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Community Outreach Toolkit

for Diaspora Organizations

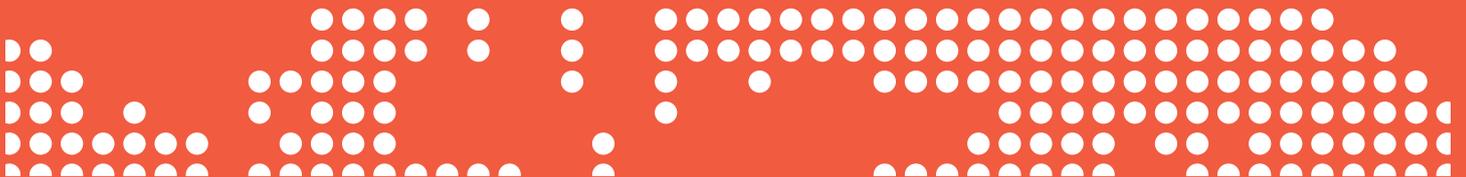


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The aim of the Toolkit

This is one of three toolkits commissioned by the Danish Refugee Council's Diaspora Programme to UNU-MERIT/Maastricht University as part of its Diaspora Dialogue in Europe programming. The Diaspora Programme is implemented by DRC's Civil Society Engagement Unit. DRC engages civil society actors rooted in and/or with direct ties to the Global South, and therefore considers diaspora transnational civil society actors an integral part of the civil society they work with. The toolkit series intends to offer practical guidance to diaspora actors in three main areas: (1) Diaspora Fundraising, (2) Community Outreach and (3) Networking and Alliances Building.

The aim of this toolkit is to outline the fundamentals of community outreach, which can hopefully be tailored and applied by different diaspora organizations operating in diverse contexts. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to community outreach, as the specific tools need to be consistent with the goal and character of a specific diaspora organization as well as the specific country/regional context that it operates in. The focus of this toolkit is, therefore, on universal principles, demonstrating how community outreach can be approached from a perspective of relationship building with more and diverse members, and introducing methods and tools that can be used by diaspora organizations to achieve this goal.

Community outreach takes place on different levels. It is possible to engage people in your actions by reaching out to members of the targeted communities individually or target (formal or informal) networks or organizations to maximize impact. This Toolkit exclusively focuses on community outreach methods that target individuals while networking and outreach on the organizational level is the main focus of the Toolkit on Networking and Alliances Building. Additionally, although community outreach can be potentially combined with fundraising efforts, as it may indeed increase the resources available to the community in the long run, it does not replace the fundraising strategies (De Vita & Fleming, 2001). Community outreach activities that aim to raise funds are elaborated upon the Toolkit on Diaspora Fundraising, therefore not the subject of this piece. Following this introduction, the first section of this toolkit provides a brief discussion of why community outreach matters for diaspora organizations.

Section 2 then reviews the key elements to take into consideration while planning and implementing community outreach processes.

Section 3 introduces selected methods and tools that can be used by diaspora organizations in their community outreach efforts.

Section 4 provides insights on how to evaluate the impact of community outreach activities.

The toolkit is informed by lessons learnt and good practices of diaspora networking and alliances building arising from the discussions within trainings for diaspora actors. The trainings were part of the Danish Refugee Council's Civil Society and Engagement Unit which aims to support civil society actors in European countries to engage more broadly with the diaspora community in a dialogue on various aspects of what it means to be or become part of a diaspora, its role in the country of residence and towards its country of origin.



Key concepts and definitions

A **community** can be defined as *a social group whose members have something in common, such as a shared government, geographic location, culture, or heritage*. Community can also refer to the physical location where such a group *lives*. The term “community” used throughout the toolkit is intended solely for convenience and does not necessarily express a judgment about who can be defined as your community. Organizations may define their communities based on shared history and geographic, ethnic or national origins, or based on living in a particular place (neighborhood, town, city, country); or as a group of people with whom they have shared interests. How you define your community may change over time, in line with changing circumstances.

Community outreach generally refers to the set of activities, programs, interventions that are designed to gain access to a targeted population that might not be accessed otherwise. In the context of this toolkit, it refers to the ability of organizations to create attention and interest in the organization/cause; build relationships with; establish participation & engagement of a large and diverse group of people.

Community building implies building and maintaining a sense of community centered around common values, interests, norms, and shared identities.

Why does community outreach matter for diaspora organizations?

Diaspora organizations often serve as safety nets for diaspora communities living in different countries of residence as they play a key intermediary role between the individual members of a diaspora, origin country and country of residence.¹ The role of diaspora organizations often goes beyond addressing the needs of their communities. Diaspora organizations can create, express and maintain a collective identity among diaspora members, thus contributing to building a sense of community.

However, **diaspora organizations** may face various challenges in successfully engaging more and diverse members to build a sense of community and a joint purpose. Their abilities to reach and connect with new members are often constrained by organizational and structural factors such as lack of human resources and technical skills, limited knowledge of regulations in the countries of residence or unwelcoming attitudes or lack of interest of host country populations. On the other hand, **diaspora and migrant communities** may face different social, economic and political circumstances in the countries of residence that influence the capacity of individuals to get involved.² For example, the existence of an atmosphere of mistrust within the specific communities, fears associated with civic engagement imported from origin country context, emotional exhaustion and loss of belief in positive social change may prevent diaspora members from engaging in mobilization efforts of diaspora organizations. It is, therefore, essential to know and understand the conditions of diaspora communities to engage them effectively, and develop the appropriate outreach strategies.

¹ Ghorashi, H. (2007). What has the metaphor of ‘bridging’ to do with hybridity? Discourses on identity within Iranian-American organizations.

² Ragab, N. J. (2020). Diaspora Mobilisation in a Conflict Setting: The Emergence And Trajectories Of Syrian Diaspora Mobilisation In Germany.



Diaspora organizations are often in an advantaged position when it comes to knowing their communities' needs and interests. However, **building a sense of community**, thus, community building, is a complex process that requires sustained efforts and strategic interventions that often **involve community outreach activities** to overcome the structural, community-level and individual-level barriers described above.

A **sense of community** implies perception of belonging that makes people feel good and safe.³

Building a sense of community, therefore, means to create a group of people who have common values, interests, norms and a joint purpose where its members perceive a sense of belonging, they feel good to be a part of this group.

Community outreach planning

Generally, community outreach efforts aim to establish a large and diverse base of support for shared goals, facilitating and strengthening the relationships within the community and creating a potential for social empowerment on the community level by providing information/services to people that might not be accessed otherwise. In community outreach planning, a crucial step is to clearly **identify the purpose** and the **desired level of community participation** to efficiently reach out. In order to achieve successful engagement, community outreach planning should also consider ensuring **unity in diversity** and take action based on the **principles of relationship building**.

What is your purpose?

From the outset, it is important to be clear about the scope and purpose of the outreach process. For example, is the process designed to:

- Provide information/services to more people with diverse backgrounds?
- Identify the needs and challenges of targeted communities to define future focus of work?
- Engage the targeted communities in the decision-making processes?
- Develop new collaborations in implementing programs/activities?
- Getting a large and diverse base of support for advocacy efforts?

³ Hyde M., Chavis D. (2008) Sense of Community and Community Building.



Community outreach for policy change

Community outreach efforts may help achieve a larger and a more diverse membership, which, in turn, increases the chances for peoples' participation in the activities in question and the success of the action. The increasing involvement and commitment of people to a specific cause has the potential to facilitate the creation of a **public opinion**, which further legitimizes the cause in the eyes of ordinary citizens, moving you closer to achieving your aims. It may contribute to or **strengthen joint actions/initiatives and allow for greater influence on specific agendas** or decision-makers. As a result, it enables the diaspora organizations to actively involve targeted communities in transforming their circumstances by providing a space for them to exercise their agency and realize their power.

It is worth remembering that community outreach is a spectrum – it can take different forms, depending on the organization's purpose and strategy.⁴ It may include: informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering, in the ascending order of commitment. While informing is limited to providing an outline of community activities and can take the form of sending newsletters or creating a website, empowering implies creating a system of community decision-making and working together with all members of the group.⁵ Ideally, the latter should be the ultimate goal of the community organizer, who does not only lead, but lets the leadership spill out into the community, enhancing its capacity.

⁴ Schmitz, P. (2017). Community Engagement Toolkit. Collective Impact Forum.

⁵ Ibid



What level of participation/engagement are you hoping to achieve?

Table 1 describes the seven levels of community participation, which seek to distinguish the motivations of community organizers promoting community participation/engagement. As a first step, you can ask yourself on which level you currently ensure participation of your community and which level you wish to achieve.

Table 1. Seven levels of community participation

Levels of participation	Features
1. Manipulative participation (co-option)	No legitimacy or power to participants, they may feel misused and instrumentalized.
2. Passive participation (compliance)	Symbolic participation, people participate by being told what has been decided but not involved in decision-making.
3. Participation by consultation	People participate by being consulted on certain issues, no decision-making power.
4. Participation for material incentives	People contribute by resources (e.g. labour) in return for material incentives. No stakes when incentives end.
5. Functional participation (cooperation)	People participate on a predefined time frame, or a project. Participation seen as a means to achieve project goals rather than enhancing longer-term engagement.
6. Interactive participation (co-learning)	People participate in collective planning and analysis, participation is seen as a right, not just the means to achieve project goals. Everyone has a stake in decisions.
7. Self-mobilisation (collective action)	People can take independent initiatives on behalf of the organization, give away decision-making power but will be there for coaching.

Source: Adapted from Arnstein (1969), Pretty (1994), and Door Beyond War training

How do you ensure unity in diversity?

Community outreach includes efforts that focus on enlisting the participation of diverse members in the organizational processes and establishing a **common purpose that unites them together**, thus, building a sense of community. It is therefore the power of unity that amplifies the influence of actions and contributes to achieving the specific objectives/vision of a given organization. However, important to emphasize is the **fine balance between unity and diversity**. Establishing unity that allows for



diversity where people from diverse backgrounds are able to work together towards a common goal in an atmosphere of tolerance and respect for differences is a prerequisite for successful engagement.

Diversity and inclusion are widely recognized as fundamental aspects in progressive workplaces, education systems, in political and civil society spheres across the world. The increasing popularity of the terms is linked to a growing understanding of the need to overcome inequalities in access to opportunities and achieving equal representation of traditionally marginalized groups. Diversity and inclusivity of a diaspora organization is key for its effective functioning and should be at the core of the community outreach plan. Yet, mainstreaming diversity and inclusion within diaspora organizations may require additional efforts due to the complex relations that arise from historical and contemporary experiences of diaspora communities, especially for those originating from conflict areas.

CIVICUS Report: holding the mirror up to ourselves: diversity and inclusion practices and trends in civil society

CIVICUS is a global alliance of civil society organizations and activists committed to strengthening civic engagement and collective citizen action across the globe. Recognizing the limited discussions on diversity and inclusion issues in the civil society landscape, CIVICUS published a report that identifies diversity and inclusion practices of civil society organizations around the world. The report lists the core principles of diversity and inclusion as well as toolkits developed by other organizations such as Plan International's Gender and Inclusion Review (GIR), and the Disability Inclusion Scorecard developed by Light for the World.

Key concepts and definitions

The dictionary defines unity as “a condition of harmony; accord; a totality of related parts; the quality or state of not being multiple; oneness; continuity without deviation or change.”⁶

Although diversity and inclusion are concepts that are often used interchangeably, they have distinct meanings.⁷

Diversity refers to all possible dimensions that can distinguish one person from another. These dimensions may include, but are not limited to, an individual's nationality, ethnicity, citizenship, location, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, gender expression, race, ideology, religion, age, disability status, specific health conditions (e.g., HIV), educational background, employment status, social class and cultural identity.

Inclusion, then, implies the mindful and intentional effort to ensure diversity by creating an environment where people with diverse backgrounds in terms of the above listed dimensions can work and succeed together.⁸

⁶ Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

⁷ Mor Barak, M. (2015) Inclusion is the Key to Diversity Management, but what is Inclusion?

⁸ CIVICUS (2020). Holding the Mirror up to Ourselves: Diversity and Inclusion Practices and Trends in Civil Society Organisations.



Reaching out to a diverse community requires an in-depth understanding of the personal reservations and structural constraints that may present a barrier for the participation of different sub-groups. For example, in the diasporic context, the different political ideologies upheld by different groups can lead to natural exclusion and inclusion of certain segments of the society. If there is an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion, or rivalry among different groups, it may not be realistic to aim for a diverse membership that reflects all segments of the society. While it may be difficult to achieve a diverse membership that represents different ethnicities and political views, including people of all genders and age groups could be the goal of the organization.

The key here is to make sure that the make-up of your team and membership reflects the population with which you work (or want to work) and that there is a common understanding of the vision and values of your actions..

With regards to the engagement of women, the topic of male bias in the diaspora organizations has so far been brought to light.⁹ For instance, it has been observed that women often stay on the side-lines of decision-making, are not involved in the roles of community leaders as much as men, and are more active in informal interventions.¹⁰ Introducing a quota system is one of the most common strategies of assuring women involvement in organizations as, over time, it may lead to the shift in social norms in the community.¹¹

To ensure effective engagement, women should be engaged in co-developing outreach strategies. Establishing safe spaces where women and girls can feel comfortable and express themselves without fear of judgement and harm is vital to sustaining ties that are created through outreach activities. Building upon existing womens groups and support networks within the communities can help establish trust and enhance the effectiveness of outreach activities.

Crucially, it is key to consider the intersection of gender and age. Arguably, many elderly women may be marginalized in their communities, regardless of the assets they may bring in. Efforts should also be put on targeting them and recruiting them into the community organizations.¹²

Involving the elderly should include the modes they are familiar with (such as fliers, phone calls or emails) and consider mobility limitations with on-location meetings. Personalizing the contact is especially important for this group.

Regarding youth, providing age-appropriate messages and focusing on online modes of outreach, especially involving social media is viable. Even though involving the youth as volunteers is an excellent idea, they should not solely be confined to that role, but rather have presence on the higher levels, making the organization intergenerational. Practicing “intentional philosophy” here is important – informing the youth why their engagement is sought after, so they see the potential for their own development.¹³

⁹ Busbridge, R., & Winarnita, M. (2015). Dialogue and Other ‘Men’s Business’: Gender, Conflict and Multicultural Politics in the Diaspora.

¹⁰ National Women’s Studies Association. (1999). NWSA journal: A publication of the National Women’s Studies Association.

¹¹ ADB. (2014). *Women’s Participation and Voice in Community-Based Organizations*.

¹² James, K., & Raissa, L. D. (2016). *ENGAGING OLDER WOMEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY. A Promising Practices Guide for Women’s and Senior Serving Organizations*. Canadian Centre for Elder Law.

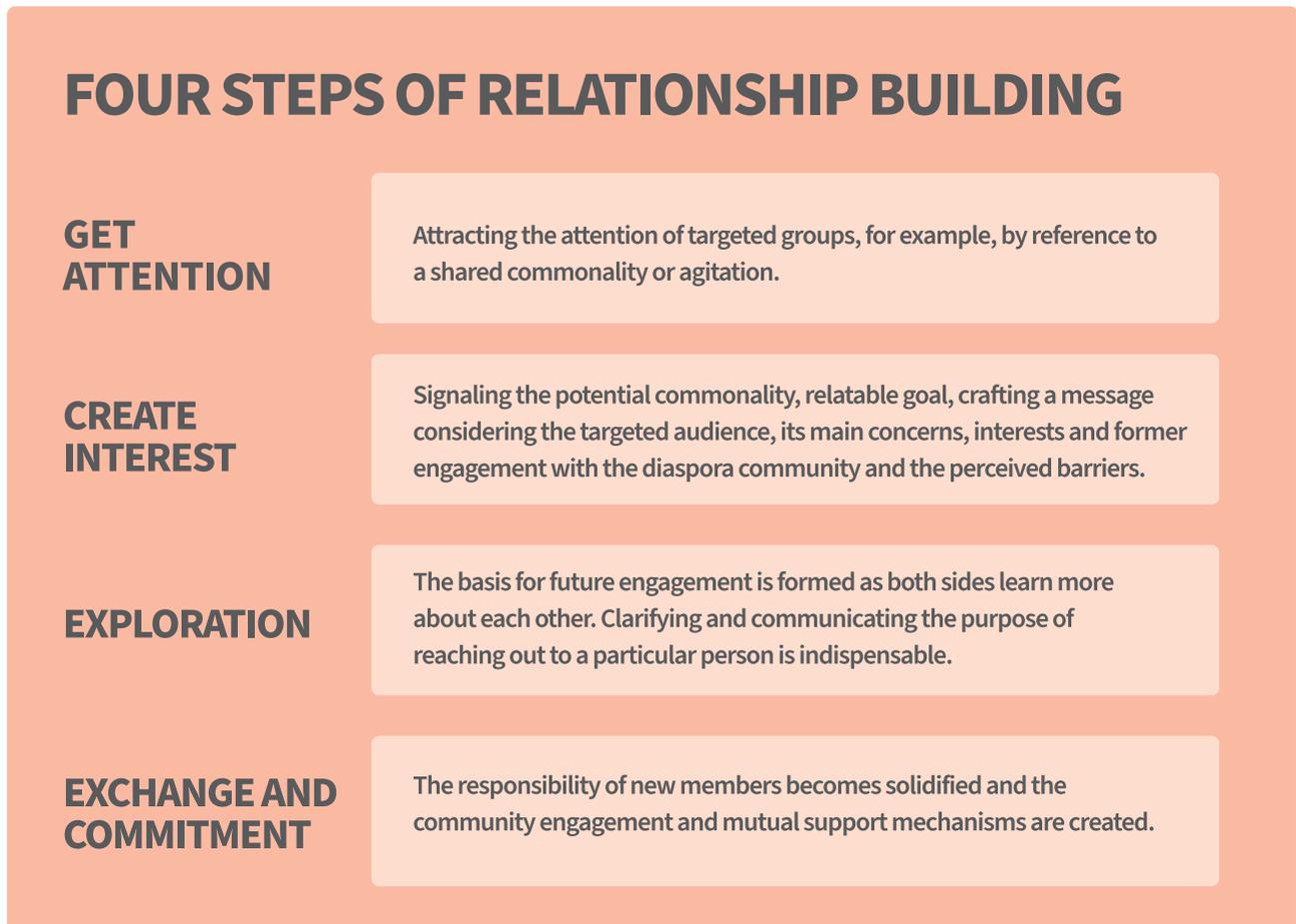
¹³ Rehnberg, S. J. (2009). *Strategic Volunteer. A Guide for Nonprofit and Public Sector Leaders*. RGK Center for Philanthropy & Community Service.



Four steps of relationship-building in community outreach

When creating an outreach plan for targeted communities, one should conceptualize it as a relationship-building process. To understand the basics of community outreach, it is important to outline the process of relationship building, which follows the below cycle:

Figure 1. Four steps of relationship building



Source: Schmizt, 2017; CCESL, 2014

Any outreach process begins with defining the target group, getting their attention and earning their interest. Essential next steps to ensure the longevity of the relationship are; “exploration” of the basis for future engagement and solidifying roles and responsibilities of new members and the mutual support mechanisms through facilitating “exchange and commitment”. The overarching principle in the relationship building process is establishing trust. Continuous efforts that build on each other over time provide an enabling context for relationships and trust to build and strengthen over time.



Community outreach methods

Everything from member meetings, announcements, demonstrations, social events and emails/social media campaigns can be an element of the plan, as long as it is consistent with the organization's goals. Conventional outreach approaches like distributing brochures, writing newsletters, and canvassing (going door to door in the community) are crucial components of community outreach, but engaging a diverse audience in a sustainable manner often requires developing strategies that combine traditional methods with new technologies and innovative techniques that resonate with the target communities you would like to connect with.

The rest of this section introduces selected methods that can be used by organizations to access diverse segments of their targeted population and enhance participation. This is not an exclusive list but rather a selection of different community outreach methods that best apply to diaspora organizations on the basis of the specific needs and challenges reported within the framework of DRC Diaspora Dialogue project.

Conventional methods

The most well-known examples of outreach methods are the organization of social/community events, public meetings, canvassing (door-to-door visits), distributing fliers and leaflets or conducting surveys, interviews and focus group discussions that serve the dual purpose of establishing contact with targeted groups and spreading and gathering information from the targeted communities while increasing visibility and outreach. A successful outreach meeting, formal or informal, is one where everybody understands and follows through the established action steps, so that the community strengthens and endures.¹⁴ Some selected methods that can be employed by organizations to increase their outreach are listed as follows:

House meetings: are often organized in someone's house, a restaurant, or a local community center where you can have the chance to invite people and have an informal chat about your organization or your campaign in a cozy atmosphere. The objective can be to get people to sign up, to volunteer, donate or participate in your activities (CallHub, n.d.).

Social and cultural events: A practical approach to generate interest and get people to know you is through organizing social events such as concerts, art exhibitions, food festivals, film festivals or movie screenings that are open to the public. Such events can foster a sense of community and establish a base level of trust. For diaspora organizations, the additional advantage is that such events provide space for cultural expression for diaspora communities and encourage cultural exchange between migrants and other residents. Similarly, you can also attend local community events organized by other groups and interact with people by setting up a stall and handing out fliers, stickers or leaflets (CallHub, n.d.). Rallies can also be considered as social events that can allow space for exchanges between organizers and passers-by if you are well prepared to engage with outsiders prior to taking on to the streets. It is important to remember that not every individual feels comfortable attending rallies, particularly if they have a precarious legal status.

Public meetings: Public meetings are similar to house meetings, but conducted in a more structured manner. They can involve seminars, presentations and workshops with the aim to spread information and engage in productive exchange with targeted audiences. Section 3.3. presents innovative participatory approaches that can be used while designing such gatherings.

¹⁴ Schmitz, P. (2017). *Community Engagement Toolkit*. Collective Impact Forum.



Data collection tools: Depending on the purpose and the operating context of your organization, your outreach strategy may involve collecting data from your target community to understand their characteristics, needs and interests. Data collection tools are most useful if your audience are both potential primary beneficiaries of your programs and projects, and individuals who would be able to inform the community about your work and ask them for their contribution. Fieldwork may involve conducting small-scale surveys, in-depth interviews with community members and key stakeholders, and focus group discussions (FGDs). The below table presents the advantages and disadvantages of these methods and when they would be most useful in detail.

Table 2. Data collection tools in community outreach efforts

Tool	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Most useful when..
Surveys	<p>One-to-one, ideally in-person or via phone, or online</p> <p>Mainly multiple choice questions</p> <p>Ideally no more than 30 questions</p> <p>10 To 15 minutes</p>	<p>Time-effective, cost-effective</p> <p>Reaches a larger audience</p> <p>Allows for identifying priorities, red flags</p> <p>Yields good results when conducted in conjunction with interviews and FGDs</p>	<p>Lack of human contact, leaves little room for relationship building and creating a sense of community</p> <p>Simplified results, does not allow in-depth understanding of issues</p>	<p>Mapping community demographics to collect basic information such as gender, age, occupation, place of residence etc.</p> <p>Conducting needs assessment to identify needs and priorities of the community and to make sure that the actions you plan to undertake correspond to actual needs</p> <p>You want to inform people about the programs and campaigns and get more community support for the subsequent actions that build on the results of the survey</p> <p>Use findings as a tool for acquiring additional funding sources</p> <p>Can be used for evaluation purposes (e.g., Exploring the extent to which your campaign is achieving desired outcomes)</p>
Interviews	<p>One-to-one</p> <p>Open questions</p> <p>Semi-structured, in-depth discussions</p> <p>Around 1 hour</p>	<p>Allows in-depth understanding of attitudes, perceptions, needs and interests</p> <p>Promotes interpersonal dialogue in a relaxed atmosphere</p> <p>You can ask follow-up questions, to probe for additional information to generate rich data</p>	<p>Limited community mobilization capacity</p> <p>Can be time and labor-intensive</p> <p>Results are not generalizable</p> <p>Prone to bias</p>	<p>Building interpersonal relationships with your community</p> <p>Gaining in-depth insights and nuanced understanding on a specific issue and finding innovative strategies to address challenges</p> <p>You can use findings as a tool for acquiring additional funding sources</p> <p>Ideal when people are direct beneficiaries of your activities</p>
Focus Group Discussions (FGD)	<p>8 To 12 people</p> <p>Open questions</p> <p>Informal, facilitated discussion</p> <p>Around 1 hour</p> <p>Best practice to hold separate discussions with men, women, minority groups so they can express themselves openly</p>	<p>Participatory nature, based on interactive group processes</p> <p>Allows for understanding group dynamics</p>	<p>Requires financial resources (e.g. If you need to rent a place)</p> <p>Prone to bias, as people might hesitate to openly state their opinions in a group setting</p>	<p>You want to understand people's perceptions, beliefs, fears, questions and needs with regards to a specific issue (e.g., How they cope with COVID-19 and what are their concerns and needs)</p> <p>You want to understand group dynamics such as opposing arguments, points of agreement, social norms etc.</p> <p>You can use findings as a tool for acquiring additional funding sources</p> <p>Ideal when people are direct beneficiaries of your activities</p>



Resources and tools

Online survey tools

There are many web-based platforms that allow users to create surveys. Some of them are listed below:

Google Forms is included as part of the free, web-based Google Docs Editors suite offered by Google. It is very practical and useful for simple and small-scale surveys.

<https://www.google.com/forms/about/>

SurveyMonkey allows users to design surveys for free up to 10 questions. It is appropriate for intermediate questionnaire designers, and it supports users with finding the right question. The website also offers a wide variety of resources and survey templates that could inspire you while designing your survey. Read more at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/resources/>

Qualtrics is a powerful, feature-rich online survey tool that allows one to design and distribute surveys and analyze responses. It is a highly flexible platform with a rich toolset that allows developing complex surveys. It is a paid software, but a demo can be requested for 14 days.

<https://www.qualtrics.com/>

SoGo Survey is another online survey tool that's pleasant to use, with a favorable reporting function. <https://www.sogosurvey.com/>

Focus Group Discussions: UNICEF provides a detailed guide on how to conduct focus groups discussions with communities. Read more at: [UNICEF's Focus group discussion guide for communities.](#)

Storytelling

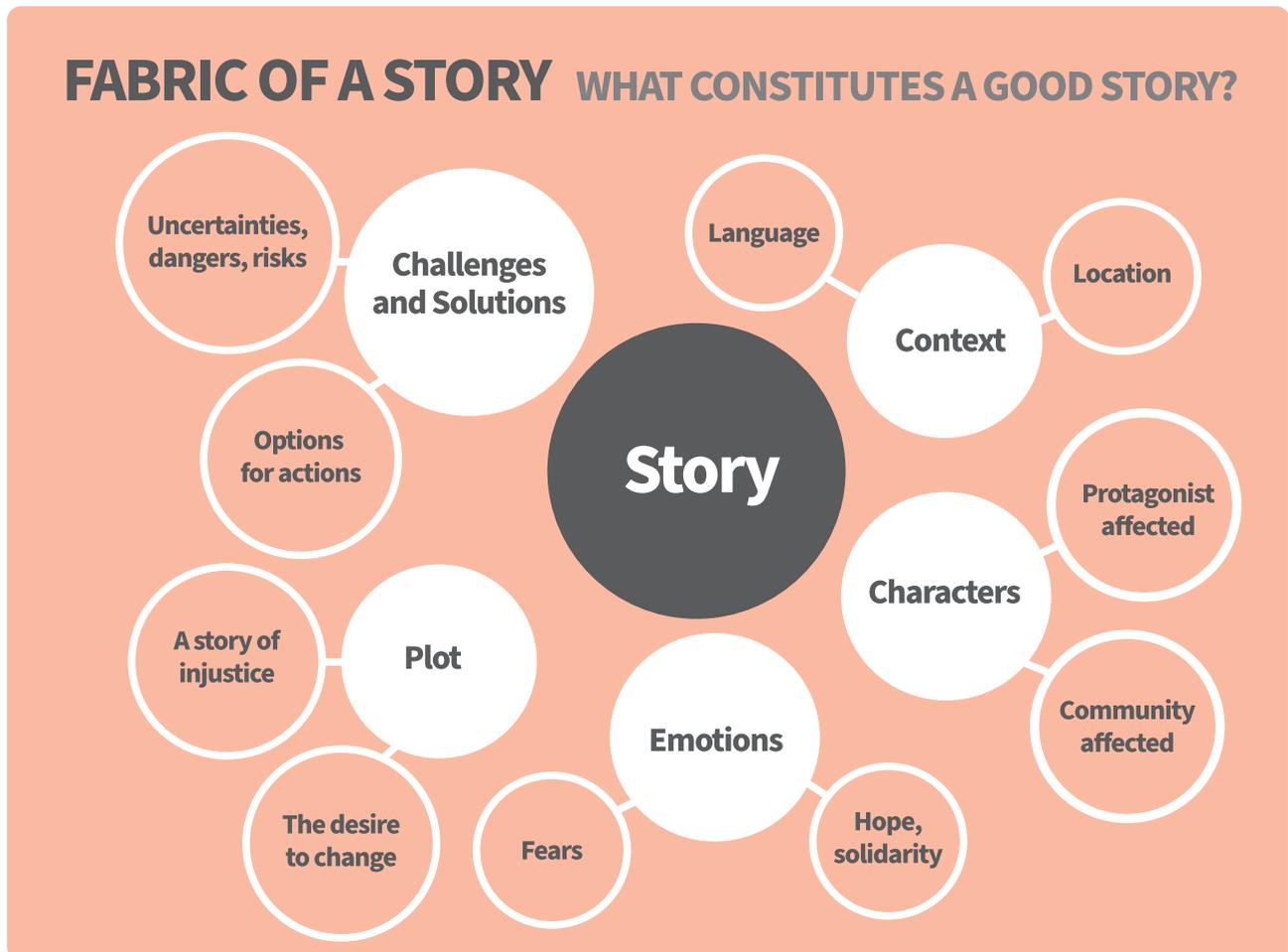
Stories are essential elements of building relationships and attracting people, getting them to know you and your cause, and challenging the stereotypes they might have. For generations, stories have been told to share values and principles that help us come up with a lesson, and identify the moral of the story and certain patterns of behavior.

Stories are vital for civil society actors in their efforts to better communicate about their overall objectives or specific projects/campaigns and engage more people. Many civil society organizations are using storytelling to promote their work and enhance their outreach. The public narrative of a civil society organization can enable citizens and non-citizens alike to discover common interests and identities and join their efforts to try to influence public policy and public opinion.

In order to **get the attention** of people and **spark their interest** in your cause, it is vital to formulate a **powerful and convincing story** that allows you and your team to connect with the **hearts and minds** of your community. Particularly in advocacy campaigns, a powerful story can allow the audience to **relate to your story** and elicit reactions such as **empathy or sympathy** that may eventually encourage them to be part of the solution. The organizers need to always clearly determine the story of the organization (why they come together and what matters for them) and then choose a corresponding strategy (how they will act) and the targeted community. A story is composed of a protagonist who is affected by a meso- or macro-level problem, and a clear statement of the problem and potential solutions. Successful stories often elicit emotions and promote values of solidarity and acting together to tackle challenges together.



Figure 2. What constitutes a good story?



Storytelling can be used as a method to extend your **community outreach** as a civil society organization or to **advocate for a certain cause**.

Storytelling in community outreach

Storytelling (or public narrative) is a key element that can be useful during informal get-togethers which allow for an exchange of information and community mobilization from the ground up (CCESL, 2014). Although the character of the meeting may be social, it is important to have a well-prepared storyteller provide some physical material (e.g. brochures or business cards) and gather participants' contact information to ensure proper follow up and work towards continued involvement.

A public narrative of a civil initiative is composed of three main components: 1) a story of self; 2) a story of us; and 3) a story of now. In his article "What is Public Narrative?", Ganz¹⁵ describes these components:

"A story of self communicates who I am – my values, my experience, why I do what I do. A story of us communicates who we are – our shared values, our shared experience, and why we do what we do. And a story of now transforms the present into a moment of challenge, hope, and choice."

¹⁵ Ganz, M. (2008). What is Public Narrative? Kennedy School.



Figure 3. Three components of a story



Things to consider while narrating your public story as a diaspora organization...

A story of self is not about what you studied or how you grew up, it is the certain events that you experienced related to your cause, which made you a leader.

A story of us is neither the story of the victim nor the story of the superhero. You should find common ground between victim and superhero.

Don't be wordy. Stick to 2-3 minutes.

Select the right story. We have multiple stories, select the story which fits the audience and context. The turning point of a story does not have to be traumatic. The message to be delivered is that we are all in the same context, we need to collectively address this problem.

State the problem clearly and present solutions to tackle the problems. If you do not present solutions, you are a victim. People may sympathize with the victim but if they are not given options to support the victim, they may not know how to contribute.



Storytelling in advocacy and campaigning

Human-focused storytelling is an effective method used by civil society actors in issue-based advocacy and campaigning efforts. It often begins with the story of one individual affected by a larger occurrence (e.g., natural or man-made disaster, injustice or a new policy) and then paints the bigger picture through this individual story. Humanizing a cause can be effective in combating prejudice and misconceptions surrounding your cause. However, it is important to find common ground between drawing the picture of a victim and superhero. If the story does not offer options to tackle the challenges, it is the story of victimhood. It may elicit empathy and sympathy, but it is often not enough to convince people to join your community. The Ariel Formula explained in the below box can provide useful guidance while approaching larger crowds that can potentially support your cause.

The ariel formula for storytelling in advocacy campaigns

1. State the context
"We are meeting today to talk about the recent decree on migrants' access to the labor market introduced by ..."
2. Segue to the story
"But before I do that, let me tell you a story."
3. Tell the story
"As a professional teacher and an asylum-seeker from [country], I..."
4. State what you learned
"What I learned from this experience..."
5. State what we can learn
"What we can learn from this experience..."
6. Connect to the challenge and present solutions
"So, as we face this new regulation..."

Source: Adapted version of Ariel Formula for Business Storytelling, retrieved from <https://www.arielgroup.com/storytelling-a-story-of-self-a-story-of-us-and-a-story-of-now/>

An influential digital storyteller from the South Caucasus: Chai Khana

Chai Khana is a women-led, multi award-winning regional media platform based in Tbilisi, Georgia. They publish stories about conflict-affected communities and underrepresented groups in the South Caucasus region through the use of human-focused storytelling. They also offer training and mentorship to young journalists and activists on human-focused storytelling. They define their mission as "inspiring and fostering cross-border understanding of the Caucasus". The stories published by Chai Khana can be accessed via their [website](#).

Alternative stories: Diaspora identity

The experience of immigration often brings with it issues of identity and a complicated sense of belonging. Personal narratives of diasporic experience can be powerful sources that cultivate an understanding of the unique circumstances of each individual by going beyond the stereotypical depictions of migrants and diaspora communities in mainstream media outlets. The US-based non-profit organization called Facing History provides numerous resources to support educators in the classroom to sensitize students and motivate them to become woke, and stand up to bigotry, hate and discrimination. One of the teaching ideas developed by this organization encourages students to think about diaspora identity. This method could be used by diaspora organizations in their awareness-raising efforts, particularly in organized gatherings and workshops.

See: <https://www.facinghistory.org/civic-dilemmas/identity-diaspora>



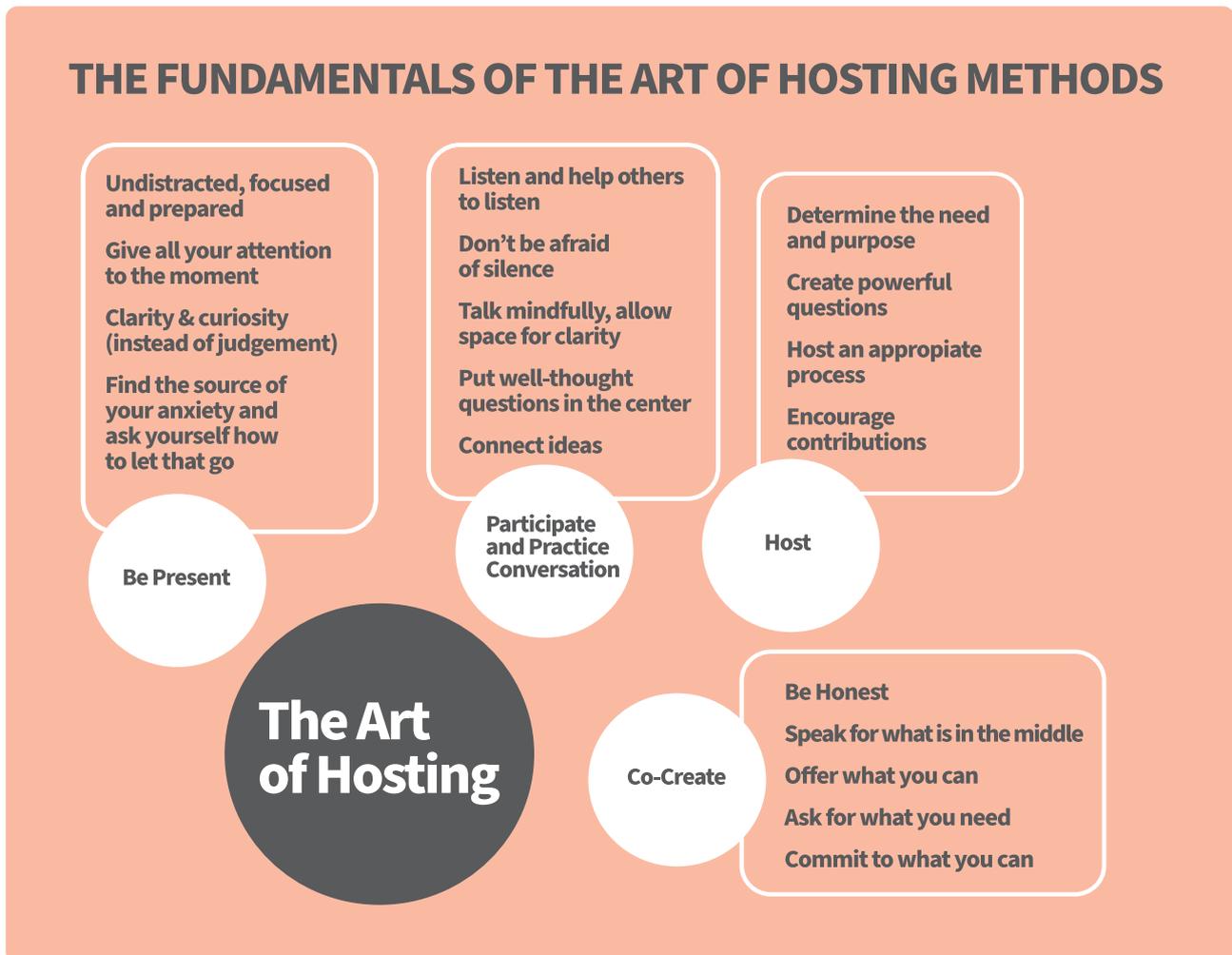
The art of hosting

Storytelling methods described in the previous section can help organizations to “attract attention” and “create interest” among the targeted audiences. Next step is to invite those “interested” individuals to participate in a conversation with you to learn more about you and your organizational activities, contribute with their ideas and discover avenues for future collaboration. As elaborated in the four steps of relationship-building (Section 2), the essential next steps for building a solid relationship are; “exploration” of the basis for future engagement and solidifying roles and responsibilities of new members through facilitating “exchange and commitment”. This requires creating spaces that allow for meaningful, impactful conversations that make efficient use of everyone’s time.

The art of hosting is an umbrella method that can be used to convene a meaningful conversation in various group settings, including civic spaces. It consists of a range of conversational methods that can be applied in events, such as World Cafe, Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space Technology, ProAction Café and Circle. The overall aim of these participatory methods is to harness the collective intelligence and self-organizing capacity of the participants and facilitate engaging with diverse groups in a constructive manner. The practitioners can tailor the method based on the context and purpose of the gathering. (Read more: <https://www.artofhosting.org/>).

The art of hosting methods have four fundamental principles in common that are the sources of a good conversational design: (1) be present, (2) participate and practice conversation, (3) host and (4) co-create. The below chart describes each of these principles in detail.

Figure 4. *The fundamentals of the art of hosting methods*



Source: Chris Corrigan, n.d. retrieved from:

<https://www.artofhosting.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Hostinginahurryversion1.5ChrisC.pdf>



World Cafe

- Informal cafe atmosphere where tea and coffee is served
- Multiple tables with different questions (ideally four or less)
- Participants divided into small groups and each group assigned to one question/table
- After 20-25 minutes, each small group moves to the next table, to answer the question assigned to that specific table
- Optional: One participant can remain as the host of each table and summarize the previous discussions to the newly arrived groups in the beginning of each round
- It allows for collecting the wisdom and knowledge of the entire audience, and builds on each other's knowledge.
- Read more: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/>

Open Space Technology

- Participant-driven and less organizer-driven
- Make the organization one big coffee break with a central theme
- Session topics are proposed by the participants, discussed and agreed together with the group
- People then choose the sessions they most want to attend based on their interests
- Useful for groups with diverse set of skills and interests
- Appropriate for increasing self-organizing capacity and encouraging people to take responsibility for what they love.

Appreciative Inquiry

- A positive, asset-based, solutions-oriented approach
- The aim is to engage in a constructive dialogue by addressing positively framed questions to appreciate what's already working well, what resources exist in the community, organization or a team, rather than focusing on a problem that needs to be solved
- The idea is to encourage participants to share positive stories or personal success stories, which in turn empowers them and helps them gain confidence in their ability to deliver
- Read more at: <https://organizingengagement.org/models/appreciative-inquiry/>
- Watch the 4-minute video for further information: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzW22wwh1J4>

Digital community outreach

Community outreach can also take place in the online world, particularly more so as a result of the physical distancing measures implemented in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Virtual communities are not inferior to real-life ones and can generate significant network capital spanning across borders.¹⁶ Social media provides enormous opportunities to social change makers in their efforts to engage with a larger and a more diverse audience. There are many platforms and tools that can help civil society organizations in their digital outreach efforts.

¹⁶ Keles, J. (2015) Diaspora, the Internet and Social Capital.



It is key to first invest some time in defining the target group and the preferences of its members. There are a plethora of options available when it comes to online community outreach and the efforts tend to become easily scattered across different platforms and modes of virtual interaction, diminishing their impact. For example, when young people are concerned, it makes more sense to reach out via Instagram than send an email newsletter, while young professionals may be more active on LinkedIn. It is therefore crucial to choose the best medium for your targeted audience. Additionally, to avoid losing track of the members of the community, it is advisable to keep a contact list of the participants. Being organized is often underestimated when it comes to online strategies. Planning, scheduling posts or emails, updating bios and generally being consistently active, however, is fundamental. Another danger of online outreach is that it can easily turn into broadcasting, missing out on the mutual involvement part, especially when the chances for physically getting together are limited. To counter that, it is always important to maintain an individual-level relationship building, even if it is merely through sending a private text message. The exploration and exchange stages of relationship building cannot be left out in virtual reality.

Moreover, networking amongst the community members themselves should be assured, so that horizontal relations between community members are fostered and the organization is strong. This requires time, initiating discussions and creating possibilities for formal and informal exchange between the different individuals within the organizations. The ways in which this can be secured will differ depending on the organization and its demographics. It is possible to set up a separate platform (e.g., Slack, HoneyComb), which allows users to create a virtual space, organize online events and get-togethers through different softwares (e.g., e.g., Skype, Zoom, Google Hangouts, MS Teams). As mentioned previously, relationship building is at the core of community outreach. Without a doubt, it is key to maintain a strong digital presence; however, it is important to remember that the number of followers on any social media site is not a viable indicator of the success of the strategy, while the strength of the relationships definitely is.¹⁷

The toolkit designed by USAID to strengthen civil society organizations' presence on social media can be a useful guide in developing your digital outreach plan. It offers detailed information on different social media platforms, how to develop a social media policy and how to link programmatic goals to social media. It provides insights on how to grow your digital community and measure impact in addition to guidelines on data security and privacy issues.

Digital tools to enhance community outreach

Build your digital footprint!

<https://buffer.com/>: Allows you to add all your social media accounts in one platform and calculates the optimal time to post on social media. Up to three accounts are free. Tell your story and increase your outreach with a publishing, analytics, and engagement platform.

<https://tweetdeck.twitter.com/>: Twitter tool for real-time tracking, organizing, and engagement. Helps reach your audiences on Twitter.

<https://www.canva.com/>: Create posters, newsletters, graphs, fliers, infographics and images for social media posts. Free and easy to use.

<https://mailchimp.com/>: You can design and send out campaign email templates and you can import contact lists from excel, without having to enter all the emails one by one.

<https://create.piktochart.com/>: You can create good looking infographics for free.

¹⁷ Matusek, S. (2017). The 10 Golden Rules of Building Communities That Matter



<https://socialimpact.youtube.com/>: YouTube Social Impact engages changemakers, global leaders, and cultural influencers by offering a platform for social engagement and impact through video storytelling.

<https://pixabay.com/>: Offers a wide collection of high quality images without copyright protection.

<https://line.do/> : Visualization tool that helps create engaging storytelling.

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/hyperlapse-from-instagram/id740146917>

The instagram app allows fast forwarding a time lapse video and give it a cinematic feeling (e.g. capturing an entire sunrise in 10 seconds)

How to make your own videos?

It is estimated that online videos will make up more than 82% of all internet traffic by 2022 - 15 times higher than it was in 2017. Social videos are becoming increasingly popular. Some popular examples are online platforms including Mashable¹⁸ and AJ+¹⁹ (an initiative of Al Jazeera).

A successful initiative of AJ+ is Palestine Remix project²⁰ which allows users to create their own video content by using the documentary archive on its website. The project transcribes all the documentaries by using a technology that synchronises text and video. This allows users to instantly find anything mentioned in the films, and also to view and use parts of various films to create your own content.

What are the requirements?

A successful video...

1. Must work without sound, if it involves talking, remember to add subtitles in a readable size and font
2. Must be mobile-friendly
3. Must be square
4. Must last for 60-90 seconds maximum
5. Must be accessible across multiple platforms

There are many online applications that can help you create videos. Some of them are; **Procreate (to create animations), Vont & Jupiter, FCP, Legend, Gravie, Replay, Splice, Fontspiration (font animation), GoPro Quik, Viva video**

¹⁸ See Mashable content: <https://www.youtube.com/user/mashable>

¹⁹ See AJ+ content: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieAeeyWtS5E>

²⁰ Palestine Remix Project: <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/palestineremix/about.html>



Evaluation

Evaluation is a key element of the community outreach process. It is based on the critical reflection of organizers and, when undertaken on a regular basis, allows for the most effective outcomes in enabling a sense of community to build and strengthen over time. Evaluation will differ depending on the specific goals of an organization. Already when designing the action plan, it is best to indicate when the first evaluation will take place and what criteria will be used.

A simple method to evaluate the success of an outreach program is to keep track of all the activities conducted to expand outreach and evaluate the effectiveness of each activity based on a predefined evaluation criteria that involves a set of realistic and measurable indicators.

Table 3. Evaluation of community outreach processes

Activity Evaluation Criteria	Examples of quantitative indicators	Examples of qualitative indicators
<p>Did the activity attract new members/volunteers/beneficiaries?</p>	<p>As a result of this particular activity...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many people signed up to become a volunteer? • How many people became a member? • Did the activity expand organizers' outreach to new beneficiaries? • Did the activity enable outreach to previously inaccessible or marginalized groups? 	<p>Did the activity improve interpersonal relations with the community?</p>
<p>Did the activity attract new donors/partners?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did this activity help us find new partners or donors? • How much donation did we receive? 	<p>Did the activity promote greater freedom of expression for specific groups (e.g., women, youth, elderly, ethnic minorities)?</p> <p>Did the activity increase the hopes of the people towards positive social change?</p>
<p>How much did the activity increase your interaction with the community?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many people heard your story? • How many people participated in your meetings/rallies? • How many fliers were distributed? • How much social media interaction did we get? 	<p>Did the activity promote greater freedom of expression for specific groups (e.g., women, youth, elderly, ethnic minorities)?</p> <p>Did the activity increase the hopes of the people towards positive social change?</p>

Moreover, albeit it may sound trivial, celebration should be a part of every outreach and engagement campaign in order to maintain the high morale and strengthen the community spirit.



Recommendations

Challenges facing diaspora organizations are multi-layered, each corresponding to a barrier in community outreach efforts. The community outreach training conducted in partnership with Door Beyond War allowed diaspora actors to reflect on specific challenges facing them as individuals and organizations. The discussions revealed structural and organizational constraints such as lack of human resources and technical skills and limited knowledge of regulations in the countries of residence in addition to more fundamental challenges such as the atmosphere of mistrust within diaspora communities, fears associated with civic engagement imported from origin country context, emotional exhaustion and loss of belief in positive social change or unwelcoming attitude or lack of interest of host country populations. In line with these inputs and taking into consideration the preconditions to utilize the methods discussed above, recommendations to inform the design of community outreach strategies for diaspora organizations can be roughly listed as below:

- **Develop a long-term communication and outreach strategy:** Community outreach is a long-term process that requires establishing continuous channels of communication that cultivate a mutually empowering relationship between organizations and their target groups. Communication and outreach with communities should not occur only once but should be part of a longer-term engagement and relationship-building plan, creating multiple opportunities for information sharing and exchange. The centerpiece of relationship building with communities is trust. In settings characterized by low levels of trust and suspicion, communicating with the communities consistently and regularly is imperative. That communication should clearly explain the purpose of outreach, how the participants were identified and selected to be invited in discussions or events, what kind of information or resources may be asked of them (and how their information or resources will be used and protected), what the strategy is to ensure equitable inclusion of different communities, and identification of what the potential outcomes of engaging may be.
- **Transparency and accountability:** It is the obligation of an organization to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results in a transparent manner. The members of the outreach team should be responsive, approachable, open to criticism, well-prepared, focused and present in the moment during any communication with the communities. The rationale and results of actions should be communicated through established channels, in a regular manner.
- **Adopt tailored approaches for specific subgroups:** Recognizing and tailoring messaging and outreach to different groups within a diaspora is particularly important. Where possible, the communication and outreach strategy should be tailored to specific sub-groups within the diaspora, for example ethno-religious communities, given their different pre- and post-migration experiences that affect current and future relationships with other components of the diaspora. In your messaging, encourage using a sensitive and inclusive language that recognizes and caters to all components of diaspora. The methods and means of communication as well as the right moment and place for communication should be chosen in consideration of the characteristics of the community.
- **Create safe spaces:** Achieving diversity in community outreach requires a nuanced understanding of the target groups' characteristics, needs and obstacles to participation in community mobilization. It is vital to establish safe spaces that correspond to specific needs of target groups, allowing diverse groups to equally voice their opinions free from harm or judgment, in an environment that prioritises their emotional and physical safety.
- **Adopt a conflict-sensitive approach:** Community outreach programs/activities should take a conflict-sensitive approach that entails careful analysis and understanding of the possible positive or negative impacts of interventions on communities and sub-groups within those communities.



Continuous dialogue with community members can facilitate identification of divergent views within the diaspora communities and help actors reflect on how the proposed programming and interventions interact with identified conflict risks (divisions and tensions). Failure to recognize the internal fragmentations within the diaspora communities may exacerbate existing tensions and fuel/create further conflict.

- **Adopt a context-sensitive approach:** Fear, anxiety, loss of hope for positive change and feeling powerless and exhausted are emotions that can easily arise in the contexts of conflict or post-conflict. In such contexts, it is important to have realistic expectations when it comes to asking people for their commitment.

Some practicalities...

Make yourself familiar with laws and regulations on public gatherings in your city and always make sure you obtain the necessary permissions or notify relevant local authorities before organizing a public event. The authority that can grant such permission can vary from city to city, but it is often under the mandate of municipalities. In some cases, particularly for small events, it is sufficient to notify the municipality. In large-scale events, a permission can be required to check whether the event conforms with the predefined set of eligibility requirements and conditions for the organization of events.

When you are designing outreach materials, **be aware of copyright laws**. If you are not allowed to use a specific visual or audio, a practical first step is to identify and contact the owner and negotiate whether payment is required. It is important to obtain permission agreement in writing to avoid misunderstandings,

If you engage in data collection, make sure you fully **comply with EU's data protection law General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)**. GDPR is based on seven key principles, including ensuring that the data collection practices conform with law, that the data is only collected for a specific purpose which research subjects are properly informed about, making sure that the collected personal data is destroyed when it's no longer necessary, and making sure that the personal data is properly encrypted and/or pseudonymised wherever possible. Small organizations, which often lack the resources to appoint data protection officers to guide them through compliance, may find the seven principles listed in Chapter 2 of the GDPR may find particularly useful. The full legal document can be access via: <https://gdpr-info.eu/>



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Annex: online resources and toolboxes

Beautiful Trouble Toolbox

Beautiful Trouble provides an online Toolbox for grassroots and social change actors. In different sections you will find the different theories behind their tools, as well as strategic frameworks and hands-on exercises to help you assess your situation and plan your campaign. It also highlights specific forms of creative action, such as a flash mob or blockade. The website and tools are available in Arabic.

Website: <https://www.beautifultrouble.org/>

Commons Social Change Library

The Commons Social Change Library is an online collection of educational resources on campaign strategy, community organising, digital campaigning, communications and media, working effectively in groups, fundraising, diversity and inclusion and much more.

Website: <https://commonslibrary.org/>

NGO Connect

NGO Connect, is a website site of SCS Global dedicated to connecting and strengthening civil society organizations (CSOs), networks and support organizations worldwide. The Resources and tools database contains technical and program-related materials to support organizational development and institutional strengthening.

Website: <https://www.ngoconnect.net/resources-tools>

Power Shift Network Resource Bank

Power Shift Network Resource Bank is a crowd-sourced compendium of all the movement's best tools and trainings capturing methods for community building, storytelling, coalition building, fundraising and much more.

Website: <https://www.powershift.org/resources>

Racial Equity Tools

Supports individuals and groups working to achieve racial equity. It offers tools, research, tips, curricula, and ideas for people who want to increase their understanding and to help those working for racial justice at different level – in systems, organizations, communities, and the culture at large.

Website: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/>

Trainings 350

Offers practical tools for organisers, facilitators and trainers, including tools to build long-term capacity and power, activities for leading interactive workshops, seminars, and retreats, as well as methods for leading group meetings. The website and tools are available in Arabic.

Website: <https://trainings.350.org/>



Notes



DRC DANISH DRC REFUGEE DRC COUNCIL

Danish Refugee Council is a leading, international humanitarian displacement organization, supporting refugees and internally displaced persons during displacement, in exile, when settling and integrating in a new place or upon return. We provide protection and life-saving humanitarian assistance. We support displaced persons in becoming self-reliant and included into hosting societies - and we work with communities, civil society and responsible authorities to promote protection of rights and peaceful coexistence.

The aim of the DRC's Diaspora Programme is to support the constructive role of diaspora as transnational civil society actors that seek to contribute to relevant protection and solutions outcomes for people affected by conflict and displacement - in the diaspora's former home countries, for those on the move, and for those settling in third countries.

Contact: diaspora@drc.ngo
Website: www.drc.ngo/diaspora

Maastricht University's Graduate School of Governance (MGSoG)/United Nations University-MERIT (UNU-MERIT) is a higher-education institute that leads the way in operational, policy-relevant studies and evaluations. Its focus is on preparing robust evidence to support more informed and responsive policy across different thematic domains, including migration.