Content guidelines for project staff

So you have an interesting story idea! How do you go about developing it?

- First and most important, identify the audience
    - Who is the story for? Is it for internal stakeholders, government, development partners, other development organisations and practitioners, media or the general public? Or some combination thereof?
    - Is it for training purposes or for the project beneficiaries?
    - Is it part of a campaign?
- Given your audience, identify the form/medium
    - If you have strong visuals and some budget, a video could be shot
    - People still read! Especially if accompanied by strong photographs
    - Infographics could be developed to accompany a story
    - If the story is particularly great, it could use a mix of video, photo, infographics and text
    - Sometimes we can hire illustrators to develop a different kind of story – comic books, etc, or to support a text story, or for online campaigns
- When developing a video:
    - Keep it short – under 3 minutes
    - Can produce two versions, if needed.
    - Foreground the story and the people reached, not IFAD or the project name
    - But don't forget to mention IFAD!
    - Simplify the story so anyone can understand it
    - Some notion of change should be shown
    - Best to focus on one or two aspects of the intervention, rather than attempt to cover every angle in one film
    - B-roll is required – always good to see people in action and not just talking heads
    - We encourage you to share the script with your communications officer for inputs and feedback
    - If the video is of an interview/talking head and only for online use, shoot it in portrait mode, as that allows for wider use across channels.
- When sharing information for a story:
    - Context is important – we need to establish a baseline. This means data about the place, country, etc. For instance, if the story is we are helping people in XY village plant AB variety of crop, we need to know what they were planting before, how many people in the village, what their yields are versus what the previous yields are, are their government schemes they are taking advantage of, etc.
    - Photos of people in action, as well as profile shots, are a plus
    - B-roll information – for instance, anecdotes and hobbies, can add colour to a story

    - There needs to be a catalytic event/incident – either it's an intervention that the person accessed, or they themselves took action
    - Results also need to be established
    - It is better if we can have a sense of what the people quoted in the story want from life in future
    - A story is also more persuasive if we can build it up to speak for larger groups and issues
- When sharing photos:
    - Please upload directly to a Google folder and share the link.
    - Do not share the image only on WhatsApp or paste into a Word document. This compresses the quality and the photo cannot be used
    - Try to take photos in landscape mode
    - Please include captions that include, at minimum:
        - The names of the people in the photo
        - What those people are doing
        - One line at least of context
        - Name of village/geographical area and project/activity
- When sharing videos:
    - Share a version that does not include any text along with a version with subtitles
    - If possible, please share the raw video as well

These are initial suggestions to help shape your thinking! Please reach out to your friendly neighbourhood COM officer to brainstorm ideas and for more guidance on producing communication materials, etc. Most stories can be used in a variety of ways, across different media. We want to get as much bang for the buck as possible. The sooner you enlist us, the more helpful we can be in identifying the most effective and efficient ways to tell your stories.