

## A Systematic African Storytelling Approach for Knowledge Mobilization



### Rationale, Theory, Or Goal of The Elements Essential to Storytelling

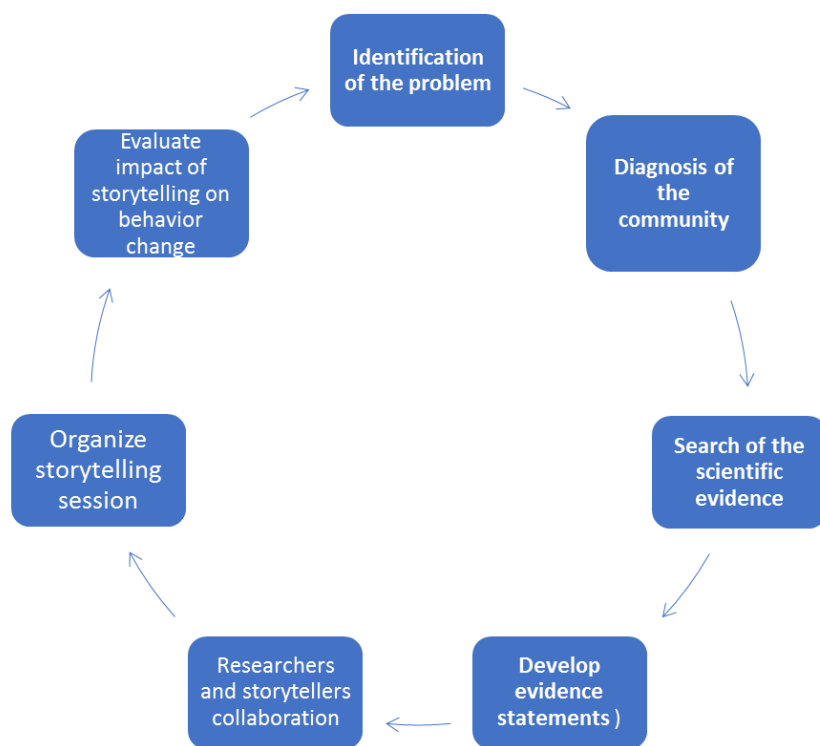
Despite the ever-growing body of research, the evidence ecosystem is faced with the problem of evidence to practice gap. Some of the challenges associate to the limited uptake of research evidence is the Complexity of research evidence terminology, limited access to research evidence, the language in which the research evidence is disseminated, limited funding of innovative knowledge mobilization approaches etc. To ensure the effective uptake of research evidence by targeted population, it is important to consider what, to whom, by whom and how should research be transferred. Understanding the dynamicity (Non-scientific savvies, non-literate, non-digital literate, resources constraints inhabitants with limited access to media, hundreds of languages spoken etc) of the different populations is a great step in knowledge mobilization for an equitable use of research evidence for decision making by all.

Storytelling is the vivid description of ideas, beliefs, personal experiences, and life- lessons through stories or narratives that evoke powerful emotions and insights (Serrat 2008). The African tradition of storytelling a mechanism to pass on traditions, codes of behaviour, beliefs, to educate, transmit values, worldviews, expectations, cultures, myth, entertain, empower, motivate, maintaining social order and to keep information alive from one generation to the other. (P. K. al 2008, Tuwe 2016).

The added value of storytelling to the scientific way of communicating with graphs, tables, forest plots, figures and charts (*still very complex even for scientists*) is that Storytelling is done in hundreds different languages, communicate to populations with different background, transfer knowledge in a digestible form, communicate facts in a non-confrontational way, appeal to the emotions of the listener while at the same time, entertaining the audience, Stories have causality in its communication (cause and

effect) which makes stories stick , more persuasive for behaviour change as audience quickly identify themselves in the life of the characters “People forget facts but they remember stories” I quote Joseph Campbell “Facts don't persuade, feelings do. And stories are the best way to get at those feelings” I quote Tom Asacker.

Our systematic African Storytelling Approach follows 7 clear steps as seen below



**Evidence-Based Storytelling Framework (eBASE Africa)**

The goal of the storytelling events is to disseminate knowledge in a digestible form that relates to people of all background (young, old, scientific, non-scientific, non-literate, non-digital literate, different languages, and people in resource constraint areas with no access to any form of media.



This approach has been used to sensitize children; indigenous people living in resource constraint areas with limited access to information; non-digital citizens with limited capacity to access reliable information online and the general public at large. This approach has been used to sensitize citizens around sexual and gender-based violence, peace and reconciliation, menstrual hygiene management, [malaria](#), environmental protections, and covid 19 protective and preventive measures.

The storytelling approach has been used in developing our [child protection song](#) which has impacted over 50,000 children in schools in the far north region, east regions, northwest region and south west region of Cameroon. This song helped the children living in conflict affected areas of Cameroon to recognize and respond to child sexual abuse.

The same storytelling approach has been used to improve the knowledge of indigenous citizens on [menstruation literacy](#), fight myth and cultural stereotypes around menstruation. This was with the aim of improving school attendance of 10,000 adolescent girls in 15 schools in 3 regions of Cameroon (east, north and far north)

Our systematic storytelling approach has also been used in communicating COVID 19 recommendations from [Covid 19 RecMap](#) to 2000 non-digital citizens of Cameroon

This same approach has been the focus of a training with the government of Western Cape South Africa and the South Africa Centre for Evidence to solve Urbanization challenges in Cape town.

It has been the focus of a Webinar with WHO on how best to tackle health issues in an era of infodemic and mistrust in health institutions. It has equally been a subject of funding from French Embassy, Grant Challenges Canada and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research under Ecodiv19 RecMap

### What Materials are Needed for School Clubs?

1. **A Community Storytellers Guild:** a contract to be signed between the storytellers guild and the relevant partner (CSO or government administrator) which details the objectives, activities, expected results, and guiding principles of the guild. This guild must not be a pre-existing guild.
2. **Storytellers guidelines:** This is an evidence-based set of modules and activities that will guide every storytellers guild. A guild should seek to include community consumers representatives of health (community health workers) and education (parent teachers associations).
3. **Venue for storytelling:** provided by the community where storytelling event will happen, this is a space within the community where community members can sit and comfortably follow storytelling events. This space needs to be officially signed off by the community or local leaders.
4. **Storytelling stage:** stages could be made at site of event. We advise use of locally available spaces for staging. This may be

the village or city hall, the village gathering spot (usually a tree which provides shade and shelter). A mobile stage can be used by a CSO and can be moved from place to place.

5. **Storytellers equipment:** lights, costumes, public address systems (autonomous), branding materials, cameras and accessories, drones, scripts, evidence technical files (evidence summaries, evidence statements, policies, guidelines, storylines) etc
6. **Communication kit:** materials for consumer representatives to convey their messages, sensitise their peers and community, and carry out advocacy activities will use these materials. They are flyers, roll-ups, banners etc.
7. **Psychosocial support materials (Optional for sensitive topics):** checklist, contact of a trained psychosocial expert within or outside the community.
8. **Legal support materials (optional if necessary):** checklist, contact of a trained legal expert within or outside the community. (Points 6 and 7 can be achieved through training of an existing community health worker)
9. **Medical support materials (Optional):** post exposure prophylaxis kits which include treatment for HIV, Hep B virus, STIs, physical injuries, emergency pills, and pain killers. These should be available only if there is a community nurse or doctor. Otherwise, health expert contact should be provided.
10. **Questionnaires:** pre and post questionnaires to test improvement of knowledge, intention and behaviour of targeted population around a topic

### What Procedures are Needed for Storytelling Events?

1. **Identification of a pressing issue:** this can be done by the community members, a community leader, researchers, or policy makers.

2. **Evidence Synthesis:** Researchers gather the research evidence and develop evidence summaries for the storyteller. Data is obtained from lived experiences, practice-based data, or research evidence.
3. **Community Diagnosis:** Storytellers goes on the field with the researchers to identify the different stages of change of the various communities, analyze the various stages of change to develop contextually relevant stories
4. **Story Development:** The storytellers develop the stories and organize storytelling sessions in the various communities where together with the local storytellers they tell the stories to the communities
5. **Technical Filing:** The researchers develop a storytelling technical file, evidence summaries and statements and meets with the storytellers to develop stories
6. **Storytelling:** The event is organized in the community and local storytellers from within the communities are trained to share these stories in the form of drama, song, dance, poems etc. After the acting, community members are asked to share their own stories and experiences, feedback and the lessons learnt

The sessions are recorded and take-home materials for participants are divided. A report of the event is done including questionnaire on knowledge and intention (as pre- and post-tests).

## How are Storytelling Events Rolled Out?

*The objective of storytelling is to maintain the traditional approach of storytelling for community teaching and learning where storytellers tell stories at larger scale, fathers tell stories to sons, and mothers tell stories to daughters.*

**Household Level:** The storytelling intervention will be delivered in households by individual members, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters will tell stories at household level. This will include storytelling and child protection events focusing on alerts for SGBV, incest, and child labour. This can be delivered face to face or through social media platforms.

**Community Level:** The intervention will be delivered face to face by community members and facilitated by storyteller's guild. Storytelling and child protection events will be live and face to face in communities. These can be recorded for research and online redistribution purposes.

**Virtual World:** storytellers guilds and family members are encouraged to make audio and video recordings of their stories and share on virtual platforms and social media.

## Where Do Storytelling Intervention Happen?

The intervention is delivered at community levels (households, community locations, community institutions including schools, njangi houses, churches, etc). However, recorded sessions can also be shared via social media platforms to reach wider audience and target discreet audience.

## What is the Dose and Cost of Storytelling?

*Because this is a relatively cheap intervention that can be delivered once storytellers guild is set up and equipment are available, the dosing of storytelling events depends essentially on needs as assessed by consumer representatives and storyteller's guild.*

### Cost of Equipment for Storytelling events

1. Public address system (estimated on rechargeable 2 speakers, sound amplifier mixer, two wireless mics, speaker stands) : 600,000 XAF
2. Professional Cameras (Canon XA40 Camcorder 4K): 1,950,000 XAF
3. Drone Camera (DJI FPV Combo): 1,050,000 XAF
4. Mobile Stage Van: (with towing vehicle) (without towing vehicle)

## Adaptation and Tailoring to Context



The dosage of the intervention may be modified following its compliance, acceptability, and feasibility within the population of study.

### Expected Results

1. Participation of participant in storytelling events
2. Local storytellers trained to communicate evidence-based stories in their different languages
3. An improvement in knowledge
4. An improvement in intention
5. Improvement in behaviour



