



Report on Dignified Storytelling's First Consultation: Putting Dignified Storytelling into Practice

Facilitated by Altamont Group¹
October 21, 2020
5-7pm GST / 9-11am EDT

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Consultation Participants

The first consultation for Dignified Storytelling was held on Wednesday, October 21, 2020 with 27 participants in attendance, representing international and national organizations (26% and 15%, respectively), independent consultants/freelance storytellers (19%), foundations (11%), academic institutions (1%), and other types of organizations (22%).²

Of the participants, the majority (60%) identified as both being both storytellers themselves and working with storytellers; 30% identified strictly as storytellers, and 10% identified as primarily working *with* storytellers.



Participants pause for a screen shot during the first Dignified Storytelling Consultation.

Consultation Agenda

The consultation was the first in a series of discussions to help inform the Dignified Storytelling Guidebook, which is being developed with support from Dubai Cares and Expo 2020 Dubai as a component of the wider Dignified Storytelling program (see Annex B for more information).

The purpose of Consultation #1 was to discuss the practical steps that storytellers take to ensure their stories promote a respect for human dignity. It also served as introduction to Dignified Storytelling and to others with a shared interest in telling impactful and ethical stories.

Discussion Summary

During two breakout discussion sessions, participants dialogued around several discussion questions, sharing insights based on their expertise and experiences telling stories within development contexts.³ Discussion questions were organized under four components of the storytelling process:



¹ Altamont Group is a boutique advisory firm: www.altamontgroup.ca

² Percentages have been rounded to the nearest tenth. The full list of participants can be found in Annex A.

³ Special thanks to the Group Leaders: Dr. David Girling (University of East Anglia), Nina Ford (Global Fund for Children), and Liz Cheesbrough (The Good Side), and Diana Gascon (VIVEWORLD).



Key takeaways from each of the breakout discussion sessions are summarized in the table below.

Group A: Preparing for the Story	
Discussion Questions	Key Discussion Points
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When should we NOT tell a story? How do we weigh the potential risks? 2. What are ways to increase the active involvement of all partners and potential contributors during story planning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data is a type of story and also needs to be considered in risk assessments. • In general, choose to be conservative and not tell a story when the risks are unknown or when a person's safety could be jeopardized. • Risk mitigation measures may include omitting specific location details or holding publication for a later date. • The goal of the story and personal self-reflection are part of the risk assessment, which needs to carefully consider the purpose, lens, context, and audience. • It's important to examine all stakeholders involved and how each may be impacted by the story. • Be aware of the danger of perpetuating a stereotype, and if so, tell a different story. • Throughout the entire storytelling process, it's important to engage contributors – ideally over a longer time period. • A first step is understanding social norms and power structures – and then finding ways to address and work with these dynamics. • Language matters! Communication needs to be in the language spoken by story contributors and in a way that is accessible and easy to understand. • Techniques like using illustrators/illustrations can help tackle sensitive content.
Group B: Ensuring Consent	
Discussion Questions	Key Discussion Points
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What issues should be discussed with potential contributors before formally requesting consent? 2. What steps can be taken to counter any feelings of obligation from potential contributors? 3. What developmentally appropriate strategies can be used to talk to children about consent? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent must be informed and deep. • Consent has to have a period of validity and should be possible to withdraw. • Due to social media, an image can end up anywhere, making consent all the more important. • Need to use local people and those who fully understand the cultural context. • Language barriers must be addressed. • More than one person needs to be trained on processes for consent: it's the responsibility of all involved. • It's critical to engage with local people and, when possible, use local talent (videographers, etc). • Key questions to ask include: Who is in control of the final image? How long are you asking for consent? And is that economically viable? • Consent is needed from parents for younger children. • Consent is also needed from the youth to share with parents. • It's important to understand the age of consent, including at what age or maturity level a child/youth has autonomy to decide on their own.



Group C: Developing Content	
Discussion Questions	Key Discussion Points
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can relationships be built and trust established if time is limited for the story-gathering? 2. How can we do justice to context with limited word counts (or limited audience attention spans)? 3. What are ways to 'pass the mic' to contributors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust-based relationships do take time, often making it important to work with contributors through community-based partners. • Games and spontaneous activities can help to build rapport and confidence, especially with children. • Stories can be broken down into a series of shorter stories. • Short and long form content can be layered and told through a diversity of social media platforms. • Less can be better – look for those “punchy” or poignant through lines. • As storytellers, we can help retrain audiences; the way stories are told can capture or demand their attention. • No one can care about everything! It's important to tap into the interest of target audiences. • Viewing and terming participants as co-researchers emphasizes that it is a collaborative effort. • Use online platforms to encourage user-generated content and see where that leads. • Training is needed to build skills and confidence for people to take and use the 'mic.' • Language is important to opening the door for active involvement – use accessible language in the language of contributors.
Group D: Publishing the Story	
Discussion Questions	Key Discussion Points
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How long should images and personal information be kept on file or used by organisations? 2. What other data should be on file with the content? 3. What needs to be considered to ensure that follow-up with contributors happens? What the main constraints to following up with contributors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is not a specific time frame for keeping or using content, but this must be agreed upon with the storyteller and contributors. • Remember: once data is online, it is there forever. • Specify where the data is coming from and the subject when storing data. • Organizations should be in charge of the conditions and responsible to establish the context of the data. • Storytellers need to be ready to adapt to new stories. • There's no common platform used to share and store consent. • It is difficult to do the follow up with contributors – there needs to be easier ways to contact people. • Consent should not be permanent and avenues to withdraw consent are needed.

In the closing poll, 26/27 participants indicated that 'yes' they would be interested in participating in future consultations; one participant indicated 'maybe.' The next consultation in the series – which is planned for early December 2020 – will continue to build on Consultation 1 and will focus on telling stories about and with specific vulnerable groups.⁴

⁴ When polled, the top three interest groups for Consultation 1 participants included children; people living in or fleeing from conflict zones; and survivors of sexual assault or gender-based violence.



Annex A: Dignified Storytelling Consultation 1 Participant List

1. Dee Abbott, Children in the Crossfire
2. Sara Al-Boom, Dubai Cares
3. Sadia Anwar, Historically
4. Jane Body, Mama Hope
5. Chandra Chakma, BRAC
6. Liz Cheesbrough, The Good Side
7. Constance Dykhuizen, Philanthropy Consultant
8. Lina Elkurd, UNICEF
9. Delice Fatiro, Resonate
10. Diana Gascon, VIVEWORLD
11. Jorge Fernandez, VIVEWORLD
12. Nina Ford, Global Fund for Children
13. Dr. David Girling, University of East Anglia
14. Baela Jamil, ITA
15. Roger Jenkins, Federation of Asian Storytellers
16. Clelia Kakunze, African Union
17. Michael Kass, Story & Spirit
18. Shermin Mheidly, Dubai Cares
19. Perpétue Miganda, FemWise-Africa
20. Mariana Miragaia, World Humanitarian Forum
21. Dr. Wunpini Fatimata Mohammed, University of Georgia
22. Lionel Ntasano, Nonara Productions Inc.
23. Devyani Pershad, Pratham
24. Katelin Raw, VVOB
25. Simone Sales, Federation of Asian Storytellers
26. Ragy Saro, Expo 2020 Dubai
27. Byrone Wayodi, Asante Africa Foundation

Consultation 1 was facilitated by Sajida H. Shroff and Jamie Vinson of Altamont Group



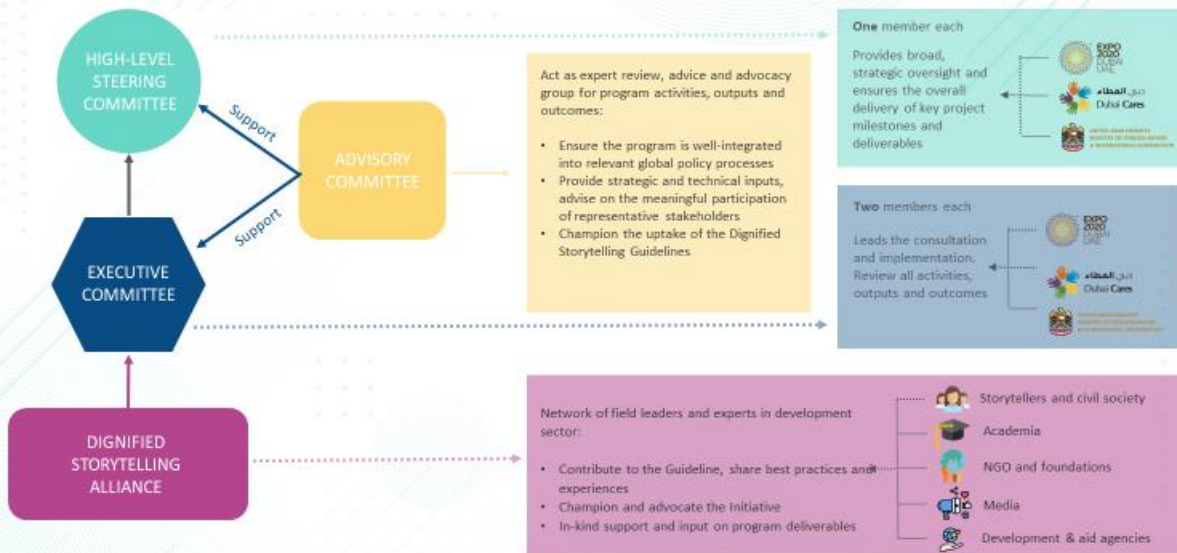
Annex B: Information on Dignified Storytelling

Orientation to Dignified Storytelling

To foster a shared understanding of how storytelling can and should instil and maintain the dignity of all persons



Orientation to Dignified Storytelling





Dignified Storytelling Consultations

Dignified Storytelling will host a series of individual and group consultations to solicit cross-sectoral perspectives to be included in the Dignified Storytelling Guidebook.

Co-Chairs	Dignified Storytelling Alliance	Potential Consultation Topics
 	 United Nations Academia & specialised agencies NGO & foundations Storytellers & civil society Media Development & aid agencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Applying the Dignified Storytelling principles2. Guidance for working with particular vulnerable groups3. Working with other stakeholders for Dignified Storytelling4. Ethical and practical dilemmas in practicing Dignified Storytelling5. Advocating and educating for Dignified Storytelling6. Collecting good practices that apply Dignified Storytelling

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Get involved with Dignified Storytelling!

The Dignified Storytelling website is coming soon: www.dignifiedstorytelling.com



Join the Dignified Storytelling Alliance



Sign up for an upcoming consultation



Submit a best practice case study



Participate in Dignified Storytelling events during Expo 2020



Request more information about partnering with us

All queries about Dignified Storytelling can be sent to HQ@dignifiedstorytelling.com