

ELMT Guide to Documenting Stories of Change¹

Case studies are a useful tool to understand and verify examples of change that have been cited during the evidence of change review. As a learning tool it is important that these are carried out with a spirit of openness to understand people's reality and how this has changed due to the program or other externalities. The primary audience for these case studies is the team, however if the team then decides they could be shared for wider learning and included in reports or for communication materials.

Ideally these should be **short narrative statements** in the first person rather than in somebody else's words, on their experiences and reflections using their own words as much as possible.

They should aim to answer the following questions:

- Persons details: name, where they live, description of their livelihood
- How did they get involved in the program, what support did they receive?
- Which changes have they seen in their lives, family, community as a result of the support;
- What other changes are happening (climate change, mobility, conflict, price trends)
- How do they see their activities developing in the future?

It would be useful to ensure that these anecdotes are not describing just things going well, or people that are happy with the changes, but rather the contrary, i.e. that they delve into the problems and generate significant probing of these constraints.

What is the expected content?

The process documentation would be particularly useful where it sheds light on the relationship over time between the environment, local government, and the community - and within the community on issues such as gender relations and other hierarchies that affect access to and rights over benefits of facilities. We would like to be able to tell a story and provide a flavor of reality which numbers or even third party anecdotes cannot achieve. Stories also show how complex factors interact in the life individuals and thus make for great learning tools.

Who should collect these testimonies?

Ideally a range of people should collect these stories, women and men who have different roles within the NGO. Ideally all staff members could be trained to record the stories and could undertake some of these as they go about their work, such a process would encourage all to put aside time to listen. It would also be important to encourage third parties to undertake these, e.g. other partners within the initiative not working in the particular community or external parties altogether.

¹ Adapted from GWI's monitoring tool 'personal and community stories', Helen Pankhurst

Over time, partners should look at the quality of the testimonies being generated and see if additional support from experts in this area would be useful to them, ideally with experts undertaking some testimonies and training staff at the same time to sustain the generation of improved stories.

What is the expected length?

There is no format prescribed length for this process, save to suggest that ***extracts or shorter pieces of half a page in length or less are often most useful.*** However, the actual interview is likely to be longer, see example in Annex A. These longer stories can be particularly interesting to get an overview of people's worries and priorities and to review what people say about a wide range of key issues over time.

In what language should they be?

We would encourage these to be first written in the ***local language*** to capture exact expressions, with the most interesting of these being translated for wider circulation in a way that wherever possible retains the flavor of expressions used.

Who should be interviewed?

The personal stories should aim to tell the story of a wide section of the community to give a flavor of different people's experiences, ***women, men, young and old, abled and disabled, rich and poor, people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds,*** etc. It would be useful to come back to the same people over time to capture changes.

Community stories should likewise try and give a flavor of collective experiences, they could be event focused, e.g. people who came together for a particular purpose or because of a particular event or could look into a particular category of people such as minority groups and their common experiences.

How do the stories get used?

Partners are encouraged to think about ways in which these narratives can influence implementation in the short and longer term, however our suggestion is that the most interesting, thought provoking stories should be used as a spring-board for discussions at all levels from the community level, focal area level, country level to regional level and some time given to this process as a regular slot in meetings. Each partner could take it in turns to initiate this process.

The ***quarterly reports should include at least 2 half-page stories*** which the team is happy to share and ideally most documentation should include examples.

In addition any story that identifies problems that require action should be copied to those able to address the problem. However, the interviewer should be clear in the interview process that the prime function of the stories is to record experiences rather than provide an avenue for problems to be addressed.

Note to interviewer

Please ensure that all stories are dated, authored, and if possible and there are no confidentiality issues, the person is named and located for future follow up questions and good quality photographic information is included. It might also be possible to take short video clips. **This guideline includes as an Appendix 2 a consent form which should be translated into local languages and filled in for all stories.**

In terms of how to conduct the interview, you will find that some people are very forthcoming with information that makes for a good story, others are more reticent and are not used to, or don't like talking about themselves. Sometimes it takes several probing questions before a story pattern emerges. It helps to make people comfortable, communicate through words and body language that you want to connect to them on an emotional level and understand why this topic is important to them, what pain and what victories it has brought. Ask specifically about problems and difficulties to get beyond rosy reports. Try and identify what was the turning point in the situation. Ask what are the hopes and the inspirational lessons to come out of this experience. Share your thoughts if appropriate to encourage them in their telling of the story. Story telling in itself can lead both the teller and the listener through a process of analysis of events and outcomes that they had never pieced together or reviewed internally before.

A good interview is ***semi-structured and improvisational*** and a good interviewer's aim is to say as little as possible and listen and learn as much as he or she can. Good questions are those that make sense and animate the narrator; guide the direction of the testimony while giving them plenty of space for self-expression; and ensure that the necessary topics are covered and all leads, however unexpected, are followed through. Short open questions are usually the best.

In terms of transcribing the interview some clustering of themes or omission of repetitions is often useful, however it is important that the transcriber retains the spirit of the process which is all about hearing the voice of the person interviewed as directly as possible.

What kind of questions to use?

The following bullet points provide some ideas – note that only a few of these questions are expected to be covered by any single story.

Include:

- how their lives have changed from the past/ what their vision for their family and community is in the future;
- changes in social and gender equity; the role of customary institutions; the role of the government; their voice; the relationship with local government and external agencies, challenges and aspirations;
- the cross border nature of their livelihoods and how this has changed;
- Ask what interventions have made a difference – particular current interventions versus previous/ food aid versus livelihood support etc.? What changes, internal resolutions did they initiate to change the situation? Try and understand what the trigger(s) for change was.
- Ask for anecdotes, funny stories, sad stories, sayings, poems, etc that might shed light on transformation.

The best time to record these case studies is when community members are relaxed and have time. It is important to build the relationship beforehand and set people at ease. Explain that

you want to understand their lives better and whether and how the program has made a difference, explain how the testimonies will be used and ask the individual sign a consent form.

Tips for conducting interviews²

Take time to build a connection before beginning the conversation

If you don't know the interviewee well, introduce yourself. Make a little informal time at the start to hear who this person is. Let them know a little about who you are, or simply tell them about the interview process and how the interview may be used. Ensure the interview is conducted at a time that is convenient for the interviewee and they are relaxed. It may be useful to create a social occasion e.g. invite them for tea or a meal or during a chat chewing session etc. A tape recorder avoids the need to write notes, but the interviewee needs to be at ease with it.

Listen, Listen, Listen

Remember when you are interviewing, it's your role to suspend your opinion and listen to what the interviewee has to say.

Give people time and space to take things at their own pace

Some people warm up immediately, others take time. If the interview begins to get really interesting just as it's finishing, see if there is time to go back and think again about earlier questions.

Show your interviewee that you are really listening and that you really care

Keep your body relaxed and open – comfortably close, and gently facing them. Try to avoid being separated from them by a table. Make eye contact. Allow your facial expression, and verbal reinforcement to reflect your genuine interest. If you are curious and want some more information, by all means ask for it!

Go back over what you've learned to confirm for accuracy

Have the interviewee read over what you have written. Give them the option to modify or change anything you've written, to help it more fully express the essence of what they said.

Thank them

After the interview has finished thank them, and tell them what you have learned as a result of the interview.

² from Land & Water Australia's Social and Institutional Research Program *Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy 2005 – 2010*. Alice Roughley, Land & Water Australia and Jess Dart, Clear Horizon, July 2005.

Examples of good case studies

There are excellent examples undertaken by PANOS a worldwide network of independent institutes working to ensure that information is used more effectively to foster debate, pluralism and democracy. Panos London has an excellent web-site with lots of examples <http://www.panos.org.uk>, a couple of these are included in Appendix A. There is also an East Africa website <http://www.panoseasternafrika.org.ug>

Two case studies are given below, developed by CARE Bangladesh.

Yusuf Mia got the light at last...

12 years back, Yousuf Mia lost his last belonging from Tista river erosion, a piece of land which he has inherited from his father. After losing all of his possession, he came to Bajra village, Ulipur and starts his living. But it was quite difficult for him to depend only on agriculture. He lends a cow for some additional income. That cow gave birth to a calf on which Yousuf got half share. Few days later he buys another one. But all of his efforts went into vain as he was unaware about proper dairy management. He was searching for some useful information to rear his cow more effectively and to generate more profit.

In year, 2008, CARE's "Strengthening the Dairy Value Chain" project starts its operation in that area. Yusuf took that chance and joined SDVC's milk producing group. From the learning and training session Yusuf came to know about farm management technique, de-worming, taking care of pregnant cows, method to increase milk production, health management, fodder cultivation, milk marketing and so on. Sensing the profitability and usefulness of rearing cows he collects grass and maize seeds from local BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) office and cultivates grass and fodder on 3 decimal lands. At the same time his cows gives birth to a calf. After 45 days the fodder grows and he feeds the fodder to his cows. Few days later, he notices changes in milk production. Last year he has got 1.5 liters of milk. But the same cow is now giving 3 liters. So he is getting 1.5 liters more. As Yusuf described, "The main key to the success is proper dairy management. When my cow was pregnant I used to go the LHW information center to give and receive updated information about his cow. Moreover I have confirmed de-worming, feeding concentrated feed and DCP powder and last of all green fodder. These were the technique that I have followed to increase production". Yusuf is now practicing UMB (Urea Molasses Block) for his cow to increase the production even more and to keep the cow healthy.

Now Yusuf is selling the milk through the group and getting Tk 100/day. Selling milk through group is a good technique as Yusuf said, "I used to spend a lot of time and money for selling milk personally. Milk selling in group is saving my time and money. I can now spend more time for my cows and crops". He is generating additional income from selling cow-dung. Moreover calves are always the future resource for him. Yusuf is bearing his younger daughter's educational cost. He said, "I had to stop the education of my elder daughter due to economical problem when she was in class VIII. But now I am firmly determine to highly educate my younger daughter" His life changed a lot. Besides the educational cost he is also bearing the cost of family necessities. He can now provide proper food to his family and this means a lot to him. Situation also changes his social status. Village people now come to him for advice and motivation. Yousuf says, "I feel

honored when people comes to me for advice". Seeing the success of Yusuf some group members is also practicing the same. He is now a model farmer of that village.

All are working for better.....

Shinghergari Tohshildar Para, a deprived and distressed village located at Kishoreganj Upazila. Most of the people here have their own dairy cows but they never thought of bringing the resource forward as a profitable business. The people who are living here were ignorant about the growing milk market outside their village. They used to sell their produced milk only @ Tk 18-20/ liter. But after the intervention of CARE's "Strengthening the Dairy Value Chain (SDVC) project" they are now taking milk production and selling as a profitable business. As they are linked with the outside market directly they are selling @ Tk 25-32/liter and getting some additional services.

A year back the people of Shinghergari Tohshildar Para were unaware about milk marketing, improved dairy health service, improved feed and fodder and developing breed by artificial insemination. As SDVC entered the area they eventually came to know about the potentiality of rearing dairy cows. With the help of CARE they forms four groups and one of them is named as Uttar Shinghergari Milk Producing Group where all the group members are female. They build linkage with the formal market processor named MilkVita directly and by which the price of their dairy milk increased from Tk 18-20 to Tk 25-32 which affected greatly to their income level. They develop a female collector named Momtaz Begum who collect the milk from the group and transport to MilkVita's collection point with the help of her husband. Every Wednesday they sit for a group meeting to share their problems and discuss about solutions. They have opened a bank account for their group and deposits money for their saving. There were no medical and health support available to that community but now with the direction and assistance of CARE they have ensured vaccination and de-worming for their cows. Local VFA (Veterinary Field Assistant) named Binoy Chandra is providing cattle health services to the group. They have also developed a Livestock Health Worker to get instant health support of their cattle.

To increase the production of milk they have cultivated different types of fodder such as maize and jumbo. Moreover they have developed a feed seller to make the concentrated feed available for their cows. They have a written agreement with MilkVita where MilkVita will ensure fat based price to the group and will provide Artificial Insemination service, provide fodder seeds and so on.

All of these are sign for better days. Every group member are working hard and doing the best for nice future and CARE is with them as a friend.

Appendix B – to be translated into local languages

CONSENT TO
USE MY LIKENESS AND INTERVIEWS – ADULT (*see italics for minors*)

Location: _____ Date: _____

I give the ELMT partners, its representatives and agents, the absolute right and permission, as described below, to use:

For minors change wording above to I and my Parent or Guardian give ELMT and its partners, its representatives and agents, the absolute right and permission, as described below, to use:

Information and other materials, including without limitation, my name, address, age, my statements, a personal interview, my image, and my voice recording, including excerpts of such information. This information is known as my “Materials”.

My Materials may be used, including editing, by ELMT and its partners’ permission, OTHER COMPANIES, PERSONS OR GROUPS that partner with ELMT to promote it’s mission.

Further acknowledgements:

- My Materials may be used for any use, including in printed materials, Internet and other electronic media, video and audio recordings and other media.
- My Materials may be used for any period of time and anywhere in the world.
- My Consent cannot be canceled or changed.
- I have received some kind of consideration from CARE or its partner in the form of a certification of appreciation or photographs in appreciation of my consent.
- I understand that if ELMT partners receive money or other value for my Material, and its partners will use it in their work to help others around the world overcome poverty.
- I understand that I will not review or approve the draft or final product resulting from the use of my Materials.
- I have read, or have been read, this Consent before signing it, and I understand this Consent.

Sensitive Additional Information:

My Materials specifically include the following sensitive condition:

IF THE CONSENT WAS READ TO THE SUBJECT OR THE SUBJECT MADE A MARK TO INDICATE SIGNATURE: I certify that I read this Consent form in full to the person whose signature appears below, and/or have witnessed the mark of such person who could not sign his or her name.

MARK TO INDICATE SIGNATURE: I certify that I read this Consent form in full to the person whose signature appears below, and/or have witnessed the mark of such person who could not sign his or her name.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

In the case of a minor:

1. Signature of Child (if practicable): _____

Child’s Name _____ Age: _____

I certify that I am the child’s parent or legal guardian and consent on behalf of such child.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Printed Name: _____