



**HuMEL Peer Network**

COLLABORATE, EVALUATE, EMPOWER

## **HuMEL Storytelling Session 2: Effective Writing and Reporting**

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*Jen Lazuta, Regional Communications Officer, Central Africa*

*Jim Stipe, Content Strategist, Digital Communications specialist*

**March 14, 2024 | 9:00 AM ET**

# Best Practices



Activate your video when you are speaking, if possible.



Mute your microphone when you are not speaking.



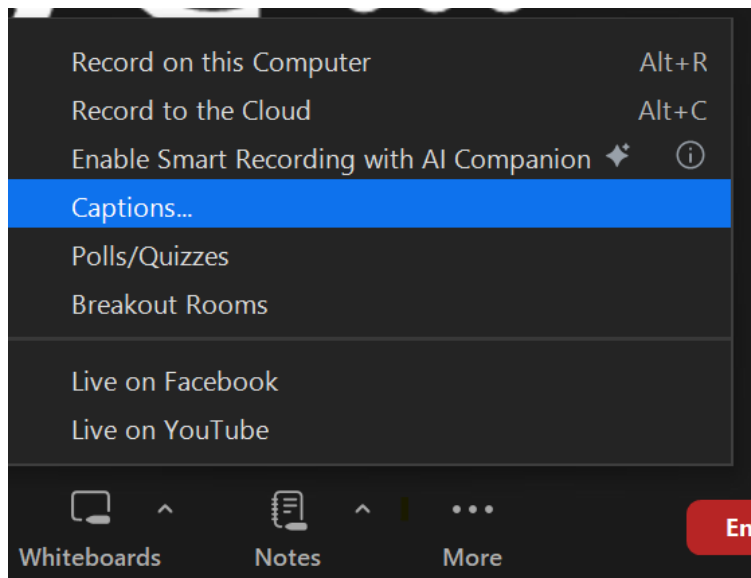
During Q&A, raise your hand if you'd like to speak out loud.



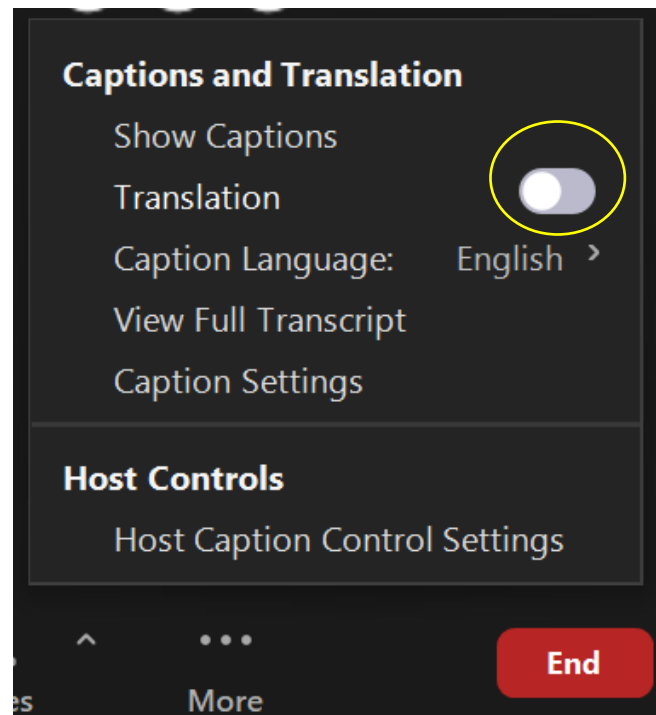
Use the chat box if you have any questions or comments!

# Translated Captions

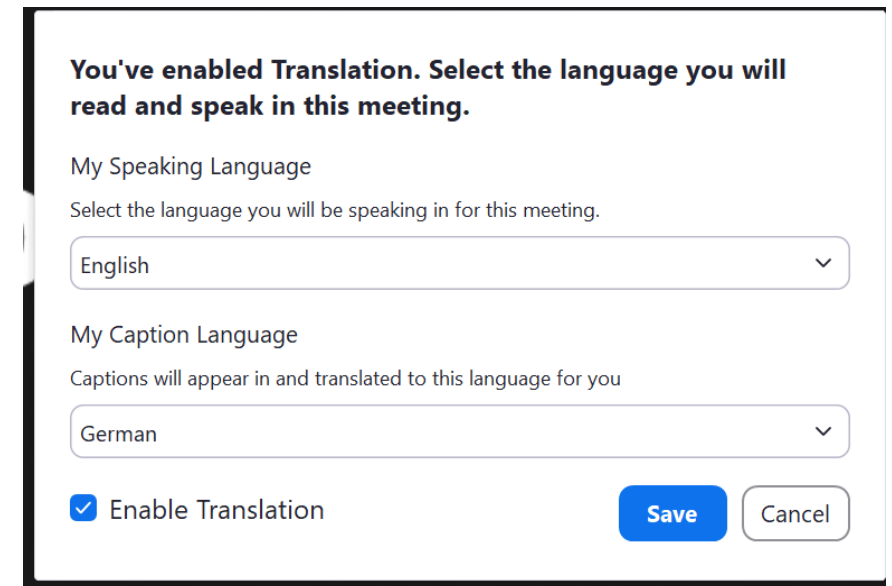
## Step 1: Click Captions under "More"



## Step 2: Switch translation on



## Step 3: Select language



# Today's Goals



Reporting for Impact



Tips for Good Stories and Quotes



Visual and Digital Opportunities for Dynamic Reporting

# WRITING DONOR REPORTS

## Top Tips



# Donor Reports: Preparing for Success



- ✓ Plan for visual milestones to capture
- ✓ Think about "before" and "after" photos
- ✓ Capture program participant interviews with compelling quotes
- ✓ Think about opportunities beyond *written* report
- ✓ Build in time for editing

# Writing Donor Reports

## Six Top Tips

1. Open with the **big picture**.
  - Why the project was needed from the **human** perspective
  - How the project was impactful in reach, and in people's lives
  - The value of donor support-why it mattered, the difference it made
2. Write shorter sentences.
3. Eliminate jargon and acronyms.
  - *We are humanitarians. **Write from the human perspective.***
4. Break up blocks of text.
5. Use clear, compelling subheadings.
6. Have an intuitive flow of the narrative.
  - If you were to read only the sub-headings, would you understand?

# Break up text by using lists

## **BEFORE**

In our writing workshop, we'll learn about how to construct better sentences, how to revise our sentences, and how to write with the reader in mind.



# Break up text by using lists

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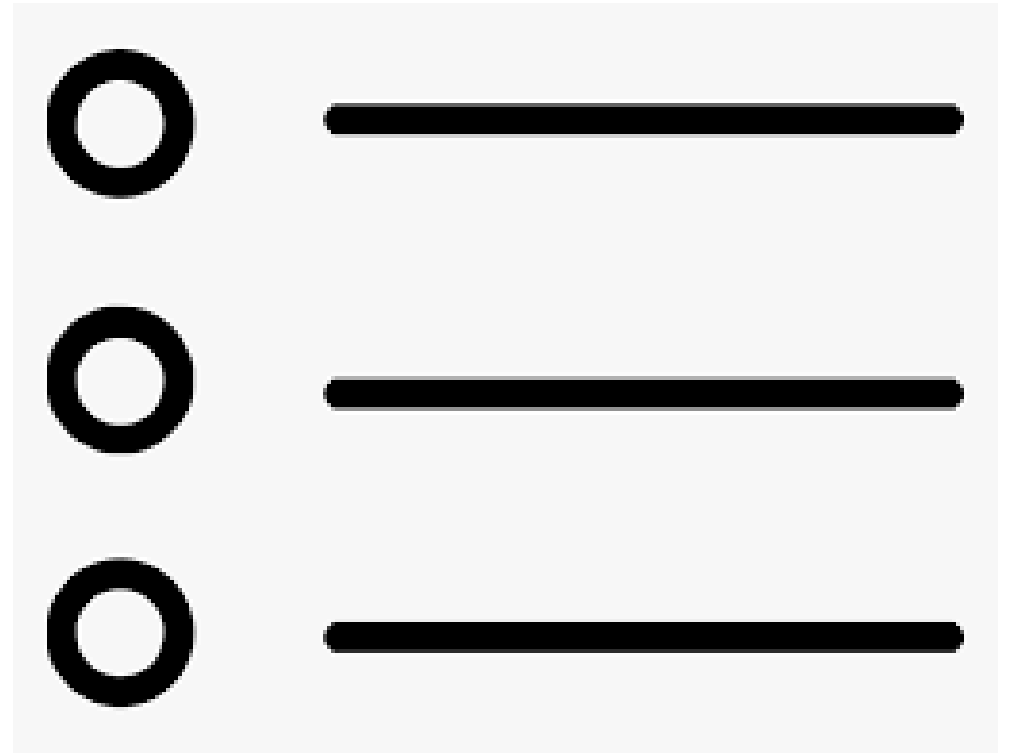
## AFTER

This workshop will teach three things:

1. How to construct better sentences.
2. How to revise sentences.
3. How to write with a reader in mind.

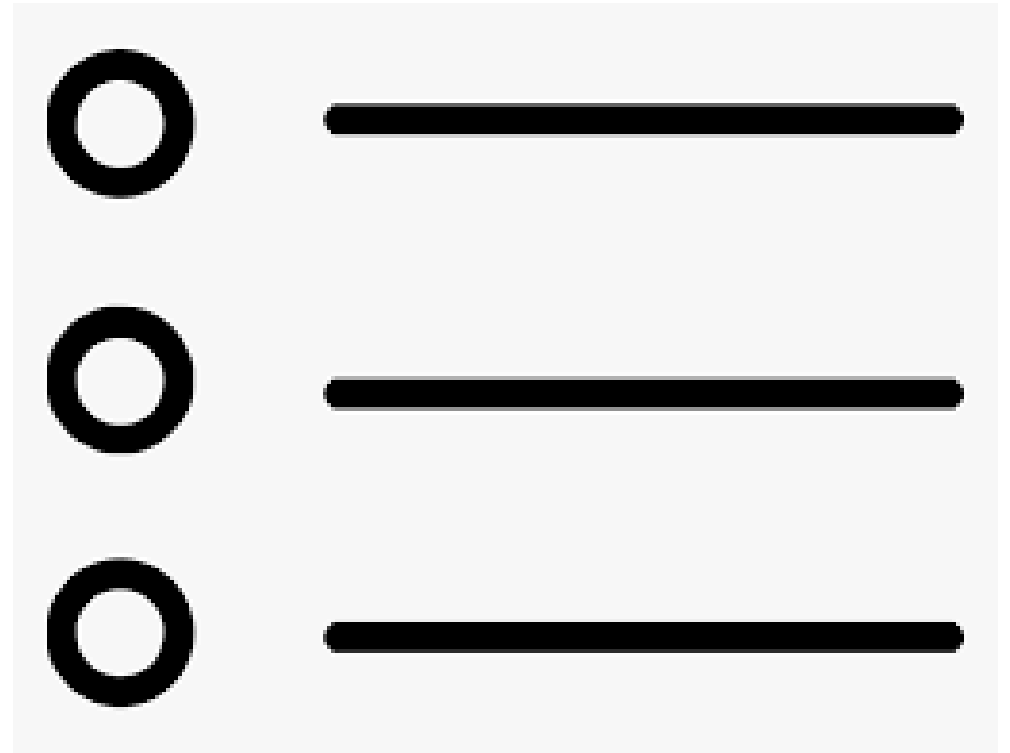
# Make use of design elements: Help the reader to not have to work so hard

- Will subheadings help the reader understand the main message?
- Can bullet points improve the reader experience?
- Can you add space between paragraphs to create more white space?
- Can the text be bigger?



# Make use of design elements: Help the reader to not have to work so hard

- Will subheadings help the reader understand the main message?
- Can bullet points improve the reader experience?
- Can you add space between paragraphs to create more white space?
- Can the text be bigger? **(YES!)**



# Earthquakes in Turkey and Syria

A REPORT FOR [DONOR NAME]

## [DONOR NAME'S] IMPACT

[Organization name] is extremely grateful for the generosity of [Donor name's] \$XX amount gift to support our emergency response to the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. Your gift provided families in urgent need with [description of impact of support]. Sentence about why this support mattered in people's lives at this moment in time.



With your generosity, CRS and our local Church partners are providing families in Turkey and Syria with immediate assistance and support for long-term recovery. Photo by Caritas Syria

## CONTEXT

The effects of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake and series of aftershocks that struck Turkey and Syria in February continue to be felt. The death toll now surpasses 50,000. In Syria, an estimated 500,000 people have been displaced, with many living in collective shelters, with relatives or friends, or in informal settlements with minimal services. Hundreds of schools are serving as shelters or need rehabilitation. Families have reported lingering mental health issues among children and their caregivers. In Turkey, more than 2.7 million people are displaced.

## ORGANIZATION NAME / PARTNER RESPONSE

With your generosity, [Organization] is supporting our local partners in their efforts to provide urgent

relief and assistance for long-term recovery.

In Syria, XYZ contributions to partners are supporting 6,000 families in collective shelters in Aleppo, Latakia and Hama with blankets, food, hygiene items, electricity and other supplies. [Organization] is also providing cash assistance and other support for at least 300 families in Tartous and for those displaced from areas closer to the earthquake's epicenter.

In Turkey, [Organization] supports [partners], which continues to coordinate with:

- In the Dioceses of Istanbul and Izmir, Caritas has provided cash, vouchers and shelter.

Example:  
Headings/  
opening

# Example: Bullets / ease of reading

- 300 local masons were trained to complete home repairs using techniques for building back better, and five demonstration shelters were constructed to serve as training sites.



With your support, CRS trained local masons to complete home repairs. Photo by CRS staff

## WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

- More than 3 million gallons of clean drinking water were provided to 25,000 families.
  - Six temporary solar-powered water treatment systems were established in collaboration with Water Mission International.
  - Three of the temporary systems were converted into permanent ones, in collaboration with the National Directorate of Drinking Water and Sanitation. CRS is also repairing seven additional water supply systems.
- Community water-user committees were formed and trained to manage the water systems.
- 2,500 families received training on best hygiene practices through home visits. Hygiene promotion officers visited families to assess hygiene practices, share information, test household water quality and distribute water purification tablets.

## LIVELIHOODS AND COMMUNITIES

- More than 1,000 farmers, small entrepreneurs and vendors in the Cayes, Cavaillon, Maniche, Camp-Perrin, Arnaud and Plaisance communes received training and cash support for livelihoods activities.
- Six farmer field schools were established so that farmers can come together to learn improved farming practices. Schools were equipped with agricultural tools, including picks, hoes and machetes. Workshops on best practices for maintaining plots of land and preparing biopesticides were also conducted.
- 105 people received training on community-led disaster risk management.
  - Five trainings in Cavaillon, Arnaud, Plaisance, Camp Perrin and Maniche were facilitated by CRS to help community members create action plans to reduce risks.
  - Five action plans were created and CRS will support communities in implementing at least one of their priority disaster risk-reduction activities.



Farmers participate in training to improve farming practices and livelihoods. Photo by CRS staff

# Example: Quotes / icons

Program participant Mohammed Muktar, center, receives cash assistance from CRS, which enables him to buy the vital food his family needs most while boosting the local economy.  
*Photo by CRS staff*



“ I used to own a big farm with my brothers, but, because of prolonged drought, it has dried up. I now wake up every morning not knowing what day labor I will be able to find.

Mohammed Muktar  
CRS cash programming  
participant



**7.7 million**  
PEOPLE IN  
ETHIOPIA ARE  
RECEIVING  
FOOD RATIONS  
THROUGH CRS  
PROGRAMMING.

## EAST AFRICA

### Ethiopia

Humanitarian needs in Ethiopia continue to escalate given the ongoing conflict in the north, and drought in the south and east. The country is experiencing one of its most severe droughts in 40 years, following four consecutive failed rainy seasons. After almost five months of relative stability, the security situation in the north degraded significantly when Ethiopian government forces and rebels reengaged in active fighting in the north of Amhara region and the south of Tigray.

CRS is responding to the compounding crises by providing 7.7 million people with food and support. This includes vital support for 2.8 million people in conflict-affected areas. CRS is also providing crop seeds, and cash for vegetable seed distribution, for families affected by drought. CRS continues to support displaced families with emergency shelter and cash for rent in the southern state of Oromia.

### Somalia

On September 5, the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee said that, without significant humanitarian assistance, parts of Somalia would face famine between October and December 2022. Southern Somalia has seen a drastic rise in acute malnutrition in children, and child and adult deaths. Today, 1.4 million children under age 5 face acute malnutrition. Nearly 330,000 may die without immediate treatment.



Experts estimate that, in the hardest-hit areas, one in three livestock have died since mid-2021.

The crisis has led to massive displacement and heightened conflict around land tenure and resources. Nearly 3 million people have been displaced, and 48% of Somalia's population needs humanitarian assistance. CRS has supported more than 70,000 people affected by this crisis with health care, nutrition services, cash assistance, and clean water and hygiene supplies.

# Icons for sectors - UN, OCHA



OCHA

## ICONS V.02

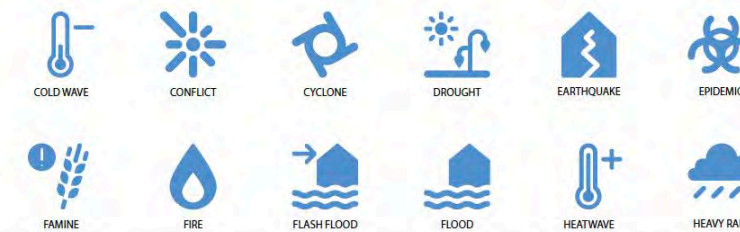
### CLUSTERS



### OTHERS



### DISASTERS/HAZARDS AND CRISES



# Icons for sectors - Your organization



MEAL



Agriculture



Education



Emergency Response and Recovery



HIV



Microfinance



Mobile technology



Partnership and Capacity Building



Peacemaking



Protection



Water Sanitation and Hygiene



Youth



# Acronym Humanizer

## From This:

- NFIs
- IDPs
- Animators
- Agricultural inputs

## To That:



موظف المشروع  
PROJECT STAFF

# Presenting your Report

## Ask yourself.....

What can I give them in a presentation that they can't get in a written report or slidedeck?



## Set the tone.

- Tell them what you are going to say. Give the headline.
- Explain why this topic is important in people's lives—and why it's important right now.
- As you present, take them where they can't go without you.

## One thought per slide



Bullets.

Space.

Let people absorb.

Photos should align.

*More slides with less information is better than fewer slides with too much information.*

# Conversational language

## **This:**

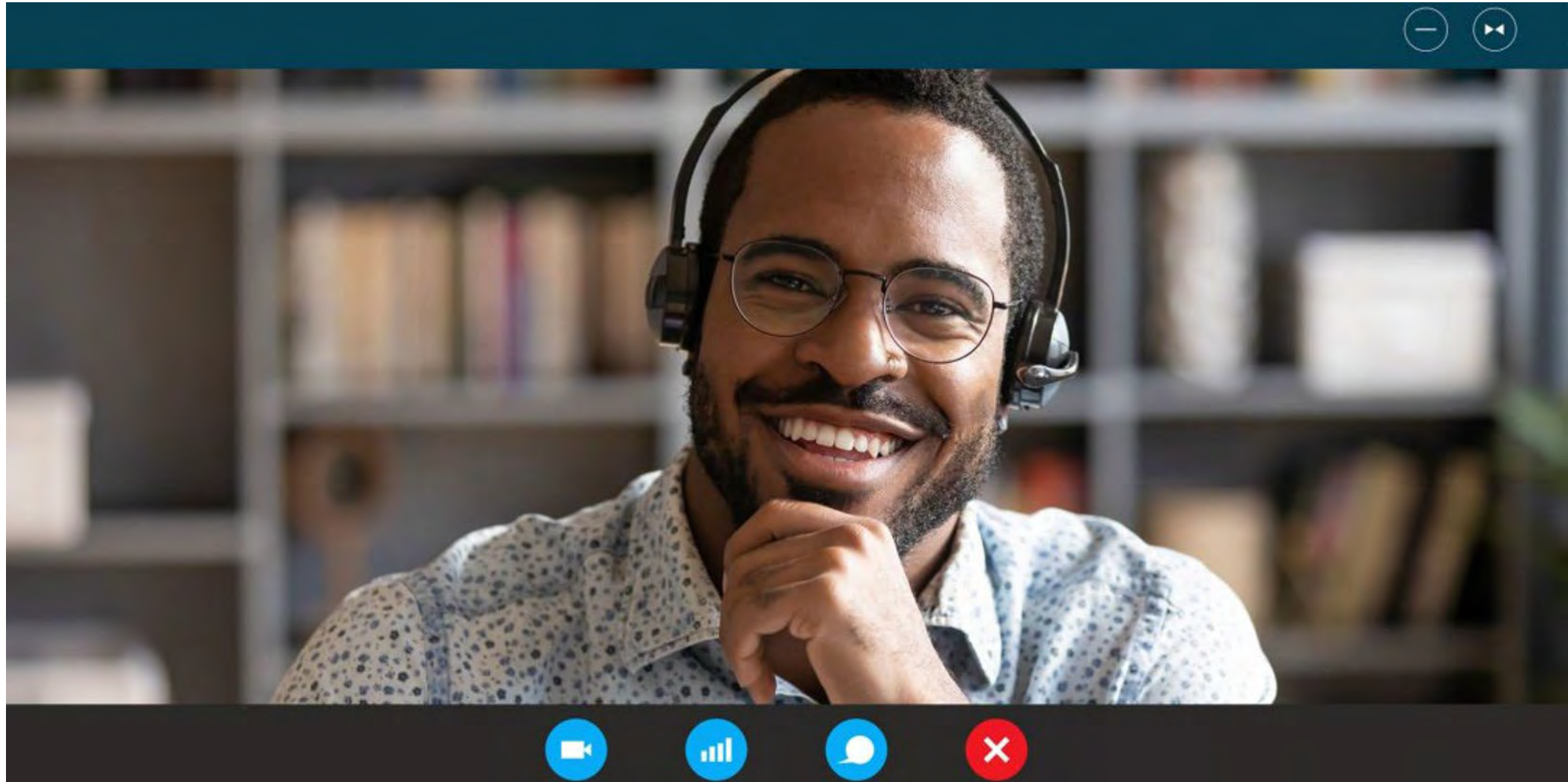
A rapid assessment found that households are reporting decreased food intake.

## **Becomes this:**

Families are eating fewer meals.



# Virtual



# The Three L's

Look

Level

Lighting



# Look



# Level



# Level

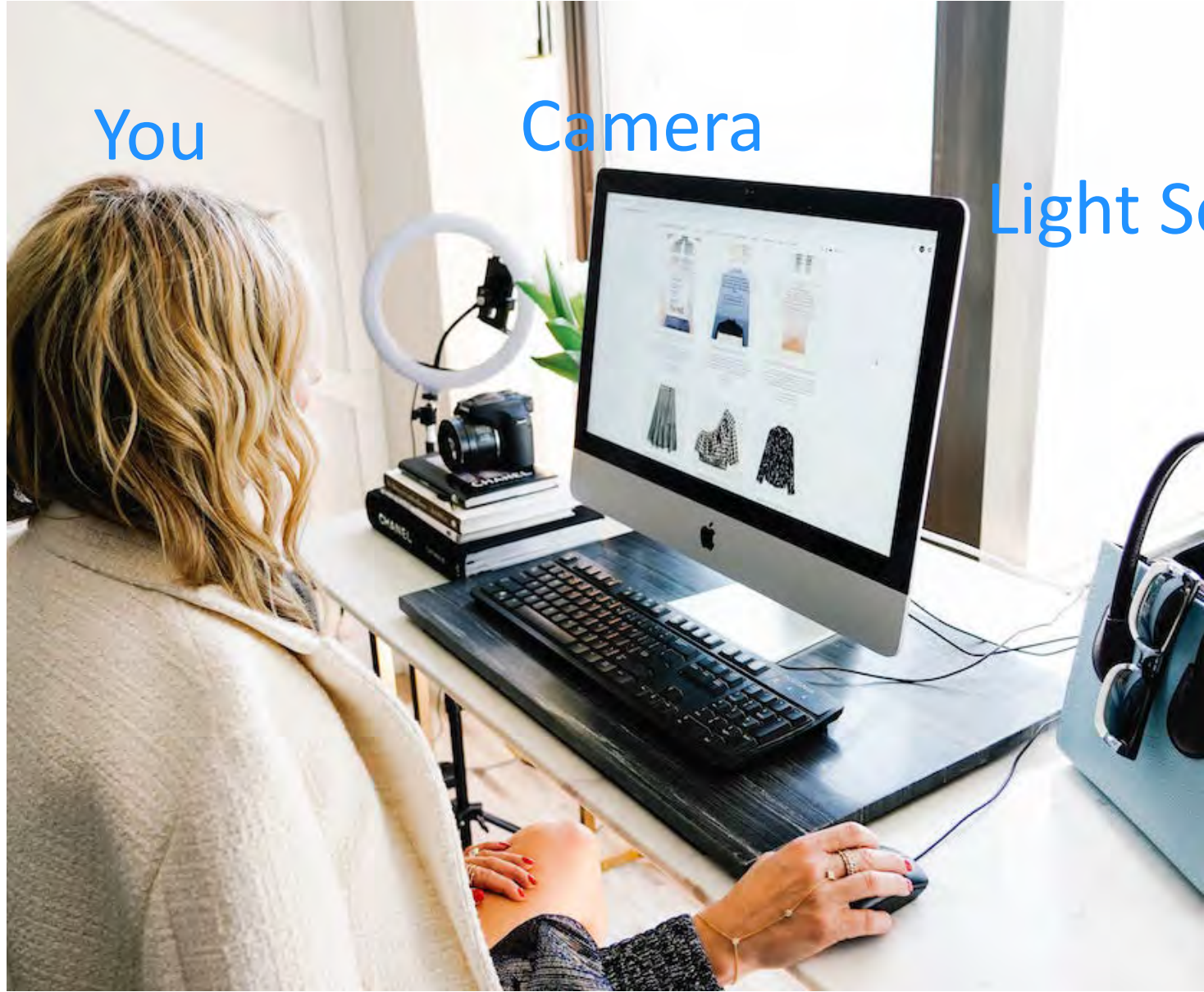


# Level



# Light





You

Camera

Light Source

# Gathering Success Stories



# OVERVIEW

1 “Successful” Success Stories

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2 Interview Techniques

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3 Quotes

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4 Sharing Your Story





## A compelling success story...

- Is an authentic, ethical and dignified portrayal of a person/people that tells their story in their own words
- Provides visibility on the work we do in a concrete & human way
  - Evokes emotion
- Shows how our organization/partners used funding to address a problem
- Demonstrates the impact of a program on people's lives
- Clear and concise
  - No jargon; no acronyms; simple, short sentences

# Show Don't Tell



# When choosing a story, think about:



- Who is the main subject in the story?
  - Are they unique or compelling in some way?
  - Are they representative of the project's overall positive impact?
  - Are they willing to share/give full consent and understand how their story will be used?





# Interview Techniques

- Introductory courtesies, transparency of intent.
- If the person is comfortable, record the audio of the interview to go back and listen for accuracy / good quotes.
  - Contact info for follow-up, if possible.
- Be conversational.
- Listen. Don't agree or disagree. Don't interrupt.
- Be curious.
  - Plan some questions in advance but be flexible.
  - Ask follow-up questions.
- Ensure translation accuracy.
- Humanity first. If a person is uncomfortable or distressed, stop the interview.

# The Interview

If you don't have it already, you will need:

- Basic facts and details
  - Names, dates, ages, locations, occupation, family size, marital status, etc.
- Chronology of events / key dates

Additionally, more details of their story:

- The struggle faced by that particular person
- Impact: What has changed in his or her life thanks to this support?
  - Concrete examples with emotive quotes
  - Before vs. After/now
- Hopes / dreams for the future



## Ask Open-Ended Questions!

*Tell me about the time when....*

*How did you feel when....*

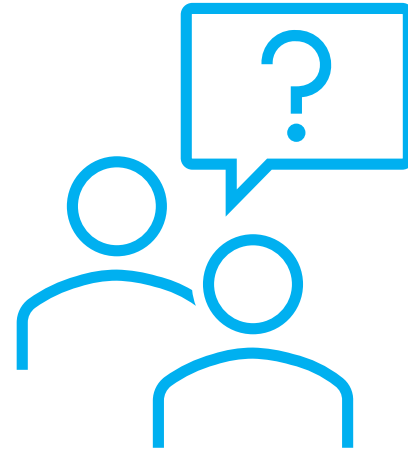
*What went through your mind when...*

*Describe to me...*

*Tell me about the day you realized...*

*Explain what steps got you here...*

## The 'Golden' Question



**Is there anything else you would like to add?  
Or anything I didn't ask that you think I should know?**

# “Quotes”





## Strong quotes

- Quotes are a certain phrase(s) that the interviewed person says that can be expressive, touching and effective.
- Good quotes add life and emotion to success stories; they create a reaction and add opinion and are unique.
- Less than 3 sentences
- No jargon
- No acronyms [or spell them out in brackets if the person uses them]

# Quotes: Best Practices

## What NOT to do!

Don't summarize words or expressions for the program participant. Don't create words they didn't say. Don't tell them what to say.

## What TO Do:

**Use the person's actual words.** Capture what is real, unexpected, human, unique. Something that paints a picture of their life, their family, their personality. Good questions and good listening lead to good quotes.

## In your words or theirs?

- Avoid exaggerations or making experiences or feelings “cinematic”
- If you weren’t there and the person doesn’t describe something in a certain detailed way, don’t ‘create a scene’
  - “The rebels attacked our village. We walked more than 10km during the night to reach the town. I was very scared for myself and my children. I just kept praying to God to keep us safe.”  
- Mariam
  - Mariam trembled as she ran into the dark night. She held tightly onto her children’s hands, praying that they wouldn’t get lost.
- A good moment to ask those follow-up questions – what did you see? What did you do? What were you scared of? Keep safe from what? Where did you walk to?
- If it’s not possible for further details, stick to the quote:
  - When an armed rebel group attacked Mariam’s village in the middle of the night, she and her children were forced to leave their home. They walked more than 10km to a nearby town. “I was very scared for myself and my children,” Mariam said. “I just kept praying to God to keep us safe.”

## Good or bad quote?

1. “My name is Martha. I am 27 years old. I live in Yaoundé.”
2. “At one point, I almost lost my sister because I could not raise the money requested by the hospital for her surgery,” Awa said. “I was devastated at the thought of losing her.”
3. “[NGO name] worked with 4 partners to provide youth a comprehensive package of SILC-PSPs and agricultural training using its SMART skills curriculum,” the head of programming explained. “In addition, our organization collaborated with these 4 sub-partners and Akazi Kanoze Access to provide Work Ready Now! /Be Your Own Boss to more than 8,000 youth.”
4. “Thank you, [NGO],” Fatimata said. “Thank you, [donor].”

# Sharing your story

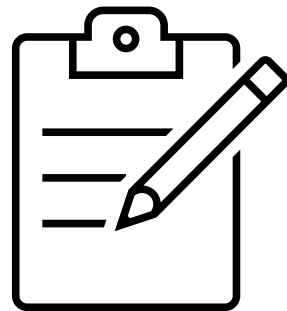


# Structure

- **Opening:** introduces us to the main subject of the story.
- **Context paragraph:** why are we talking about this person, place, or event
- **Supporting paragraphs:** give more details that support the context paragraph. Explain the larger problem and how we addressed it
  - Colorful quotes
  - Relevant data
- **End:** come full circle to what you talked about in the beginning and show the outcome or impact; end on a positive or hopeful note.

# A Compelling Intro is...

- Clear and concise
- Relates to the main point of the story without revealing everything
  - Intrigues the reader
- Usually starts with a person, not a project or organization or donor



## Which story would you keep reading?

1. [NGO name], with generous funding from [donor name], is supporting the recovery of malnourished children across communities in Borno State. [NGO] and its partners work with Lead Mothers and caregivers whose children are identified with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), to participate in the eight-week community-based supplementary feeding program (CBSFP).
2. Remembering to take daily medications can be hard for many people. But imagine being a young child and having to remember to take pills each day, every day, always at the same time. This is what Martha, who was diagnosed as HIV-positive shortly after birth, has had to do for the past 15 years. When she was younger, Martha had the support of her mother, who used help administer the medications to her. But at age nine, when her mother passed away, Martha was essentially left on her own to follow her treatment regime.



## The reread: Check yourself

- Remind yourself of common stereotypes of the people you are writing about. Have you perpetuated them in any way?
- Have you made assumptions about this person based on race, economic status, country of origin or gender?
- Have you used any jargon, acronyms or “non-human” terminology?
- Have you respected the dignity of this person and their story?
  - ‘The [insert family member] here test’
- Does any included information put the person at risk?
- Does it evoke emotion? (and not pity)
- Is the story understandable to a general audience?

## And last but not least...

- Every story needs at least one visual!



# Creating effective visuals

# Use strong visuals



**SOMALIA DROUGHT**

**What we're doing:**

- Supporting 500,000 people with a range of assistance
- Providing 4,400 families with cash to buy food and living supplies
- Trucking clean water to the highest risk communities
- Distributing hygiene kits or vouchers to 1,200 families

[crs.org/donate](https://crs.org/donate)

# Where to start?

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- 1 Start with your audience.

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- 2 What are your audience's biggest questions?

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- 1 Start with your audience.
- 2 What are your audience's biggest questions?
- 3 How can I answer those questions in the most visual way possible that is easy to understand?



**Create visuals that communicate...**

**Clearly**

**Quickly**

**Succinctly**

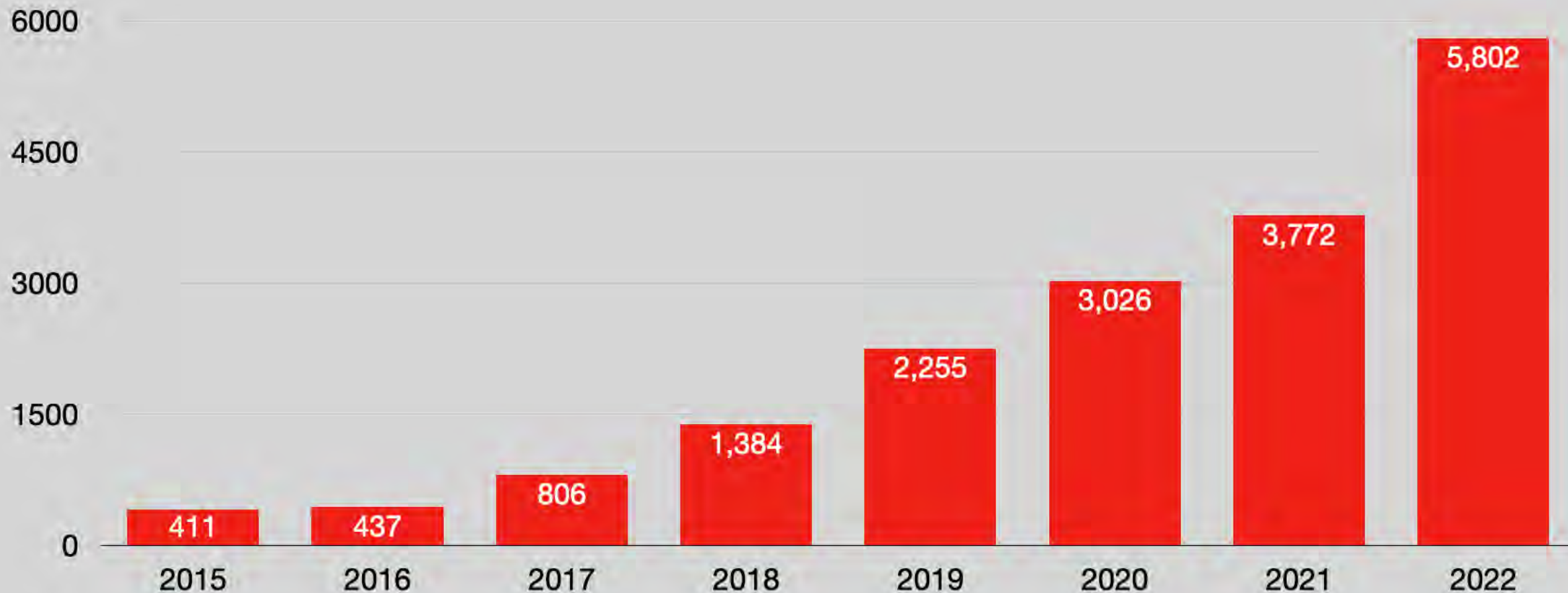
# Conflict in the Sahel

Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words.

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# Conflict Events in the Sahel

Events include: violence against civilians, explosions/remote violence, protests and battles

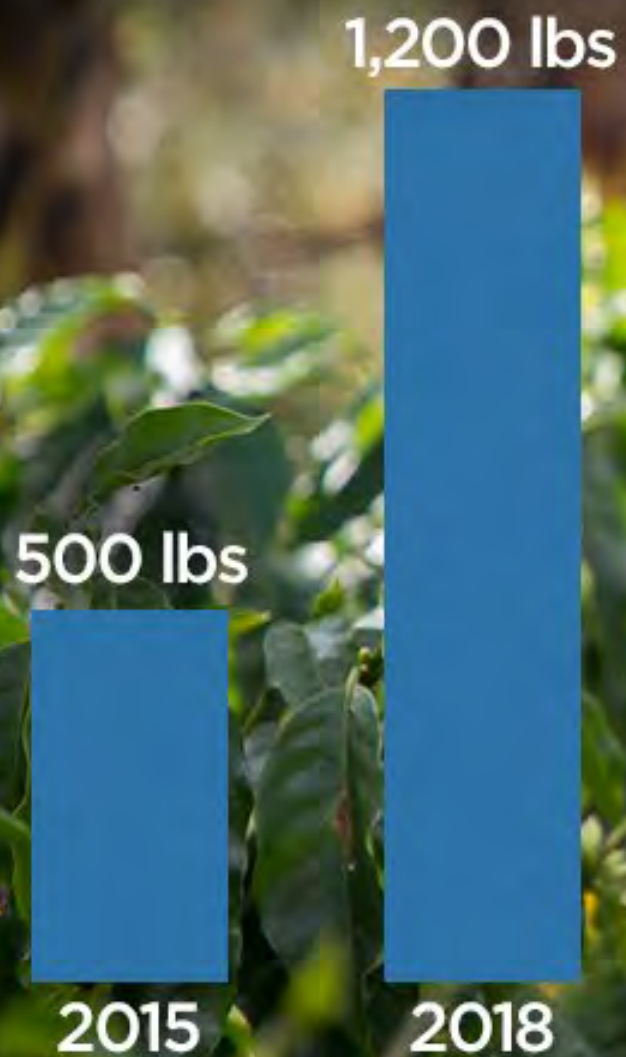


# How a program in Honduras is increasing coffee yields

Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words. Lots of text to explain the program and how it works using a lot of words.

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Coffee farmer Alonzo more than doubled his harvest in just a few years using Blue Harvest techniques.



Old method of processing coffee beans creates acidic, polluted water

The Blue Harvest method creates much cleaner water



# Show, don't tell

Data analysis  
Local leadership  
Sphere standards  
Civil society  
Government actors  
Community health workers  
Maternal and child health  
simplify  
Community meetings

Education programs  
Trainings  
Watershed management  
USAID  
Partners  
Monitoring and evaluation  
Savings and internal lending communities  
Water points

Youth peace ambassadors  
SBCC  
Change analysis  
Social cohesion  
Data collection

Annual data  
Kitchen gardens  
ICT4D



simplify.

**Table 8.** Comparison of labour cost: conventional versus UAV/SfM technique

	<b>Field person days</b>	<b>Field rate</b>	<b>Field labour costs</b>	<b>Office person days</b>	<b>Office rate</b>	<b>Office labour costs</b>	<b>Total labour costs</b>
Conventional method	52	\$60	\$3,120	3	\$30	\$90	\$3,210
UAV/SfM	4.62	\$60	\$277.20	7.2	\$30	\$216	\$493.20
		<b>Total savings in labour costs:</b>					<b>US\$2,716.80</b>

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On foot:  
\$3,210





Using a drone:  
\$493



\$3,210



\$493

# INFOGRAPHIC

# 01







# People fleeing their homes

# ↑40%

In less than two years, the number of displaced persons has increased by 40%, reaching 2.5 million people in five west African nations in the Sahel

**41,382**

reported fatalities  
between 2015-2022

- Battles
- Explosions/remote violence
- Violence against civilians

Source: ACLED

# Tips for simplifying

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- 1 Decide what is truly most important.

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- 2 Let go of the things that are not.

# Tips for simplifying

- 1 Decide what is truly most important.
- 2 Let go of the things that are not.
- 3 Think of a way to show what is truly most important.

examples.

# Quotes



**“Blue Harvest means change. Today I use half of the water I used before.”**

Alonzo Benítez  
Coffee farmer in Honduras

Photo by Jim Stipe/CRS



# Quotes

**“I saw farmland being covered by a dune once. I felt like it could just be the end of everything.”**

Volalee, a community member in Ankibay, Madagascar



Photo by Dooshima Tsee/CRS

# Quotes



Photo by Dooshima Tsee/CRS

# Quotes



Photo by Dooshima Tsee/CRS

# Quotes

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Volalee, a community member in Ankibay, Madagascar



Photo by Dooshima Tsee/CRS

# Quotes



**If we're not proactive we will also feel the heat of the violence extremists. We go to communities close to border areas to raise awareness of the violence extremists, how they manipulate using religion.**

Sheikh Dr. Hazic Hussein Zakaria, Ghana

# Statistics

**75% less water**

By participating in Blue Harvest, coffee farmer Wilfredo Sanchez uses far less water than he used to.



Photo by Jim Stipe/CRS

# Statistics



**6,900,000 pounds**

That's how much food CRS provided to people in need in Madagascar from April to June this year

Photo by Jim Stipe/CRS

# Statistics



↓ 50%

In Sierra Leone, the percentage of children under 5 years old with malaria decreased by 50% from 2013 to 2021



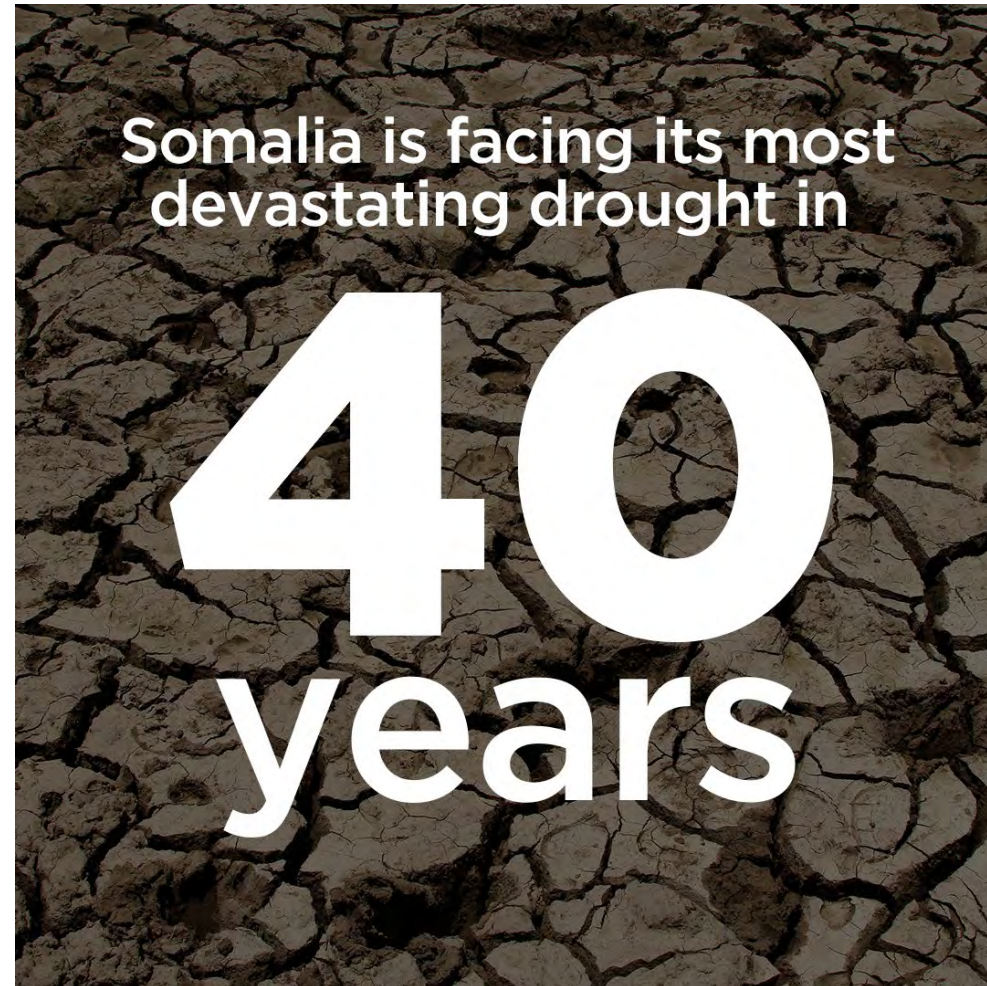
# Statistics

**345 MILLION**

people—more than the entire U.S. population—face "acute food insecurity, or "emergency" levels of hunger.

[crs.org](http://crs.org)

## Use large font selectively to draw attention



# Use icons to show what a program is doing



**SOMALIA DROUGHT**

## What we're doing:

- 

Supporting 500,000 people with a range of assistance
- 

Providing 4,400 families with cash to buy food and living supplies
- 

Trucking clean water to the highest risk communities
- 

Distributing hygiene kits or vouchers to 1,200 families

  
ocrs.org/donate

# Animated statistics



# Animated statistics



# Animated statistics



# Before and After



# Before and After





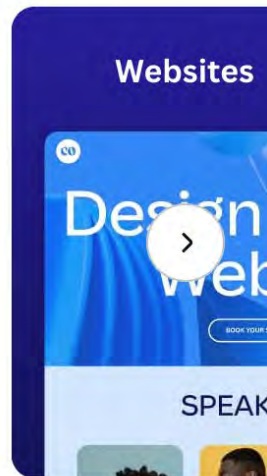
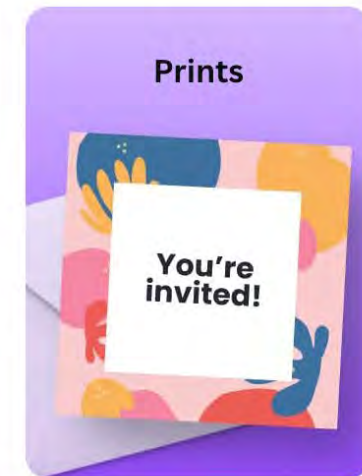
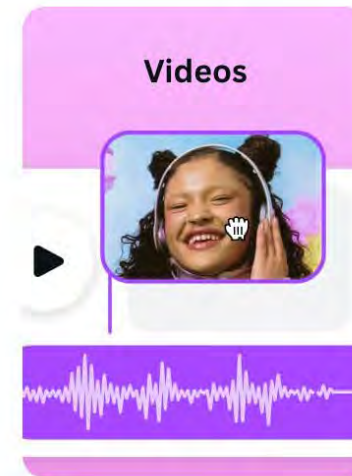
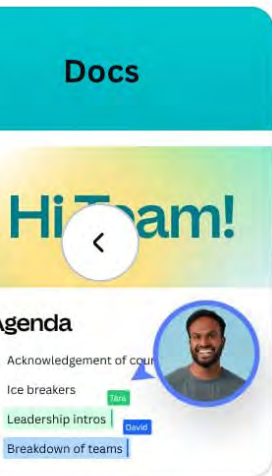
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# Exposure

# Q&A

What questions do you have?