

COURSE MATERIAL AND TOOLBOX



REFRAMING **THE MESSAGE**

CHANGING NARRATIVES

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LET THE PEOPLE TELL STORIES ABOUT DEVELOPMENT WORK



“We don’t need a new story, we need many new stories.” So wrote CISU’s chairwoman, Susanne Volqvartz in an opinion piece on information and development work for Altinget online newspaper. A wealth of new stories should show the Danish public all the facets of development work, thus enhancing their knowledge of global challenges, and perhaps inducing them to get involved.

Many of the thoughts aired by CISU’s chairwoman in her article have been taken up by CISU in the project ‘Reframing the Message’. There is vast potential throughout CISU’s 285 member organisations. They can tell the story about development work in 285 ways coming face to face with the Danes. Because CISU’s member organisations are out there among the Danes: at the local supermarket, at the children’s school, in the sports club, across the fence with the neighbour. This is the potential that CISU’s European project Reframing the Message set out to tap into through a series of activities and communication courses over a two-year period from 2013 to 2014.

The present material is intended to give you basic knowledge about the project, the reflections on communication and information work developed throughout its duration, and how you can carry on reframing the message.

The material can be seen as consisting of a theoretical and a practical part. The former will introduce you to the theories on which Reframing the Message was built, setting out how the theories have been embodied in a variety of contexts.

The practical part takes you through various phases of communication work. You will read tips on how to write a constructive story that engages recipients, and you can learn about how to work with the press and draw up a communication plan. To make it even easier for you to use the material, the toolbox can be taken out and be kept right at hand whenever you need it.

Enjoy reading.



“In CISU alone, we have 285 organisation members. If we all decide in earnest that we want to communicate and to make this a part of our strategy, we can go incredibly far in creating the necessary knowledge.”

Susanne Volqvartz

“The time is over when the Danish public could be reached through mass media and uniform messages about charity, aid and solidarity with the world’s most vulnerable people. Firstly, there are many different models of good development cooperation, and there are many political responses. We cannot help this. Secondly, the target groups are far too varied for us to communicate with them as a homogenous group.”

*Susanne Volqvartz,
CISU’s chairwoman in an opinion piece
for Altinget online newspaper*

TWO YEARS TO SET A EUROPEAN AGENDA



Reframing the Message was an EU-funded training and communication project, which was implemented by CISU – Civil Society in Development in cooperation with the Dutch organisation Wilde Ganzen and the Czech Divoké Husy. In the autumn of 2012, the EU approved the three organisations’ application to strengthen development organisations’ communication about development cooperation. Indeed Reframing the Message aimed to help popular organisations get across their stories about what they are working on alongside their respective partners all over the world. Precisely as CISU’s chairwoman wrote in *Altinet* newspaper.

The project objective in Denmark was to enhance CISU members’ communication about development work so as to convey the nuances of these endeavours in a respectful manner. Among other subjects, the Danish organisations were trained in how to describe the underlying causes of poverty and inequality, thus enabling them to seek, over time, to influence the Danish public’s deeper commitment to and understanding of global issues. Likewise in the Netherlands and Czech Republic, organisations and popular initiatives were involved throughout the project period. The three organisations together forged links around Europe, both to be inspired by how others address the issue and to lead the way with a practical hands-on approach to the major discussions of principle. In the section “What do they talk about on the international scene?” on page 18, you too can delve into the initiatives that inspired Reframing the Message.



The project began in the boreal spring of 2013, and continued until December 2014. Throughout its duration, CISU offered courses, held seminars, arranged competitions, and set up special workshops, where participants could exchange experiences and views of each other’s work in order to strengthen their communication, both with their partners and with the Danish public. The goal of all courses was to equip participants

Fact box on ‘reframing’

The official objective of the project Reframing the Message as described to the EU reads:

That a diverse band of civil society organisations work to change the public’s views of development work. The organisations should seek to inform the public about the progress taking place in many developing countries, and at the same time describe the structural causes that underlie much poverty and inequality.



with hands-on communication tools and to familiarise them with the communication approach put forward by Reframing the Message.

In the course of two years, participants in Reframing the Message had the chance to learn how to draw up a communication strategy, use social media, convey information on websites, work with the press, give compelling talks, and prepare lively contents for online platforms with a smartphone, all this in cooperation with their partners in various developing countries. (Note: there is a list of all courses and activities in the project at the end of this booklet, see page 38.)



How to 'reframe' a message

The title of the project – Reframing the Message – refers to how we view developing countries and to new ways of portraying them. The 'frame' (read more about framing on page 10) is what determines the perspective. So reframing is an attempt to bring new perspectives to already-known stories. What is meant in practice by reframing our message, or our entire communication about development cooperation, is an effort to replace existing negative narratives and images, which the public has come to associate with development cooperation, with some constructive and solution-oriented stories and pictures. Thus we wish to move away from the perception of developing countries as exclusively problem-ridden and mired in an unchangeable situation, focusing more on the potentials present in developing countries and among their populations.

The World's Best News

Another example of a wish for reframed communication about development issues is the joint national campaign "The World's Best News", which each year in September, from 2009 to 2015, distributed good news from developing countries to Danes on the go early in the morning through a special print edition of the free newspaper MetroXpress. The campaign sought to boost positive stories about development work to let the Danes know that it makes a difference. The campaign, which became a success with over 90 participant organisations and even more business partners, was also met with criticism, as many found it to be untrustworthy to report only on heartening progress.

Out



- hopelessness, victimisation rhetoric, problem-oriented communication, simplified messages and stories implying that it is only us here in Denmark who can change the state of affairs.

In



- constructive and nuanced communication, room to convey structural causes of poverty, giving partners their own voice.



COMFORT ZONE COMMUNICATION



Most of CISU's member organisations can trot out the recipe for a solid rights-based civil society project in a developing country by rote. It is about establishing a sound partnership with a local organisation and thinking through all the processes – obstacles as well as opportunities – prior to project start. A rights-based civil society project addresses the causes of poverty (e.g. gender inequality or poor governance) rather than alleviating symptoms (e.g. by paying school fees or building a children's home). This helps ensure that the project, over time, modifies underlying social structures.

Curiously, we may say the same about communication as about civil society projects. Information work must also give recipients an understanding of how development cooperation takes place. It should tell stories about what development cooperation requires and is able to achieve, both the limitations of individual projects and the scope for pushing wider agendas.



It's comfy in the zone

Comfort zone communication means communicating about our work as we have always done it. Although the way we go about projects is in constant flux and has changed significantly since the 1970s, we continue to relate the projects as we did back then. After all, it is just communication, right?

This may seem obvious, but day-to-day reality in a whole lot of organisations, where resources are scarce, has led to minimal priority being given to communication, leaving it as “something we do when we have got time to spare”. And when time is in short supply, we often end up reporting on our work in the same way that we have always done it. As one may put it, somewhat provocatively, we tell our stories within our comfort zone using the same formula: “The world is full of problems; it is good that we relieve them; you should thank us.” Such comfort zone communication tends to be churned out without dwelling on the actual world view that it reiterates (that there are no human resources in developing countries, and that only we can relieve the problems). The common denominator of such an approach is that communication is treated as a secondary aspect of carrying out development work. However, communication and information work has to come in from the cold. In some cases, it can turn into the very driving force of development work, if we manage to engage the Danes, give an account of resources and potentials, and be sincere as to what it takes to bring about change.

Finding solutions together

Online you can find numerous blogs, websites and campaigns seeking to break down stereotypes and comfort zone communication. Acting across borders, the various initiatives set out to create a new narrative about developing countries and how to find solutions together, both at home and out in the world.

In a globalised world, where problems are no longer rooted or solvable in a single country, a great deal of civil society organisations face the challenge of conveying the complexity and opening the eyes of fellow citizens to ways of working together for shared solutions, not least by showing how developing countries possess powerful human resources who also wish to contribute to change, locally and internationally.

VALUES INFORM OUR ACTIONS



Before delving further into the myriad stories, how to present them, and what we may gain from them, we shall take a brief look at a theory of human values. This is introduced because it can provide a useful entry point to discussing what is valued within your organisation. In addition, the theory of basic human values offers an understanding of how the organisation's values and communication are linked.

Through his research, the social psychologist Shalom Schwartz has identified 56 values, including freedom, loyalty, security, power etc., which are held by everyone, but prioritised differently. These values are the root of our motivations and the standard by which we judge our own and other people's acts. In fact, according to Schwartz, our values control the choices that we make throughout our lives in terms of career, family structure, views of ecology

and sustainability, political standpoints, volunteering, etc. However, the 56 values are not merely floating around one by one in our consciousness. They are interrelated, Schwartz has found out. He has mapped out the values and entered them into a circular model, which illustrates how individual values influence one another. He calls this model the values circumplex. The values circumplex shows how the 56 values are situated relative to one another, and which values are associated. For example, on the next page you can see that the values of 'broadminded' and 'equality' are close to one another in the values circumplex, which means that they are closely linked, whereas disparate values, such as 'wealth' and 'a spiritual life' are distant from one another. Thus one can read the values circumplex to comprehend how the 56 values are interrelated. It is important to get a sense of this before we subsequently turn to how our communication can set out to affect particular values. You can read more about this in the sections from page 10 onwards.



Points to remember

- Basic values affect our acts
- Values are interrelated, influencing one another.
- Values can be activated through language and the way in which we frame our messages.

The 56 values are ordered into ten different value clusters. Each value cluster is named after the overall prevailing attitude found within the various values that pertain to it. The value clusters are also described on the next page below the values circumplex.



Good exercise

Ask yourself and others in your organisation:

- Which values do we cherish most in our private life?
- Which values do we have in our organisation?
- Which values do we wish to pass on to our recipients?



- UNIVERSALISM**
Understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.
- BENEVOLENCE**
Preserving and enhancing the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact.
- TRADITION**
Respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self.
- CONFORMITY**
Restraint of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.
- SECURITY**
Safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships and of self.
- POWER**
Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.
- ACHIEVEMENT**
Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.
- HEDONISM**
Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.
- STIMULATION**
Excitement, novelty and challenge in life.
- SELF-DIRECTION**
Independent thought and action; choosing, creating, exploring.



ON THE SEESAW



As mentioned, we all hold these various values within ourselves, but we differ in how much weight we attribute to each of them. This prioritisation influences our actions, such as choice of career, family structure and political convictions. Thus you may well value personal challenges and pleasures in your life, but it is not until the values are repeatedly activated, e.g. through language or concrete acts, that they become a part of how you live your life, making the prioritisation stand out. The Danish people obviously vary widely in what they value in life, and this is all very well. Nevertheless, we can use the values theory to work actively with the way in which we communicate, so that those we address (target groups within the Danish population) will come to share the sets of values that prevail within each one of our organisations.

In his work with the values circumplex, Schwartz has made three significant discoveries about human values:

1. The seesaw effect: The more you articulate and activate a set of values, the more you weaken the values situated at the opposite end of the values circumplex.
2. The spillover effect: When a value is activated, other closely related values automatically come to the fore.
3. The muscle effect: The more a particular value is activated, the stronger it will become in the recipient's mind.

Accordingly, when our communication activates values from the cluster of 'universalism', the opposite values from the cluster of 'power' are weakened. Our target group will thus be more likely to set their own needs aside and help others. It means that how we communicate about development cooperation impinges on the level of the Danish public's engagement in development issues. Our communication contributes to activating particular sets of values in recipients, hence suggesting a particular course of action. In the longer term, our communication can strengthen the Danish population's values in the area of 'universalism', thus enhancing understanding of and support for the shared goal of a more just world.



Spillover effect: When activating a value cluster in one side of the values circumplex, it encourages the views and actions situated closely to the activated values.



Seesaw effect: When activating a value cluster in one side of the values circumplex, it inhibits the values, views and actions situated in the opposite side of the values circumplex.



Not just about words

Working with your organisation's values does not only make a mark on your communication. It also encompasses your strategy, internal set-up and structure of partnership cooperation.

VALUES ARE THE TRUE CURRENCY – FOR YOU AND YOUR AUDIENCES



Everything that we communicate as human beings is value-laden in one way or another. Sometimes we are unaware of it, say, when writing the minutes of the last board meeting. Sometimes we are highly self-conscious of our wish to signal particular values to recipients, say, when preparing a campaign. However, some values are more geared towards the goal of working for global justice. These are the ones within the values cluster of ‘universalism’. Here we appeal to our recipients’ understanding of, for instance, freedom, justice and the common good, as opposed to when we play on values concerning money and power.

Become part of the story

Values are the true currency of storytelling. They give civil society organisations a particularly precious point of departure. On social media we see how the most popular posts tend to be those that express strong values. We choose to share what inspires and motivates us. We do this to create a story about ourselves, showing what we value in life. This gives us an opportunity as civil society organisations. We can become part of the story which our recipients would like to tell about themselves.



Individual benefits:

A slogan such as “contribute 30 dollars and enter the contest to win a car” diverts attention from the cause for a better world, focusing instead on each recipient’s self-gain. It leaves recipients more inclined to act in their own interest rather than to help others.

Community spirit:

Means explaining the underlying causes of inequality and poverty, appealing to recipients’ wish for, say, a clean environment, solidarity and empathy. What matters is to put across messages that speak to recipients’ community spirit. This will open our recipients’ eyes to how the world is interconnected and lead to a deeper understanding of how we can work together for a more just world.



Ask yourselves:

- What are your visions for a more just world?
- How can your recipients share your vision and make it their own?



‘POOR’ MEANS A STUDENT, AN AFRICAN AND A BEGGAR IN PARIS



We now know that language – in terms of how we communicate and conduct information work – can be used to create consistency between the values of an organisation and the values passed on to recipients. To elaborate even further, we shall look at a concept that may help us ensure such consistency. It is the concept of framing. The theory of framing is a useful tool to understand the interplay between communication and values. Firstly, we need to understand what a frame is. Then we look at how to use it as a tool in our own communication.

What is a frame?

A frame can be conceived as the glasses through which we see reality. It encapsulates the combined knowledge and experience that we possess of a given field, all of which underpins how we interpret the information presented to us. When we hear, for instance, the word ‘poor’, all our understandings and images of that term are activated.

It is not just about having no money in the pocket or the bank account. It can also evoke an image of a beggar on the street in Paris, the student’s experience of eating pasta

with ketchup for seven days in a row, and perceptions of persons in developing countries. The word ‘poor’ encompasses all that and more, all of which combines to make up the word’s frame.

When we ‘frame’ something, we choose certain elements of reality and let them come to the fore in a text. This is done to draw attention to a particular problem and to promote its solution. When we frame, we appeal to certain aspects of people’s knowledge of a given subject and try to control what images appear inside their heads. That is, whether they should think of the Parisian beggar, the pasta-eating student or people in a developing country.

The journalist’s take

Framing is comparable to the journalist’s take on a story. Journalists make up their own mind as to what they want to emphasise. When they interview a source, they receive far more information than what they can put into an article. Accordingly, they choose a take on the story which controls the information that goes into the final article, and ultimately what the reader learns about the subject.



Framing:

- Means the glasses through which we see and understand the world.
- Can be compared to journalists choosing their take on a story.
- Involves selection of particular images and metaphors to be conveyed, and the deliberate omission of those images that one does not want recipients to associate with the story.
- Frames need to be repeated to build an impact.



‘LAND OF OPPORTUNITIES’ OR ‘HEART OF DARKNESS’?



A fundamental principle of framing is that a frame – the particular take on a story – must be repeated many times before taking hold in a recipient’s mind. When we link a piece of information to a word on numerous occasions, it will, in the end, become included in the frame for that word.

This also applies to how we put the surrounding world and development cooperation into words. Is Africa, for instance, the ‘land of opportunities’ or the ‘heart of darkness’? It is the same continent we are talking about, albeit emphasising two different aspects.

We build frames by associating particular words with each other. If we harp on the same stereotypes, e.g. that all Africans are lazy and corrupt, they end up becoming cemented in the Danish public’s perception of Africans. Likewise, when we always show pictures of or refer to Africa in connection with development cooperation, the whole African continent ends up being equated with poverty and aid. However, this is only one part of reality. For sure, poverty is a major problem in vast parts of Africa, among other places, but the true picture also shows that the middle class is growing in many African countries. And in addition to being poor, African populations are also vigorous, innovative, creative, curious, hard-working (add many more terms yourself).

Not a single story

We can also conceive of framing as a way of introducing light and shade into the images of poor countries and their populations. This means that we must tell as many stories as possible, running the whole gamut of nuances, to show recipients that developing countries offer more than a single story – the one about poverty.

When we continue to tell the same story, using the same frame again and again about hopelessness reigning supreme in developing countries, we deprive our recipients of the myriad other stories about schooling, business and family life, which also characterise the day-to-day experiences of many people in developing countries. Thus the only story about developing countries becomes the one about hopelessness and inertia.

Reframing the Message set out to confront such one-sidedness. We need to bring forth the thousands of stories from developing countries. This will leave room for both negative and positive stories, but first and foremost constructive stories, which also suggest feasible solutions. All those nuances will bring us closer to reality. Then recipients on their own can form a realistic impression of global challenges.



“It had not occurred to me that anybody in his family could actually make something. All I had heard about them was how poor they were, so that it had become impossible for me to see them as anything else but poor. Their poverty was my single story of them.”

“I think I started to realize that stories are so powerful – particularly powerful because we’re not always aware of how powerful they are.”

*Chimamanda Adichie
Nigerian writer*



FOTO: JAKOB DALL



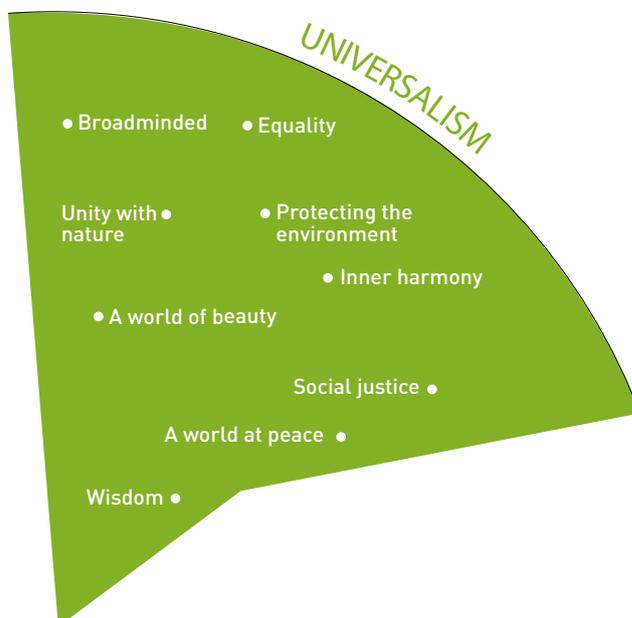
TURNING FRAMING INTO POPULAR SUPPORT



Given what we now know about values and how to bring them into play in our communication by means of framing, we can shine the spotlight on systematic efforts to create consistency between our organisation's values and its way of communicating. This will also be useful in terms of strengthening Danish civil society organisations' popular support base, that is, of enhancing our target groups' engagement in our cause. The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' "Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society" from June 2014 says, in its section on information activities: "Danish organisations also need to make a concerted effort to maintain and enhance their popular support in Denmark" (Danida 2014, p. 35). Accordingly, it is indeed a political priority to work on civil society organisations' roots in the Danish population.

The ways in which civil society organisations can seek to engage recipients in their causes are as plentiful as the number of organisations. Here you will learn how to use the values circumplex to comprehend the link between how your organisation communicates and recipients' engagement in your cause.

If you want those with whom you communicate – your recipients – to know you and, over time, perhaps share your values and visions of a more just world, you can concentrate your messages on particular value clusters. The values situated in the cluster of 'universalism' in Schwartz's values circumplex (see the values circumplex on page 8) make up a useful tool to create common understanding of the cause between your organisation and recipients. When your communication activates universalistic values, recipients will be more inclined to find that development work is important. Just as important as appealing to values pertaining to universalism in your communication, values in the categories of 'power' and 'achievement' should be used with care, as they tend to push people towards a more individualistic course of action, telling them to think first and foremost about themselves. Accordingly, recipients will be less inclined to support development cooperation over time, and even to attribute any importance to our working together towards global justice. That is, the opposite of what we want to achieve with our communication. Indeed, in the long run, appealing to values of 'power' and 'achievement' may inadvertently weaken the Danish public's engagement in development.



FINDING DANISH FRAMES



Thus far you have been presented with international research regarding basic human values and communication on development cooperation. In the Danish context, the report “Finding Danish Frames” was published in 2013. A team of researchers from Roskilde University scrutinised 22 campaigns from five Danish development organisations. The report sheds light on how Danish development organisations frame global poverty and international development cooperation. The researchers examined which frames and values predominated in the five organisations’ campaigns. The analysis behind the report identified six overall frames which characterised the campaigns investigated. Each frame was identified and explained within seven areas: 1) causal reasoning, 2) actors and roles, 3) moral basis, 4) emotional basis, 5) possible solutions/actions, 6) metaphors and choice of vocabulary, and 7) visual devices.

You can read more about how each of the six frames describe the seven areas in the report Finding Danish Frames – for details, see the section ‘Learn more’ on page 39.

Use ‘charity’ and ‘tragedy’ with care

As we become conscious of the frames that we use, we also notice that certain frames and values are less favourable to our pursuit of a more just world and of greater engagement among the Danish public. Frames about both ‘tragedy’ and ‘charity’ may be counterproductive by undermining the values of universalism. This is because they tell recipients that the world’s problems can be solved with a single donation, or rather that it is so downright hopeless that all we can do it to put a plaster on the wound. Accordingly, such frames should be used with care and possibly be balanced by other frames.



The six frames from the Danish study

1. Fighting for rights:
Human rights violations lead to injustice and poverty.
2. Solidarity:
Political oppression causes injustice and poverty and suppresses development.
3. Charity:
Poverty is endemic but donations can create a positive change
4. Economy as a competitive game:
Poverty is a result of structural economic inequality and injustice.
5. Tragedy:
Poverty is a tragedy with innocent victims.
6. Renaissance:
The Global South is full of (business) opportunities.

Take a look at your own communication

A good way of starting out can be to assess your own organisation’s communication based on the seven areas described above. What are the underlying messages in the stories that you tell? Try to go through your latest newsletter, campaign or information activity to look into how you work with:

- Causal reasoning
- Actors and roles
- Moral basis
- Emotional basis
- Possible solutions/actions
- Metaphors and choice of vocabulary
- Visual devices

LISTEN TO THE VOICES OF THE WORLD



Do you need inspiration for how to work with values and different stories from developing countries? You can also challenge your own storytelling ways by inviting provocative comments from strong personalities from around the world. Provocations can improve your communication, as you may come to see things from new perspectives, enabling you to broaden the scope of your narrative. Social media offer good opportunities to follow what is being discussed and what goes on around the world. They provide an alternative to traditional communication, and there is typically less distance between people in the social media.

- If we listen to partners and keep up-to-date with general trends, our results improve.
- We can learn something we might have forgotten.
- It provides new ideas.
- It strengthens our credibility.

Digital dialogue

The social media are an obvious place to start an online dialogue with your partners. Look at it as a playground where you can:

- Try to contribute pictures and comments on each other's Facebook pages.
- Strengthen and spell out the relationship between you and your partner, also towards the surrounding world.
- Experiment with how much capacity your partner has to contribute towards your communication.



The list of social media – including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, apps and various blogs – is endless, and it is time-consuming to be active on all of them. So make up your mind how much time you want to set aside and which media you want to dedicate your efforts to. You can always begin by listening. This does not take up quite as many resources. Here is a brief introduction to where you can start.

Facebook and Twitter

There are some differences between these two media. While Facebook is used by virtually everybody, Twitter remains a niche medium in many countries. Nevertheless, being on Twitter might be useful, as you can use the sign # (hashtag) to search for persons, words or events, seeing everything that is tweeted about the subject. For example, by searching #tellCNN, you can gain insights into what people in eastern Africa, in particular, think about particular international media. Facebook, on the other hand, is good at keeping up the conversation and building relationships across organisations.

Blogs

If you are in doubt what to listen for, there are various blogs which strive, in their distinct ways, to bring the myriad stories from around the world to light. Here is a small selection:

- ‘Global Voices’ is an international blog where ordinary citizens write about events in their own countries. You can get first-hand accounts from all the nations on Earth, and even contribute your own stories, if there is a journalist inside of you eager to come out.
- The ironically titled ‘Africa Is a Country’ is a US-based blog writing on Africa in the widest sense. The sharp, sarcastic tone towards Western media and opinion formers will often put a grin on your face. It is scathing of stereotypes and of Westerners who believe they are going to save the world on their own.
- ‘Africa Is Done Suffering’ is another global blog, which focuses on potentials and strong personalities across the continent.

CASE

WhatsApp became the shortcut to dialogue

One of CISU’s member organisations was deeply inspired by a course on how to use a smartphone to produce lively contents for its various online platforms, all this in close cooperation with its partners. The various apps to which they had been introduced during the course were brought along to a major partner seminar in Zimbabwe. Here they realised together that using the apps presented would be too risky for partners, as their reports would leave lasting traces on the Internet. On the other hand, they were already using the messaging app WhatsApp to communicate internally. Today partners send a flow of documentation, short video updates and pictures to the Danish organisation via WhatsApp.



WHAT DO THEY TALK ABOUT ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE?



Not only Reframing the Message has focused on how we tell stories from and about developing countries. Indeed there are several initiatives – both in Europe and elsewhere on the globe – attempting to challenge stereotypical comfort zone communication and sow the seeds of a new narrative about development work and about the countries with which we cooperate.

DEEEP

The most radical of the initiatives which have inspired and collaborated with Reframing the Message is the European project DEEEP. DEEEP argues that it is no longer sufficient to change how we communicate. We need to change the whole system. According to DEEEP, the ways in which we have worked with development in the past decades have failed to address, contest and change the structural causes of poverty. This is why DEEEP seeks to raise the debate throughout international development circles. It can be inspiring to hear how others, outside our own little backwater, reflect upon and work with change.

Smart CSOs Lab

There is also the European initiative Smart CSOs Lab. This laboratory for intelligent civil society organisations examines how to rethink the story about change in the world. We should restore the belief that it is actually possible to create a better and more just world, and this is incumbent on civil society organisations.

The Smart CSOs Lab holds conferences, publishes about engaging communication, blogs about challenges, and invites persons from civil society circles to reflect on the status quo. One of their publications “Civil society in Transition – broken stories, seeds of new stories and a new activism” mentions demands for growing fundraising to eliminate poverty as a story that has ceased to work. Among the reasons are: “The whole logic of the aid industry is still based on a hierarchy relationship between donors and recipients, far from the idea of a relationship of solidarity”.

Common Cause

This English organisation is not actually new. Common Cause has long worked on how organisations can become sharper at bringing their organisational values to bear on the stories that they tell about themselves. Its website contains plenty of good examples of what value-based communication may look like. Its scope is not confined to the development sector, so at Common Cause you can also be inspired by how other sectors use values in communication.

If you want to dig even deeper, you can take a look at the Bill Gates Foundation’s latest campaign, The Narrative Project, which confronts myths about development. You can also read about the US initiative, The Rules, which wishes to take an activist approach to telling new stories. Finally, there are our fellow Nordics from Africa for Norway, who constantly produce humorous viral hits aimed at breaking down stereotypes about developing countries.



BEYOND 2015 – NEW SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Much progress has been achieved concerning several of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). But now their time is up, and we are looking towards what should happen after their deadline in 2015, the so-called post-2015 development agenda.

After the MDGs, there is no longer any wish to set goals with a new expiry date. Instead efforts are underway to formulate global sustainability objectives that are not confined to developing countries, but also set out how rich countries should commit themselves to favouring the climate and the world's poor. In 2012, Danish development organisations prepared a joint statement of five principles which the Danish government should seek to apply to the new sustainable development goals:

1. The new goals should combine development and sustainability, and apply to all countries.
2. The new goals should take a human rights-based approach.
3. The new goals should commit rich countries to ensuring coherence.
4. Better involvement of civil society.
5. The new goals should set out concrete financing commitments.

The new goals are being prepared. The UN System Task Team has recommended 17 goals and 169 targets, far too many to be presented here.

Most importantly, if we are to continue to influence the world's politicians to keep their promises, we need to spread knowledge of the new sustainable development goals among the Danish people, so that they too can take part in putting pressure on governments. To this effect, you and your organisations can help by reporting on how the work carried out alongside your partners contributes to fulfilling one or several of the goals. It can also be a way of enriching a person-centred story with a wider macro perspective.

In the toolbox, on page 25, you can read more about how to work with the micro and macro perspective in your stories.

TOOLBOX



There is no single recipe for good communication about development issues. What matters is to be aware of the devices that we use to communicate, and of how the framing of our messages impacts recipients. Nevertheless, there are a few points to keep in mind. In the next few pages, you will find various tools to help you when sitting in front of your desk about to start on a story. You will be presented with a method for developing ideas, for conducting interviews, and for building up your story to improve the chances of recipients engaging with it. Many of the tools have been devised by journalist Cathrine Gyldensted, who has published the teaching book “Håndbog i konstruktiv journalistik” [Handbook on constructive journalism] (Ajour 2014).

DEVELOPING IDEAS

— FROM FAULT FINDING TO SEEING OPPORTUNITIES



Already before you know which story you want to tell, you can work on seeing things from a perspective that is different from what you might be used to. To this effect, six headings may inspire you to think of other ways of telling a story than the usual one. Not all headings might be equally relevant to your story, but perhaps they will help you focus on solutions, engagement and learning. Rather than exclusively highlighting the problems, the six headings might bring you to see opportunities in your story which you had otherwise failed to notice.



Feel your way

Think about the story you want to tell. Then try to ask yourself all the questions written in the bubbles. Do any of them give rise to ideas for other ways of framing your story?

POSITIVE FEELINGS

Does anything in your story evoke positive feelings?

RELATIONS

Which relations (positive and negative) does your story suggest?

MEANING

Which parts of the story are meaningful to recipients?

ENGAGEMENT

Which parts of the story might engage recipients?
Does anything in your story refer to a particular engagement in a cause or in something else?

SUCCEEDING IN SOMETHING

Does anybody in your story succeed in something, whether in important or in trivial matters?

SOLUTIONS

What are the solutions to the problems that your story recounts? Are there other opportunities that you have passed over?

KILL YOUR VICTIM



Despite this somewhat macabre heading, this is not about actual murder. It concerns the way in which we approach our sources. This is because, when talking to people, the questions that we ask shape how they come across. If we only inquire into what is difficult, tough and sad, well, then we contribute to casting our interviewee in the role of the victim, which might indeed not suit him or her.

Conducting an interview is useful to learn about a person's experiences and feelings. We can also use it as research to gain insights into a particular subject. These two forms are respectively the experience interview and the research interview. In the case of the experience interview, it is important not to stigmatise our interviewee as a victim beforehand, thus asking only questions that focus on what is difficult. Because perhaps the interviewee has a powerful story about how he or she handles the situation. When conducting an experience interview with people who have either gone through tragedy or whose life situation is deeply unhappy, there are typically three states of mind in which they may find themselves.

1. Resigned. There is nothing constructive or encouraging to say.
2. Open and spontaneously reflective. The penny drops during the interview. "Actually, come to think of it..."
3. Reflective. Ready to reflect on the situation.

If you are aware of these three phases of responding to hardship before starting your interview, you are more likely to take care to inquire into the state of mind concerned with the right questions.

Of course, not all persons and situations are suitable for asking developmental questions focusing on the interviewee's learning. Sometimes people are quite simply victims, say, after a tsunami, and there is nothing developmental to say about the situation at the time when you meet them. Nevertheless, we can choose if we want to focus on the individual victim or broaden the story to include what has caused the person's situation. You can read more about how to link individual accounts to wider contexts in the section headlined "Structu-what?" on page 25.



Examples of constructive questions:

- What will it take to solve [...]?
- Would you like to help solve [...]?
- When do you do so?
- Is there anything others should help to do?
- How can you overcome possible obstacles?
- What happens if you solve [...]?
- Who has helped/supported you?
- What have you learned that others may learn from?
- How have you taken responsibility for changing [...]?
- And how did you experience it?



Kill your victim

- Inquire into feelings other than those that are difficult.

A COURSE OF OBSTACLES



Notwithstanding our pursuit of constructiveness, putting across solutions and learning rather than problems, the stories must not turn into what might be called a form of ‘positiv propaganda’. This would be just as untrustworthy as painting only gloom and doom. In this sense, the concept of an obstacle is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it helps make the story more credible, and secondly, it adds some dynamics to draw attention. Just think of Cinderella. How boring it would be if she simply strode up to the palace and married the prince. No, the fairy tale is only interesting because Cinderella has to overcome a course of obstacles along the way.

Likewise, you must remember to include the obstacles when telling your story. Be open and sincere as to what is difficult. Here are a few cues to help you present the obstacles:

- What may cause [...] not to succeed?
- Who has a stake in opposing the process?
- What is decisive to realise [...]?
- Does [...] impact the community? The family? The country?



Point to remember

Always present the obstacles in your story. The world is not perfect, nor can your story be.

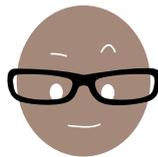
COMPOSITION

- SET RECIPIENTS ON A GOOD COURSE



Finally, you can also work on how your story begins and ends in order to engage the recipient in its subject matter. The way in which your story is composed impinges on the mood in which you leave audiences. Do you leave them with a feeling of hope and belief in change or with a sense of resignation and dejection? This obviously depends on the actual story – some things are so terrible that the tragedy blots out everything else. Nevertheless, you can do your part to leave your recipients moved and enthused. Think about how you begin your story, since this will show recip-

ients whether it is mainly a funny, surprising, powerful or sad story they are about to read. Then elaborate on your story to allow for nuances, complexity and obstacles. This will enable you to surprise and challenge your recipients, but just as importantly, to strengthen your own and your story's credibility. Perhaps what matters most is to end your story with a point that leaves your recipients wiser and/or thoughtful. Because this is how you set recipients on an active course.



THE BEGINNING: How your story begins sets the mood and signals to recipients what type of story they are about to read.

ALONG THE WAY: Let your story unfold. BUT remember the obstacles and also present what is difficult.

THE END: Set your recipients on a good course by leaving them moved and enthused through a positive click of the heels before ending your story. Refer to learning, development or obstacles overcome.

STRUCTU-WHAT?



You have probably heard the expression before: the structural causes of poverty and inequality. Within the project Reframing the Message it was often mentioned as something we wanted to hear more about. But what does it actually mean to present the structural causes of poverty? It means zooming out from the detailed portrait to show the broader picture. The story about a girl's life in rural Liberia cannot be seen in isolation from major issues such as, for example, gender equality, education policy, the right to decide over one's body, etc. Highlighting structural causes of poverty has to do with also presenting how the individual girl's life is related to the general context in the rest of the country, continent and world in which she lives. When we fight for the rights of coastal fishing communities, the focus should not just be on each fisherman being able to support himself and his family, but just as much on fisheries agreements between the EU and developing countries, i.e. on how the situation of each fishing family is affected by international treaties.

Discussing structural causes of poverty is akin to taking a broader perspective on the individual story. It puts across some of the complexity of development cooperation. When we communicate about structural causes of poverty and inequality, we also help give the Danish public a more realistic insight into what it means to work with development, and thus also what it actually takes to move towards global justice, and how problems cannot be solved with some donations.

The micro and macro perspective

When telling a story, pay attention to whether you are at the micro or the macro level. The former will typically tell the story of a single person, i.e. "the little story". It has the advantage that it is easier for recipients to identify with an individual. Conversely, it may be harder to paint the broader picture based on the personal story. Thus, you may ponder how to include the macro perspective. How does the personal story relate to a wider (political) agenda or trend? Because the macro perspective is where you expand your story and link the little story to the big story, just as in the case of the coastal fisherman and EU fisheries agreements.



Structural causes of poverty

The story is linked to an agenda that goes beyond the individual project or person. It takes in perspectives or stories about advocacy and the work behind it. Seeing the broader picture fosters understanding and engagement in the long run.

This is the story's macro level.



Project communication

This revolves around itself and only presents a small part of what the project is about. Here we are at the micro level.

HAND OVER THE MICROPHONE



We can also reframe the message by giving talking time to the people it is all about, either our partners or target groups in the South. Rather than speaking on their behalf, focusing on our own view of the situation, we can let our partner speak directly in our communication. This serves to highlight that people in the South are active agents of change in their own lives.

CASE

From reframing course to capacity-building of partner

Following activities within the project Reframing the Message, a CISU member organisation set out to strengthen its partner's communication and information work. In Denmark the organisation had begun to set up a new website, which was to step up efforts to show how the work is carried out in cooperation with a partner in The Gambia. However, not content with renewing the appearance of their own website, the organisation also wished to strengthen its partner's communication. Thus they helped the partner establish a new website and Facebook page, training two webmasters tasked with keeping the pages up-to-date. Thanks to training and close cooperation, the partner now runs its own platform from which to communicate. This also benefits the Danish organisation, which is now better placed to work with its partner to find and tell the good stories that engage the public in Denmark as well as in The Gambia.



Example above

It can be hard to know what the villagers think, as it tends to be your own perception of the situation that is reported.

Example below

Hand over the microphone and let the protagonists speak for themselves. This enables more nuanced communication, from which you too may learn something new.

CHOOSING IMAGES



Frames are not made up of words alone. Visual elements – especially photos – also serve to create and constitute frames. Images help define the relation created between recipients and those being portrayed. They can evoke a variety of feelings in recipients such as compassion, resignation, a sense of justice or hope. Images also determine how we perceive the people depicted. Are they active individuals or passive victims?

Images can also point to the role of the organisation behind. Are they the ones that solve the problems directly or do they contribute to change?

In Ireland, the national NGO platform Dóchas' has established seven principles for images and messages used in NGO communication. Below are two illustrations from their material. Both compound the feeling that development cooperation is futile. What images and illustrations should we use to promote our message that global justice is possible?

Dóchas' Code of Conduct and Illustrative Guide

Dóchas' has prepared a Code of Conduct for Irish NGO communication and an accompanying guide that illustrates how organisations can implement the Code. The material can be found on www.dochas.ie

Ex. 1

This image signals hopelessness. The recipient is featured as a benevolent donor rather than as someone wanting justice. Justice has no place in the visual framing shown here. The picture exclusively activates compassion with a passive victim.



Ex. 2

This illustration depicts the boy respectfully. Yet the image and message simplifies the larger issues of poverty by suggesting that donations can solve global poverty.

STIFFLER/FINDCHAOS.COM





Sala, aged six, and her schoolmates attending a maths class in Bosso. Thirty Nigerian refugees are studying at the school in addition to 300 Niger children.

UNHCR / H. CAUX / JANUARY 2014



Beyond the factory gates, the building boom the cement factory is helping to fuel is providing jobs for countless construction workers across Ethiopia.

PHOTO: SIMON DAVIS / DFID



Nejjemba Teopista, farmer of Kayunga, holding her hoe after working in a communal garden at Kanguzumira where food is grown to feed the poor and sick. Caritas Uganda project, 2008.

PHOTO: SEAN SPRAGUE / CARITAS



Medical staff listens to the heartbeat of an infant at Makara hospital in Preah Vihear, Cambodia. The hospital is able to attract highly qualified medical staff because they are offered incentives through the Health Service Delivery Grant. Preah Vihear province, Cambodia.

PHOTO: CHHOR SOKUNTHEA / WORLD BANK

Tip

Use your smartphone to take photos and record video when you are on the move. See how at www.cisu.dk/smartphone.

Ex. 3+4+5+6

These four photos are examples of images that could be used in our communication. The people are active and the situations point towards the future.

Also consider what it does to the image and the message, when the people are named in the caption.

All images are from the photo sharing service Flickr. Here you can borrow images from 'Creative Commons' for free as long as you follow the copyright instructions.

A ROAD MAP TO STORYTELLING



Going through this information material, you have come across the concept of 'engaging communication'. In the sections about values and value-based communication, as well as sprinkled throughout the rest of the text, you have read that good communication is capable of engaging recipients. Something that we know serves to engage is the encounter with other people. Therefore you will now be presented with a storytelling method which places the individual person at the core. Professional storyteller Simon Hodges from Words that Change works with a 'story map', which can help you and your organisation discover the core of your stories and tell them in a manner that engages recipients in your cause.

The story map is based on four themes: community, values, intervention and transformation.

1. Community

Create a sense of the community or society that forms the context of your story. Which persons belong to the community? What is their reality? Describe what makes them tick and what they want to achieve in life, and finally what stops them from achieving it.

2. Values

Remember what the values of your organisation are, and reach your own understanding of those values. Then examine and describe how those values can be associated with the community that you have just portrayed. Do they share the same values? Why are your organisation's values also valuable to the community?

3. Intervention

Explain how you and your organisation can help and/or empower the community against whatever prevents them from realising their dreams.

4. Transformation

Describe what difference your organisation has made together with the community. Focus in particular on tangible changes brought about through your cooperation.

If your storytelling follows these four steps, you will both link up to your recipients and explain why your organisation's work is valuable. But most importantly, you will bring the persons back into the core of your story, and that is engaging.

THE WEBSITE: SOLO PROJECT OR JOINT UNDERTAKING?



Your organisation's website is akin to an online business card. This is where many become acquainted with your organisation for the first time. In many ways, the website is where you show your face and have to make a good first impression. Consider what your website is signalling. Is it clear that you work alongside local partners in various developing countries, struggling for common goals? Or does your work come across as a solo project, in which your partner's role is invisible? Think about whose voices are heard on your website, and pay attention to the overall impression that it gives of your organisation. Is it a solo project or a joint undertaking?

Write succinctly for the Internet

When writing for the web, we need to remind ourselves to make it as easy and inviting as possible for readers. Otherwise, they can quickly find something more interesting on some other website. We must always keep in mind that the easier our text is to understand, the greater the chance of readers staying with us all the way. The main points regarding writing for the web can be expressed in five headings:

1. Write simply

Use the same term about the same thing or concept throughout the text. Do not, for instance, write both 'development cooperation' and 'development aid', if the meaning is the same. This tends to confuse readers and can make them stop reading.

- Do not write long, convoluted, argumentative sentences. It is preferable to use an additional full stop or prepare a list of arguments.
- Use only abbreviations and expressions that are commonly known. Otherwise you may confuse.
- Ensure consistency in the style and tone of the whole text (and obviously of the entire website).

2. Arrange the text clearly

- Write headings for sections and subsections, stressed in bold letters.
- Write the most important information in the beginning of the section, and get to the point. Avoid formulations such as "Let us start out by...", "In this article we shall look at...", "In conclusion, one might say that..."
- Divide your text into sections, with one idea per section.

3. Use an informal style

- Avoid passive language, as well as long, convoluted, argumentative sentences. Passive verbs are tiring to read, e.g. "it is considered good practice if one's partner in the South is given a voice in one's communication."
- Write actively. Use active verbs instead to ensure that the reader knows who does what. For examples: "CISU believes that good development communication gives a voice to partners in the South."



4. Build an ethos

- Share your sources with readers. It comes across as trustworthy when you are willing to reveal them, hiding nothing.
- Be careful with negative and positive words. The former include terms such as 'horrible' and 'appalling', the latter 'fantastic' and 'fabulous'. Keep in mind that, rather than using too many strong adjectives, you should try to describe what was so 'fantastic' about the situation, leaving readers to judge. This comes across as more trustworthy. Also avoid excessive use of '...' and '!'.
- Spell correctly and proofread for typing errors, careless punctuation and grammatical mistakes. If there are (far too) many errors, some readers will perceive what you write as unserious and unprofessional.

5. Make for easy navigation

- Make sure that it is easy to navigate around in your text and website. Readers should not get lost. You can do this in the following manner:
- Explain your links clearly, avoiding the overused 'click here'. Specify with a good and telling text where the click will take readers. For examples: "Download the booklet 'You Have Got the Story' as a pdf file."
- When establishing contextual links, always make sure that the link opens in a new tab, so that readers can easily find their way back to where they came from.
- Stress important words in bold.

Bring your message to the fore

There is generally just one thing you can say with your website. When people come from Google, you have some 10-20 seconds to say it. This is why your organisation's primary message must appear clearly as soon as visitors arrive at your website.

Good advice to continue the work

- Run a user test. Ask some friends or family to look through your website. It is always highly valuable to get outsiders to examine your site, inquire into any ambiguities and point out if something is difficult to navigate. "If you were to guess, what do you think is the message of this website?"
- Transparency. The user should not need to contact you to get answers. It should be clear what kind of organisation you are and what you do.
- Think outside the box. For example, use pictures with text as links.
- Test the website on different computer screens. Not all of them have the same resolution.
- Test the website in different browsers, in particular Internet Explorer.

DRAWING UP A COMMUNICATION PLAN



A good communication plan may well be simple and easy to get a sense of. What matters is to prepare yourself before you begin to communicate so as to pass on your message to your recipients at the right time and place. What is important is to focus on your objectives, recipients and message. The next couple of pages will take you through the six most important steps in a communication plan.

SIX STEPS FOR YOUR COMMUNICATION PLAN

WHAT is the story that you want to tell?

WHO is the target group?

WHY are you telling your story? What does the organisation wish to achieve with it?

HOW are you going to address the target group? In which language/style?

WHERE are you telling your story – on which media channels? On your own or on other people's? Which channels do your recipients use? How can the various channels play together?

WHEN are you telling your story? Is there something you should take into account or an agenda to be taken advantage of?

WHAT: the story

Before you think through how to tell your story, what matters most is to make up your mind about what story you want to tell. Which persons form part of it? Are you going to involve your partner in the narrative?

WHO: the target group

Reflect on who you want to reach. Why precisely them? How can this target group contribute to meeting the objective – the desired effect – through your story? Once you have chosen the target group you think is best placed to give you the desired effect, look into their media habits. What interests them in their spare time? What do they care about politically? Etc.

The table shown overleaf hypothesises five target groups (A-E) with varying engagement in development cooperation. You can use them as inspiration to work on the target group for your story.

WHY: the effect

The effect is what you would like recipients to do after they have read/seen/heard your story. You might want them to:

- Give a donation towards your work
- Sign a petition
- Join your organisation as members
- Discuss the issue with their friends
- Volunteer for the organisation
- Show up at an information meeting

Regardless of the story you want to tell, you always do it because you want recipients to do something.



Use the six steps

Next time your organisation has a story you would like to share with a wider circle of recipients, try to go through the six interrogatives, one by one, and draw up your own communication plan for the story.



The table is from CISU's publication "I har historien – en guide til oplysningsarbejde"
[You have got the story – a guide to information work].

	A	B	C	D	E
Knowledge of and interest in developing countries and their problems	Without knowledge. Without interest.	Not uninterested.	A certain knowledge and interest.	A great deal of knowledge and interest.	Vast knowledge and experience. Intense interest.
Ways of responding to stories and information about developing countries	Never read anything about developing countries. Deliberately choose to overlook it.	Read a bit about developing countries, mainly because it is exciting and fascinating.	Sometimes read about developing countries, but with varying interest.	Read about developing countries every time there are articles about them in newspapers, magazines and the like.	Seek out a great deal of information, specialist literature and so forth about developing countries.
Activity in relation to developing countries	Never contribute anything.	Sometimes donate to collections if the cause is appealing to them.	Are not active, but donate to collections.	Passive members or regular contributors to an NGO.	Active NGO members.
Likely comment on information about developing countries	If you want me to read about developing countries, it mustn't be about their problems. That's too depressing. Instead you can get me to read about what I may experience in developing countries as a tourist.	If you want me to read about developing countries, it has to be mainly because you tell exciting stories that I can identify with, or because it concerns interesting and fascinating stories and experiences.	If you want me to read about developing countries, the stories have to be good and ideally about people. It helps if I can learn something from them.	I always read it if it is about developing countries. I like articles telling good stories while putting across information that puts the issues into perspective.	I particularly enjoy reading articles about how people have gone about various development projects. How do they do it? What succeeds and what does not? And stuff like that.



HOW: the product

There are many ways of putting across your message. Here is a list of ideas as to what form your product may take. The list is intended to help you think beyond the most usual means (newspapers, television, news, etc.).

- Article
- Newsletter by post or email
- News SMS
- Diary letters
- Letter to the editor
- Talks
- Visit by the partner
- Email dialogue between a group from Denmark and a group from a developing country
- Video
- Radio programme
- TV
- Event
- Blog
- Teaching material
- Facebook page
- Exhibition
- Magazine
- Flyer
- Press release
- Poster
- Sound reportage on the web
- Book

WHERE: Find the relevant channels to get your message out.

First you must reflect on which media are appropriate for you and your story. Here once again you should consider who your target group is. Your story must be passed on through a channel used by the particular target group that you aspire to reach.

There are many ways to get your story out to recipients. Here is a list of ideas.

- Local weekly newspapers
- Daily newspapers
- Magazines
- Professional journals and periodicals
- Your own organisation's journal
- Your own website
- Other organisations
- Local primary and secondary schools
- Boarding schools
- Adult educational establishments
- Libraries
- Public streets and squares
- Radio stations (local and nationwide)
- TV (local and nationwide)
- Meetings and talks
- Emails
- Newsletters
- Events
- Trips
- SMS, MMS

WHEN:

The right moment depends on the circumstances surrounding your story. If you are reacting to something in the public sphere, say, a debate, an agenda or some opportunity to be taken advantage of, then timing and promptness are of the essence. Conversely, if you are trying to start up something from scratch, it might be more important to concentrate on an internal timetable and on your own organisation's rhythm and set-up. If you are planning to run an entire campaign, you should consider for each element (website, press release, flyers etc.) when the time is right both for your own campaign planning and for recipients.



CONTACT RELEVANT MEDIA



Call in advance. It is always a good idea to contact the medium that you want to use before sending anything. This enables you to prepare the medium and ensures that you have got in touch with a relevant person to whom you can email directly, rather than ending up sending a message to the editorial staff in general, of which nobody will take ownership to the same extent.

When you contact a medium

A good rule to keep in mind is: do not “say something about...”, but “say that...”.

Here are a few examples of how to improve “say something about” messages by using “say that”.

We want to say something about...

“We want to say something about an education project with traditional midwives.”

“We want to say something about how microcredit works.”

We want to say that...

“We want to say that education of traditional midwives saves many women’s lives.”

“We want to say that microcredit fosters commitment and self-support.”

You probably have several messages that you would like to convey. However, stick to one per product. You cannot make stories that promote two messages. Even if you could, it would leave recipients confused as to which one is the most important.

PITCH

The following should be taken into account when pitching your story to a medium (newspaper, TV, online medium, etc.):

- Familiarise yourself with what the medium wants. What is of value to them?
- Prepare a presentation to make it clear what the good story is.
- Take care the presentation does not become too long. The distributor must quickly realise what your story is about.
- Start by catching the person’s attention with a sales talk, also known as a pitch.
- End by stating what you want, and what the medium will gain from it.

MESSAGE AND SLANT

Local and regional media will often want to give the story a local slant. However, you can still convey your own message that is important for you. For instance, the headline could read: “Young girl from Skive wishes to help women in Africa”, but the actual message that you want to bring out with the article is that you are going to Mozambique to learn more about how a local youth organisation uses Facebook to create dialogue about violence.



WORKING WITH THE PRESS

— WRITING A PRESS RELEASE



Once you have initiated contact with a journalist from a medium, it is a good idea to prepare a press release, which you can also distribute to several other media. The press release serves as follow-up to the initial contact. It aims first and foremost to inspire and remind the journalist. You could possibly ask the journalist if she wants to take your story further. If the answer is a clear no, this is your cue to try to pitch your story to another medium.

Good advice for the press release

- Keep the press release at about one page.
- A press release can contain date, headline, subheading (not more than 4 lines), body text (10-12 lines), quotes from key persons (chairperson, partner, programme officer), facts and contact information.
- Pay attention to newspaper deadlines. They usually need to receive your material a couple of days before deadline, but not far too early, since long-term planning in the media is rare. Some two days before might be a good rule of thumb.
- A press release can be copied and pasted directly into an email, but it can also be attached as a file.
- It is a great idea to include one or several images. Remember to write what each picture shows, names of persons who appear in it, and who the photographer is. Only use photos for which you hold the copyrights.

Follow up personally

It may be a good idea to follow up an approach, either by delivering your material in person or by contacting the medium after sending it. This will make them less likely to forget it.

LIST OF IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES



Implemented activities

Below is a list of the various services provided by Reframing the Message to CISU's member organisations throughout the two-year project period. Many of the activities have been on offer and implemented more than once.

Courses

- Tell the story
- Tell the story with a smartphone
- Social media and digital dialogue with the South
- Constructive communication
- Communication strategy
- Facebook – start the conversation online
- Effective website communication
- Be heard! In the media too
- Compelling talks

Workshops

- Follow-up workshop – communication strategy
- Constructive communication, part 2
- Compelling talks, part 2
- Regional workshop on working with reframing in the organisation's communication
- Regional workshop on general communication
- Systematisation workshop on reframing in general

Seminars

- Reframing seminar
- Storytelling
- How stories move along various communication platforms
- Common Cause – communicate your organisation's values consistently

Special advisory services

- Ten CISU member organisations were advised individually by an external communication consultant

Communication boot camp

- Ten CISU member organisations spend a weekend in either Aarhus or Copenhagen dedicated exclusively to strengthening each organisation's communication. It was a weekend of individual advice, exchange among colleagues and presentations.

Debates about development communication

- Altinget / Udvikling: altinget.dk/udvikling/artikel/hvor-dan-styrker-vi-opbakningen-til-bistanden [how to strengthen support for development aid]
- U-landsnyt.dk: u-landsnyt.dk/tema/tema-om-udvik-lingskommunikation [special edition on development communication]
- Folkemødet 2014: u-landsnytdk-og-folkem-det-vi-d-kker-u-landsvinkle
- Online magasin: "Herfra og videre i debatten om udvik-lingskommunikation. Snapshots af debat 2014" [The debate on development communication thus far and going forward] Snapshots of the debate in 2014]

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CISU – Civil Society in Development
Klosterport 4a, 3. sal
DK-8000 Aarhus C
Tel.: +45 86 12 03 42
Monday-Friday from noon to 3pm
cisu@cisu.dk
www.cisu.dk

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Text: Emilie Tranholm Larsen
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