asking for suppliers to include their approach to ethical storytelling within bid submissions and include it in scoring criteria? Can clients and communications partners start having conversations about ethical storytelling during the project set-up phase so decisions are made consciously rather than unconsciously? Can we store content so it is always attached to its context? – i.e. who is featured, would they liked to be named, where was the content captured. We encourage each organization to explore the key moments highlighted on page 86 and think about which ones they are going to prioritise in order to make continued progress on ethical storytelling.

04

We must surface tensions and discuss trade-offs: Some of the practical application suggested in this guide are easy to implement straightaway, but many of the shifts that might lead to the biggest impact are not overnight changes. Therefore, a key action is to promote more active and open conversation with clients, discussing tensions and trade-offs. We have already found that this guide has supported us to have better conversations with clients earlier in the process. For example, we were recently approached by a non-profit organization looking to demonstrate its impact and thought leadership in a given market by telling stories of people whose lives had been either impacted by the problem they are trying to solve or the solution they are providing. Leveraging the insights in this guide, we were able to suggest that if the objective is to build trust across the in-country partners and the communities they serve, perhaps we might want to tell a different type of story. For example, stories that demonstrate how their organization has listened and adapted their approach based on feedback from the communities and country partners. In doing so, we position them as an organization people would be pleased to partner with and to have show up in their communities. This led to a reappraisal not on the objectives of the brief, but the type of storytelling that might best serve it. The question then became whether there was a tension between the objectives the client was seeking to achieve and the more traditional type of stories they had assumed was the solution. This discussion helped to reconcile both the business case and the moral case for moving away from portrayals of 'beneficiaries' to collaborators.

05

We need to build in feedback loops: The chapter on community trust highlights that there is too often an extractive relationship where organizations seek to capture content for their needs but this doesn't always reflect what the community are wishing to say and have heard. Also, there is rarely follow-up with communities on what the final content was, why and where it was used. We will start surfacing this challenge with our clients and suggesting how we could build feedback loop(s) into storytelling processes so that content contributors feel valued and appreciated. Even if restrictive budgets mean that it is not feasible first time round, by surfacing the conversation we are laying the groundwork for this to be considered and acted on the next time.

There are many more reflections we could have shared, but this is representative of the exercise we hope every organization who reads this guide goes through – i.e. leveraging all the perspectives and practical guidance contained to pick their top reflections they plan to act on. Every organization is at a different stage of their journey on ethical storytelling so we expect it will be different for everyone.

We will end by saying that we are honored to have had the opportunity to both facilitate and learn from this project and the vast array of contributors who gave their time to share their perspectives. We would like to thank the Hilton N. Conrad Foundation for providing the grant to make this co-created endeavor possible. We hope it sparks more open conversation about the stories we tell, why we are telling them, who we are telling them for and how we tell them ethically.

We wish you all the best on your own journey towards better ethical storytelling.

Katie Gilbert
Managing Director, M&C Saatchi World Services

Appendix
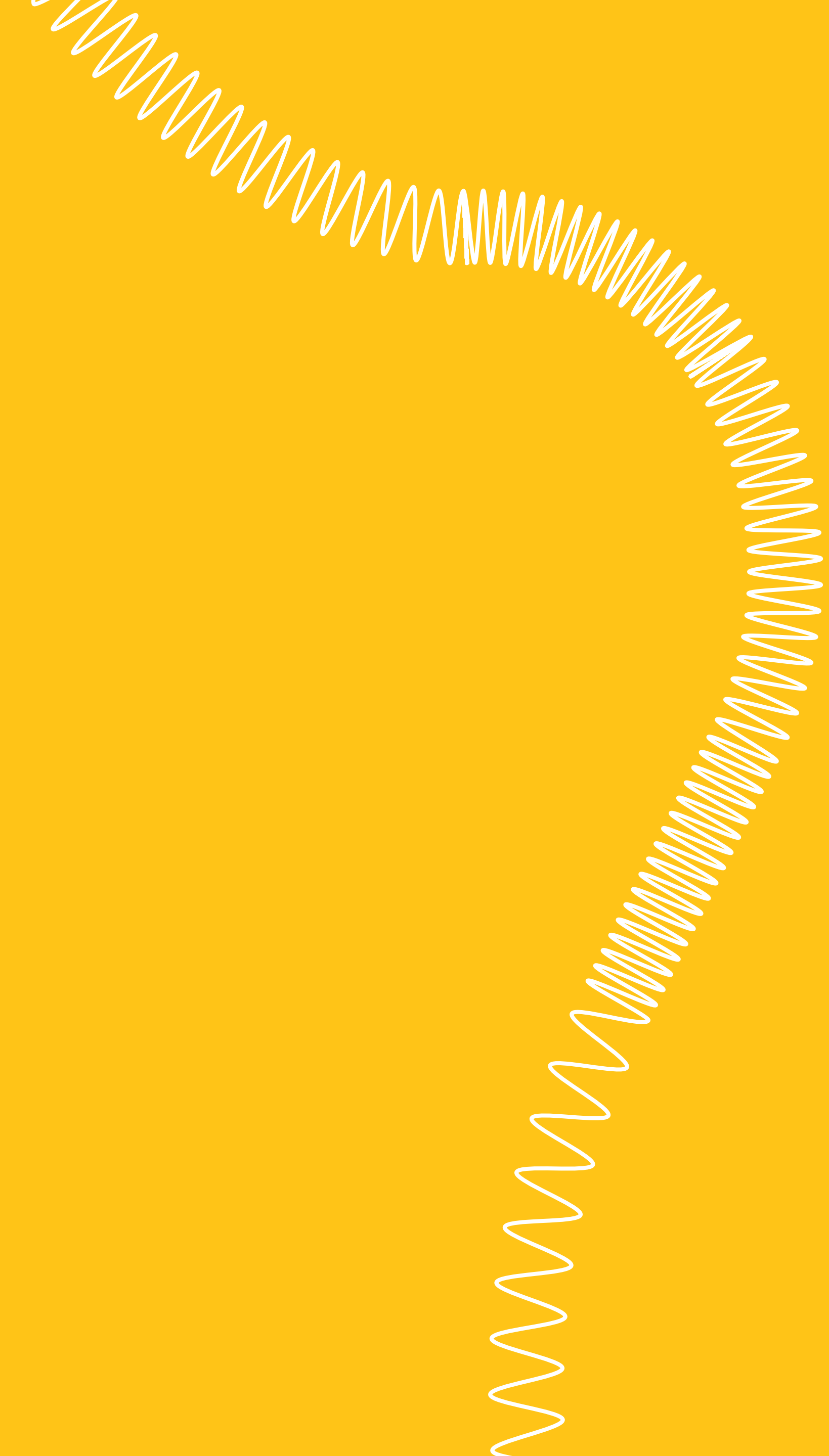
Content by Chapter

Chapter 1

Full focus group discussion led by Chilande Kuloba-Warria   **https://youtu.be/4xipySjcHhg**

Full Gertrude Kabaszi interview audio   **https://youtu.be/dsCt8wv5Emk**

Chapter 2

Full Q&A discussion led by Levis Nderitu   **https://youtu.be/WPQvgBhAqIQ**

Chapter 3

Full Matthew and Tracy Hammond interview   **https://youtu.be/Vi9t_rcGFFw**

Full Michel Lunanga audio   **https://youtu.be/58wHeZt3Q_Q**

Full Diah written interviews: Ari Trismana, Mardiyah Chamim & Michelin Salata   **https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ZHVnaT7GlVQxtD7El7LPaXdzlGffKpAb?usp=share_link**

Chapter 4

Full Raquel Thomas interview   **https://youtu.be/Nj43Ofuodcl**

Chapter 5

Additional Reading List   **https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1f3QUtG1qSm7lHWZcNkGGnQvtQQPKPuhB/edit?usp=share_link&ouid=104773114502134877728&rtpof=true&sd=true**

Chapter 6

Full Shakil Ahmed interview   **https://youtu.be/-0k-7fAY13g**

Full Lamea Tanjin Tanha interview   **https://youtu.be/_uddCBj8mXM**

Full Peter Torres Fremlin interview   **https://youtu.be/EEgPblLikac**