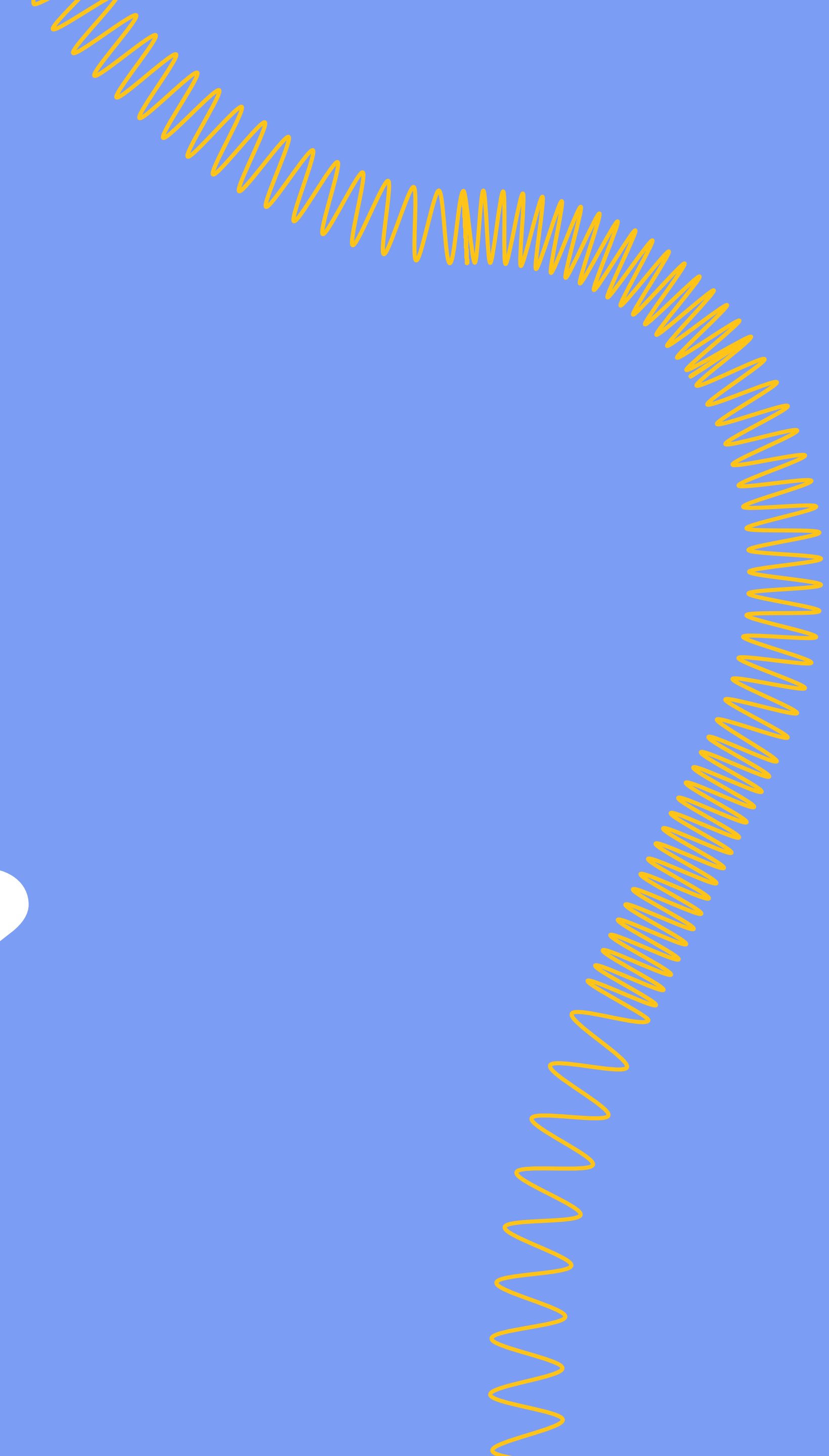


Chapter 3

How do we build trust?



“Storytelling is sacred, it’s how we keep the dead living, and the living thriving. It’s how we show up as our most authentic self.”

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

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

– Shalini Moodley, Co-Founder and CEO of MetroGroup

How can we build sustainable relationships

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Shalini Moodley



Diah Dwiandani



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

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

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

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

Introducing Project X

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

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

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

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

Section 1: The Brief

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

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

The Planning Process

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

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

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

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

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

Learnings:

- It’s extremely important for the NGO’s program team, both at head office and on the ground to be involved in the storytelling process. It’s also ideal to get the agency’s involvement at the start of the program. It sometimes feels that the storytelling aspect is an afterthought, as opposed to being part of the program. When an agency is pulled in at the last minute, the rushed job has a big impact on the authenticity of the story.
- Another learning point here is scouting. Before one even takes out the camera, we need to understand the environment and know the political climate. If we had gone with an entire crew and equipment to start shooting without scouting, there would have been additional budget costs. If we had included the local team during the briefing phase, we would have known that phase one was in completion. It would have also helped to build a better relationship with the local organization on the ground. Scouting also helps to remove some of the assumptions when going into a project.

Dealing with assumptions

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

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

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

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

d’écoles. Nous avons parlé avec nos frères, les ONGD et le gouvernement mais pas de changement jusque-là.”

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



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

*Names of those photographed not shown for anonymity purposes

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

After conducting this interview, it became apparent that the local community was not even aware of the purpose of the NGO’s program. The village leader did not know what the long terms goals were, and what kind of impact it was expected to have on the community in the future. He did not see an immediate change, and because the suffering

of the locals is so deep (something the client and agency could not comprehend) this program had no immediate benefit to their daily lives.

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

Reflection Prompts

- When gathering stories or capturing content, do you consider how you will engage with a community in advance?
- Have you considered the how this will affect the quality of your output and its chances of being effective?

Learning:

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

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

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

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

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

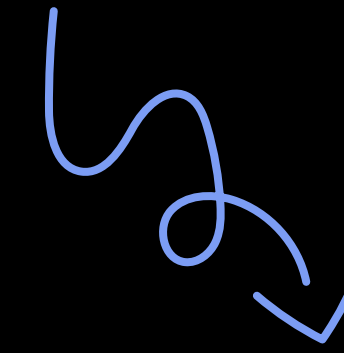
Learning:

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

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



Mutedi Simon
Fisherman



“The fish have decreased. We don’t know why there aren’t any in the water. My name is Mutedi Simon, I am a fisherman.”



Photos provided by Shalini Moodley
*Names of those photographed not shown for anonymity purposes

Checklist between the client and the agency during the brief stage

- Ensure the local program team provides their input for the brief.
- Conduct audience research before the brief (this is important to understand where the starting point of a story should be.)
- Do not make any assumptions about the people, the place, and the environment. Go in with an open mind and an open heart
- Understand the local environment (the social, economic and political climate needs to be considered.)
- Conduct a roundtable discussion between the agency, the program team, the local program team and the marketing department.
- Include the storytelling component as part of the program, and start the process early, as capturing a story based on trust takes time.
- Scouting is extremely important. Understand the environment and history of the place and people before you even touch your camera.

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

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

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

To read Diah’s full interview with Michelin, [click here](#).

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

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

Section 2: In Front of the Camera



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

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

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

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

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

“My hope is to see the general shape of the project. I am confident the project will be about building the village in other sectors that haven’t yet been improved like water, the hospital, and other things like building good houses – I am very convinced, and I have hope. Speaking personally, this project brought me joy because it addresses some of my needs. Currently I have nothing else and if this project happens it will help me. My wish is to get out of this suffering and get a good job because here I feel like I’m in a dungeon.”

Learnings:

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

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

informed them that the program was stopped. We went in, we got the story and we left, and that feels wrong.

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

Reflection Prompts

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

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

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

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

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

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

Perspective provided by Diah Dwiandani.

Case Study: **WatchdoC Indonesia**

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

Diah

What makes WatchdoC different from other production companies?

Ari

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

Diah

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ari

Section 3: Behind the Camera

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

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



Photos provided by Shalini Moodley (Names of those photographed not shown for anonymity purposes).

[Transcript]

- *Quel rêve avez-vous pour votre école?*
- *Pour mon école je voudrais changer l'environnement de cette école.*
- *Dans quel point précisément ?*
- *Sur le point de la construction ; vous voyez que les enfants étudient sur les mauvaises conditions tel que vous le voyez mais je voudrais qu'il y ait un changement. C'est à dire nous, nous allons bien étudier seulement pendant la saison sèche mais quand il y a la pluie on étudie pas. Non non on arrive pas à terminer les programmes scolaires parce que comme la pluie nous dérange il y a un moment où nous écrivons dans nos journaux dans nos journal de classe que y a une rubrique d'observation si nous passons nous passons un jour (sans étudier parce que il a plu) nous allons revenir au prochain jour nous voulons que notre école soit modernisée encore qu'on trouve un peu le bâtiment, l'équipe scolaire, les*

ordinateurs, bon les choses importantes pour l'école. Ils peuvent nous aider.

- *What's your dream for your school?*
- *I would like to change the environment of this school.*
- *In what way, specifically?*
- *The building itself; the children study in poor conditions as you can see, but I would like there to be a change. That is, we can study fine during the dry season but when it rains, we do not study. We can't finish the curriculum because the rain disrupts us. It reached a point where we write in our journals, our class journal where there is an observation section, that if we spend one day (without studying because it rained) we will come back the next day. We want our school to be modernized so that we can have the building, the school staff, the computers – well, the important things for the school. They can help us.*

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

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



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

Learnings:

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

Reflection Prompts

- There is a tendency to use photos that strongly evoke sympathy or pity. How can we show our teams that donors are starting to respond to authentic and/or empowering photos more?
- How can we move towards telling a wider variety of stories about the communities we work with?

Respecting local culture

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

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

Checklist for culturally-sensitive storytelling:

- Get all approvals from local authorities (sometimes it's not the law, but it is customary.)
- Use local crews or local assistance as much as possible, as its helps with community involvement.
- Transfer skills to locals to try to uplift the community.
- Get involved in some of the community activities, like playing soccer and sharing a meal together.
- Spend time in the village without a camera.

- Spend time getting to know the people.
- Offer gifts to village leaders and the community as a sign of respect.
- Provide water and refreshments to the interviewees.

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



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

Case Study: T2T

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



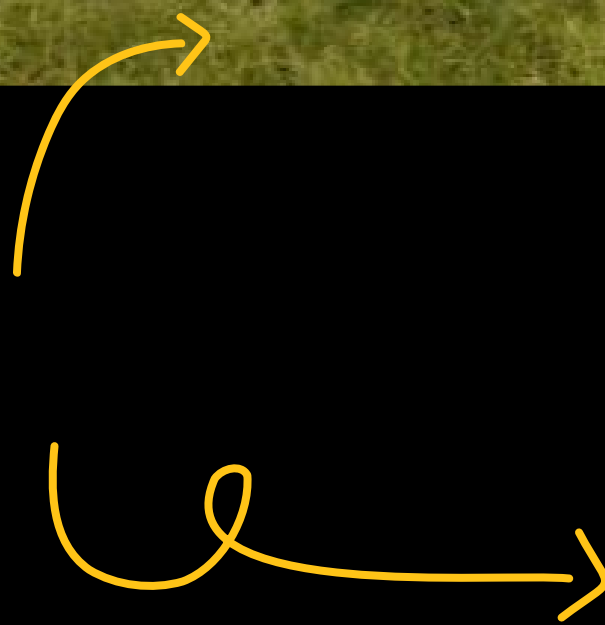
Shared by T2T Africa with Shalini Moodley to show their team at work with communities
*names of those featured are not shared for anonymity purposes



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

How to create sustainable relationships when setting up a project.

To see the interview in full, [click here](#).



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

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

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

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

Perspective provided by Diah Dwiandani.

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

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

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

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

- Ari Trismana, Director and Producer at WatchdoC Indonesia

Case Study: **Development Dialogue Asia**

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

Diah

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

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

I also think it's best to have a local activist with you, someone who works there, or a resident. Let them do the introductions. You don't want to ambush people. So, first step, read the room, and then adjust yourself. It takes time and won't happen at once. You may need one, two days, and that's fine. Build your trust.

It can be a challenge if you're under a tight deadline. In that situation, having a local with you is even more crucial. They bridge our relationship with the source and can be a valuable resource about what to do, what's considered sensitive, what to avoid, things like that.

Mardiyah

Checklist for conducting due diligence before production:

- Be certain of your goals. Ask yourself the question: Why do we need this production? What would the community see or understand from it? Will they find it useful?
- Preliminary meetings. Make sure you know what you are looking for in the area, and who to meet and interview. You will never have too much preparation.
- Make sure the parties involved – civil society organizations (CSOs,) communications professionals, local contacts – are briefed in detail about the goals and objectives of the project.
- Make sure you have a local contact in the area to facilitate your adaptation and introduce you to people.
- Create a safety protocol together with your civil society partners and local contacts, and make sure everyone involved in the project is aware of what to do when a safety protocol needs to be activated.
- Prepare a crisis communications plan.
- Be mindful of your own situation, and make sure you are in a good condition before jumping into the field. In the field, be of help instead of asking for it.
- Do not rush. Communities that have gone through a traumatic event are in a position that defies comprehension. Do not force them to tell their stories if they don't feel like it.

Case study: Michel Lunanga

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

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

Guidance on capturing visual stories

The following guidance was shared by Michel:

- Images of people in vulnerable situations should focus primarily on the reasons for and the context of a situation, rather than on an individual's suffering.
- Consider the dignity of the person who has been captured in the image. Does the image reinforce the trauma? Where appropriate, try to show women in the powerful position they often occupy within families and communities.

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



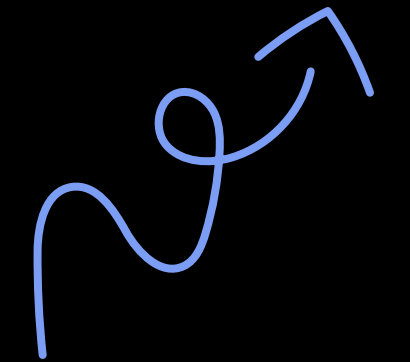
↑ Click here to listen to **Shalini Moodley** interview **Michel Lunanga** (Multimedia Producer for Doctors without Borders).

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

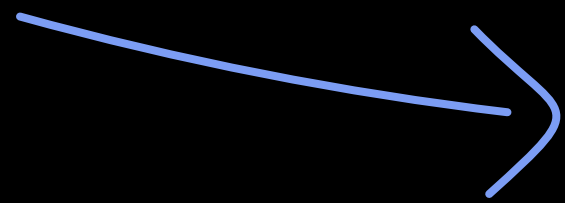
To hear the interview in full, [click here](#).



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



Shared by Michel Lunanga



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



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