

HOW
TO...



Capturing stories

A toolkit for volunteers



Restless Development and VSO support our volunteers to address the lack of understanding about global poverty in the UK that is undermining support for international development. Volunteers on overseas placements are in a unique position to share first-hand experiences of global poverty that can challenge apathy, stereotypes and scepticism about international development. Restless Development and VSO will provide innovative training and support for overseas volunteers to capture and share genuine and powerful stories; inspire action by others, and become lifelong campaigners against global poverty.



Half the world is under 25. In the world's 60 poorest countries, the average percentage of the population under 25 is 60%.

Restless Development's mission is to place young people at the forefront of change and development. **We believe that young people are capable of helping to solve the world's biggest problems.**

We focus on three areas: civic participation, livelihoods and employment, and sexual and reproductive health and rights programmes. Our strength comes from being led by young people, from the boardroom right through to the field.

www.restlessdevelopment.org



VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) is an international development charity that brings people together to share skills and knowledge to fight poverty. VSO volunteers work in whichever fields are necessary to tackle poverty – from education and health through to helping people learn the skills to make a living.

We work with local people so that the impact they make endures long after their placement ends. VSO recruits volunteers from countries in the global north and global south, as well as supporting the growth of volunteering within developing countries. Today, with our partners, we are helping over nine million people in communities in 30 countries around the world.

www.vso.org.uk

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Introduction

Stories are powerful. They can help create change and inspire action. They can bring to life and help give context to development issues such as health and sanitation, climate change and gender inequality, by communicating first-hand experiences. Stories can also motivate others to take action, for example, they can influence decision-makers such as politicians to change development policies or inspire the general public to sign a petition or go to an event.

Recent studies in the UK show that perceptions of international development are often negative¹. As a volunteer, you are in a unique position to collect and share stories that illustrate how international development can work, and ensure voices of those living in poverty are heard. By sharing stories from your volunteer placement you can help to change these negative perceptions.

This guide will help you to identify stories to collect, ensure that you are collecting them safely for both you and the community you work in, and help you share them through photographs, blogging and video.

www.croydonradio.com

¹ One study showed that 57% of people agreed with the statement that 'development assistance is wasted and does little or nothing to promote British interests and should therefore be radically reduced'. Niblett, R. (2011). "British Attitudes Towards the UK's International Priorities". The Chatham House–YouGov Survey 2011. <http://bit.ly/qaobXO>



How to use this guide

This guide has been written to complement the pre-departure online training course (contact us if you haven't done this but want to). It will remind you of the key learning elements from the course, suggest some ways to reflect on and practise what you have learnt, and ways to make an impact with the stories you collect.

If you are on a volunteer placement with others you may want to complete some of the activities as a team. You could also use this guide to share some of your skills with the local community, with local volunteers or local colleagues in your work place, and engage them in the development of the stories you are sharing.

Each chapter follows the same format:



How to:

- key learning from the online training course.
- point by point guide for each skill.



Reflect on your learning:

- group and individual activities.



Explore, including:

- interactive activities to explore the skills in more depth.
- connect the skills to an issue in the local community.
- case studies and examples.



Practice:

- activities to put your skills into practice.



Check list:

- before you take action, ensure that you have remembered everything on this check-list.



Do:

- after following each of the steps you should be ready to put your new skills into action.

What makes a good story?

Throughout your placement, look out for stories that can help communicate positive messages about development work. Not all stories need to have a happy outcome, but you should be thinking about how your story could challenge negative perceptions of development.



Find a good development story

Read the article below paying particular attention to the highlighted sections. It captures a number of key elements that contribute to a story that communicates positive messages about development work.

Solar engineers 'lighting the way' for other women – Tanzania²

In Tanzania 60% of women live in absolute poverty even though they make up an estimated 80% of the agricultural labour force. Women are the main producers of cash crops, yet rarely gain access to the wealth they generate.

VSO volunteers in Tanzania manage a pioneering partnership in collaboration with UN Women to train rural, illiterate women as solar engineers. The women gain income-generating skills, improve the quality of life in their villages by increasing access to electricity, and also gain greater standing in their communities, playing an increased role in local decision-making.

A MAN'S WORLD

Forty-year-old Arafa was born and raised in a remote village close to Mtwara (south-east Tanzania). She remembers being forced out of school at a young age, and working the land after marrying an authoritarian husband. He spent any money she earned on himself.

It is painful for her to recollect the days when she didn't have enough food to eat and clothes to wear. "I felt very bitter and betrayed. I was literally starving, and didn't have money for food or clothes," she said. At the age of 16 she had her first baby and two years later she gave birth again; both children died before they were five years old.

1: This article uses statistics to frame the story and introduces the issue of women disproportionately in poverty.

2: Introduces the actions the local community and volunteers are taking to address the issue.

3: Arafa is introduced. The article uses a direct quote to emphasise the impact of the issue and bring a personal perspective. These paragraphs also add context and detail that is useful for bringing the story to life.



Things started getting better for Arafa when she gave birth to a third child, and remarried. The freedom she had to make decisions over her own life was greater than she had previously known, but even that can't compare to what happened next.

A LIFE-CHANGING JOURNEY

Arafa is one of a handful of women selected by her village in 2011 to train as a solar engineer at the Barefoot Solar College in India. Challenging the patriarchal norms of her community, she spent six months alongside women from around the world getting to grips with circuit boards and soldering, equipping herself with the skills to power her village with solar electricity.

The pilot project is run by UN Women and India's Barefoot College, with VSO volunteers Lesley Reader and Maurice Kwame overseeing its implementation in Tanzania. Lesley describes why it focuses exclusively on women: "training women between the ages of 35 to 50 is a great investment because they return to their community instead of taking their skills to the city, which is often the case with younger men and women."

With the support of her second husband, Arafa embarked on an overseas journey she could never have dreamed of, a million miles away from the village she has lived in her entire life. "There was a big language barrier as the other women all came from countries like Uganda, Sudan, Bhutan, Malawi and Peru," says Arafa, "but we overcame this and bonded, communicating through sign language and slowly began looking after each other".

4: Continues to use Arafa's personal story. Illustrates a solution to the issue presented at the beginning of the article.

5: This shows the long term solution the community achieved.

6: Highlights the impact of the solution in the local community.

7: Illustrates further impact and how the project is challenging traditional gender roles and addressing gender inequality.

8: A direct quote helps to further illustrate the impact and add a personal touch to maximise empathy.

9: Highlights both the involvement and views of the community, and that of the volunteers, to show connection between global and UK issues.

10: Links the local measurable impact story into a wider national context – the election in 2015 and the stronger role that women are playing.

ELECTRICITY AND EMPOWERMENT

Arafa and her fellow engineer Sofia have fitted more than 60 solar installations in village homes. Many have benefited, including several village children who can now study using solar lanterns in their previously poorly lit homes.

But the real upshot of training rural women as solar engineers lies in the transformation they undergo as individuals and the impact this has on their community as they take on unprecedented leadership roles in their traditional villages.

Saidi Hamisi Namaruka, the 53-year-old local leader of the village said, "Nowadays those girls are heard. Even in the meetings they raise a hand to speak, people are paying attention to them and listening to them without a problem. So they have that power. They are like leaders in the village."

Part of the project involves the women setting up a village energy committee that handles the money that members of the community contribute towards the cost and maintenance of the solar equipment.

Fatuma, a local village woman who now acts as treasurer of the committee, said: "For the first time, we are being respected when we speak, people are listening to what we have to say, and the engineers are setting an example for other girls in our village who want to be like them."

VSO volunteer Lesley believes the participation of women at the local level benefits the entire community, "Women are the ones that gather the firewood; they fetch the water; they look after the children; they cook and clean. When they're involved in decision-making, they take all of that into account"

A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Fifteen Tanzanian women have so far trained as solar engineers within the programme; aside from fitting solar panels, many of them have informally shared their skills with other community members.

The plan for the project is to now set up a training school, so the women solar engineers can share their skills with other women. In turn, they will be able to bring solar energy into their remote communities and play a greater role in local decision-making.

"Tanzania is at a crucial point in its history," says Lesley, who is optimistic that things are on their way up. "The country is in the process of reviewing its constitution and there's another election in 2015. Women are playing a stronger role politically – it's just about making sure that filters down to the village level as well."

Guiding principles for collecting and sharing stories

When you collect and share stories it is important to work with the community to ensure that the community member(s) involved:

- Understands the **objectives** of sharing the story.
- Where possible is involved in **capturing** the story.
- Gives **informed consent***
- Understands and agrees with how you will communicate their story and to whom.
- Is kept informed of the end result.

Remember that stories don't have to be just text; they can be photos, videos and audio too.



* **Informed consent** is the process of ensuring that the person the story belongs to has given their permission for it to be shared. Guidelines and a consent form can be found in the resources section.



Remember

A good story will:

- Highlight issues affecting the community and outline the chosen/proposed solution.
- Highlight the impact that the programme is having on community.
- Reflect reality of life in the community – both positive and negative.
- Point out similarities between the UK and the host community.
- Be interesting and engaging.
- Have a clear narrative with a beginning, middle and end.

- Include a first-person perspective (someone directly affected by the issue).
- Include a call to action.
- Include facts and statistics.

What not to include:

- Small and/or lots of detail (unless particularly key to the story).
- Events such as meetings or training workshops which might not be interesting to people outside of the organisations.
- Something not reflecting the true opinions or realities of your placement community.



Reflect

Read through the example article. Think about whether this story inspires you to take action or not. How and why does it inspire you? What elements make it inspiring, which elements could be improved?



Explore

Use the power of stories to get to know your fellow volunteers, your host family, community members or your work colleagues. Ask each person to share a short story about their lives. Discuss with your group or reflect by yourself on what elements made other people's stories effective and how can you use those elements when you collect stories for the programme. You can also explore other sources with stories about development, such as the Guardian website development section. Search for: 'Poverty Matters' <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters>



Practice

Tell or write the story of your arrival in placement and the people you first met. Make sure it has a clear beginning, middle and an end. Think about how you can use your personal perspective and add facts and statistics to support your story.



Check List

- Look for stories that highlight **issues affecting the community**, that highlight the **impact of your work** and that accurately **reflect reality in the community**.
- Make sure you prioritise **direct voice (quotes)** and **first person perspectives**.
- Think about the problem you're communicating, the **solution** you are suggesting and the **impact** of that solution.
- Don't get stuck on the small details.
- Think about how you can **inspire action** with your story.
- Ensure the **involvement** of the person the story belongs to.



Do!

You now know what makes a good story – use the rest of this guide to capture content to develop stories to share from your placement.



Capturing stories Interviewing

Interviews are a way of engaging in a conversation with someone, and helping them tell their stories and share their experience. You can use interviews to capture information and make your stories more compelling with quotes and anecdotes.

HOW TO: Conduct an interview

Step 1: Before

Think about

- Interesting or inspiring interviewees.
- A place where you and the interviewee will feel comfortable.
- Your questions. Choose open-ended questions and write them down.
- Language barriers – do you need a translator?
- Your safety – check with a local volunteer or staff member.
- Your interviewee's safety – check the resources section for information on safety and ethics.
- Whether you want to record the interview. Choose somewhere quiet if recording it.

Step 2: During

- Introduce yourself.
- Explain why you are conducting the interview.
- If recording or filming the interview, check interviewee is ok with this.
- Explain what you plan to do with the information.
- Gain informed consent.
- Start with simple questions, for example 'tell me a bit about your work', or 'tell me about your family'.
- Ask clear and concise questions.
- Clarify points any points you don't understand.
- Give your interviewee time to think.
- Feel relaxed and comfortable!

Example structure and interview questions:



Step 3: After

- Write your interview up as soon as possible.
- Contact the interviewee to clarify anything you are not sure of.
- Use the voice of your interviewee, for example by using direct quotes in your piece.
- Share your written piece with the interviewee for approval where possible.
- Thinking about using other media – for example you could tweet a photo and quote from your interview, or publish the recording online (use audioboo.fm).
- Include a 'call to action' in your piece and connect your story to a wider campaign or issue.

Camfed Interview with filmmaker Penelope Machipi – 14 November 2011³

“Hidden Truth” was filmed by the Samfya Women Filmmakers, a group of 23 women from Samfya, Zambia who were trained in filmmaking as a way to challenge injustices in their community and advocate for change. The film has been screened in 24 rural communities across Zambia and Zimbabwe and has been viewed by more than 17,000 people. Penelope Machipi, Director of “Hidden Truth”, speaks candidly about making and presenting this powerful film about domestic violence in Zambia.

1: The first question establishes Penelope’s motivations and what the issue is.

Q: What was your initial reason for making a film about domestic violence?

“For this, the Samfya Women Filmmakers’ second film, we researched topics and talked with women in the community. We learned that a lot of women had been victims of domestic violence, and we wanted to make a film to help people learn about the problem and stop it.”

2: The second question starts to explore her experiences and the issue in more depth.

Q: What was your experience making a film on such a sensitive, personal topic?

In fact it was very hard, and at times, very scary. We got threatened by men, people tried to take our camera, and we were told that we had “no respect to tell this story.” It was interesting the reaction some men had to us with our camera and gear. They were afraid of us—they thought we were going to get them arrested. One husband even confessed to us, and then started treating his wife better, even doing the housework once he thought he was going to get in trouble!

Q: Well thankfully you have not only got the film done, you’ve screened it all over the country, in numerous settings! What kind of responses have you received from these community members regarding what they perceive as the causes of domestic violence?

Women’s responses have been that it’s because of poverty. Women are not educated and not economically independent, and they have children to look after – that’s why often they feel unable to leave, as they have no other support.

Some people believe that if your husband beats you it means that he loves you, and if you report him then you will be accused of wanting to send your husband to jail. Now, since “Hidden Truth”, people are saying that women need more of an education about what path to take if they’re suffering from domestic violence.

3: This question explores how change is happening.

Q: Have you seen any other evidence of changes in attitudes or behaviour around domestic violence in your community since the screening?

There has definitely been a change in attitudes and behaviour since “Hidden Truth”. We are starting to see people living in peace. Screening the film has brought issues of domestic violence out into the open, when previously people were not comfortable discussing the topic.

The question and answer sessions after the screenings have resulted in people talking more openly about what they have seen in the community and how they feel about domestic violence, without necessarily discussing [their own] personal issues. Lots of women have requested that the film be screened again to different people in the same area, so that more people get the opportunity to see it... women would like more sensitisation around the subject of domestic violence, along with more victim support. Chiefs in the communities have even been requesting more screenings of the films.

Q: Did audience members in the communities have any comments about what they think needs to be done to end domestic violence?

Audiences commented that the government should empower women with information, but also economically to reduce dependency on men. The men have been saying they would like more sensitisation about the effects of domestic violence. The men themselves believe that they should discuss domestic violence within community-wide meetings.

Q: What were some of the most positive comments you heard from people about the film/the screenings?

Some positive comments have been that women are now making strong statements about wanting action taken when somebody perpetrates violence. More people are voicing how they believe the government should empower women. Demands have been made on the government to formulate more laws that protect women.

Q: How do you feel about the new anti-gender-based violence legislation in Zambia?

I’m extremely happy that the new law has been passed to help protect women in Zambia. In addition to the passing of the law that we’ve been fighting for, I would like to see it being enforced, so that women are protected. I believe the whole community will be very happy about the passing of this law.

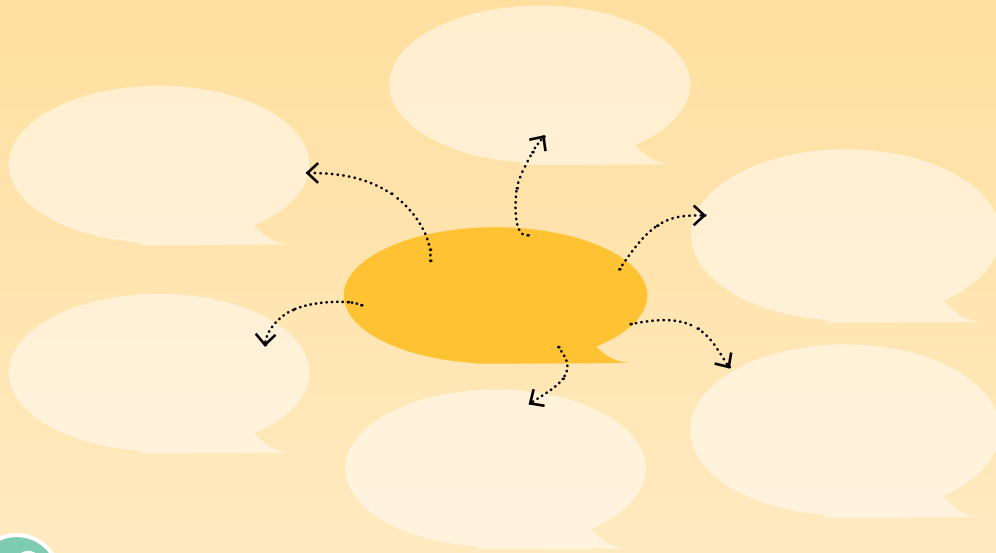
Q: What do you think has to be done to translate this law into reality for women in Zambia?

I believe that the passing of this law will be a great success if the government can work with organisations to implement and enforce the law so that women can be protected. In addition, to translate this law into reality in Zambia, they need to provide shelter for women. During the time the women are going through court with a case of domestic violence, the government should provide protection for them and their children.

4: This question explores the reactions of the local community. It brings in other people’s reactions to Penelope’s story, and shows how Penelope is working with the local community to affect change.

5: This question explores the links the issue Penelope is taking action on, into the wider context of national law in Zambia.

6: In this question the interviewer follows up on Penelope’s previous comment, and asks her to elaborate on how this can happen.



Reflect

Use the mind map above to map out all the people in your community who you could ask for an interview. If you are in a group, share your mind maps and add to each other's.



Explore

Read the excerpt of the interview with Penelope Machipi. Either discuss with others, or reflect yourself, on how the interviewer enables Penelope to tell her story. Does the story inspire you? Think about how the interviewer structures the interview.



Practice

Work with another volunteer (or a work colleague) and interview each other on your volunteer experience. Before you start, write a short plan of what you want to achieve through the interview and a list of questions to ask.

Whilst conducting the interview ensure that you go through the process for gaining informed consent (see informed consent guidelines in resources section). Afterwards give each other feedback on your interviewing style. When giving feedback talk about positive aspects and improvements for the future.



Check List

You are about to conduct an interview, make sure you...

- Have read through 'How to', paying particular attention to gaining informed consent and ensuring the safety of you and the interviewee.
- Have a list of questions prepared, but are also prepared to be flexible.
- Bring a pen and notepad.
- Prepare your device if recording the interview (check battery power and memory space).
- If you have a volunteer leader, tell them where and when the interview will take place.



Do!

Use your new interviewing skills to capture the voices of those living in your community. Remember that you are looking to change perceptions of development in the UK. Think about how stories from community members could do this. Identify at least three interviewees within the community. These could include:

1. Community member with an interesting life history.
2. Community member or local community organisation that is challenging perceptions or running an innovative project.
3. Local person who has brought about change.
4. Young person in community who has overcome significant obstacles.



Capturing stories Photos

A good photo should be able to tell its own story, and can be as powerful – if not more powerful – than words. It can also support a written article or blog to give a story context.

How to: Take a picture that tells a story

Ask questions about your photo:

- What is the story I am trying to tell?
- Will this photo help to raise awareness of positive development work?
- Does the photo reflect the realities of the community?
- Do I have permission to take and use the photo?

The photo below is a good example of a picture that tells a story



Technical tips:

FOCUS: auto focus (standard on most digital cameras) will focus on what's in the centre of the frame. Use pre-focus to move your subject away from the centre of the frame (this is done on most digital cameras by pressing down halfway on the shutter button).

LIGHT: the light should not be behind your subject

THINK ABOUT THE COMPOSITION: for a portrait, someone looking straight into camera is usually very powerful. Try not to include too much empty space in your photo, and avoid taking photos of people's backs!

RULE OF THIRDS: think of your photo divided evenly into thirds (you might have seen this on your camera's LCD screen). Experiment with where you place the subject of your photo within these thirds – it does not need to be in the central. In the photo of the woman opposite. The subject is in the right-hand third of the photograph

FRAMING: experiment with framing your subject, for example frame your subject with the sky.

ZOOM: use zoom to focus on the action.

Why the image works:

- It starts to tell a story – seeing this photo makes you want to know what she is trying to say, and how people reacted to it
- The image is positive – this doesn't mean people have to be smiling, but it shows people being active and having personality
- It challenges stereotypes – it shows people in Sierra Leone taking action themselves, with a woman leading
- You can see faces, and feel engaged in the situation.
- Shows the person in their own environment
- Captures the emotion of the subject - the woman looks empowered and passionate.

Ethics – dos and don'ts



Do:

- ✓ Gain informed consent from the person or people being photographed.
- ✓ If photographing a child under 18, gain informed consent from their parent or guardian.
- ✓ Respect people's privacy. E.g. do not take photos of people's homes, unless they give informed consent.
- ✓ Consider blurring or obscuring people's faces to protect their identity if needed.
- ✓ Respect people's wishes e.g. if they do not wish to be photographed.
- ✓ Consider security or safety issues – are you putting the person at risk by publishing their image?



Don't:

- ✗ Publish nudity. In particular, you must not publish photos of nude children.
- ✗ Publish violent or sexual images.
- ✗ Publish images showing use of illegal drugs, the abuse of drugs, smoking, solvent abuse and the misuse of alcohol.
- ✗ Edit photos so that they misrepresent the original image. Cropping or slightly lightening is fine, but it's good practice not to 'flip' images or make significant changes

Tell a story:

Take several photos of the same situation to tell a story. This could include:

- An establishing shot: a wide picture of the scene which explains where the story takes place.
- An action shot: shows an action from the project/story.
- Relationship shot: shows two or more people involved in the story and should capture the emotion between them.
- A portrait shot: shows key people to the story. You can photograph the subjects in their environment and can focus on just the eyes and face, or the whole body.

Use the photos from your community:

- Put individual photos on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr or Tumblr with a small caption underneath.
- Use photos with a blog post you have written.
- Use photos to support an article in your local paper.
- Join together with fellow volunteers and/or work colleagues and community members to display some of the photos in the community or back home.



Remember

- Some people may not feel comfortable with having their photo taken. Try to put them at ease by being positive and encouraging. Give them the chance to review their photo if they wish.
- Consider taking a few photos to make sure you have at least one usable one!



Photo by
Alex Rattee,
Tearfund ICS volunteer

Photo by
Marcus Brent-Smith
Raleigh ICS volunteer



Reflect

Look at the example photos. What kind of story about development does the photo tell? If you are in a group, discuss with each other.



Explore

Look at this short paragraph from Restless Development Volunteer Angela Stoddard:

Taking action on disability in Sierra Leone

My team at Restless Development decided to act in order to address the root cause of the problem; lack of awareness. We worked with all the key stakeholders, including the mayor and the staff under Dr Musa, and I went on SLBC Government radio, to promote projects aimed to address this. The one I am most proud of is our 'Showcase Your Ability' race for the disabled in the centre of Bo. We were granted police assistance to close the roads for a course stretching from the Mobil petrol station on Sowa Road all the way to Coronation Field Park. On this day the medal ceremony was solely for the disabled participants who were the champions. It was a joy to see most of the city's population come out to line the streets and cheer for the participants— even those using wheelchairs and crutches – who were as competitive as any able bodied individual.

Think about how you could use photos to tell this story. Identify three different types of shot you would use to capture this story.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Practice

Practice your photography skills in your community, and record some details about those photographs. For example:

- Ask your host family/ fellow volunteers/ local community/ work colleagues what a typical day is like for them and take a photo that reflects this.
- Ask a friend in the local community about the positives and the challenges of living in this community and take a portrait that reflects your friend's response.
- Take a photograph that gives your story context. This could be a place in your local community where people gather.



Check List

You are about to take some photos, make sure you...

- Gain permission for the photo to be taken and used in your story.
- Write a list of the type of shots you want to get – who is in them, what they are doing, and the location
- Make a list of the equipment you need on the shoot.
- Test all your equipment in advance. Make sure you have plenty of battery power/ memory space.



Do!

Use photos to enhance your stories, or as the main way of telling stories. Decide on an issue in community that you would like to highlight. Take a series of photos to capture this issue. You could include:

- A portrait of someone in community who is affected by the issue.
- An action shot of an organisation working on the issue.
- An image that shows the community environment.
- Volunteers or local community taking action on the issue.

Capturing stories **Video**

Short videos can bring the stories you tell to life, and are often the most direct way for people to access the reality of life in community. You don't need to have access to a video camera. This section will prepare you to capture interviews as vox pops⁴ on your smart phone or digital camera. Make sure you have read the section on interviewing before this.

How to: Film interviews



Set up

Decide roughly how long you want it to be and the format.

Choose your background scenery and appropriate place to film, somewhere with minimal background noise. Make sure you have permission to film there.

Prepare your equipment: check battery power and memory space, ensure the microphone is on.

Do a test recording to make sure the sound and focus are ok.

Frame the interviewee with their eyes 2/3 up the screen.

Keep the device close to the subject.



During the filming

Don't zoom during shots.

Always shoot in landscape.

You are looking for sound bites that can be edited down to 10 – 30 seconds. Ask the interviewee to say short phrases or sentences if needed.

Ask interviewees to repeat the question in their answer and to speak slowly and clearly (to allow questions to be edited out).

You can re-record or repeat parts of the interview if you wish. Consider changing the angle of shots, or shooting close ups and wider shots.



After the filming

If you want to edit your film Vimeo and YouTube have tutorials on editing film, e.g. this film on Windows Movie Maker. Search for: [Windows Live Movie Maker Tutorial Part 1](#) or <http://bit.ly/uHPfZB>

Think about using music or photos to enhance the film. Ensure you have permission to use all the material and include credits. The Creative Commons website (www.creativecommons.org) is a good source of information.

Consider using a logo at the beginning and end of your film for branding purposes.

Include a call to action at the end of the film, e.g. 'follow me on Twitter', or 'sign up to this campaign'.

Upload your film to online channels such as Vimeo or YouTube and tag it with search keywords.

Share it on social media or on your blog.



4 A vox pop is a short piece of film where one person talks directly to the camera on a particular subject



Reflect

Think about, or discuss in a group, why you would use film.



Explore

If you have internet access, look at how other organisations have used film to highlight development issues. For example watch this clip. [Search for: African Men Hollywood Stereotypes](#) or <http://bit.ly/Yly44A>.

Make a list below of the way film can challenge stereotypes and expectations rather than reinforce them.

If you have slow/limited internet access, discuss with others how to make the most effective use of film. Use the videos you record in the practice activities to reflect on what is effective, what can help to combat stereotypes and what helps to clearly communicate your message.



Practice

1. Record 'vox pop' videos of three different people in your community answering the same question for a maximum of 30 seconds each.

Example questions:

- Talk about a typical day in your life.
 - If you could be president for a day what changes would you make, why and what impact would those changes have?
 - What are the challenging aspects of daily life for the local community?
 - What makes it hard for people here to make a living?
 - Who inspires you and why?
2. Practice your camera skills by filming a quick snapshot of your own daily life in community. If you have fellow volunteers, watch these snapshots together and discuss what you like and ways you can improve.



Check List

You're about to shoot a film, make sure you...

- Recap on the interview section.
- Write out a plan for the filming, including equipment needed, shots needed, interview questions.
- Gain appropriate permission for the video.
- Test and prepare your equipment.



Do!

There are many creative ways you can use film to tell stories from your placement – use short video vox pops to accompany blog posts, create a video blog, create a short film showing a day in your life on placement, interview those in your community with interesting stories to tell, etc.

Choose an appropriate international day, for example 'world AIDS day' (Dec 1st), 'International volunteers day' (5th Dec) 'International women's day' (8th March) or International Youth Day (12th August) to explore in community. Make three vox pops to illustrate different people's thoughts on that issue. For example you could speak to:

- a young person in community.
- a local business owner.
- a local female figure.
- a decision-maker (for example the local mayor).
- a religious leader.



Capturing stories Blogging

Blogging is an effective way for people to share their experiences with a wider audience. Blogs are an easy way of communicating the stories you will find on placement, as well as a good way of updating those back home on what you are doing. You can use your blog in many different ways, and incorporate different elements into it, including the interviews, photos and films you are collecting. This section will show how to set up your blog and then how to increase your audience.

How to: Write a good blog and maximise your readership

Think about

Step 1: Set up your blog ►

- Choose a platform to host your blog – some common ones are Tumblr, Wordpress, Weebly and Blogger.
- Customise your site with a theme, images and a title, and add some information about yourself.
- Think about changing your blog settings so you can view and approve comments on your blog.

Step 2: Set up your blog ►

- Ask the questions: Who do I want to reach? What do I want to say? What do I want to achieve? And why/impact?
- Remember that you are aiming to highlight issues, call for action and support, and to change perspectives - not just to inform people back home of what you are doing.
- Recap on the 'what makes a good story' section. Your blog should communicate the reality of life in community and prioritise first-person perspectives.
- In addition, a blog is more personal than a news article – so think about why you chose this issue, what has inspired you in community, what is your opinion on the topic?
- Ensure that the story you choose for your blog will not put community members or yourself at risk.

Step 3: Write your blog ►

- Keep it short – no more than 600 words per blog post.
- Make it personal – what's your opinion on the topic? What is a local person's opinion on the topic?
- Use photos – one or two per post.
- Stick to one subject per post.

Step 4: Go viral – getting more people to read your blog ►

- Publicise the link to your blog – on social media, your email signature etc.
- Ask your organisation to promote it.
- Send it to organizations and individuals working on similar topics. Ask them to promote it.
- Share it with work colleagues, friends and community members.
- Add social media sharing options to your blog.
- Write concise, catchy headlines that people will want to share.
- Search engine optimisation: use 'keywords' (also called 'tags' and 'labels') to help readers find key parts in your blog, and ensure your blog is captured by search engines.
- Comment on other blogs (for example the Guardian 'poverty matters' blog) and leave a link to your own.
- Monitor your site traffic. If a post gains lots of page views, consider doing more of the same. Use Google Analytics or your blog platform's analytics.
- Engage with your readers. If they comment on your blog respond to them.





Reflect

Read the example blog below. Think about what makes a blog different to an article. Highlight the elements you think makes this blog effective in meeting the objectives set out above. Is there anything that makes it less effective?

It's time for a change

It's time for change

It's time for new beginnings

It's time for a shift in power, a shift in rights

Its time everyone, and I mean EVERYONE, was heard

They play a key role in the economic growth and development of this society, yet they have no rights over their money or land

They form a large part of the population, yet their views are a mere whisper to many, like a silenced majority

They want change, new beginnings, a shift in power

They're gaining a voice, a strong, powerful voice that is growing by the day

They're galvanising, uniting together in solidarity, as a coalition with one voice

They won't be silenced, they will be heard, they will be seen...

The women and youth of Tanzania.

Read more from Louise Jenkins here: [Search for: msjenko.tumblr.com](http://msjenko.tumblr.com)



Explore

Search the internet for other blogs about your community/host country. Exchange links with fellow volunteers.

You could also explore blogs written by other volunteers. Here is a selection of great blogs from volunteers on placements around the world:

Liv, volunteering for Restless Development in Zambia, uses the theme of children's goals for the future to write her blog. She uses photos and examples of what they write to structure her blog. [Search for: live in Zambia wordpress or http://bit.ly/16OF7yd](http://bit.ly/16OF7yd)

Kate Turner, volunteering for VSO in Rwanda, uses her blog to highlight work on disability in Rwanda and uses this blog to highlight a call to action she makes on Twitter. [Search for: Kate Turner wordpress Rwanda invitation or http://bit.ly/17zDP8O](http://bit.ly/17zDP8O)



Practice

Write a test blog before you publish anything on the web. Ask fellow volunteers and/or your work colleagues to read it and give you feedback. Alternatively email it to friends and family back home to ask for their feedback. You can use the example below to set this up.

Blog template:

Writing a blog about an issue that's being faced in your placement community

- Introduce someone from your community who's been affected by the issue
- "Quote from the individual who has been affected by the issue"
- PHOTO
- The bigger picture – describe the problem, who it affects and why it matters. If possible include statistics
- summarising how prevalent the problem is amongst other people in the community or country.
- Your personal experience of the issue – help your UK readers to understand it by drawing parallels with
- issues experienced in the UK
- "Another quote from an individual, perhaps a local volunteer or NGO worker, saying what they think is
- needed to address the issue"
- Your personal opinion about the solution and what would be required to get this solution up and running
- Call to action to the reader (this could simply be an invitation to share the blog or a link to a relevant
- section of a charities' campaigns page so the reader can get more information)



Check List

You are ready to set up your blog, make sure you...

- Research the different blogging platforms and choose which one is best for you.
- Read the information available on your chosen platform about how to set up a blog.
- Read the other sections of this toolkit on finding a good story, and how to gather content such as photos and film.



Do!

Aim to write a blog entry every few weeks. Use your blog to share photos, films and excerpts from interviews. In your blog you could cover:

- An issue from the community and how to take action. “How can your shopping shape the lives of these Malawi farmers’ families?”
- The link between a local issue and wider global debates. “Half the people in this Ugandan village are unemployed – and here’s how the UK must help”
- The impact of your project on the community. “You can’t catch AIDS from touching them?’ – how the fight against myths and prejudice is being won”
- An interesting event or someone’s life story. “Moses: Orphan, practical joker, TB survivor, Arsenal supporter”

Sharing your stories

The aim of collecting and sharing stories from your placement is to influence the way in which development is perceived in the UK, and to amplify the voices of those living in poverty. You might choose to use your stories to generally show positive impacts of development, or you may choose them to highlight a particular issue and advocate for positive change.

How to: Get your stories heard

This chapter will help you to identify, capture and share the stories that you have encountered during your placement. By working through this chapter you will bring each step in the process together, and reflect on impact you could have.



Identify, capture and share

Identify

- Look at the stories you have collected.
- Identify the issues those stories highlight.
- Collect further information and research the highlighted issues.
- Make links between local issues and national and global policy or campaigns.
- Write objectives for how you can use this story to bring about change.

Capture

- Collect one story in several different ways – take a series of photos, record vox pops from community members and fellow volunteers, write a blog, interview community members and volunteers who are taking action for change
- Think about innovative ways you can tell your story through these different mediums
- Think about which mediums will be most effective for sharing your story

Share

- Share your story through social media.
- Share your story through local and national media.
- Identify possible partnerships and campaigns that address your issue. Share your stories with them and take part in campaign actions.
- Share your story with decision-makers, such as your local MP, and ask for positive change.

Other resources: The VSO participatory advocacy toolkit provides some good examples of how to use stories and examples from your placements to plan effective advocacy actions. **Search for:** [vso international Images advocacy toolkit or http://bit.ly/17zDAKQ](http://bit.ly/17zDAKQ)

For example: Restless Development volunteer William Shankley chose to discuss the issue of Chhaupadi⁵ in Western Nepal.

At the local level William was very impressed by his host mother's abilities. He realized that the practice of chhaupadi was in stark contradiction to this and started researching the issue by looking at Nepali national legislation and the global post-2015 agenda.

He built a story by describing personal impressions, combined with research by academics and NGOs. He wrote his story in a blog post format.

William shared his blog on youthpolicy.org.

Search for: [Youthpolicy gender equality west Nepal or http://bit.ly/HrHrQh](http://bit.ly/HrHrQh)

For example: VSO used a series of photos to tell the story of women's participation in politics in Cameroon.

Through their work in Cameroon, VSO identified women's participation in Politics as a key topic

Photographs were taken that demonstrate the messages which VSO wants to share, of women looking strong and active. By adding a few sentences to the picture the women's political behaviour is further described and contrasted to national issues.

The photos appeared in the Guardian online.

Search for: [guardian Women politics Cameroon pictures or http://bit.ly/16OELaV](http://bit.ly/16OELaV)

For example: Restless Development volunteer Katie Nichols joined with the VSO women in Power campaign.

Katie's experiences in rural Zambia gave her the opportunity to meet women overcoming barriers.

Katie took onboard all the different stories she had heard and upon returning to the UK went to meet her local MP as part of a Women on Power campaign event, in order to discuss women's empowerment.

Katie then shared the issue of women's empowerment and the interaction with her local MP with the press. You can read her article here:

Search for: [Bromsgrove MP women's rights or http://bit.ly/19V7tF4](http://bit.ly/19V7tF4)

Other resources: The Restless Development 'Action at Home' toolkit gives a good overview of different actions you can take to put your stories to use. **Go to** <http://www.restlessdevelopment.org/learning> and search in 'Action at Home' for the 'Action at Home Toolkit' in the 'Resources and Toolkits' section.

5 Chhaupadi is the practice of keeping a woman/girl in isolation during menstruation.



Reflect

Discuss, or think about, what has been most inspirational about your project. With fellow volunteers or individually create a mind map of those inspirations and how they connect to global issues



Explore

Discuss or think about what changes your project has inspired you to make, and how stories will help you to do that. Brainstorm:

- What issues have been identified.
- What stories you have collected.
- What ways you can share them.
- What calls to action you will make based on your stories.
- Are there any ways you can work with other volunteers to do this?



Practice

Look at the example tweet below. There are many different ways to share stories, and good story doesn't have to be long – you can promote your story in a tweet or a picture. Summarise a story you have collected in 140 characters or less (the length of a tweet), and share it on social media.

For example [search for: JanevanCura VSO Women Power status or bit.ly/HhhouU](#)



Final check List

Bringing it all together:

- Where possible, include community members in every stage of identifying, capturing and sharing their stories.
- Collect stories throughout your placement. Keep a list/database of the relevant information and add to it regularly.
- Use different media to collect stories – pictures, films, audio and text.
- If possible, make the link between the stories you collect to events and issues being discussed at global level.
- Ensure you are accurately showing community realities.
- Follow the relevant ethical guidelines, such as informed consent and child protection considerations.
- Consider your safety and the safety of the community the story is from.
- Share the stories you collect with the local community .
- Encourage the community to participate – invite people you know to write something for your blog, learn skills such as filming and photography together and work together to collect the stories.
- Create a clear action plan for how and when to communicate the stories back in the UK.



Do!

Stories that reflect the reality of life in developing communities around the world are powerful resources for change. Use the stories you have collected through your placement, and the skills you have learnt for sharing those stories to create change. Write an action plan by following the steps in the 'how to' section.

Safety and consent

Gaining informed consent

Informed consent means consent given with full knowledge of the risks involved, probable consequences, and the alternatives.

Informed consent can be given in verbal form and written. Where possible, it would be best to gain written consent for all interviews; it is particularly important when photos and film footage are used, and when you intend to publish quotes or an individual's image.

If in doubt always use the consent form which is in the back of this toolkit. It is important to ensure the individual fully understands the content of the form and how the information will be used.

Security and sensitivity

Please be sensitive to the security of your interviewees. Consider:

- If the interview was to become public and friends and family or community were to see the story, what would the implications be?
- Could the story pose a risk to their safety, either from police or government?
- Social consequences (e.g. Could the story create stigma if their community, friends or family were to find out about their circumstances without knowing the context?).

In cases where there is a clear safety risk you can ensure that the interviewee's identity is kept anonymous.

Please be aware of your responsibility through data protection guidelines to keep a case study subject's details secure. Always ask permission before you share someone's contact details with a journalist or any another party, with the exception of your placement organisation. Again if in doubt always use the consent form, as it enables stories, images and film to be used in the media and for marketing and fundraising. It is best practice to check with the interviewee where further contact is needed.



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This toolkit was written by Katy Chadwick, on behalf of Restless Development and VSO. It is based on content from the 'Voices for development pre-departure online training course'.

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HOW TO...



This guide will enable you to identify stories to collect whilst on placement, and help you to share them through photographs, blogging and video. You can also use this guide to share your skills with the local community, local volunteers or colleagues in your workplace and engage them in the development of the stories you are sharing.



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