

Help  a
CHILD



MANUAL

**life stories &
success stories**

Introduction

Our donors are more motivated when they can read about the impact of our work on children. Stories from the beneficiaries play a very important role in this. In this document, we try to offer some context to the requirements of life stories and success stories. In this way, it should be easier to understand what we expect. Below we explain the difference between life stories and success stories.

LIFE STORIES: During an ongoing programme

One of the requirements for the (bi) annual reports is to provide life stories of families and children in the project area. We use these stories to tell existing donors and sponsors about the impact of a project. We can also approach new donors and sponsors with these stories. The stories are a way that donors get a better idea of the impact of their gift.

SUCCESS STORIES: When a programme phases out

To tell sponsors about the impact of the programme when a programme phases out, we ask you to provide 'success stories'. These are the stories of families and children in the project area. We use these stories to tell donors and sponsors what we have achieved with their money. The donors and sponsors get an impression of the impact of their donation.

Life stories and success stories are very effective to show donors and sponsors the results of the project, because these stories are about people like themselves.

On the following pages you can find:

1. **Requirements**
2. **Privacy**
3. **How to write a good story?**
4. **How do you provide a good photo?**

1. Requirements

The requirements for life stories and success stories are roughly the same. The only difference is:

- **Life stories: you should present two or more written narratives per report**
- **Success stories: you should present five written narratives**

Present written narratives (about 200-300 words) related to the outcome pathways in your Theory of Change ([two or more narratives for \(bi\)annual reports](#) and [five narratives when the program phases out](#)). This story should be an example of the impact of the programme on families and children. Make sure the story is written from the perspective of a child, youth or his/her family. Please focus in the story on a child, youth or his/her family. We prefer stories from the perspective of children (with their own comments).

- Also try to have some highlights of the changes within the community that have occurred as a result of the programme. These can be hardware (infrastructure improvements, school buildings, health facility, etc.) or software (improved empowerment, awareness, mind-set change, etc.)
- Attach at least 3 high quality photos (minimal 2 MB) of the person(s) mentioned in the narrative ([per story 3 pictures](#)). Preferably a close up and a photo of the person in his/her surroundings. Please send the photos in a separate attachment (.jpeg, .png).
- Basic information that must be included in the story:
 - First name and age of the person
 - Regular daily activity (type of work, school, etc.)
 - How has his/her life changed and because of what?
 - Dream for the future?
 - Use of one or more 'Quotes'

Additional to a narrative and photos, partners can deliver short videos as well. Red een Kind can provide assistance in how to record a good quality video. Videos are not obliged, but ReK can use them very well for informing and inspiring donors.

Be aware:

- When describing sensitive issues (for example concerning sexual related issues, or domestic violence) never use real names and pictures.
- In general: only use the first name, never use the family name for privacy/ child protection reasons.
- Ensure that people mentioned in the stories have given their consent for publication.

2. Privacy

When describing sensitive issues (for example concerning sexual related issues, or domestic violence) never use real names and pictures. In general: only use the first name, never use the family name for privacy/ child protection reasons. Ensure that people mentioned in the stories have given their consent for publication.

To ensure the safety of children and their families, it is important that a story cannot be traced back to a particular person. That is why we use only the first name in our publications. If a story is about sensitive issues, we sometimes use a pseudonym. If you use a pseudonym when delivering a story about sensitive issues, please mention this. When can then mention in our literature that it is a pseudonym.

It is important that children and families who tell their stories give their permission to publish the story and photo. It is important that they are aware that their stories and photos are used in the Netherlands.

Consent can be given verbally, but it is better still to get written permission. For example, children and their parents can sign a specially prepared consent form. An example of a consent form can you find below.

Photography and filming consent form

In accordance with our child protection policy we will not permit photographs, video or other images of young people to be taken without the consent of the parents/carers and the child. *NAME PARTNER* and Red een Kind (Help a Child) will follow the guidance for the use of photographs and videos, a copy of which is available from (member of staff responsible).

NAME PARTNER and Help a Child will take all steps to ensure these images are used solely for the purposes they are intended. The organisations will not depict any negative images of the community/person and will always try to picture decently. If you become aware that these images are being used inappropriately you should inform immediately.

To be completed by parent/caregiver

I consent to *NAME PARTNER* and Help a Child photographing or videoing my child

(name parent/caregiver:).

I can confirm that I have been made aware of how the organisation's will use these images or videos in future and how these images or videos will be stored within the organisation.

Signature of parent /carer:

To be completed by child

I (name:.....) consent to *NAME PARTNER* and Help a Child photographing or videoing my involvement in the project.

Signature of child/young person :

3. How to write a good story?

Perspective

Please focus the story on a child, youth or his / her family. We prefer stories from the perspective of children (with their own comments).

The story should show the impact of the programme on the lives of one family or one child. Sponsors are mainly interested in the effect on children; therefore tell what concrete results the programme activities have meant for the child. Here below is an example of how you could do that. This is just one example:

For example

Charles' mother is in a self-help group; where she learns how to increase her income and where she can discuss any problems she encounters.

This has the following effects for her child:

1. She has more income so she can pay Charles' school fees and school uniforms.
2. She has more income so Charles will eat more regularly and his food is more nutritious.
3. Charles' mother can discuss issues with other members of the support group and this helps her to be more positive in life. Charles sees that the atmosphere at home is better.

Highlight changes

Also try to include some highlights of the changes within the community that have occurred. These can be hardware (infrastructure improvements, school buildings, health facility, etc.) or software (improved empowerment, awareness, mind-set change, etc.).

Describe the situation BEFORE and AFTER the start of the project. Below are a few examples that describe briefly BEFORE and AFTER situations. The stories you provide us may be more detailed if necessary. If possible, include a photo of the BEFORE and AFTER situation.

For example

Hardware

Before: There is no ECD centre for the youngest children.

After: The community has built an ECD centre with the help of programme.

Before: The school buildings were in poor condition: no floors, rooves were leaking and there was a lack of blackboards.

After: There have been new floors, the rooves have been renovated and new blackboards purchased.

Software

Before: Young people hung around in the village, doing nothing and drinking too much alcohol.

After: Young people are motivated to learn a profession.

Before: Parents did not know the impact of child marriage.

After: Parents know more about the rights of children and have systems in place to protect these.

Basic information

First name and age of the person

Regular daily activity (type of work, school, etc.)

How has his/her life changed and because of what?

Dreams for the future?

To get the right information for the story it is helpful to have a checklist of questions. The questions below are a good suggestion. Depending on the topic and the person involved in your story, you can ask additional questions.

- What is your first name?
- What is your age?
- How big is your family? (How many siblings or children do you have?)

- What is your regular daily activity? (Type of work, school, hobbies etc.)
- What was your life like before the project? Could you describe which challenges you have to face?
- What did you expect from the project? Have these expectations happened?
- How has the project changed things? Can you explain what these changes mean to you?
- Can you describe one positive change that has happened because of the project?
- What do the changes mean to the children in the project area?
- Where do you see that the project has had an effect?
- What is your dream for the future?
- What do you think will happen in the project area? Even if the project stops? Do you think that the changes will be permanent?

Try to get answers to questions above that are as detailed as possible. Try to really highlight what it means to the person that you are asking the questions. The answer to a question like: “Can you explain what these changes mean to you?” can show very well the greater impact of the programme.

For example the answer of, “The programme means that I can now eat every day and I can send my children to school,” can be given more insight into the significance of such the results. For example, “Being able to send my children to school gives me hope and courage for the future. And the knowledge that they can grow out of poverty.”

Quotes

Use of one or more ‘Quotes’

In a quote you can repeat what a beneficiary has said.

Using quotes makes it clearer what the child or family actually thinks about the programme. And the story becomes more personal.

Here below are some examples of good stories. There are more good examples, including from other partner organisations, but we have chosen three. You can use these stories for inspiration. Under each story there is a brief explanation why this is a good story.

Yona is a 22 year old youth from Kayukum village, Apopong parish, Kolir Sub-county in Bukedea district. He is the first born with three other siblings, although his father has other children.

In 2007, Yona dropped out of school while in primary four due to lack of school fees and other scholastic materials and has since been miserably supporting his mother in garden work in order to raise food for the family.

In March 2016, Yona became one of the beneficiaries of the SAO interventions on income improvement for the out of school youths. He joined a youth group that started weekly savings and lending. “I first felt shy to join the group because surely i had nothing to save.”

Yona remarked as he tells his story.

Their group benefited from training in entrepreneurship, capital mobilization, record keeping and business management among others, which were organized by SAO Kolir project team, from which he got the motivation to start a business. “I was motivated by the experience of the facilitator because he is a local business man in a nearby trading center, who started his business with small capital and has since developed into a very successful business man in Kolir.” Yona Said.

Yona says the facilitator’s sharing inspired him to go to his group, and borrow Ugx 60,000/= (Equivalent to 16 Euros). He bought a pig, which he slaughtered and earned him a profit of Ugx. 29,000/=(Equivalent to 8

Euros) after selling. Since then, he has continued with the same business.

“I use my profits to pay fees for my siblings and to support my mother who in her old age and siblings with food at home. I have now bought 2 piglets for rearing. My future plan is to expand my piggery project, supply my business myself and in 5 years I want to be like the businessman who trained me.” Yona continues to narrate.

Yona’s mother also commented during a home visit by the project staff. “I am happy because our son is now taking care of us in our old age when we are weak and cannot provide for ourselves.”

In this story, Yona confirms that he acquired relevant knowledge and skills which he has put into practice. Through the knowledge and skills acquisition, he was able to get a loan and invested it in business which turned into a gainingful employment and be able to sustain his family with the increased income.

This story from SAO Uganda (bi-annual report 2016) shows how you can make a more personal story using quotes. The story shows the impact of the training received by the young person: he now takes care of his mother and siblings. It also explains what his dreams for the future.

Fred* (not real name) is 9 years old who was recruited as a child ambassador in November 2014. At that time, he was enrolled in Early Childhood Education (Nursery) at Koga Primary school. Fred's father passed away in 2010, leaving behind his mother who is a peasant farmer as the sole breadwinner. Prior to joining the program, the family mother was hopeless and could not even afford three meals a day, let alone pay for the required mandatory school levies. Fred* was often forced to stay away from school for non-payment of school levies. This frustrated the mother who resorted to abusive and violent behavior towards her children. She regularly vented her anger on her children and Fred bore the most brunt of her frustration. After being recruited as a community Ambassador parent, she started interacting with other parents and started to share her life and experiences with the other members of the group who were equally supportive. The staff came in with the help of Community Facilitators and started by encouraging her to join in the activities of the program. Information from the teachers revealed that Fred* was withdrawn and always sad in school. Further investigation by the Child Rights Ambassador from Seka Village revealed that Fred* was neglected and physically abused by the frustrated mother who did not even realize the dangers of her actions towards her child development. After consultation with her and the extended family including neighbors, child ambassador through the local administration (Chief), the Community Development Committee and members of the Area Advisory Council, Fred's mother talked to her and encouraged her to change the way she was treating her children. In July 2015, Fred's mother re-joined Koga Milimani Self Help Group and has continued to actively participate in group activities. The group has been very supportive of

her and has mentored her to learn how to better care for her children. She has also adopted kitchen gardening and poultry farming and learned to save some money and also borrow to set up her small vegetable trading business. The income she gets from the sale of vegetables has enabled her to buy basic needs such as new clothes for Fred* and his brother and also pay for school levies in time. This greatly improved the life of Fred* who is now a happy boy and very active in Children's activities, both in school and at home. Fred's self-confidence has greatly improved and he can now interact freely with people around him. The Program will continue to support the family by encouraging the mother to actively participate in the group activities as well as acquire additional skills to increase her resilience to learn skills to better improve the well-being of Fred* and the other children.

This story from the Undugu Society of Kenya (bi-annual report 2016) shows very nicely the real impact of the project on the life of a child. This is in practical terms (clothes, food) as well as psychological terms (more confidence). It describes the situation before and after the start of the project. The story describes various program interventions:

a. The importance of self-help groups: practically (more income, learning how to grow vegetables and raise chickens), morally (the support given to help mothers bring up their children).

b. The approach of neglect and abuse with the help of various stakeholders.

Long at last Sinyala is re-united to her husband and other 2 older children after she has been separated from the husband for one year. 'The SHG group where I belong took a step to counsel me and went also to my husband with an emphasis that our children had no peace because they were separated two from each other. I took two young ones while as my husband had two older ones after I made a decision to quit the marriage following hardships that I was going through with my husband quarrelling and bullying most of the times but thanks to my fellow SHG members who have made us join together with my husband and all children are happy again.

Life was hard and unbearable for Sinyala Nyirenda to take care of the children and a pregnancy of nine months alone after her husband divorced her and married another wife. She narrates her story.

'It never rained but poured on me, the worst thing he did to me was selling the whole cassava garden without my consent which I cultivated myself with my own hands while he was busy boozing and took the whole amount to enjoy with a new wife. He even took the blankets to the new home leaving me with children helplessly. I felt I was no longer worthy to live, I wished I could just die to forget the whole torture, but when I looked at the children and the pregnancy I was carrying, I persevered. I had no hope of life, I had nothing to set my eyes on, except God, said Sinyala. By God's grace this community facilitator by the name of Phillis approached me looking at my situation to join a Self Help Group (SHG) in our community. I was convinced and became member of Umodzi group. Through the

group I can testify that things are changing for the better, I'm able to do small scale business of selling bananas and Usipa. I have bought and replaced the blankets which my husband took from me. I have managed to buy Lenitis school uniform and pay her school fund. Through our social discussion at our group meetings, I presented my problems to the members who sacrificed their time to call my husband and I and settled everything so that we take care of children together as a family. As I am saying we are reunited with my husband because of the SHG group. I'm a living testimony of these groups. Thanks to HAC and LISAP for the project I'm very grateful. My husband came and apologized to my parents as well for the ill treatment he did to me. I am glad now that the group has managed to bring us together so that we can take care of the children'. She concluded while showing the scars of teeth on her cheek beaten by her husband but now they are together. The husband was not present during the visit but Sinyala owes it all to her SHG group.

This story from LISAP Malawi (bi-annual report 2016) clarifies the meaning of a self-help group. The story describes a personal situation, which is symbolic of other families in the project area. Divorce and separation occur frequently in the area. What is nice about this story is that it is told entirely by the mother using one long quote. It also shows the situation before and after the intervention of the self-help group – therefore describing what the whole situation means for the children involved.

4. How do you provide a good photo?

Attach at least three high quality photos (minimal 2 MB) of the person(s) mentioned in the narrative. Preferably a close up and a photo of the person in his/her surroundings.

A high quality photo is in focus, at least 2 MB and matches the story.

For example

The story is about a child who learned to stand up for his/her rights during the children's support group. In addition to photo of the child, you can also provide a photo of the child while he or she is at the children's support group.

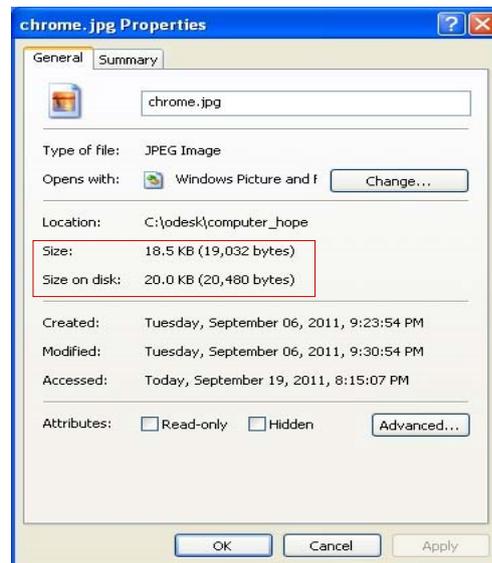
The story is about a mother who bought chickens with money that she borrowed from the self-help group. As well as the photo of the mother, you can also provide a photo of the mother with her chickens or of the mother during a weekly meeting at the support group.

2MB

We would like photos that are at least 2 MB, because these can be printed at the correct size. If the photos are less than 2MB, they will be unclear and blurred if we use them for printing. Examples of how we use the pictures are: social media, annual reports, brochures, magazines, etc.

How do you check if the picture is 2MB?

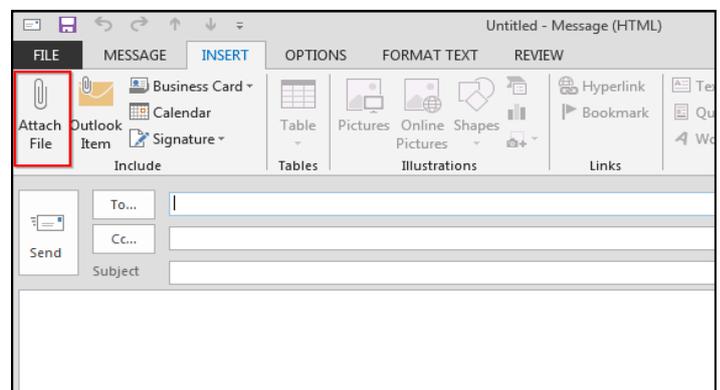
- Right click on the photo
- Select 'Properties'
- The 'General' tab will show the size. This should be at least 2,000 KB or 2 MB. (See picture)



How to make a separate attachment?

Please send the photos in a separate attachment (.jpeg, .png).

1. Transfer the photo from the camera to the computer
2. Make sure that the photo is saved as a JPEG or PNG
3. Start a new email in your email program
4. Click on 'attach file' or first on 'insert' and then 'attach file'. (see picture)
5. Select the photo on your computer
6. The photo is now attached to the email and the email is ready to be sent



Do not:

- attach it to a Word document and send it as a pdf
- don't paste a photo into a Word document
- save and send the photo as a pdf
- copy photos with the right mouse button and attach directly into the email message

Below are some examples of good photos. There are more good examples, including from other partner organisations, but we have chosen three. You can use these photos for inspiration. There is a brief explanation under the photo explaining why it is good.

These photos from EKHC SWZ (bi-annual report 2016) are in focus, larger than 2MB and back up the message of the story. The story is about how the support group has improved the situation of the family. Picture 1 shows the family involved in the story. It is nice that the children are in the picture because we are ultimately curious about the impact of the project on the children. Photo 2 shows the father with his daughter and the sheep he has purchased with the help from the project. The picture shows the concrete results of the project. The sheep are not only important for the father (or parents), but they will ultimately benefit the children. In this way we can easily explain towards sponsors why their gift means so much for children in need.



These photos from EPR Rwanda (bi-annual report 2016) complement a story which is about a boy who has had AVET training. He is focused on breeding piglets and this is going well. The pictures show the boy with his piglets. From his happy face and smile you can see that he is pleased with his training. He looks straight into the camera, looking right at you. The other picture illustrates the surroundings (trees, etc. in the background); this way our sponsors can get a good idea of how this boy lives.



These photos from AEE Rwanda (bi-annual report 2016) are not specific to a life story, but are a good example of photos that we can use. The photos show ongoing project activities. Both photos show children / mothers engaged in an activity. Anyone looking at the photo therefore gets a good idea of what such an activity in Rwanda looks like.



Tip: avoid making photos in bright sunlight, so the photo will not be overexposed.