



**The Storytelling Project:  
Scalable Monitoring of Development Initiatives  
Through Real-Time Community Feedback  
Funded by the Rockefeller Foundation  
www.GlobalGiving.org**

**The Problem:**

Rigorous impact evaluation of an intervention can take years to complete and often consumes 10-20% of a project's budget. This reality limits the number of interventions attempted. However, hundreds of local organizations intervene regularly to address problems in a less structured way. Many of these approaches are highly effective and yet their stories remain inaccessible to the field of workers who wish to discover what works.

**Solution:**

We are casting a wide net and gathering brief narratives about all community efforts that could potentially help others discriminate good ideas likely to succeed from bad ideas that have been tried repeatedly without success. We are also developing tools to simplify analysis of patterns in the tens of thousands of stories we are likely to receive in 2011 – tools that can provide every knowledge consumer in the development space with new perspectives on his or her own approach to solving complex social problems having multiple root causes. By crowd-sourcing both data collection and analysis, this system can be universally applicable, cost-effective, and scalable globally.

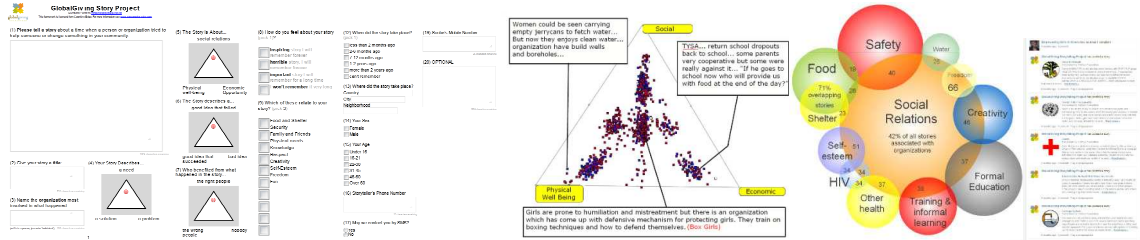
**How it works:**

1. **Building a scribe network:** GlobalGiving works with hundreds of partner organizations in Kenya and Uganda. We asked each organization to identify a dozen or so community members, whom we trained to be story scribes. About 10% of these invited organizations in 2010 have sourced scribes to GlobalGiving, and we are always eager to invite more organizations.
2. **Gathering stories:** Our 3 field staff train scribes and meet with them monthly to collect stories **about any community effort**. We provide scribes with [pre-printed questionnaires](#) that allow the storyteller to clarify essential aspects of his or her story. Scribes are trained to listen and write down what the storyteller says, and explain the questions.
3. **Reducing bias through incentives, social-mapping, and cross-narratives:** We employ a variety of “triangulation” techniques to ensure that the thousands of stories we’re collecting are free from manipulation.
  - a. **Incentives:** Scribes are paid 10 Kenyan shillings (or 300 Ugandan shillings) per story (minimum of 20 stories required). Scribes are asked to interview anyone in their community and collect exactly 2 stories per community member about two different organizations. This way, only half the feedback can be about any one organization.
  - b. **Social mapping:** We tag stories collected by any scribe about the same organization that sourced them to GlobalGiving as *self reports*. We also track who talks to whom and map out the social network of human relations. Incentives are tied to one’s identity, so people prefer to identify themselves correctly – essential for reliable social mapping. The map allows us to look for deeper patterns in stories.
  - c. **Cross-narratives:** The scribes that organizations source to us often collect stories about other organizations within our network. These “cross-narratives” don’t suffer from the “self report” bias inherent to internal reporting. Last year 5

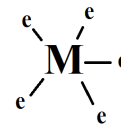
organizations sourced over 100 scribes, who collected over 2500 stories about 252 organizations in all.

4. **Completing feedback loops:** We scan and process 1000+ paper stories each month, and deliver these stories back to *all* organizations in the network. We also meet organizations to test analysis tools (like SenseMaker®), web-based tools. We may also hold community meetings where interest is high. We ask organizations to tell us what they are learning and how they prefer to receive this feedback. We will build better visualizations based on their feedback. We are also planning to experiment in SMS-based feedback to storytellers and community members themselves.

### Highlights: Shapshots of story form and analysis



**Evaluation** – This is a **shared monitoring tool** (which represents a large swath of the real world). By separating monitoring from evaluation, it facilitates multiple interpretations of shared data across organizations, leading to richer discussion of the underlying issues. (Diagram: One **M**onitoring system, many evaluations) It can also serve as a **hypothesis generating engine**, so that more expensive evaluations target the most critical factors. In its final form, GlobalGiving will facilitate sharing of these interpretations via Facebook groups linked to our website.



**Observer perspectives** – Thousands of stories gathered in an open-ended way can provide a **reality check** against any formal monitoring and evaluation system. Discrepancies can also reveal to organizations the inherent bias in their internal evaluations.

**Communication** - All of these stories are online and publicly available, so that any organization can link to them in their donor communications and funder reporting.

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#### Online write up of the 2010 pilot:

[www.globalgiving.org/story-tools/](http://www.globalgiving.org/story-tools/)

#### Details on methods and implementation:

<http://www.globalgiving.org/jcr-content/gg/landing-pages/story-tools/files/-story-real-book--2010.pdf>

**SenseMaker® information:** <http://www.sensemaker-suite.com/sensemaker.htm>