



Online Training: Writing a Success Story

Why do we write success stories?

- Success stories are a great way to promote the valuable work we do and to highlight our successes.
- Success stories show the impact of a project and make us accountable of how donor money has been spent.
- Donors can use your success story to demonstrate to their stakeholders, the impact that their funding or support has had.
- Others can learn from your successes (or failures).

What makes a great story?

- Something new or interesting
- Sharing a person's life/transformation
- Overcoming hardship/obstacles
- Emergency or response
- Children

Writing like a STAR

Structure your story around these elements:

Situation – What was the situation before? What was the problem, issue or concern?

Task – What was your task or the objective of the program, project or intervention?

Action – What did you do?

Result – What was the outcome? Who benefited? What evidence is there of your success?
Qualitative/ quantitative data? Quotes from beneficiaries?

Get HELP

Get HELP to get your story started:

Hero – Who is the story about? What makes him or her a hero?

Engaging – What is new, engaging or interesting about this story?

Lesson – What changed in this person's life, what improved? Or what is the lesson learned?

Photo – A good image can speak a million words. Make sure you have consent to publish the photo. It should be good quality photo that captures the essence of your story. Don't be afraid to crop your photo to focus it and bring out the best part of the image.

PIQUE people's interest

Pull them in – start with a quote, question or something interesting

Inform briefly – share the basics

Quote – use a powerful quote

Unveil more – Share more of the 5 Ws and H

Engaging ending – Wrap it up.

5 Ws and a H

Make sure your story covers:

Who is this story about?

What was the program/project/intervention about?

Where was the program/project/intervention implemented?

When was program/project/intervention implemented?

Why was the program/project/intervention implemented?

How did the program/project/intervention make a difference?

Example of a Success Story

I want you to meet a friend of mine: 14-year old Mohammed Athuman. Today he is helping his aunt cook lunch, crack open a coconut to add to some fried fish. Just a year ago, he didn't have the strength to do this.

'Now I'm fit!' he says with a smile.

In 2022, Mohammed and his brother Ramazthan lost their mom to typhoid – and then lost their dad a year later. An aunt and uncle took them in, even though they were already struggling to support three children of their own.

Later that year, Mohammed had a bicycle accident. His side swelled up and wouldn't heal even after an operation. Knowing that Mohammed was often anemic, the hospital ran an HIV test. The results came back positive, likely due to a tainted blood transfusion years before.

Mohammed went on anti-retrovirals, but he stopped taking them because they made him sick whenever he didn't have enough food to eat with them. His health declined rapidly.

In early 2009, Mohammed's life started to change. A community volunteer from the Catholic Diocese of Tanga stopped by the house and immediately enrolled the two brothers in a program for orphans supported by the Catholic Relief Services and funded by the US Government PEPFAR HIV Program. They received fortified flour and began drinking healthy porridge each day. This extra food made Mohammed feel good enough to start taking his anti-retrovirals again.

Now Mohammed understands that to be healthy he must take these drugs consistently for the rest of his life. He is so happy to be back in school again and have enough energy to play with his cousins and friends. For one young boy, this CRS project has made all the difference.*

*This success story was presented during Communications and Media Skills Training facilitated by the Catholic Relief Services on behalf of the GAVI Alliance.

Dos and Don'ts for writing Success Stories

- **Do** use short, direct sentences.
 'The MACIS Secretariat held a workshop' is nicer than 'A workshop was held by the MACIS Secretariat'.
- **Do** use simple, familiar words over 'aid-speak'
 'The people received food and blankets that helped them survive' is nicer than 'The beneficiaries of this intervention were facilitated with commodities to improve their livelihoods'.
- **Do** develop an angle from which you tell your story. This may be a human interest, something startling or an innovation.
- **Do** include some facts and figures
- **Do** include quotes or photographs to bring your story alive
- **Do** create an emotional hook by connecting the reader to the people behind the story.
- **Don't** use long and complicated sentences

- **Don't** use jargon, acronyms, 'aid-speak'
- **Don't** use broad sweeping statements or grandiose words, which can destroy the credibility of your story
- **Don't** be a TOAD (too **t**echnical, **o**verly religious, **a**cronyms, **d**etailed)

Be creative

Your success story does not have to be in writing. Short videos, slide shows, PowerPoint presentations, displays and others can be a great way to demonstrate your success. Consider the audience and your own capabilities before choosing how you want to tell your success story.

- How much time does your audience have and how interested are they in your story? What technology does your audience have access to?
- How will you present your story? Are you presenting it in person to a group of people or in a one on one meeting? Are you emailing it or posting it on a website? Do you want to include it in a report?
- How much time can you invest in producing your success story? Do you have the technical expertise to do the job? Do you need the help of experts? Who can assist you with your story?