MESSAGING TOOLKIT

SHIFTING THE NARRATIVE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ECONOMY

# WHAT IS A "NARRATIVE" AND HOW CAN WE "SHIFT" IT?

Broadly speaking, narrative work is designed to influence how people think, feel, and act. But groups that specialize in narrative work use particular terminology, which they often define differently! This can make it feel technical and inaccessible. So, here is a brief introduction to this work.

A narrative is an idea or a set of connected ideas repeated in verbal and written communication. For example, arguments that sound similar to each other or stories that follow the same pattern create narratives. Narratives help us make sense of—and give deeper meaning to—what we see, hear, feel, and experience. In other words, they shape the way we view the world.

A story is how we tell each other about something that has happened to someone or something. They have a beginning, middle and end. Stories bring narratives to life by making them relatable, accessible, and personal. The media, popular culture, and politics are full of stories.
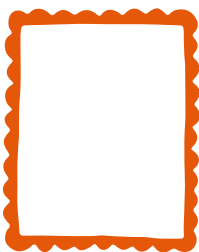
Stories and narratives are built by combining several ingredients (or, in more technical terms, frames). A frame is the way we tell a story. In other words, it's the choices we make in what we say and how we say it. These choices matter. What we include in and what we leave out of a story affects whether or not people are willing to listen to us and how they interpret what we're saying. The include things like values, explanations, and metaphors.

Counter-narratives offer alternative ways to talk about issues. They frame stories in ways that emphasize different values, or provide clearer explanations, or trigger more positive associations.

CHEAT SHEET: NARRATIVE INGREDIENTS

These are the things that shape the way we talk about an issue. Like when cooking, we can combine different ingredients, following different recipes, which results in different meals. These ingredients are known to be especially important to help us get people's attention and shift their attitudes and actions.

EXAMPLES

VALUES

Deeply held beliefs or principles that are widely shared across society. Research shows that talking about values motivate people to think beyond their own interests, to a concern for others and the environment.

"We all know it's important to keep the commitments we've made"

"In South Africa, we believe in Ubuntu"

TONE

The emotion we convey through our communications. A good tone makes people feel that change is possible, whereas a gloomy or apocalyptical tone has been proven to make people feel that there's nothing we can do.

"If we work together, our kids can have the bright futures they deserve" (hopeful)

"Our country finds itself at the edge of a cliff" (crisis)

EXPLANATIONS

A sequence of ideas or series of steps in a process. A good explanation identifies the systemic causes of a problem, suggesting systemic solutions are the way to go. They close gaps that people might otherwise fill in with their own assumptions.

"When governments borrow money from the International Monetary Fund, it comes with strings attached, like being forced to cut public budgets. This affects public services like schools and hospitals. To compensate, women have to do more unpaid care work (like looking after children or caring for sick family members), reducing their opportunities to earn an income. This is how austerity worsens gender inequalities"

SOLUTIONS

Proven or promising approaches to improving a situation. They boost people's sense of "can-do." By putting forward achievable solutions that flow from our explanations, we stop people thinking that big issues are too complex to solve.

Through our collective decisions, we have designed an economic system that produces poverty. By changing policies and institutions, we can redesign the system, change the outcomes it produces, and solve the issue.

METAPHORS

Describing an issue in a way that isn't literally true, but helps explain an idea. A good metaphor helps people get a better sense of a complex issue by comparing it to something they're familiar with.

Saying "business fat cats" instead of executives, or businesspeople.

RECIPE PLANNING TEMPLATE

Ready to shift the narrative? This template will help you plan a campaign (or recipe) to boost your advocacy efforts based on the Shifting the Narrative recommendations.

1. WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CAMPAIGN TO ACHIEVE?

The overall goal of our project is to change the way people think about the economy and its relationship to human rights. Think about the long-term outcomes you are working towards (e.g. better housing, improved service delivery, more jobs). What shifts in people's thinking (e.g. better understanding a problem, seeing the potential of a solution, becoming more motivated to act) would help achieve them?

Here are some examples:

1 Short-term shift: More community members mobilise to demand their right to clean water.
Long-term outcome: access to clean water for everyone in Motherwell.

2 Short-term shift: Young people are more aware of the benefits of taxing the rich.
Long-term outcome: introduction of a wealth tax.

3 Short-term shift: People on housing waitlists have a clearer understanding of the economic factors causing backlogs.
Long-term outcome: More people enjoying decent housing in Cape Town.

SHORT-TERM SHIFTS & LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

In the text box, describe your long-term outcomes (ideal future) and short-term shifts (what this campaign could achieve as a step to get us there).

2. WHO DO YOU NEED TO REACH TO ACHIEVE YOUR SHORT-TERM GOAL?

Think about the different groups of people, or audiences, you could impact to achieve your short-term goal. Now, evaluate which of them are more strategic to you: who are more plausible to shift their minds or attitudes and, with that, impact those in power to achieve your goal. Don't be afraid to think outside the "usual suspects", sometimes, you'll find that a group you're not usually communicating to might be key to your objective.

TARGET AUDIENCE PROFILE *(answer these four questions for each group you should communicate with).*

What do they have in common?	**What is stopping these people from making the shift you want them to?**	**What are their hopes?**	**How do they stay informed and come to judgments?**
Start by identifying the basics: Age, location, occupation, income levels, or any other factors that make this audience a group.	List any obstacles you see. They can be material (e.g. lack of resources to attend gatherings) or psychological (e.g. beliefs, fears, anger)	List the dreams and aspirations that move them, so you can tap onto them when describing your ideal future.	How do they stay informed about what is happening in the country and the world? What sources of information do they trust the most? Think about what influences this group, might be friends and relatives in one-to-one conversations, or certain forms of social media. Keep this into account when deciding through which channels you will reach out to them.

3. WHICH NARRATIVE INGREDIENTS WILL YOU USE TO PERSUADE THEM TO THINK OR FEEL DIFFERENTLY?

Narrative ingredients shape how we talk about an issue and help us shift people's attitudes and actions. Like when we're cooking, we can combine different ingredients, following different recipes, to create different meals. Brainstorm here which ingredients you might use in your messages, taking into account your target audience's dreams and the obstacles that get in the way of your short-term objective.

VALUES THAT MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO THINK BEYOND THEIR OWN INTERESTS:

TONE THAT MAKES PEOPLE FEEL CERTAIN EMOTIONS:

EXPLANATIONS THAT DESCRIBE WHY A SITUATION IS HAPPENING:

SOLUTIONS THAT SHOW PROMISE FOR IMPROVING THE SITUATION:

METAPHORS THAT DESCRIBE SOMETHING IN A WAY THAT ISN'T LITERALLY TRUE, BUT HELPS PEOPLE RELATE TO IT:

4. HOW WILL YOU ENGAGE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE?

Taking into account the analysis you just made, define how you want to reach your target audience/s. Think about their routines, at which times they might be more available to receive information, and through which formats would they feel more comfortable (like in-person conversations, whatsapp messages, community meetings, etc.).

CHANNELS

For each way to reach your audience (or channel), list the ones you will use:

In-person
-
-
-

Written materials
-
-
-

Digital media
-
-
-

Traditional media
-
-
-

Others
-
-
-

5. HOW WILL YOU ORGANIZE YOUR ACTIVITY?

In the table below, list the activities you will carry out, assign responsibilities, dates, and costs for each.

What needs to be done?	By when?	By whom?	Cost

6. HOW WILL YOU KNOW WHAT IMPACT YOUR ACTIVITY HAD?

List some ideas about how you'll know what shifts have happened as a result of your campaign. You can use them later to evaluate how your it went and how to improve the next time.

PAMPHLET TEMPLATES

Shifting the Narrative

Add here any logos you might have, but keep it small. It should be just big enough so people know who made it, but doesn't distract from the main image and call to action.

This is your call to action!

Paragraph 1: Start with value that is cherished by the audiences you're aiming to reach. Now, present the problem you're trying to address in a couple of lines. Explain which group is responsible for it (you can use the metaphors in our guidelines for this), which actions they are carrying out, and the effects this has on your audience's lives. Paragraph 1 Paragraph 1 Paragraph 1 Paragraph 1 1 Paragraph 1 Paragraph 1 Paragraph 1. Paragraph 1 Paragraph 1 Paragraph 1 Paragraph 1 1 Paragraph 1 Paragraph 1.

Paragraph 2: In bold, because you don't want people to forget about this, write your solution: What can people do to fix this problem? How they can solve it, and what should they do after reading your pamphlet (re-state the call to action). Paragraph 2 Paragraph 2 Paragraph 2 Paragraph 2 Paragraph 2 Paragraph 2 Paragraph 2.

Contact and other details can be added here

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