

SHIFTING THE POWER

A TOOLKIT FOR JOURNALISTS AND COMMUNICATORS

ON OUR RADAR

Michelle Obama said that "we can't give other people their voices." But we can guide them on how to use their voice for change. Not many of us are able to share our stories to the public. Why? Because of the fear of being misunderstood, fear of not being articulate enough! All of these things hold us back. It is not easy, but every story counts"



Brigitte Sossou Perenyi,
presenter of BBC documentary 'My Stolen Childhood',
a collaboration with On Our Radar

Thank you for reading this guide.

If you're here, you hopefully agree that media outlets need to represent a more diverse range of voices and human experiences if they are to rebuild trust and relevance. We hope this guide offers a practical contribution to shifting the old power centres within media and public communication. We must find a better way of working through collaboration rather than extraction and prescription.

Working with groups that have been silenced or excluded can be challenging. Each community will be different and there will be stumbling blocks along the way. But when it goes well, it will be collaborative, radical and fun. You'll create meaningful relationships as well as surfacing original, raw and authentic stories.

This guide will offer a range of tools and methods that can be used to promote a more inclusive form of journalism and storytelling, with marginalised groups and individuals.

It's based on over half a decade of experience and making award-winning, high-impact content in collaboration with reporters from marginalised communities all over the world - from garment workers in Bangladesh and people living with dementia in the UK, to quarantined villages covering the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone.

This isn't intended as a definitive guide. Every context will have its own unique challenges and every organisation will have its own workflows, outputs and audiences. This is an introduction to a framework to make journalism inclusive and empowering and borrows heavily from lessons learned from community organising, service design and the humanitarian sector.

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DO I HAVE TIME FOR THIS?

You have deadlines, targets and tried and trusted methods of working. You might not think you have the time or the budget to initiate new ways of working, let alone the buy-in from your leadership team.

Think back to what you were covering five years ago and consider this: instead of flying a crew in and out of a country at great expense for just one story, your crew trained up a reporter network while they were there. They are not the national elite; not a group of local journalists, media graduates or well known fixers. They hold the marginal spaces where the lens only lingers when a crisis unfolds and then passes over them once again. It only takes a couple of days of training, but now every time a story emerges in that context, you are the first to know. You have the people who know it best, reporting in real time, directly into your HQ. They have the basic skills to speak to the right people, gather and share critical information, while keeping themselves and their communities safe as their experience unfolds. They move through community spaces inaccessible to a foreign crew, asking informed questions to trusted networks, documenting what they are seeing, experiencing and how it feels. They capture the invisible tremors of impact. Your creative teams start to build a story around that insight; your team of journalists enhance it with rolling dialogue back and forth. As it goes out, audiences sitting on their phones on the bus, or flicking through at the breakfast table, at their work desk, feel they are looking through a window into a world into an honest human experience. It suddenly feels less academic, less distant.

Imagine you were tasked with covering the refugee crisis in 2015, and had used the first two days of your press trip training networks of refugees to use their mobile phones to document their stories. Over the next few years, you would be getting raw and real-time updates from border crossings, refugee camps, detainment centres and homes in new-found countries. You would be hearing more about the nuances of what people have lost and left behind, how they have been treated, the sheer and often surprising diversity of their former lives, and their own ideas of what might happen next. It would be a far richer narrative than what we have to date.

In 2016, just before the referendum in the UK, you may have been commissioned to visit a series of towns and cities to find out what residents thought about Brexit. Imagine if, at the same time, you brought those residents together and trained them to report on Brexit in their hometowns. Unlike your rival media houses, you now have a steady stream of stories coming into your newsroom about how ordinary people really feel about Brexit - and how it links to their daily lives. You make a series of documentaries or podcasts narrated by your community reporters as they interrogate significant political shifts among British people and how these shifts link to their daily concerns about health, family and jobs. You are one of the only newsrooms that isn't accused of being out of touch with how British people think and feel.

Working in this way doesn't just have the potential to save time and money. It opens the door to voices rarely allowed into the mainstream media, builds trust with audiences and shifts the power away from the ivory tower.

WHY IS THIS MISSION CRITICAL?

The rise of citizen journalism opened up access to raw, authentic coverage of unfolding global events, told in the words of those most affected. However, the rise of fake news and difficulties verifying reports submitted by untrained citizens has dampened enthusiasm for genuine, community-led stories.

Despite these challenges, it is undisputed that the prevelance of mobile has shifted the rules around media engagement. Technology has made it easier than ever to connect with people at scale. Audiences crave stories told straight from the source. Journalism should be a valuable public service - informing, entertaining, and creating empathy with people we'll never meet. To remain relevant and regain trust, journalism in the UK needs to give a platform to different voices and create dialogue, understanding and connection between communities.

Too often the 'experts' the media choose to speak to are academics, specialist correspondents, or people with the relevant university degree. Lived experience is a different kind of expertise. Those who are facing tough times understand an issue best because they are living at the centre of it. They are experts by experience.

Collaborating with communities can lead to stories that are more intimate, emotional, challenging and surprising. People are more likely to offer up access into their lives if they trust in the intention behind the production, and feel that both their experiences and their voices are being respected.

Professional journalists have editorial, legal, technical and production expertise. Individuals and communities with lived experience have access, insight and authenticity. We believe there is huge power in finding the sweet spot between these two groups.



USING THIS TOOLKIT

This guide is divided in two parts.

Part one will look at the theory behind On Our Radar's 'five Cs' methodology and how it pairs common barriers to participation with concrete tools for engagement.

Part two will run through two pathways to engaging communities in reporting:

1. **Establishing a community reporter network**
   How to ignite a network of reporters and give them the skills to report on a collective issue.

2. **Co-producing content**
   How to run a participatory process with an individual or a community to produce a story around a specific issue.

This toolkit is intended as a dynamic resource for journalists and communicators. If you are working on a relevant project or approach that you are keen to share then get in touch at **partnerships@onourradar.org**



PART 1

WHAT'S IN THE WAY?

A DIAGNOSTIC LENS

WHAT'S IN THE WAY?

LOWERING THE BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

One of the clearest messages that has emerged from over half a decade of working with communities - experimenting and listening, and making mistakes - is that all humans share a deep desire to speak and be heard on the matters that affect their lives. What has also emerged is a strong commonality in the challenges that arise from the imbalance of power between the heard and unheard. From the collation of audio diaries by people with dementia in the UK to the development and mobilisation of a network of Sierra Leoneans on the frontline of Ebola, there have been five recurring barriers that communities and individuals have faced when trying to have their say.

A clear framework has emerged from these community collaborations that provides a pathway for those with little experience of being heard to share their experiences. We call these the '**five Cs**' and they offer a flexible diagnostic tool to uncover why someone may feel uncomfortable or unable to share their stories. For each of the five Cs, there is a suggested action that will go some way to filling that gap and lowering that barrier. These five barriers are often interconnected and require a willingness from participants to work together to tackle them. Each of the five challenges has given rise to a different creative process and *while not all stages will be relevant for every community*, they offer a way of assessing where the collaboration can go and which resources are needed to support that work.



CONSENT

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION	TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT
 **CONVICTION:** Do participants trust you and the process? Do they believe that speaking out will result in meaningful change?	**CO-DESIGN:** Create a shared misson underpinned by a clear understanding around intended results and impact. 
 **CAPACITY:** Do participants have the skills, access and resources required to report on a story safely, securely and accurately?	**TRAINING:** Offer training in entry-level reporting skills such as verification, interviewing, researching and awareness of bias. 
 **CONFIDENCE:** Where does the power come from to find your voice?	**MENTORING:** Establish a clear and supportive plan to boost a sense of self-worth and foster a belief in the right to be heard. 
 **CONNECTIVITY:** Do participants have barriers to digital engagement and, if so, what tools are they using to communicate?	**TECHNOLOGY:** Build or adapt digital tools that enable offline and marginalised groups to share stories in real-time. 
 **CRAFT:** Do participants have the necessary skills to deliver broadcast-quality media for public platforms?	**CO-PRODUCTION:** Provide legal, editorial and production support to ensure quality, rigor and the highest production standards 

CLOSURE

CONVICTION



DO PARTICIPANTS TRUST YOU AND THE PROCESS?
DO THEY BELIEVE THAT SPEAKING OUT WILL RESULT IN MEANINGFUL CHANGE?

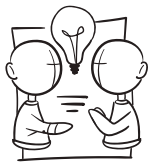


CONVICTION

It can be hard for individuals to believe that sharing their experiences will result in meaningful change. Social marginalisation or a breakdown in trust in institutions can lead to a well-founded fear that sharing a story may create further isolation, criticism or disrespect. Extractive journalism can give rise to stereotypes or single stories that cause deep damage. Communities may not trust media or institutions who have, in the past, distorted their words in order to sensationalise a story.

The loss of conviction is a challenge for both contributors and consumers of news. There is a parallel breakdown in audience trust in traditional media houses, who are often seen to be occupying an ivory tower well away from the realities of civic life, and in social media spaces, that are often perceived to be biased and permeated with fake news. As a result, people retreat into echo chambers they trust and because they do not see themselves in mainstream public discourse, there is less chance of them seeing the media as a potential platform for change.

It is possible that, even with the best intentions, a potential collaboration may be viewed with suspicion by a participant with previous experience of being poorly treated or misrepresented. Ensuring they feel invited in at the very early stages of planning and design may help to ease concerns and help to surface new ideas. A sense of ownership or genuine engagement helps build trust and it can take time. Working with local partners or services who already have a trusted connection with a community can be incredibly helpful. Approaching them early on to work with you to connect with communities can open doors and offer protection to someone into a vulnerable situation.



CO-DESIGN

Traditional design processes can perpetuate marginalisation; the same people commissioning projects are the ones leading the design and delivery of the projects. The design phase is the first opportunity to break this cycle. Opening up the design of a project to those who are due to be represented by that project offers a brilliant chance to create a shared mission and explore creative routes that may have evaded an internal design team. It allows you to hear which barriers are preventing a community from being heard. To get the most out of a co-design process, the emphasis needs to rest on listening and responding to a genuine problem rather than arriving with a pre-emptive idea or solution.

Alongside the creative design, this is the first opportunity to address safeguarding, power mapping, consider community-led risk assessments, explore a shared theory of change, and initiate more playful activities to genuinely break the ice, promote open discussions, and prompt creative thought.

The key is that the participants feel heard and understand that they hold a critical role in guiding the project. There is a spectrum to this: some projects will want to put that control firmly in the hands of the participants, allowing them to guide both the creative direction and the storytelling itself; other projects will carve out clear and genuine moments for participants to input into the design and direction while retaining some central control. Wherever your project lies on that spectrum it must offer an authentic opportunity for collaboration. Tokenism will be spotted immediately and can further erode conviction in the media. If done well, the creative process will emerge as stronger and more authentic, establishing essential buy in from all stakeholders.

CAPACITY



DO PARTICIPANTS HAVE THE SKILLS, ACCESS AND RESOURCES REQUIRED TO REPORT ON A STORY SAFELY, SECURELY AND ACCURATELY?

CAPACITY

Very few people have the opportunity to go through professional journalism training and fewer still will go on to have access to quality production tools or be given a platform for their work. Introducing the concepts of newsgathering and storytelling to communities can be a real pleasure as many of the skills required are already innate in social interaction: inquiring after friends and family, witnessing exchanges and events, hearing about the latest issues from community leaders, questioning local politicians or service providers over decisions and actions. Many of those participating will already have had to be their own advocates and rise up against prejudice or a lack of justice.

There is a critical role in reframing these capabilities as valuable journalistic skills and adding to them through training and mentoring. In particular, there is a need to enhance understanding around the importance of personal safety, source protection and privacy during the reporting process, as well as helping groups to recognise the impact of their own power relationships and bias. Capacity-building for reporting must remain responsive as each participant will also bring unique challenges. A lack of formal literacy or fluency in an official language can pose additional challenges, while certain disabilities can raise additional barriers to learning and engagement. Taking time to understand reporters' capacity challenges and finding the right tools and training mechanisms to mitigate them is key.



TRAINING

Training and skills-share sit at the heart of communications capacity-building and can be both a learning opportunity and a creative process in its own right. Training can be delivered remotely via digital or mobile, with pre-recorded modules sent to participants who can learn at their own pace. Workshops can travel through community spaces or bring participants together in a central space.

The content of the training can be adapted to each unique context but key modules cover the basics of reporting, finding sources, conducting interviews, verification, triangulation, use of mobile or digital tools, along with appropriate guidance in safeguarding, privacy and data protection.

You can only share a limited amount of knowledge in a workshop setting, so a good training session should leave a group with a sense of camaraderie and a solid grasp of the principles of community reporting, as well as a clear understanding of where their own boundaries and limitations lie. From a publisher's point of view, this kind of training mitigates some of the key pitfalls of citizen journalism. Sources and facts can be properly verified but retain the benefits of a unique, on-the-ground perspective. Make sure all spaces and resources are accessible and responsive to the learning needs of individual trainees.

CONFIDENCE

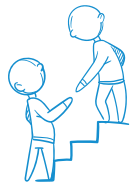


**WHERE DOES THE POWER COME FROM
TO FIND YOUR VOICE?**

CONFIDENCE

In a society where the dominant narratives are shaped by elites, the voices of marginalised groups and individuals are routinely ignored. When people don't see themselves reflected in the media, those they align with are routinely demonised by the press, it can erode a sense of self worth. Boosting skills can help to raise self-esteem but there is a deeper level of work needed to undo negative cultural and social messaging and ensure that each person feels able to claim their space and raise their voice. This can be done through group work or individual mentoring and requires time built in to projects to listen and respond to a participant's unique circumstances. This stage of the process can pose real challenges; how far can this go before it becomes a therapeutic process and requires a higher level of professional support? How to ensure that no harm is done by raising expectations that individual stories may result in change?

In addition, predicting the amount of support someone is going to need is difficult, particularly as emotions can run high when sharing vulnerabilities and painful experiences. As a result, confidence building requires boundaries that bring clarity to the roles and relationships, and expectations of the collaboration, while retaining the flexibility to be able to respond with humanity when challenges arise. This does not all have to be held by one person. Working with a referring partner is critical here, as they should have services and support infrastructure in place to help. If not, this is something to consider at the very earliest stages of the planning. Finally, feedback plays an important role in building confidence. Seeing work published on a well respected platform can give people a real boost so it's vital to build in time and budget to ensure participants are given a chance to see the final publication and hear the reactions of their audiences.



COACHING AND MENTORING

Establishing a mentoring plan involves allocating time and resources to listen to participants' experiences, and, when invited, to share your own knowledge, skills and experience. A participant may want guidance on how to frame their story for a particular audience, or get some creative feedback on their reporting. They may come across ethical issues that they need to discuss or have been told a difficult story that has left them feeling overwhelmed. On shorter term projects, this support can end up being a specific coaching experience, focused on a particular story or production. For longer collaborations, it can become a broader mentoring relationship based on a desire to build a participant's confidence and ability over time.

Choosing the right mentor and the right channel for that process is important. The mentor could be an internal role, or held by an external trained professional, or perhaps facilitated by a local partner. Equally it could be a peer-to-peer relationship held by someone who shares lived experience with the participant, in which case the value added is less of the professional skills and more about the confidence that comes with a shared history. While it helps for each participant to have a personal mentor, at a push you can foster a positive group environment for mentoring which can enable everyone to play the role of both the mentor and the mentee. There are also technical options for holding that space. Phone calls, chat apps or SMS, and in-person meetings are all tried and tested channels for remaining in contact. Keeping a note of mentoring exchanges, or recording with permission, can be a useful way of checking in on progress as well as ensuring both parties are protected in the case of any concerns arising. While mentoring can be a challenging part of the process, it has the potential to significantly enrich the depth and quality of any collaboration as well as leaving a legacy of self-development for those involved.

CONNECTIVITY



DO PARTICIPANTS HAVE BARRIERS TO DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT AND, IF SO, WHAT TOOLS ARE THEY USING TO COMMUNICATE?

CONNECTIVITY

It is a myth that the whole world is online and digitally literate . There is often an assumption that the majority of communities across the globe have access to the internet due to the increasing availability of affordable mobile handsets, the distribution of telecommunications networks and access to wifi and mobile data. While this is indeed on the rise, the internet is only currently accessible to less than half of the global population. Those who are 'end of the line' communities, living in remote rural regions, are often out of range, while certain demographics, such as women and girls, older people, the very young or those with disabilities are less likely to have independent access due to financial constraints or power imbalances. Even among those who live in connected areas and have access to a handset, it can be a challenge to afford data packages or phone credit, or even find reliable electricity to charge a device. During crises or periods of extreme weather, connected communities can find their internet access controlled or cut off leaving them with little or no way to share information.

The internet is perceived as becoming more inclusive and while a positive shift towards more diversity of online voices online is to be celebrated, there are glaring demographic and regional holes in online dialogue. Ownership and editorial planning remains in the realm of the elite. Furthermore, the design of the next phase of technology is happening without the majority. Early adopters of new digital technology and media platforms tend to be disproportionately white, male, middle-class and well-educated. As development moves on, there may well arise an even more significant digital divide. Sharing of text and audio-visual via a mobile is one leap, but engaging with news via virtual reality may well move public discourse even further out of reach.

TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

As the world becomes increasingly digitised, there is a crucial role in ensuring those in the least connected spaces are not left without a means to share information. The increasing prevalence of mobile handsets offers a brilliant opportunity to draw a significant proportion of the global population into public conversations. Short text (via SMS) and voice technologies (via phone calls) offer a 'common denominator' as they are available on every handset, compatible with most media platforms, and many people already feel comfortable using them as communication tools.

The use of SMS for breaking news shot to the foreground during the Arab Spring, when those involved in the emerging uprisings used SMS to share news with online and mobile communities, and eventually, directly with global news outlets. Similarly, as chat app downloads increase among previously offline groups, more and more people have the option to share audio visual content from their phone.

There is a role for platforms and tools that consolidate and manage incoming messages for newsgathering, and render offline conversations equitable with digital ones.. On Our Radar has a community insight and storytelling solution called Radius which does just that. The best technology solutions build on the fact that the original resource for information-sharing has always been human interaction. Training community members in 'crowdsourcing' can extend 'connectivity' well beyond those with internet access or mobile devices. By dovetailing technical and human capacity and committing to a genuine co-design, information can flow back and forth from the more hidden regions.

CRAFT



DO PARTICIPANTS HAVE THE NECESSARY SKILLS TO DELIVER BROADCAST-QUALITY MEDIA FOR PUBLIC PLATFORMS?

CRAFT

Despite the advances in audio visual capacity within mobile equipment, there remains a high barrier to entry into the mediasphere. Someone wanting to share a public story is likely to find their lack of production skills can result in a discerning media outlet turning down content. Despite a potential acknowledgement that a story may hold a valuable message, that content is likely to be rejected if the presentation is perceived as amateur or lacking in professional standards. While the rise of citizen content, particularly from crisis-affected regions, has shifted this somewhat, the relaxation of the 'rules' that allows for grainy mobile footage to be aired on prime time TV is reserved for humanitarian and political crises and not for the more entrenched social issues that underpin most marginalisation.

There is therefore a valuable partnership between those with professional experience and editorial networks and those with lived experience and community networks to collaborate. While it can take a great deal of training to genuinely raise production standards among communities, it is just as valid to negate that barrier by offering legal, editorial and production skills as a service to communities and working with them as equal collaborators. Over time, this relationship can evolve to the point where investment in those professional production skills becomes more realistic and appropriate. That can be a great moment for someone who has found value in the experience of community reporting and can see a pathway for them to a more professional journalistic role.

CO-PRODUCTION

Co-production is the most public manifestation of shared power. Collaborating on the production is one of the most satisfying stages for many communities who are used to being overlooked or simply seen as a 'source' rather than a producer or presenter. When this works well, reporters come away from a project with enhanced skills and something they are proud to share. For broadcasters, having the voices and perspectives of those most affected by an issue presenting and advising on the production process, is invaluable.

The goal is not always to place the camera, mic or pen in the hands of participants (although that can be done to great effect in the right context) but instead to match their access and knowledge with professional skills. Community members may take the lead in developing initial stories, researching leads within their networks. They can build trust around the project and negotiate access in the appropriate spaces. Together with their community, they can help to set the tone and angle of the story, leading on the interview process and staying in touch with interviewees as the project goes towards production. Alongside this, your team may continue to oversee the development of the story arc, work on the visual style and feel of the final product, while ensuring that the appropriate compliance and consent protocols are upheld. In the final stages of production, communities can play a role in the editing process to ensure it reflects their experiences and voices accurately.

PART 2

THE ROAD TO COLLABORATION

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

THE ROAD TO COLLABORATION

This section will walk you through two possible beats for surfacing community stories.

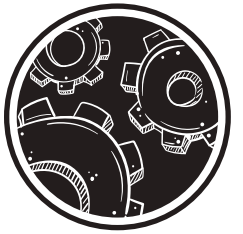
- **Establishing a reporter network:** Building the capacity of a group of community reporters who can capture a story that is emerging over time. This will likely involve a broad spectrum of support from co-design to capacity and confidence building to keep the network active and engaged, as well as establishing a connectivity solution to enable reporting before working with them on co-production.
- **Story dive to co-produce content:** An intensive story sprint with a group over a short period of time. This may be a documentary, a podcast, an investigation or a feature. This will likely be focussed around the co-design and co-production phases. If the aim is to produce a piece in a short period of time, you're unlikely to need to set up a training scheme, a mentoring plan, or a tech platform.

Both of these models have the capacity to surface unique storylines and inspiring media, but their relevance depends on the nature of the story, the available time and resources, and the capacity and the will of the communities engaged.

Of course, the two models aren't mutually exclusive - you might use the stories developed within your reporter network to make a film or podcast..

EACH SECTION WILL OFFER THE FOLLOWING

METHOD



RESOURCE



SPOTLIGHT





SETTING UP A REPORTER NETWORK

Establishing a reporter network works best where there is a need to facilitate community engagement and insight-gathering in a structured way over an extended period.

A watchful and engaged community network is particularly relevant when you are waiting for a critical moment to surface or where an unfolding journey is central to the story. It hits the spot when the temporal nature of that story would evade a 'parachute' journalist. If there is a call for coverage from multiple perspectives or geographical locations, then setting up a reporter network is a really exciting way to achieve this. It offers a line for participants to reflect on their experiences as they change and emerge, often building a rich picture of a situation that never really stands still, like the shifting sands of dementia, or the long frustrating journey of some to find stable housing. Ideally it would be set up to enable reporters to share information in real-time, at their own pace, and from a far more intimate range of community spaces.

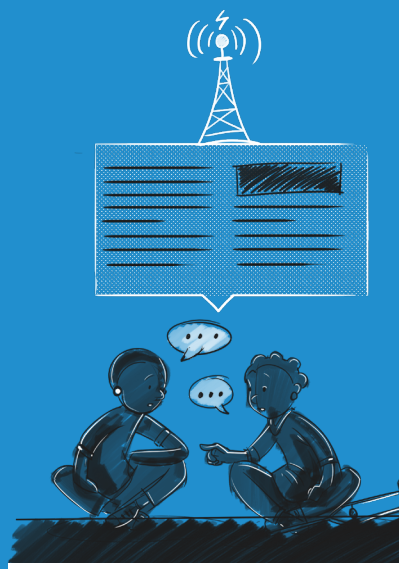
Mobile reporting can enable this beautifully. SMS, social media, chat-apps or phone calls all facilitate live reporting around the clock. There is no need to wait for a reporter to arrive, an editorial office to open or a focus group invite. Many of our crucial reporting moments over the last 7 years have emerged late at night or in the early hours of the morning - from people's bedrooms, on route to a health clinic, while waiting for emergency housing, or outside a polling station. The mentoring relationships that can evolve alongside a longitudinal reporting project allows trust to solidify, benefiting both the story and the ongoing capacity of the participants. You can invest in skills and confidence over a period and the return on this investment can be a loyal group of collaborators who acknowledge you as a trusted space to share their experiences. The risk present in this model is always around sustaining engagement. For those with chaotic lives, or facing a decline in health, sustaining a reporting role can be hard. This can be mitigated by a reliable and appropriate mentoring relationship but it is also strengthened by iterative learning and adaptation so the project continues to move with its participants.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Do you want a range of angles on an unfolding news story?

Will the story develop over time and are you likely to revisit it?

Do you have capacity to monitor stories, mentor reporters and maintain the network?



INITIATING A STORY DIVE

A co-production offers a chance to work in-depth with a group or individual to capture a critical story at a particular moment in time.

In contrast to a rolling reporting network, a co-production is usually time-bound and can suit a more reflective tone, allowing a community to go into detail about an experience that is currently affecting them or has had an impact on their lives. Perhaps you want to capture the experience of a single person, which in turn can shed light on an issue that affects others in a similar situation. For other productions, it could involve a group of community reporters collaborating on a single feature tackling a shared concern from their own diverse perspectives.

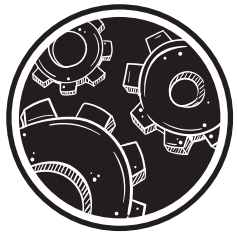
As a model for engagement, it can be as participatory as a longitudinal network and just as beneficial to both community groups and production teams. As the producers and community will likely be working closely together on content, there is usually less of a need to build community reporting skills share but there may still be a role for training in storytelling skills. Equally, while there may not be time to establish a long term mentoring relationship, intensive coaching can be key to keeping the story on track and tackling reporting issues as they arise. The shorter time frame can help to keep energy and engagement rates high and it can work well when there is a natural deadline around a story, or where there is little capacity to maintain a long-term network but still a desire to aim for a more inclusive form of journalism.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Do you want to focus on a specific story or issue?

Is the focus on a past issue or a story that is static or evolving slowly?

Do you have a short window of opportunity to gather content?



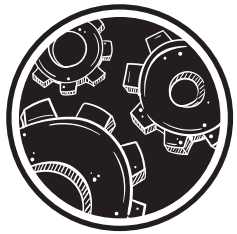
CO-DESIGN

Co-design is a way for those with lived experience to become an active part of the creative development process. As well as surfacing richer ideas, this is a chance to make sure that a project is inclusive and relevant to the communities. The co-design phase may yield a range of different outputs; these could be action plans, guiding values, a list of reporting themes or something as specific as a storyboard or wire-frames. The steps below can help to hold that process regardless of the output.

STEPS

1. **Identify a local partner** If you already have a network or strong ties in this community then this could be a chance to work together in a new way. If not, the first step is to connect with a community-based partner who has local experience and connections to guide the process. This will ensure that ideas are relevant or useful for the community. This may be a formal entity like a union or NGO, or a more informal group like a mothers' support network or a farming cooperative. Working with partner organisations can also be a helpful way to get advice if a safeguarding issue arises or you need to verify any concerning reports.

2. **Invite participants** This can be one of the most challenging phases but it is critical to the success of the project. Participants may have concerns to address before they feel secure to participate, and many will have other high priority issues on their plate. It is worth being clear about the necessary time and capacity needed to participate; some people may not be in the right place to engage. Mixing self-nominations with referrals can get a broader reach as not all participants will feel fully represented by a community organisation.. Local partners can play a vital role in helping individuals assess and decide on whether they want to engage. This is also a critical moment to ensure diversity in your network. Go beyond a simple equal opportunities exercise and proactively seek out those who identify with more marginalised groups. Disability should be a crosscutting concern and so ensure that any adverts or engagement plans are accessible.



STEPS

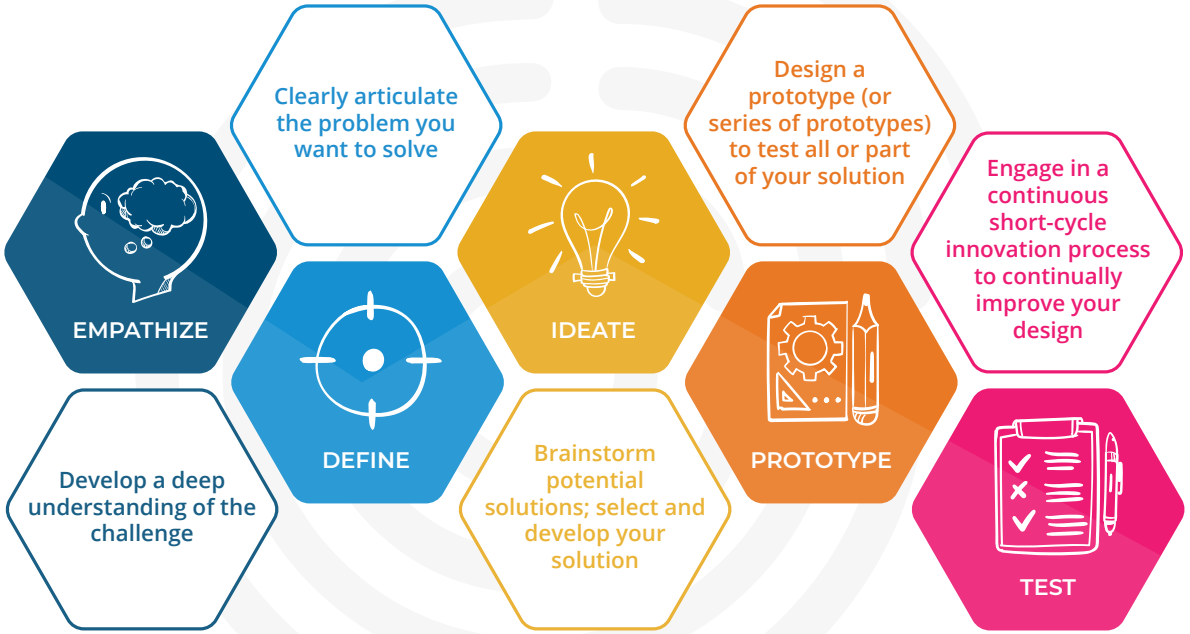
3. **Listen deeply** Once you've identified participants, you can enter into a phase of research that involves a deep level of listening and learning. Doing so will help to reset the assumed power dynamic and ensure that the loudest voices heard are of those with the lived experience. This should not be an extractive process. Wherever possible make this learning phase conversational to allow for participants to share their expertise and ideas, without imposing a framework for them to express themselves. This might involve bringing together participants for co-design conversations supported by guided questions, holding a series of recorded phone or video conversations, or sending round a dynamic online survey, such as a Typeform, which enables a richer range of responses. Training up a group of peer researchers to hold these conversations can be a great way of encouraging engagement.

4. **Clarify expectations** If there are genuine parameters for the project, set them out at the start. Open up space to hear participants' hopes and expectations for your collaboration. Participants need to know where the stories are going to go and how they are going to be used. If you're a major organisation with a big platform, then you will probably already know where the stories will be published but never assume that everyone knows what to expect. If you don't yet have a publishing platform then you may want to think about a way to frame this as an opportunity for the group to feed into that decision. In cases where the output isn't due to be published as a report or feature, then you should already have a clear idea of how their engagement will have impact. That might be in changing internal practice or policy. Be careful never to overpromise and to work through how the group might deal with disappointment or lack of publication or uptake. Also be clear on any deadlines, key moments in the project, and when they should expect contact and feedback, as well as any remuneration plans that have been made.



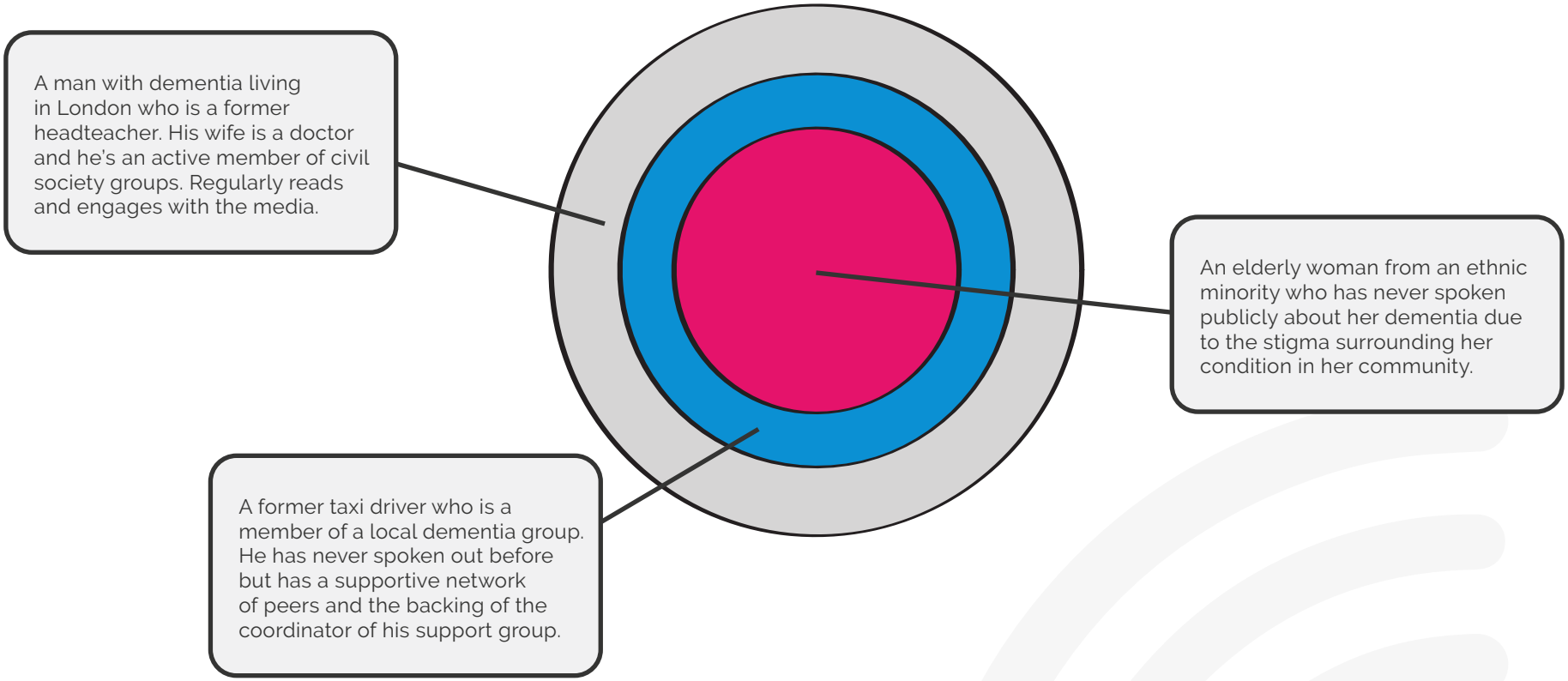
CO-DESIGN

This Stanford Design Thinking framework is a useful place to start when thinking about how to support a community through the design process. Mapping it out like this can help participants to understand how a more agile approach can result in a better, more relevant solution. Communities can add great value throughout the process - particularly by enriching the early stage of establishing the context and articulating the challenges. But communities can add great value to the designing and testing phases too and keeping them involved throughout the process can lead to far more sustainable solutions. Short tests of tools and approaches run in local contexts by local community members can unlock great insight that is less affected by external influences.



MAPPING LAYERS OF MARGINALISATION

Even within a group experiencing a degree of marginalisation, it is important to map how gender, class, ethnicity, geography, age or health might make certain individuals more or less likely to speak out. Think about unpeeling the layers of marginalisation. Are you just drawing in the same people who always put themselves forward for projects? The best and most surprising stories will come when you go beyond the 'usual suspects'. Check your own stereotypes - do you have people who contradict these?





CO-DESIGN

Securing consent to engage is not simply a tick-box exercise.

In order for someone to make an informed choice they need to fully understand their position and the consequences of engaging.

Use the co-design process to get a really genuine idea of what they want to get the most out of their participation. This set of question can help to guide that discussion alongside any of your existing risk mapping and engagement frameworks.

Always be realistic and honest about what your project can and might achieve.

You will lose trust if you overcommit and plans fail to materialise. Many factors will be out of your control so avoid making promises that may not be in your capacity to deliver on. Instead, you can explain the potential impact of sharing their perspective. Explain how their report might contribute to public knowledge and informing audience attitudes.

There should be a clear criteria for which reports will be selected, how many, and why so that people don't get demotivated if something they've sent in doesn't make the cut..

WHAT YOU WANT TO FIND OUT?

- [ ] What language is most appropriate?
- [ ] What channels do they want to use to communicate?
- [ ] What are their literacy levels?
- [ ] Are there previous experiences that they want to build on?
- [ ] What time can they commit to?
- [ ] What interests them most in this project?
- [ ] What issues do they want to cover?
- [ ] Are there any stereotypes that this project could counteract?
- [ ] What impact do they want to have?
- [ ] What existing skills are they keen to bring to the table?
- [ ] What new skills and experiences are they hoping to gain?
- [ ] What would help them demonstrate any new skills gained?
- [ ] Do they have any accessibility needs, learning difficulties or hidden disabilities?
- [ ] Is there anything that could make their engagement easier and more comfortable?
- [ ] Do they have any anxieties or safeguarding concerns that they want to share?

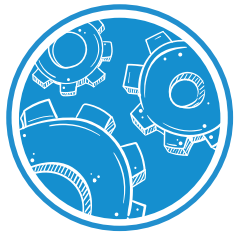
SPOTLIGHT



DEMENTIA DIARIES

Dementia Diaries is a UK-wide project that brings together people's diverse experiences of living with dementia as a series of audio stories. It serves as a public record and a personal archive that documents the views and day-to-day lives of people with dementia, with the aim of prompting dialogue and changing attitudes. The initial co-design workshop enabled participants with dementia to shape the creative direction of the project and pinpoint missing narratives or misunderstandings around how the public talk about dementia. The co-design phase highlighted how keypads on digital and mobile technology were preventing people with dementia from sharing information independently so the project used 3D printing to create simplified mobile phones with just one button, which connected participants to an answerphone. Voicemail was a format that most people are accustomed to and this device turned it into a simple channel for sharing a regular audio diary. Voicemails came into our editorial platform as digital files so they could be curated and shared.

Shaping the project in this way gave participants confidence that their needs were being considered, their perspectives were valued and that they would have an element of control over the project itself.



TRAINING

Building up community capacity through basic journalism training can raise the quality of reporting, further clarify the collaboration and transfer skills that are valuable to those with little public voice. The type of training will depend on the outcomes of your co-design stage. If the format is going to require community participants to use mobile to record or newsgather than the training will need to cover this. If there will be a need for a bank of community testimonies then honing interview skills will be key. If the production is veering towards sharing difficult personal journeys then there may be a particular need to work on messaging and tone as well as offering training around what to expect from audience reactions. You may also want to add specific skills in tech or journalism e.g. investigative, crisis reporting or data collection into your sessions.

OPTIONS

1. **JOURNALISM 101 - 2 - 5 DAYS** For those who will be crowdsourcing news and sharing information their broader communities, they need to understand the fundamentals of journalism as a craft. When these skills need to be boosted quickly to kickstart a project then basic learning can be condensed into a few intensive days with a mix of theory and practical exercises.

2. **SHARING YOUR STORY - 1 DAY** When someone is participating in order to share their personal story there is less need for crowdsourcing skills and more emphasis needed on storytelling. Over the course of a day you can work together with a group or individual to draw out the most powerful way for each of them to share their story, working with them to decide how they would like to shape their narrative.

2 - 5 DAYS

Use the co-design process to get a genuine idea of what they need to get the most out of their participation. This set of questions can help to guide that discussion alongside any of your existing risk mapping and engagement frameworks.

Training does not need to be overly formal. Our workshops are often held outside or in dusty community halls, or even on the move. Our first sessions were run with black and white photocopies, felt-tip pens and Nokia green-screens. Those trainees ended up covering their national election for the BBC.

JOURNALISM 101 - INTRODUCTION TO BASIC JOURNALISM

For those who will be crowdsourcing news and sharing information from their broader communities, they need to understand the fundamentals of journalism as a craft. When these skills need to be boosted quickly to kickstart a project then basic learning can be condensed into a few intensive days with a mix of theory and practical exercises.

Modules Might Include:

- Introducing community reporting
- Rights, roles and responsibilities
- Acknowledging and avoiding bias
- Community and power mapping
- Researching and story-finding
- Using mobile tools for reporting
- Interviewing techniques
- Holding duty bearers to account
- Breaking news and urgent stories
- Ethics of reporting
- Slander, defamation and hate speech
- Data security and privacy
- Working with media as a fixer
- Assessing risk and staying safe





TRAINING

RESOURCE

2 - 5 DAYS

These sessions are as much about building relationships as they are about skills training. See this as an opportunity to create a safe space for honesty and sharing. Ice breakers and collaborative games can help early on.

SHARING YOUR STORY

When someone is participating in order to share their personal story there is less need for crowdsourcing skills and more emphasis needed on storytelling. Over the course of a day you can work together with a group or individual to draw out the most powerful way for each of them to share their story, working with them to decide how they would like to shape their narrative.

Modules might include:

- The power of stories to change public attitudes
- Mapping narratives in the media
- Protecting personal privacy
- Shaping stories for different audiences
- Exploring creative storytelling formats
- Managing expectations
- Post-publication care: coping with audience reactions





TRAINING

RESOURCE

Everyone loves a certificate. Always try to offer a branded skills certificate or personal reference letter at the end. It is a real boost for participants and can help them secure future job and education opportunities.

TRAINING TIPS

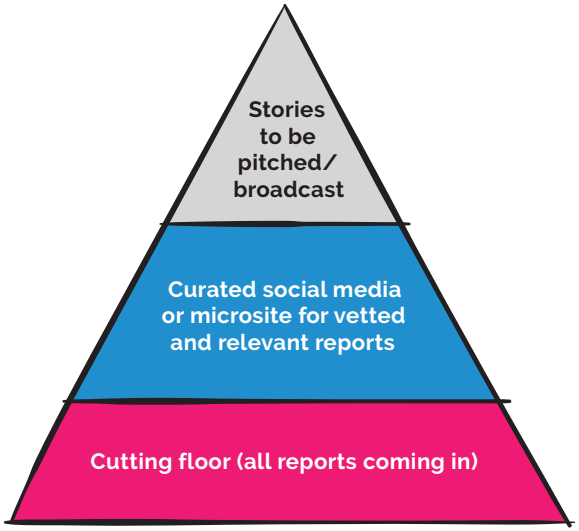
Offering training is an important step towards ensuring communities can share information with a better degree of independence and quality. Training does not need to be overly formal. In fact, ensuring it is accessible and welcoming is key. Think about delivering sessions where communities feel safe and comfortable.

- Smaller groups of between 5 and 10 can encourage openness and easier skill sharing. Try to keep single group sessions to under 20 people, even if that means delivering training over a series of workshops. It is hard to build trust and nurture individual relationships in bigger groups.
- Prepare the schedule and work plan before you arrive so that creativity can flow without derailing the process.
- Make sure the training is accessible and takes place somewhere participants feel comfortable. For some, having it delivered in their locality will be ideal; for others, the excitement of travelling to a residential session in a capital can be part of the appeal.
- The person running the training should be appropriate for the project. While there are no hard and fast rules on this, be mindful about gender and race and the spectrum of abilities represented in the management.
- Be aware that each participant will need to find their voice and place within the dynamic of the training group. A good facilitator will be aware of that and ensure everyone has space to engage in their own way.
- Leave time for unstructured discussion and relationship building. Some of the magic happens in the gaps.
- Mix up the theory with practical exercises: giving people the task of submitting their first report and providing feedback will greatly improve confidence that they can go and do it on their own.
- Make sure people leave on a high, feeling good about the project and clear on their role in the process.
- Don't let people leave the room without being really clear about what the next steps are.
- You can work with participants to track their skills adoption by doing a baseline survey or recorded conversation to work out where they feel under capacity to report. This can then be revisited once they have going through the training and then again when they've had a chance to report independently.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Clear messaging to participants

- Participants need to know where the stories are going to go and how they are going to be used. If you're a major organisation with a big platform, then you will probably already know where the stories will be published e.g. audio reports to feed into a radio show or podcast at the BBC or film to be made using the most compelling stories and published on Channel 4 News. Avoid confusion by clarifying this at the outset of the project: never assume what they might know or expect.
- If you don't yet have a publishing platform for your reports and you're waiting to see what comes in before pitching them to media houses, then you may want to think about a way to frame this as an opportunity for the group to feed into that decision. If you're running a network for months or over a year, it can help to give participants a way of seeing their work emerge as they go along. Ahead of publication, you could launch a simple microsite or social media feed that can act as a cutting floor for all the vetted, relevant stories, or even text or call in updates to offline groups. With little or no feedback during a longitudinal reporting period, participants can start to think 'what's the point?' and this can erode confidence and conviction, potentially having a more negative effect than not having done the project at all.
- In cases where the output isn't a media report, then you should already have a clear idea of how the reporters' storytelling will feed into an internal organisational report or government policy document - to do this, you need to have already established a partnership with an organisation, NGO or government department and have their guarantee that the community-led storytelling will be part of their thinking.



Picture: One example of a flow of stories

SPOTLIGHT



PARTICIPANT SELECTION: WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Mobile Lives was a storytelling project with homeless youth in London. We took away a lot of lessons from this project, particularly about the importance of forming solid partnerships at the community level and engaging at the right time with those in vulnerable situations. In the case of this project, our partnership with a major youth support and advocacy charity ended abruptly just days before the project started, when the charity went into administration. Instead of postponing the project, we rapidly acquired a new set of referrals from another housing support organisation in order to keep momentum.

Many of those who turned up to the co-design sessions were each at the peak of personal crisis and in urgent need of mental health support. It became immediately clear in initial discussions with the young people that, although they were interested in the project, they had far more pressing problems to solve and the low engagement rates reflected that. We learnt that there needs to be an element of personal stability or, at the very least, participants need to be able to make an informed judgement around their engagement. We have since become stronger at slowing down or halting projects accordingly, regardless of pressure from commissioners or donors, if we feel safeguarding or welfare issues are at stake.

THE LEGACY OF TRAINING: BEYOND EBOLA

In 2012, we were invited to train a network of citizen reporters to track voters' experience sduring the Sierra Leone 2012 elections. At that time, few people were online and we taught them to use SMS to share short form news updates from their streets and polling stations. The network had eyes and ears all over the country, from urban slums to polio camps, rural villages and market towns. We curated reports and shared them on Twitter resulting in global media attention. One report on the absence of voting papers for blind and visually impaired voters was flagged by EU observers and contributed to a shift in electoral policy.

After the elections, we left a reporting channel open and took time to maintain a relationship with the network. When the ebola crisis broke on the Sierra Leonean border in 2014, the network reignited overnight. Their reports featured on The Guardian, Channel 4 News, BBC World Service and Sky News, amongst others. They captured the realities of living in some of the most vulnerable communities in Sierra Leone, often reporting new developments long before international media arrived on the scene. Together, we made an award-winning web documentary from these reports, called *Back In Touch*. The network has remained active and have gone on to report on disability and malaria in Sierra Leone.



COACHING AND MENTORING

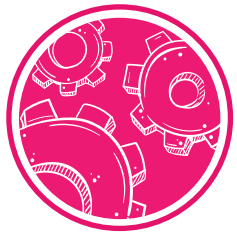
The mentoring process is critical to maintaining engagement.

It will be shaped by the unique circumstances around each project. Some participants may have very low self-esteem and the mentoring will be essential to building up their confidence to participate. Others may already have confidence in their ability to represent themselves but welcome guidance or input from a coach or mentor.

If you are setting up a long term reporter network then it is likely that you are looking at establishing a longitudinal mentoring relationship based on an evolving story. If you are working on a production sprint, then the process will be more task-focused and time-bound and may feel more like coaching or editorial guidance.

Regardless of the format, the relationship should enhance the co-production process, making it more open and collaborative, ironing out issues and stumbling blocks and encouraging confidence among participants to engage with honesty and authenticity. The first couple of weeks are crucial in building confidence and conviction so make sure mentoring plans are set up and ready to roll as soon as reporting begins.





COACHING AND MENTORING

1. ACTIVE LISTENING

There are some simple considerations that will help to create a positive environment for you both.

- Mentoring can be be an enjoyable way of staying in touch with participants and keeping a project on track. It is a space to get an update on their story, get affirmation and feedback. There are some simple considerations that will help to create a positive environment:
- Clear space and time to listen without distractions.
- Be clear on how long you have together and when time is coming to a close.
- You may need to ask for background information to understand participants' concerns or experiences. These conversations should be treated as absolutely confidential unless agreed.
- If recording sessions, ensure you have their permission to do so on record and if taking sensitive notes make sure these are properly stored and protected.
- It can help to summarise what you've heard at the end of a session, or after a particularly critical point is shared.
- If participants are sharing emotional stories, then hold that space for them and give them the time to go through that without being hurried or feeling judged. Avoid the temptation to dismiss or distract.
- If you feel the conversation has gone down a difficult path or you are privy to a safeguarding disclosure then do let them know that you feel unable to hold that space safely and you would like to get additional support.
- If you feel compelled to share information with others then seek permission and let them know who you plan to go to and agree with them that they are happy for you to share that information. This is where a local partner can play a vital role.
- Clarity on boundaries and roles is critical.
- Reflect back on development regularly.

COACHING AND MENTORING

2. EDITORIAL COACHING

One of the most common phrases we've heard in our work is: "I don't have anything interesting to report." Often this is said by someone on the frontline of one of the most pressing social or global issues. They may see their lived experience as mundane but that insight is incredibly valuable to public knowledge or institutional learning.

Alongside personal mentoring, these sessions can offer space to develop a coaching relationship: an ongoing creative collaboration based on sharing advice and editorial expertise. When approached with a genuine acknowledgement of one another's roles and assets, it can be a great space to discuss complex decisions about community stories and better understand risks and ethical issues. It can be a great space to have a dialogue about future stories or angles.

Angles that emerge from these sessions can help with the broader story-gathering process - acting as a way of surfacing commissioning ideas for the wider reporting network. Equally, if an external commission emerges, coaching sessions are a good way to brief and encourage reporters to go out and investigate those issues.





COACHING AND MENTORING

RESOURCE

TIPS

- Set weekly or fortnightly challenges to keep the pace going. These are helpful for stimulating ideas and keeping a beat to a project. That said, you can still work on more tailored mentoring plans with specific reporters if one has a particular interest or knowledge.
- Communicate through the platform that's easiest for the reporter - that's key. Do they prefer SMS to a phone call? Or are chat apps best? Discuss your intentions around recording or note taking.
- Anything is potentially interesting. If they have 'reporters' block', get their creativity flowing - that might mean submitting a song about their lives, a daily photo or a poem. This builds up trust and later you can ask more targeted story questions.
- Use encouraging language: 'no pressure, just give it a go, I'll have a listen and call you back straightaway'.
- Depending on their reasons for taking part, how can you keep individuals excited about the project over a longer period of time? For instance, you can award people with Reporter of the Week for their achievements in WhatsApp group/ newsletters or set out a development pathway, promoting reporters to 'lead reporters' to mentor or work with newer reporters.
- Newsletters or digital updates will help participants feel like part of a wider community and get inspired by the work of others.
- Tailor your personal mentoring to each individual's unique reporting styles: some people riff on the spot; others like to prepare; some are emotional; others are factual.
- Be open to feedback and change your project accordingly, if feasible.



QUALITIES OF A GOOD MENTOR

In 2004, David Clutterbuck, an academic who studied mentoring relationships, coined an acronym for what mentors do:

MANAGE THE RELATIONSHIP

ENCOURAGE

NURTURE

TEACH

OFFER MUTUAL RESPECT

RESPOND TO THE LEARNER'S NEEDS

The relationship between mentor and mentee is focussed on the mentee's development as a Community Reporter. It may include giving editorial or news gathering advice, offering information, establishing facts, sign-posting, and self-appraisal. Whatever the techniques, the emphasis is on enabling and empowering the mentee to take charge of their development.

PRACTICAL STEPS TO ACHIEVE THESE ASPECTS OF MENTORING:

Manage the Relationship

- In the first few meetings support the mentee to assess strengths and weaknesses.
- Make a long term plan for how to address those areas.
- Agree on dates, times and best method of communication for future mentoring meetings.

Encourage

- Use encouraging language.
- When giving feedback use the "Feedback Sandwich" technique - Give a positive comment, then discuss an area where they can improve, then another positive.

Nurture

- The mentoring relationship will last for a year so there is an opportunity to nurture and grow the relationship.

Teach

- Think of ways to share your knowledge with your mentees.
- Make teaching fun and interesting, use games, role play, monthly challenges etc.

Offer Mutual Respect

- Always be respectful and polite.
- Establish and use appropriate language and accessible channels for conversation.
- Never share information from the mentor sessions outside of the mentoring relationship, unless asked to by the mentee or in the case of a genuine safeguarding concern.

Respond to the learners needs

- Keep a mentor log to track each reporters needs and how those needs were responded to.
- The log can track progress so the mentor and mentee can see how far they have come.

LEONARD CHESHIRE DISABILITY

We trained a group of disability rights activists in the Philippines, Kenya and Zambia to report on health, education, employment issues and barriers they face to accessing services. These lead reporters were coached to train and mentor a network of reporters with disabilities within their respective countries, setting frequent challenges for them to share stories via mobile. On Our Radar developed a Community Mentoring Handbook and trained them in techniques for supporting their peers. They used mentoring logs to track and evidence their engagement and ensure there was a record for safeguarding purposes. The reporters submitted over 400 reports over six months culminating in a series of films. The mentors were peers from the disability community which meant they were incredibly sensitive to the issues the local reporters might have been facing.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Mentoring needs to maintain momentum to be successful. Establish a beat to your mentoring that you can commit to and that can keep you on top of it. The first couple of weeks after a workshop are important - people will be motivated, excited, enthusiastic - if you don't forge the right relationships and reach out soon after the workshop, then you will likely lose the momentum.

SPOTLIGHT



SPOTLIGHT



THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are key to successful collaborations. Institutional practice can breed a reticence around establishing relationships with participants, as they are often seen as unprofessional and open to risk of exploitation on either side. People need to feel genuinely seen and heard and the best stories emerge from a collaboration based on open dialogue, realism, trust and a level of intimacy.

For our team, that has often meant being available 'out of hours' to talk to participants, go the extra mile to visit them and understand their unique worlds, and respond promptly when important moments arise. Just building in flexible time to a project in order to hang out with someone where they feel seen and safe can encourage a far deeper conversation and surface a different level of insight.

In Sierra Leone, our network has grown over seven years into a warm and genuine partnership, resulting in a string of high impact collaborations and awards. We know their children's birthdays, celebrate their exam results and new jobs, and are one of the first to know when there are bereavements or personal challenges. That said, establishing boundaries and managing expectations around those relationships is important for everyone. If there is no chance of securing the time or budget to nurture a network or relationship with a participant, it is better not to promise the world. Don't ever leave a participant hanging without the support they need. For some without any support network, a promise of connection or a way out of challenging times can feel like a life-line. Working in collaboration needs to be about sharing power, not establishing and asserting a power dynamic that leaves someone in an even more vulnerable situation.



TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

Connectivity is key to having a voice. People need to be able to share information when it matters most to them and that insight needs a viable platform if it is to translate into public information or social change.

Mobile technology can offer a prevalent, powerful, and yet discreet storytelling tool. Talking to people on the same device they use to talk to their family and friends is a great way to build trust and make reporting a simple, accessible task. Even on the most simple mobile handset you can compile and share reports using SMS or call a voicemail line to leave an audio report.

Establishing a reporting line is a great investment as communities then don't have to wait to be asked to submit stories - they can do so when they want. This allows for quick responses to breaking news and unfolding stories.

Many news and communications teams have set up voicemail lines or distributed short codes to facilitate mass information sharing to and from communities. In humanitarian action, health development and election tracking, these one-way channels can enable communities to rapidly share concerns and breaking news.

However, humans like to converse and one-way channels don't offer an opportunity for that. There is a need for two-way reporting channels, that enable news-gathering through tracked dialogue.

TIPS

- For some projects, the production output will be a serious consideration. For instance, if you are making something for a radio or podcast platform tthen it might be that using a platform accessible by smartphones or using tailored voice recording apps or voicemails services is the best way forward. As long as you are aware that you may exclude certain people who don't have smartphones.
- Some groups may be motivated by picking up extra tech skills, while others might find tech platforms alienating and uncomfortable when sharing their stories. This should be established during the co-design phase and the technology should suit the needs of the project and the participants.
- A tech platform isn't always necessary. Ultimately these projects are all human projects and tech should be developed as a means for dialogue.
- Future proofing: will the platform remain open after the initial project? Make sure you are establishing a channel that either has a clear sustainability plan or a clear time-bound mandate.



TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

RESOURCE

Technology attracts hefty investment but it is not a silver bullet. We have learnt the hard way that if a person is struggling with low confidence, a lack of conviction, and struggling with their capacity to engage then no technology solution will transform them overnight into a budding reporter. Technology can build bridges but it can also put people at risk.

Private access to a mobile phone is still a challenge for many people in vulnerable situations around the world, particularly for women and girls. Encouraging those without genuine control over devices to share stories and opinions must be done with caution if there is any risk that the content could be read by others who might react badly to the content or their participation.

There is also a particular risk in handing out technology. Giving a new mobile, camera or laptop to someone who is in a vulnerable position can make them a target. This might leave them at risk of theft or a threat of violence. There might be pressure to have to give the item to a family member who is seen to need it more, or pressure or temptation to sell it. Theft or loss of an item can cause deep embarrassment and prevent a participant from engaging further. It may not be as exciting to let people know that they will need to use the tech they already have but it is far more sustainable.

Finally, the technology needs to be appropriate. There is little point in building an app if a community has little or no access to data. Voice can be a wonderful tool for those with little or no literacy and voicemail is overlooked as a reporting tool in today's chat-app landscape.

SCOPING QUESTIONS

- What tools do you currently use to communicate?
- What are the challenges you have with communicating through those tools?
- Do you have private access to those tools?
- Do you feel safe talking openly using those tools?
- Are there other tools that you think would be useful?



RADIUS

RESOURCE

Seven years ago we started experimenting with ways to hold reporting conversations with dispersed offline and data-scarce communities. This has lead us to develop Radius, a dialogue platform which supports people to report news via SMS, audio recordings, chat apps, photos and videos into a central hub and for managers and editors to respond in real-time.

It has been developed as a set of cloud-based tools and services that centralise:

- Two-way messaging
- Training and mentoring
- Community building
- Insight management and analysis
- Monitoring and safeguarding

It allows reporting communities to be grouped into relevant networks, for instance by geographical location or thematic subject area and reports to be tagged and organised. This has opened up the ability to manage large reporting networks swiftly, with different levels of access. It means all reports will be centrally stored, not on people's private mobile phones or laptops.

Designed in Sierra Leone, trialled in Kenya and scaled in Ghana, it came from a desire to bridge digital divides and create a more equal way of sharing news. Communities can use any offline or online mobile handset to access communications training, report on local and personal news and receive rolling guidance and feedback using SMS, voice, or chat-apps, without the need for credit or data.



SPOTLIGHT

SMS VOICES

A PRACTICAL TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION FOR IMPROVING INFORMATION-SHARING AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP FROM REMOTE AND UNDER-SUPPORTED POPULATIONS

Remote citizens across the world can struggle to engage with governing bodies who often reside in, and prioritise, urban areas. As governance and public information move increasingly to digital spaces, that gap can widen even further. With the increase in mobile prevalence over the past 10 years, short form text tools like SMS have offered a way of sharing information for more remote populations. However, when used in accountability and development, it is rarely designed to enable a direct, personal response from duty-bearers to concerned populations. Christian Aid came to us in 2013 to develop a tool that would bring communities closer to their councillors and enable a genuine connection that would last. SMS Voices is the successful culmination of 6 years of co-design and development with communities across Sierra Leone, Kenya and Ghana.

SMS Voices is a unique communications system that facilitates secure dialogue between remote citizens and their local councillors and generates a bank of qualitative data that can help shape government and humanitarian decision-making and inform national media. Across Sierra Leone, Kenya and Ghana, farmers, teachers, parents, students, community leaders and traders from under-served regions and wards were invited to become community reporters. They were trained to use community interviewing techniques to track and surface issues of local concern and share these with their local councillors anonymously, guided by a text bot, which helped to analyse and curate messages into thematics and produce overview reports. Local councillors also received training to help them manage their responses and share updates on planned action.

Evaluations have shown that it saved councillors time and money, enabled local fixes of infrastructure and injustices, and established lasting relationships between communities and government. In Sierra Leone, it offered one of the only ways for councillors to remain connected to participating wards in the quarantine periods during the Ebola crisis.



CO-PRODUCTION

When working with some of the most marginalised groups who often have very little training in digital production, this stage is where we marry up our technical, editorial and legal skills with the community reporter's storytelling skills.

Raw reports coming out of the network won't necessarily be packaged according to your editorial guidelines and they won't be edited yet.

We use different approaches depending on the format of the end-product, whether social media, video documentary or a news piece. This means we end up practicing co-production on a sliding scale, depending on the project.

1. The aims of the project are made clear during early co-design and participants have been closely involved in the planning process. As a result, consent has been given to a central editorial team to curate, edit and share stories based on that plan, supported by mentoring and feedback.
2. Key themes emerge from community reporting sprints, which are then taken into a space for community consultation. These themes are shared with communities who can suggest which ones best represent their experiences and ways to take those forward to production.
3. Co-writing and editing: This involves working side-by-side with a storyteller throughout the production cycle - from planning, researching, interviewing, capturing, editing and publishing. We use this for deeply personal stories or where we want to film and edit in collaboration.

All three of these types of co-production are about trust and sharing power. This process should be entirely collaborative. It is possible to share elements of editorial control and still remain responsible for ethics and quality control. Keep checking back with the community to be sure the narratives emerging ring true to them and remember the target audience should be considered. But keep checking back with the community that the narratives emerging ring true to them, and always close the circle you started with the co-design sessions.

BRAINSTORMING FOR CO-PRODUCTION

RESOURCE

Whether making a podcast, film, radio show or a digital piece, holding brainstorming sessions throughout the project can be really helpful. Hold brainstorming sessions at each phase in the production process - development (the big aims and themes), production (the specifics on interviewees, content and style), pitching (the outlets), and editing the final piece.

Ideas for what you could brainstorm:

- Key themes - what elements of the story do participants want to portray? What don't they want to portray?
- Who narrates the piece? From whose perspective?
- Narrative structure
- Interviewees
- Locations
- Outlets you would like to pitch to
- Duration/format of the content
- Script or structure for the final piece

TIP: For any kind of brainstorm, start with open questions as you will get more surprising answers and ideas. Don't lead with your own pre-researched ideas or assumptions.



SPOTLIGHT



LIVES BEHIND THE LABEL

The aim of this project was to find out, in the words of garment workers in Bangladesh, how their work had affected their lives and go beyond the narrative we see in the Western media about garment work. We ran storytelling workshops with 80 garment workers, who were then split into smaller groups. We began in the spirit of deep listening by asking the group open questions and getting the group to share themes.

Individuals were asked to write down and come up with 8 ideas in 8 minutes. The idea was to collate the main themes that the group shared and then get them to vote through the most prescient, important themes. After this vote, we discussed the most popular themes in more depth. Why did they pick them?

We then worked with the group to find individual stories which reflected those themes. We ended the process by reflecting back to the group what we heard from them.

At this point you might choose to pick individual stories to follow up. Importantly, this decision is now a group decision because the stories picked will be the ones that best speak to the themes and story types chosen by the whole group.

TIP: The group decision is really important to stop people being upset if their individual story isn't picked. If you then choose people out of the group to tell their story and not others, you need to make the reasoning for this very clear. You should pick stories that align with the key themes - 'these ones work because they really capture the essence of the theme that we agreed. What do you think?' For instance, the group decides they want a story about women's empowerment among garment workers in Bangladesh. So together, the group decides to pick the story of a woman who had a strict family and controlling husband but who was now in control of her own life earning her own money from garment work.



EDITORIAL CONTROL

RESOURCE

Make sure this is discussed up front. Are you all agreed on where editorial control lies and how you will come to agreements if you disagree? Is the participant clear that editorial control often lies with the media outlet not with the production company or storyteller? Are they clear that they may have to work with the expectations of the media outlet and come to compromise if a disagreement arises?

Collaboration not extraction: the individual you are working with is an equal collaborator and you must respect them as such. You will each bring different but equally important skills to the table and will need to make all key decisions together. That said, if you've built up enough trust, you should each be able to go away and fulfill separate tasks in the knowledge that you share a wider vision. You don't have to do everything together all the time!

EXAMPLE - Podcast production: you decide to make a podcast led by some of the audio reports submitted, or you decide to take some of the stories submitted and record interviews or stories narrated by the reporters. How do you make sure this is a genuine co-production? Think about the credit. Who gets the byline? Will you have the producer credit and give your reporters a credit such as 'reported by' or 'narrated by'. If numerous reporters are taking part could you credit the network itself?

EXAMPLE - Curation of micro-reports: stories have come in from disability rights reporters on stigma and lack of access to sexual health services. You've spotted this collection of stories and you decide to make an online piece pulling together these stories. You may want to ask the reporters to gather additional content now you know what you're going to make, such as photos, extra quotes or video/voice recordings. Don't forget that if the output wasn't clear from the start, then you will need to organise consent for the specific platform you're now publishing on.

TIPS

- Explain the production process so that participants understand why you asking for specific photos, shots or quotes. For instance, "we need this shot now because from a storytelling point of view, it will help link your story with the wider contex". For instance, "we need a quote from this duty bearer because they have a right to reply to the accusations made in the story".
- This should be a true collaboration - both you and the reporter should be able to input into the production process.



SPOTLIGHT

MY STOLEN CHILDHOOD

In the creation of our film My Stolen Childhood, led by the protagonist Brigitte, we collaborated with Brigitte during the development and production stages. She was the narrator of her own story. We were able to use this collaboration and the trust we had built up to pitch the film to media houses in Britain without Brigitte (who was in Ghana). The final decision about which media house we went with was a group decision. Once we had a commission, Brigitte came to London for a scripting workshop before we entered the edit. We were able to budget for Brigitte working full-time during the London edit, making this film a deeply participatory process.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

This can be resource intensive so before you make promises, you need to be sure you can fulfil them. Participatory journalism requires journalists to invest time and hard work to collaborate effectively. Brigitte's trust had been betrayed many times in the past, so we spent months building and maintaining her trust in us as filmmakers.

Deep-dive participatory filmmaking requires thoroughly brainstorming ideas before filming begins. During and after filming, we reassessed and re-worked the story over and over, up until the final day in the edit. We had many discussions about how to balance the needs of the story and the needs of the commissioners against what Brigitte was comfortable with saying, which was the ultimate priority.

Before broadcast, we found it was very important to prepare Brigitte for what might happen once her story was in the public domain and we created a media briefing for her on how to respond to questions, potential criticism and media interviews.



AFTER A STORY GOES OUT

FEEDBACK TO PARTICIPANTS

Keep participants involved in the process of publication.

Reflect back to participants how many views the piece has and what kinds of comments or responses it has had.

Duty of care - Do participants and contributors know and understand where the content will be shown? Give relevant information on what the media outlets are and what the likely reach of their audience is. Will it be broadcast or released in their own country? This could have a bigger impact for people featured in the content so you will need to brief them properly and be prepared for any backlash from their local community if it is dealing with a sensitive or taboo subject.

Safety - Will the broadcast affect reporter and contributor safety? How do you need to brief and prepare your participants?

Social media - Do you need to do a briefing for participants on social media and how to respond to criticism and exposure, especially if they are vulnerable or their story is very personal?

CLOSING DOWN NETWORKS AND REPORTING CHANNELS

Be clear about when a project is going to come to an end if you are no longer going to be able to monitor those channels. People may be expecting a response and not getting it.



MEASURING IMPACT

IMPACT ON THE PARTICIPANTS

To measure the impact of your project on participants, you can use the 'five Cs' framework.

It's easy to measure with baseline data and questionnaires from the co-design stage.

For instance, when it comes to conviction, measure the rates of participation to work out whether people believed in the project or not. How many reports were submitted? What were the drop-off rates? From a group of 40, we would typically expect 10 drop-offs, 10 star reporters and 20 'quite engaged' reporters somewhere in the middle.

Other questions to ask might be: Were the goals originally outlined in the co-design phase achieved? Did we manage to get the missing stories or pictures out into the public and change mainstream perceptions? Did we get around connectivity issues? Did the participants improve their reporting skills and how do they now talk about their confidence levels?

Impact on the Audience

Impact of published stories can be measured on the audience to see how hearing directly from 'experts in their own experience' is received differently to usual content.

Impact can also be measured through viewing figures, clicks, and shares on social media. Look at the comments on social media to see how a piece has affected people. Has it surprised or shocked them? Has it galvanised them into action?

Warmth and competence are two crucial factors for a storyteller to resonate well with an audience. In a study on one of our projects, our reporters in Sierra Leone scored highly in these areas. These reporters were tested among audiences against the likes of Penny Mordaunt and Bill Gates and were perceived to be just as influential. If marginalised groups are just seen as passive subjects or beneficiaries of NGO work, for instance, they score low on warmth and competence. But if they become active reporters and storytellers, they score much higher.



SAFEGUARDING

RESOURCE

On Our Radar has over six years of experience working with vulnerable communities around the world. We are communicators at heart and we place the dignity and value of lived experience at the very centre of everything we do.

We are all well aware of the significant risks faced by populations in vulnerable situations when those who hold power over them abuse that power. Exploiting a power dynamic doesn't always result in a major news headline: far more often, it can inflict a quieter level of harm that erodes the confidence of an individual. Safeguarding should be at centre of all considerations during a community collaboration. Ensure the communities are leading on their own assessment of risk and suggesting ways to mitigate them.

DURING THE PROJECT

Code of conduct and journalism ethics - make this a crucial part of the training so that all reporters understand these values.

Reporter safety - make clear in workshops that reporters should report on their own communities and not travel to cover stories in unknown communities or places without sign-off of the senior editorial team. For the most part, reporting of conflicts, diseases, legal cases are the domain of very experienced and trained journalists - more intensive or tailored training is needed if your network will be situated in a context like this. For example, in our Ebola reporting it was made very clear that no-one should interview someone with Ebola or go to an Ebola zone to gather stories.

Project lead - reporters should know how they can report problems, concerns and safety issues should they arise. There should be a designated project lead that they can contact.

Mental health - it should be made clear that the reporting lines are for reporting and are not spaces for disclosures about mental health or suicidal thoughts. If appropriate, share details of relevant services that a vulnerable contributor may be able to access if they're seeking help.

TECH

Sometimes for projects we include automated 'flag words' on our Radius platform that will send an urgent notification to a project lead**.**

GDPR

How will you store people's data? Communicate your privacy policy clearly to the people you're working with and make sure you're GDPR compliant.



PAYMENT

LET'S TALK ABOUT MONEY

For many organisations, this may be controversial but it is also a moment to shift mindsets and make this about more than a single story. While some will see inclusive journalism as a social or corporate responsibility, this can easily slip into a frame of mind where engagement is simply viewed as a benefit to the communities; an opportunity that they should be grateful for. While a good collaboration will certainly leave a community legacy and boost personal development, if communities are contributing a form of expertise - as opposed to being viewed simply as sources - then payment for that knowledge might well be appropriate. If they're giving up their time to show you around their community or forge connections and introductions for the project, then that time should be acknowledged. Out with the old benefactory mindset; in with pro-active diverse collaborations where community knowledge is recognised as an asset, valued and sufficiently rewarded.

Local partners can help with guidance on local pay scales or even facilitate the financial process when a community lacks the infrastructure (although mobile money has made financial exchange far easier across the world). At times, financial payment may not be appropriate; it may put the participant at risk or impact on benefits, or other domestic or personal situations. In which case, other routes of renumeration, accreditation or learning opportunities should be considered and discussed, such as vouchers, additional credit or data top-up, stipends, or pro-bono service provision. Expenses should always be covered. It is important to clarify this at an early stage as this will not only set the tone but also allow participants to work out whether they can afford to engage.

- Be very clear about your payment system and message this clearly from the start. For example, will you pay reporters if they file a report which you then publish on social media or a microsite? Will you pay them if you go on a day of filming with them? Will you limit payment for travel costs? Work out appropriate payment for the country you're filming in by consulting with local partners.
- Make sure people know this is a storytelling network not a space for disclosures about personal mental health issues or other unrelated issues.

ON OUR RADAR

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Engaged Journalism Accelerator

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On Our Radar is a not-for-profit social communications agency for unheard communities. We are a small, specialist group of journalists, software architects, digital storytellers and development workers. We bring a cross-disciplinary approach to understanding and tackling the causes of voicelessness.

We believe in the value of the insight from daily experience of vulnerability and marginalisation. We collaborate with partners to tackle exclusion, isolation and loneliness.

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