

TRUTH-TELLING THROUGH DIGITAL NARRATIVES

Technical Toolkit on Creating
Digital Narratives



GIJTR

Global Initiative for Justice
Truth & Reconciliation

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION OF SITES OF CONSCIENCE

The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC or the Coalition) is a global network of museums, historic sites, and grassroots initiatives dedicated to building a more just and peaceful future through engaging communities in remembering specific struggles for human rights and addressing their modern repercussions. Founded in 1999, the Coalition now includes more than 300 Sites of Conscience members in 65 countries. The Coalition supports these members through seven regional networks that encourage collaboration and international exchange of knowledge and best practices. The Global Initiative for Justice, Truth & Reconciliation (GIJTR) is a flagship program of the Coalition.



International Coalition of
SITES of CONSCIENCE

Learn more at www.sitesofconscience.org.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Learn more about GIJTR at
www.gijtr.org

ABOUT THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR JUSTICE, TRUTH, AND RECONCILIATION

Around the world, there are increasing calls for justice, truth, and reconciliation in countries where legacies of gross human rights violations cast a shadow on transitions from repressive regimes to participatory and democratic forms of governance. To meet this need, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC or the Coalition) launched the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth, and Reconciliation (GIJTR) in August 2014. GIJTR seeks to address new challenges in countries in conflict or transition that are struggling with legacies of or ongoing gross human rights abuses. The Coalition leads GIJTR, which includes eight other organizational partners: American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative, United States; Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR), Indonesia; The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV), South Africa; Documentation Center of Cambodia, Cambodia; Due Process of Law Foundation, United States; Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala, Guatemala; Humanitarian Law Center (HLC), Serbia; and Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG), United States. In addition to leveraging the expertise of GIJTR members, the Coalition taps into the knowledge and longstanding community connections of its 300-plus members in 65 countries to strengthen and broaden GIJTR's work.

GIJTR partners, along with members of the Coalition, develop and implement a range of rapid-response and high-impact program activities, using both restorative and retributive approaches to justice and accountability for gross human rights violations. The expertise of the organizations under GIJTR includes the following:

- Truth-telling, reconciliation, memorialization, and other forms of historical memory
- Documenting human rights abuses for transitional justice purposes
- Forensic analysis and other efforts related to missing and disappeared persons
- Victims' advocacy, such as improving access to justice, psychosocial support, and trauma mitigation activities
- Providing technical assistance to and building the capacity of civil society activists and organizations to promote and engage in transitional justice processes
- Reparative justice initiatives
- Ensuring gender justice in all these processes

To date, GIJTR has led civil society actors in multiple countries in the development and implementation of documentation and truth-telling projects; undertaken assessments of the memorialization, documentation, and psychosocial support capacities of local organizations; and provided survivors in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa regions with training, support, and opportunities to participate in the design and implementation of community-driven transitional justice approaches. Given the diversity of experience and skills among GIJTR partners and Coalition network members, the program offers post-conflict countries and countries emerging from repressive regimes a unique opportunity to address transitional justice needs in a timely manner, while promoting local participation and building the capacity of community partners. Since its founding, GIJTR has engaged with people from 78 countries, worked with 801 civil society organizations (CSOs), and has supported 588 community-driven projects and the collection of more than 8,800 testimonies of human rights violations.

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WHAT IS DIGITAL TRUTH-TELLING?

In the 21st century, the intersection of technology and human rights has given rise to a powerful tool: digital truth-telling. As the world grapples with ongoing human rights issues, the digital realm has become a pivotal space for exposing, documenting, and advocating for justice. Digital truth-telling refers to conveying information honestly, accurately, and transparently in online spaces. One of the most significant contributions of digital truth-telling is its role in documenting human rights abuses. In conflict zones and repressive regimes, individuals armed with smartphones and social media accounts become frontline witnesses, capturing images, videos, and testimonials that provide irrefutable evidence of atrocities. These digital records serve as a powerful testament to victims' harsh realities and a catalyst for global awareness and action.

Digital truth-telling facilitates crowdsourced investigations, empowering online communities to collaborate in scrutinizing and analyzing evidence of human rights abuses. Citizen journalists and investigative groups leverage open-source intelligence and digital forensics to comprehensively understand events. This collective approach holds perpetrators accountable and challenges official narratives, fostering a more nuanced and accurate representation of the truth.

The emergence of digital truth-telling intersects with innovative methods employed by CSOs in addressing human rights issues. CSOs increasingly



utilize digital narratives to present detailed stories about historical events, incorporating various multimedia elements to enrich the narrative experience. These narratives serve not only as a tool for public education but also as a platform for exposing war crimes and human rights violations. By weaving together witness testimonies, oral history videos, documents, and databases, digital narratives curated by CSOs provide a well-documented and factual basis for understanding complex events. This approach empowers critical segments of society to challenge mainstream narratives, especially in regions where truth-telling contradicts governmental policies and media interests. In this context, digital truth-telling aligns with the collective efforts of online communities engaged in crowdsourced investigations, as both work to unveil the truth and challenge prevailing narratives, contributing to a more nuanced and accurate representation of historical realities.

Digital narratives are one-page web presentations comprising text and various multimedia materials, allowing readers to read the story about specific historical events and explore them in detail. Depending on the topic and available

materials, readers can listen to witness testimonies, watch oral history videos, search through documents, and explore databases and links to other sources.

By publishing digital narratives, CSOs create their media, enabling them to contribute to public knowledge about war crimes and human rights violations. They will be based on well-documented facts and findings, tackling public discourse and empowering critical parts of society to take the lead in alternative ways of dealing with the past and reconciliation processes. This is especially important in societies where truth-telling counters mainstream government policies and media interests.

Digital narratives should use a language and format that appeals to broad population segments. However, by adding all sources of information and providing additional documentation and materials, digital narratives enable more profound research of the topic, making them valuable resources for journalists and researchers.



Incorporating victim and witness statements within digital narratives will also give them a platform to have their voices heard. Combined with other materials published within digital narratives, that segment can complete the overall perspective of the event and provide a proper address by either government or society.

As long as the legacies of massive human rights violations remain unaddressed, the prospects for accountability for perpetrators, recognition of victims, and reconciliation efforts cannot be achieved.

The politics and contention surrounding memory cultures and memorialization initiatives in post-conflict societies cannot be overstated; the question that is grappled with is, Whose truth do we tell? Whose story will drive the narrative for history lessons, museum exhibits, and cultural identity? Findings and facts established by the courts or other state institutions tend to be discarded as “imposed justice,” especially if it is a “state” that commissioned such crimes. As a result, the broader population remains in a state of ignorance regarding systematic human rights violations. In the absence of formal recognition of atrocities or human rights violations, human rights defenders and civil society pursue alternative truth-telling mechanisms, namely, building collective narratives through digital spaces.

As the world continues to move deeper into online spaces, digital narratives have become innovative, accessible, and engaging formats to confront the dominant narratives, educate broader society, and facilitate a critical understanding of the periods of the violent past. These narratives establish globally accessible platforms for dealing with systematic human rights violations and ensure that human rights documentation actively informs the public’s understanding of the past rather than remaining tucked away in official state archives or museums. To that end, the digital narratives counter the divisive public discourses that ignore the systematic nature of human rights violations and push victims’ perspectives to the margins.

What Will You Learn from the Technical Toolkit?

This toolkit aims to introduce digital narratives as tools for digital truth-telling and provide instructional guidance for CSOs and other actors dealing with transitional justice.

It is written primarily for CSOs, human rights defenders, journalists, and activists who seek to challenge dominant narratives in their communities and provide space for marginalized and vulnerable communities often omitted from official historical accounts of violence.

This toolkit will provide them with an alternative way to tackle public discourse and empower critical parts of society to take the lead in dealing with the past and reconciliation processes.

DIGITAL NARRATIVES: A UNIQUE TRUTH- TELLING APPROACH

Part 1. Material Collection and Structure

Setting the Topic of a Digital Narrative

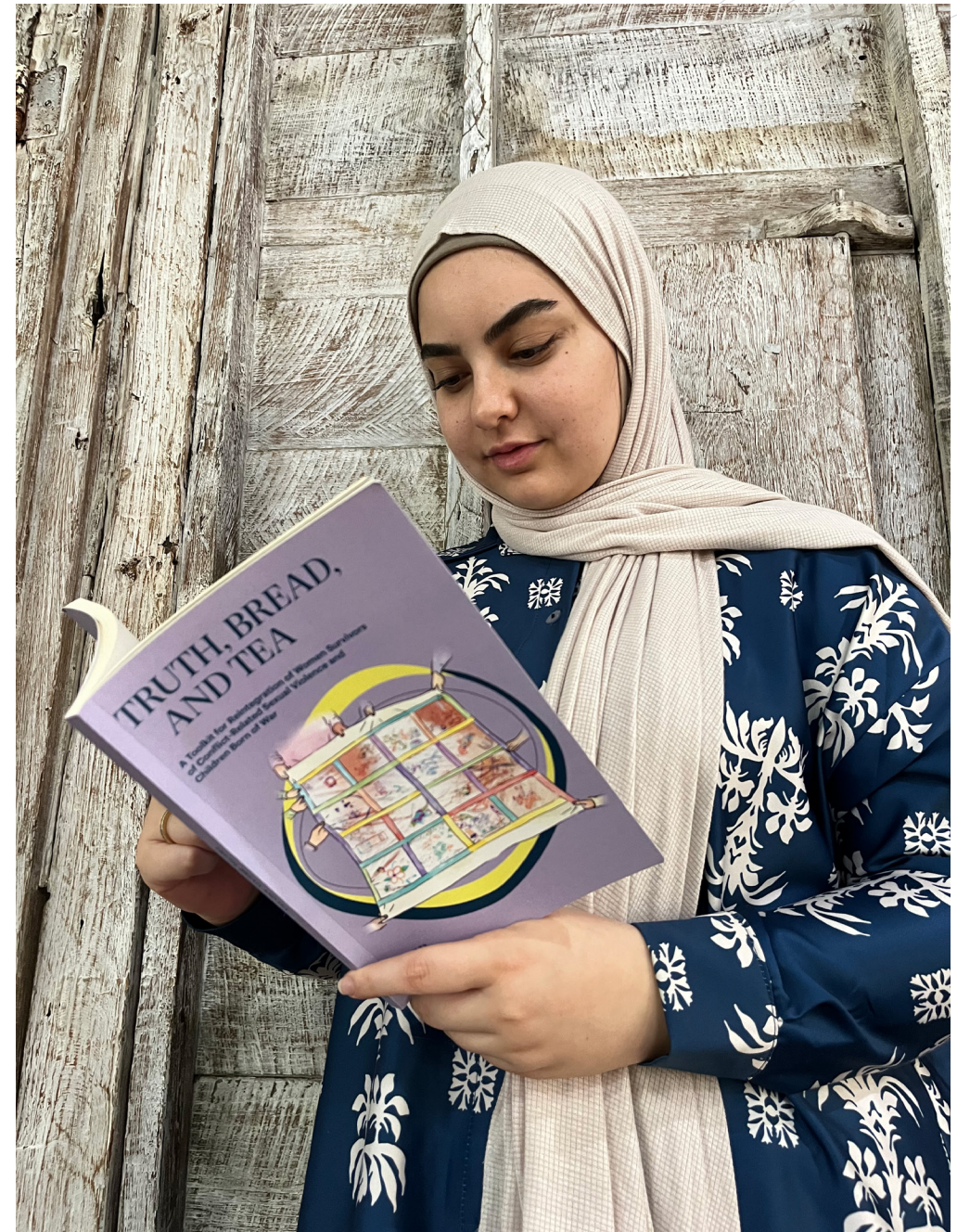
Digital narratives are complex digital publications based on broad research and documentation resources, demanding extensive expertise from creators. Therefore, when choosing a topic for a digital narrative, it is advised to start by accessing current organizational resources and capacities.

Organizations should have clear goals they want to achieve with such publication. Such goals can vary, including raising neglected topics in public, providing additional research findings, countering public narrative, enabling researchers and journalists in their work, etc.

Having clear goals in mind will give organizations a better idea of the target audience for the digital narrative and how to frame the topic and contents accordingly.

Existing publications and materials on specific topics should be the next important factor when deciding on a digital narrative, which works best when it incorporates results of previous work, giving a comprehensive overview and resources for further research.

Most digital narratives focus on specific incidents of war crimes or mass human rights violations. They can also examine and present more connected cases with the same pattern, time frame, or circumstances, with the same victims or perpetrators.



The topic can also be set narrowly to provide an in-depth approach to an issue from a specific point of view, such as the judicial aspect, analyses of media perspective, critical memory culture, etc.

Defining the Structure of a Digital Narrative

The structure of a digital narrative depends on the topic and existing materials. However, narratives have a clear idea in the planning phase of the structure that will guide future development processes.

Once the topic of the digital narrative is set, the outline of a mainline story should be defined, with key points of the content. After that, a selection of materials can be made, including which materials need to be included to support the story and what kind of layout will provide the best experience for the reader to follow the mainline story and be able to explore more.

The introduction of a digital narrative can serve several functions. It can provide a short overview of the content presented in a digital narrative or an overview of the context that the digital narrative addresses to better understand the topic. It can also serve a more technical purpose, such as providing a disclaimer or a statement presenting the point of view that the creator holds or a description of the purpose of the digital narrative. It is crucial to remember that the introduction should attract the readers, leading them into the digital narrative and the rest of the content. Sometimes, that is achieved with simple choices, such as using the quotes of victims or presenting the most relevant facts.

The rest of the content within the digital narrative should be planned as segments that serve the purpose of the individual chapters. Each segment should present part of the story, and its contents and sequence can be designed differently. The segments can be outlined as events in chronological order, information from different sources, an overview of the topic through other instruments of transitional justice, individual stories connected by the same topic, etc. Not all segments will have the same length or be equally informative. They can be presented differently using design and adding additional materials to emphasize essential information and keep readers' attention.

The conclusion at the end of a digital narrative can be general or focus on aspects of the story that should be highlighted. For instance, a conclusion could be the judgment of the case or the current progress of trials, memorialization overview, instructions for additional research, or links to relevant documents. The conclusion can also serve the purpose of calling to action, providing information



for victims, focusing on activities of the organization, or giving recommendations.

Based on the established structure, the choice of materials that will be included will be more precise, as will their position within the mainline story.

The digital narrative *Stolen Childhoods*, created by Hafiza Merkezi, focuses on impunity and memory. A timeline of significant political events that provide context is joined by the map that indicates the number of children killed in different regions, followed by stories of four children containing information about their lives, the occurrence of death, and images of them and their belongings. Information on legal proceedings is accompanied by a video of legal experts.¹

The digital narrative *Serbia's Role in the War, a Jigsaw Puzzle Through Court Verdicts*, created by BIRN, is focused on the consequences of verdicts on characterizing the conflict. It also contains victims' stories, in video form, with their opinions regarding the trial outcomes. The central content of the digital narrative is court documents and key conclusions from the verdicts, accompanied by image and video evidence. After opinions on legal matters, the digital narrative ends with the opinions of victims.²

Research and Documentation Needed for the Preparation of the Digital Narratives

For most organizations, relying on their archive is the first step in developing a digital narrative. As mentioned, having previous experience with the topic is crucial to developing the digital narrative. Since most digital narratives are initiated based on limited documentation, further research might be necessary.

The research will gather information supported by relevant documentation needed to write a mainline story for the digital narrative and other materials that should be used.



However, that doesn't mean all gathered materials should be part of the digital narrative. The selection of materials should be focused on validating the mainline story and enabling further research beyond it, as well as making the digital narrative more interactive. That means every factual statement in the mainline story should have supporting documentation as part of the digital narrative, and if possible, some aspects should be illustrated by multimedia.

Types of Materials That Can Be Used for the Digital Narratives

The advantage of digital narratives is the opportunity to present a wide range of relevant materials to the story. Compared with more conventional publications, it doesn't have limitations such as materials types and formats, even though they might need modifications to better fit within a digital narrative.

Court Documents

When available, court documents are particularly important for developing digital narratives. They can be in the form of indictments, verdicts, transcripts, video or audio recordings from case hearings, or any relevant evidence used in the case or specific information about the case.

Digital narratives can provide information about completed proceedings (no matter their outcome), court-approved facts of a particular event, ongoing proceedings with information about their progress, and/or indictments and criminal charges yet to be prosecuted.

Victims and Witness Statements

Although they are mostly part of existing documentation, victims and witness statements are specific due to the sensitivity of the information they might contain. With that in mind, statements should be used cautiously; certain parts can be omitted, or the whole statement can be anonymized.

Before engaging with victims and witnesses, it is crucially important to consider all the risks and develop security measures. This includes the safety of victims and witnesses who choose to speak to CSOs, translators, those interviewing the victims and witnesses themselves, and anyone else involved in the interview process. Risks may include both physical threats as well as potential re-traumatization of the victims and witnesses. As a rule of thumb, CSOs should “plan for the worst, hope for the best.”

Interviewers must be aware of the key principles for engaging with victims and witnesses, such as do no harm, informed consent, confidentiality, recognizing and preventing the risk of re-traumatization, managing the victims’ or witnesses’ expectations, and being aware of potential professional assistance requirements for interviewees.

This means that anyone engaging with victims and witnesses should always:

- obtain informed consent from the victims and witnesses;
- protect the identity of the victims and witnesses, as well as the information collected;



- act with respect, professionalism, and empathy toward others, always with their safety and security in mind;
- watch for signs of emotional distress or re-traumatization and stop, pause, or postpone the interview as required; and
- offer professional psychosocial support to victims and witnesses, sharing their stories during and after the process.

It is advisable not to collect information from particularly vulnerable persons, such as children showing signs of psychological trauma.

During the interviews, the interviewers are recommended to follow a structure and principles such as the following:

- Describe the project for which the victim or witness is approached, including how the stories will be used
- Obtain informed consent
- Introduce everyone present and their roles and address concerns
- Discuss how long the interview will be and advise that the victims or witnesses can always ask for breaks or to stop at any time
- Give the interviewee the power to agree or disagree, answer or not answer any questions, ask questions to the interviewer, or have information repeated
- Once the interview has begun, interviewers should not interrupt interviewees' stories
- Interviewers should not ask leading questions and encourage the interviewees to lead the interviews wherever they would like them to go
- At the close of the interviews, ask the interviewees if they have any questions and reconfirm informed consent

Media Articles

Certain media articles can complement the content of digital narratives. They can be used as a source of information, to support existing research, or to improve interactivity.



If used as a source, data from the articles should be supported by other, more reliable documentation, and it is necessary to indicate the original sources or, if relevant, provide a disclaimer.

Media articles can be an especially relevant source to strengthen interactivity and illustrate certain parts of a story. This is especially relevant for images and videos.

Other Sources

Publications by other organizations or any other type of material can also be used in the digital narrative. Examples include statistical data published by relevant government bodies, publications and statements by victims' associations, academic research papers, maps, photographs from various sources, etc.

These publications should be used so that crucial information is extracted and the source is cited correctly, and, if possible, linked to enable further research.



Part 2. WordPress Introduction

WordPress is a web content management system that is one of the most used and recommended for publishing digital narratives. Due to the universality of its use, various resources for its editing are available even for inexperienced users, making it a practical tool for CSOs that cannot afford professional services and are creating digital narratives by themselves.

Steps for Using the WordPress Template

1. WordPress should be installed once a website's domain and hosting are set.
2. On the **Dashboard**, there is an option to install a **Theme**. **Theme Chaplin** should be installed and activated.
3. In the **Resource Package folder**, a file called **wordpress_template** should be downloaded.
4. Under **Tools**, there is an **Import** option on the **Dashboard**, and that file should be uploaded there.
5. In **Plugins**, if there is one called **Classic editor**, it should be deactivated; if there is not, everything is fine.
6. In **Appearance**, option **A static page** should be chosen on homepage settings, and a page called **Use this template to create your narrative** should be selected.

After completing all these steps, the website can be edited on **Pages**, text, and materials added. Use the template provided in the **Resource Package** to create your narrative following instructions within its content.

[Resource Package is available here.](#) (need URL)

Part 3. Technical Development of the Digital Narrative

(Steps and Technical Details)

Writing the Story of a Digital Narrative

Digital narratives are interactive online publications consisting of various materials. What makes them a whole is a mainline story that serves two purposes. The first is to present the basic overview, providing context, the most essential facts, and the conclusion. Best practices indicate that readers should be able to create a complete picture of the topic by reading the text as base content. The second purpose of the mainline story is to tie all the content together in a consistent digital narrative.

Text is the most recommended format of the mainline story. However, depending on the availability of other materials and the creator's preference, certain text parts can be presented in different formats, such as video, audio, graphics, illustrations, etc. In that case, indicating that those elements are parts of the mainline story and not additional materials is crucial. Writing the whole text before transforming parts in other formats will ensure consistency.

The structure of the mainline story will depend on the planned structure of the narrative as a whole. Therefore, this creation step is closely connected to proper planning and assessment of resources and materials. It is strongly recommended that the text be planned with clear chapters in mind, each providing rounded information that follows an easy-to-follow flow.

The language and tone of the text will depend on the targeted audience for the digital narrative. It is generally recommended to make digital narratives appealing to the general public, using simple language and providing explanations for terms and phrases that might be unfamiliar, such as with legal matters. Depending on the context, it is recommended to translate the digital narrative to multiple local languages, especially if victims are from ethnic or language minority groups. If one of the goals of the digital narrative is to attract international attention to the issue, it should be translated into English, French, Spanish, Arabic, and/or other relevant languages.

Selection of Materials

Research for the digital narrative will result in gathering various documents, pictures, images, infographics, publications, videos, audio recordings, media articles, court records, etc. The opportunity to present all the findings to the public often creates an urge to make all gathered materials available on the website. However, digital narratives differ from other formats such as databases or archives because all materials are processed to give readers a straightforward way to get informed. All gathered materials will provide relevant information for writing a mainline story. Still, not all of them should be added in their original form as a part of a digital narrative.

The selection of materials will focus on achieving several main goals. They must be relevant to strengthen the story, prove presented facts and findings, improve interactivity, and illustrate the story.

Materials that strengthen the story can be documents that contain facts mentioned in the text, such as existing publications from the CSOs, court documents, reliable media articles, etc. They can also be victim or witness



statements in any format. Including those documents in the digital narrative will enable verification of the facts, essential to establishing the digital narrative as a well-researched truth-telling tool.

It is important to include variations in the materials in order to improve interactivity. Providing just textual documents will overpower the narrative. Graphics, images, and videos will make digital narratives more appealing to the general public. Specific images will not provide facts but can be relevant to illustrate the context of the topic. Those can be images of locations, historical or current, or where particular events occurred or people were mentioned, such as victims, witnesses or perpetrators, monuments, maps, etc.

All additional materials should be connected to the mainline story in some way. For example, certain documents can be relevant to the research or indirectly contribute to the mainline story. And even if the connection is challenging to establish, they should be included in the digital narrative.

When choosing the materials, creators must consider safety and ethics. Personal information of victims or witnesses should be used carefully, and documents containing those should be omitted or redacted. In some cases, it is recommended not to publish the identity of specific persons at all. Many CSOs will use documents from their archives that are collected for the purpose of documenting war crimes or mass violations of human rights or initiating trials, and making them part of a digital narrative would be the first time such documents would be publicized. However, those documents often contain sensitive information that should not be published. Graphic images can lead to ethical questions and require special considerations.

Editing of the Digital Narratives

After materials have been selected and made to follow the mainline text, they need to be appropriately formatted for the digital narrative. Some can simply be added in their integral form, but considering the need to provide the best reader experience, many others must be edited.

Materials used for digital narratives vary and can include documents, videos, images, and audio materials. The materials selected depend on what an

organization currently has or can be repurposed for digital consumption. Whatever the format, each source should enhance the story you are trying to tell.

Documents can be added as a whole or specific parts relevant to the mainline story can be selected. Best practice recommends that all information cited in mainline stories from certain documents have particular markings in the form of a footnote, hyperlink, or list of documents in a specific page segment.

Some documents containing key information can also be added as an image, illustrating their importance and making them more available to readers.

It is essential to state the source and date of all documents used whenever possible.

Videos

Videos bring essential aspects of interactivity to the digital narrative, especially those that contain victim or witness statements. Raw videos of statements tend to be long, providing a broader perspective of a victim's or witness's experience, and cannot be used in their unedited form.

Those videos included in the digital narrative should follow the mainline story. It is recommended that they be edited to complement the segment they are part of. For example, suppose a victim's statement about different aspects of an event is presented in various segments within the digital narrative. In that case, it will work best to edit the statement in several shorter videos and add them in relevant segments. On the other hand, if several victims talk about the same aspect of an event, providing multiple perspectives or additional information, those statements should be edited as one video positioned in a relevant segment.

Videos of victims can be crucial to support the facts presented in the text. However, if other materials already support those facts, they can serve different purposes. Sometimes, videos of victims can provide a human perspective to a story. In that case, they should be edited to include parts concerning the impact on their life, emotions, or expectations.

Keeping in mind the sensitive nature of digital narratives, there are cases where videos should protect the identity of the speakers. They can be filmed such that

the speaker's face is not visible and the surroundings are not recognizable; or they can be edited to blur the face or alter the voice.

Videos produced by other parties, such as media outlets or documentaries, can also be used. In that case, it is important to obtain the license for using or editing those and clearly state the source.

Images

It is only possible to visualize any digital publication with images. Proper selection of photos can contribute to both supporting the facts presented and gaining a better understanding of the context, thereby creating a human perspective.

Images selected for a digital narrative can be used in various ways. One image can be used to create a visual identity of a digital narrative, serve as a background header image, and/or create social media posts. Also, different images can be used as background or illustrations of different segments, making solid distinctions between parts of the digital narrative.

As with other materials, some of the images must be edited in a manner that is necessary to preserve a person's identity. When pictures are taken for the sole purpose of digital narrative, they can show a person from the back, in a shadow, or in some other creative way that will be appropriate.

In general, most of the images must be edited for web use. That means the format and size must be appropriate to enable fast loading of a web page on various devices.

Images can also be edited to create a unified design of digital narrative. That can be achieved by using the same filter or adding the overlay of the same color to all images. This should be used cautiously, as editing images in this way can reduce visibility,

How to Anonymize Videos:

- Record the person speaking from the back, with or without altering their voice
- Blur the face of the person speaking, with or without altering their voice
- Use audio recording with illustration instead of the person's face



especially with images containing relevant evidence. If that creative decision is made, it is recommended to apply it to images that serve as illustrations and omit those with evidence.

Audio Materials

Editing audio recordings in terms of content is similar to video. It is important to appropriate the most essential parts and include them in relevant segments. Even though speakers are not visible in this case, voice alterations may be needed for safety concerns due to the possibility of voice recognition.

Audio recordings can also be turned into video formats. Depending on the resources available, they can be added over images, illustrations, or animation and inserted as videos to make them more appealing and interactive.



Design of the Digital Narrative

Using any platform to publish a digital narrative will inevitably require some design choices. Considering that this type of publication aims to make information more available to the public, it is recommended to put additional effort into the design and make it both as readable as possible in a technical sense and appealing to readers.

The design of a digital narrative should cover the basics. The front of the text should be simple, easy to read, and available on various platforms and devices to avoid any issues for the readers. Color palettes should be chosen to enable variations (when needed) but not to overwhelm overall aesthetics.

Some images or illustrations can provide a visual identity of a digital narrative. Using a well-known image in connection to the topic as a header or as a featured image, for example, can be beneficial to attract attention from readers.

Putting the Digital Narrative Together

Combining the prepared elements into a digital narrative that's ready for publication will require several iterations of publishing and testing. All the textual elements should be proofread, and all other materials should be optimized for the web.

After creating the draft, the first check should be oriented on content, reading through the mainline story and ensuring that all materials are correctly placed. It might be possible to recognize the need to make specific changes, such as a sequence in the text, the position of materials, or the need to omit or add something. It might be helpful to share drafts with colleagues or a small group of prospective readers to get their feedback.

After it is ensured that the content is correct, all technical functionalities should be tested. It is important to make sure that content loads on different platforms and devices and that all links work correctly.

Part 4. Information Security and Permissions to Use Information

Information Security

Information security is about protecting organizational assets from disruptive operations that could, for instance, modify sensitive data or release proprietary information. Information security goes beyond technical infrastructure and involves people, policies, and organizational procedures.

There are specific risks and vulnerabilities regarding the data and individuals from whom organizations obtain information to use for their digital narratives, including the following:

- The collection of information often relates to individuals who have suffered significant harm. In line with the “do no harm” principle, those collecting information from individuals are obligated to not jeopardize the health, safety, or well-being of the individuals they interact with during their collection activities.
- In particular, CSOs must protect the sensitive details that individuals provide. This requirement is not only an ethical obligation but also a legal one on CSOs subject to data protection regulations, such as the *General Data Protection Regulation* (GDPR) in force in the European Union.³

There are three types of basic information security controls:

1. Preventive controls

Preventive controls comprise measures to address weaknesses in information systems before a cybersecurity incident occurs.

2. Detective controls

These controls alert people within an organization of security breaches—including data and cybersecurity breaches—so staff can begin to address and mitigate the damage.

3. Corrective controls

These controls aim to reduce data loss and damage to information systems by, for instance, creating backup systems. Information systems can then be restored to their original working capacity as soon as possible after a breach.

Informed Consent

To use the information collected from individuals, CSOs must obtain their informed consent. Informed consent is an agreement to participate based on a complete understanding of the process and the potential benefits and adverse consequences of such participation.

Complete understanding includes comprehension of the following:

- The nature of the process
- Why the information is being sought
- How the information will be used and how long
- How the information will be stored, processed, and used, and by whom
- How the information will be protected
- Whom they can contact if they want to edit, review, or delete the data
- Participants’ right to refuse to participate
- The potential risks and benefits of participation
- That consent is given voluntarily without coercion by others

All individuals providing information that is used in a digital narrative must give their informed consent before any engagement with a CSO, including before being interviewed, being photographed, having their information recorded, or having their information and contact details shared with third parties or published online.

If, after you’ve completed the process of crafting your digital narrative, you have not covered all these aspects, especially concerning publishing the stories with individuals at the collection stage, you should return to those individuals to reaffirm their informed consent with your current purpose in mind.

Copyright and Intellectual Property Regulations

When using digital information, CSOs must ensure that they have a lawful basis for such use. For this, CSOs should consult their respective jurisdictions' copyright and intellectual property regulations. Note that these rules differ significantly across jurisdictions. Therefore, the CSOs must ensure that they are up to date with the specific regulations that apply in their states and do not use third-party intellectual property—such as purchasing a license or obtaining permission to use this information for the digital narrative—without a lawful basis.

When considering using publicly available media, CSOs need to ensure that it is not protected by copyright and consider contacting the owner of the media. Commonly, copyrighted material will be marked by a copyright sign. Notwithstanding ownership and terms of ownership, CSOs need to ensure that the original source is transparently acknowledged in the digital narrative.

Part 5. Publishing and Promotion of the Digital Narrative

Virtual Location of the Digital Narrative

Most digital narratives use a one-page format, with all contents distributed without additional pages opening. That format is both most appealing to the public and easy to navigate. It enables the reader to follow the mainline of the story or, through interactive elements, research specific aspects in-depth.

Since digital narratives are typically longer reads, they should also be presented on particular pages, distinguishing them from content published on standard organizational websites, such as news, press releases, and articles.

Therefore, it is suggested that digital narratives be posted on the domain or subdomain of the website used as the primary organization website, if possible.

Integration of the Digital Narrative with the Website

When considering a specific format of digital narrative, which is mainly presented as a publication independent from the main website, it is recommended that it be integrated with the CSOs' online presence.

Those can be done by providing links to the digital narrative on existing websites or creating banners. If the digital narrative has a distinct visual identity, banners can provide good recognition to the website's regular audience.

Links and banners to digital narratives should be on the website's main page, posts, and pages relevant to the topic. For example, publishing press releases on the subject can provide an excellent opportunity to mention and link digital narratives and add value. It can serve journalists as a source of information and relevant documents.

Social Media Campaign

Using social media to promote digital publications can quickly reach a broader public, but results can depend on several factors. First is the current strength of social media accounts, not just in the number of followers but also in the reach and engagement of the audience. Also, using social media by targeted audiences in a local context can vary. Therefore, planning the campaign should start with an assessment.

Assessment should provide an overview of which targeted audiences use which social media platforms, the strength of existing accounts, and if there are resources to open accounts on new platforms or use paid advertising. After reaching a conclusion, content can be planned.

Digital narrative can be promoted as such, sharing information about its publication and a brief overview of its topic, contents, or conclusion. However, various elements and materials can also be transformed into social media posts to create a broader campaign.

A summary of the digital narrative can be shared on multiple social media with

direct links. It can be used as text, providing key information, facts, and findings, enriched with a citation, relevant document, or quote from victims. The exact text can be turned into a series of illustrations that can be shared as images, following the visual identity of digital narrative by using the same font and colors or other design elements. Another option is creating videos with the text as a slideshow, in which images and parts of videos can be integrated. The same summary can also be used to create an infographic to highlight key information.

Parts of digital narrative and materials can be used to develop specific social media posts that don't summarize the story, but rather just present excerpts that can generate interest and lead readers to visit adjoined links (e.g., an image of a document containing important information and a brief explanation, a picture of the victim, a quote from a statement, or basic information about what happened to the person). Videos used in digital narratives can be shared as a whole or in parts, edited in a format that a specific social media platform demands.

Those posts can be shared over a more extended period. New developments on the topic can be an opportunity to remind the public about digital narratives as well as anniversaries of events.

Media Promotion of the Digital Narrative

Traditional media such as radio, news outlets, and television should not be overlooked when seeking to promote your digital narrative. In many places, radio stations remain the most effective way to communicate with far-reaching and rural communities. A media assessment of what outlets would solicit the most engagement is strongly recommended.

Digital narrative press releases containing an overview of the topic and contents can be sent to relevant media outlets upon publication. These press releases can contain some of the materials used in the digital narrative, such as images, illustrations, and quotes from the victims. Digital narrative can also be used after publication. For example, when press releases relevant to the topic are sent, they can include a link to a digital narrative as a source of information for journalists.



The engagement of journalists is crucial in promoting a digital narrative because the information within your digital narrative is more than likely interconnected with several ongoing social causes and justice efforts. Engagement with the press through press conferences can help reach journalists in person, present digital narratives in more detail, and provide the opportunity to answer questions. The press can also be integral to validating and amplifying the stories embedded in your digital narrative for ongoing advocacy for vulnerable and marginalized communities.

When the media landscape doesn't enable these promotion methods, alternatives should be sought through smaller media outlets, often independently operated by local CSOs or international organizations working within your community. Even though their reach might be smaller, there is a chance that they will provide a path to some of the targeted audiences.

Public Events as Opportunities to Present Digital Narratives

Public events can be an important tool to bring the online presence of digital narratives closer to the everyday lives of the target audience, with previously mentioned press conferences being just one kind.

The presentation of a digital narrative can be held for victims' associations, professional networks, schools and universities, town hall meetings, and so on, which can be a good opportunity to discuss their issues further and introduce them to other CSO work.

For academics and researchers, presentations can focus on researching and documenting, getting them involved with the topic, or starting a debate about future actions that can be taken.

Public lectures on the topic can be held for students, youth, or any other group, informing them about issues and presenting digital narratives as a source of information.

Endnotes

- 1 The Digital narrative "Stolen Childhoods" can be visited here: <https://hakikatadalethafiza.org/en/project/stolen-childhoods>.
- 2 The Digital narrative "Serbia's Role in the War, a Jigsaw Puzzle Through Court Verdicts" can be visited here (in BHS language): <https://hakikatadalethafiza.org/en/project/stolen-childhoods>.
- 3 Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of April 27, 2016, on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).



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