Report First Quarter Writeshop – July 2016

ESAP Bridging Phase

1. Introduction

During the bridging phase, the MA is preparing SAIPs for the follow-up program by building their capacity to take up more responsibilities. In this context, the MA will be organizing quarterly writeshops for Project Coordinators (PC). The main aim of the one-day writeshop is to improve reporting skills of PCs, and the quality and timeliness of project reports. The writeshops will also serve to promote project team based learning, and will enable sharing and learning about innovations, as well as preparation for the regional FTA-SA meetings.

The first writeshop was organised for the PCs/cluster leads in Desalegn Hotel on Wednesday 13 July 2017. The program included:
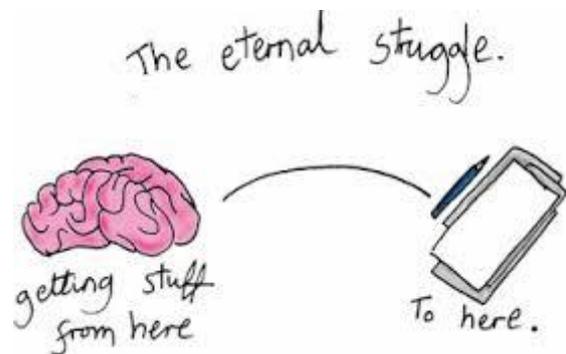
- A free writing exercise
- A story telling format for team meetings
- An input on writing structure and style
- Peer review of draft sections of the SAIP quarterly report

What participants hope to gain from the writeshops:
- To who are we reporting and what they are interested in
- Learn to write well yet simple, and to be prepared for timely reporting to the MA
- Be complete and focussed on main points
- More to write about with better content and consistency in tracking progress
- Learn from how other PCs work with the reporting format of the MA

2. Free writing exercise

This exercise[1] introduced participants to "free writing", a prewriting technique in which a person writes continuously for a set period of time without regard to spelling, grammar, or topic. It produces raw, often unusable material, but helps writers overcome blocks of apathy and self-criticism.


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[1]   From: Barefoot Guide Toolbox – Journaling with free writing.
http://www.barefootguide.org/uploads/1/1/1/6/111664/journaling_with_free_writing_exercise.doc

How participants felt about this way of writing:
- It is possible to think and write at the same time, and to write a lot without preparation – grammar is not so important at this stage
- It removed my fear of writing; I feel free to express, discovered new ideas: it is creative and rich
- It is not yet complete, and not everything is relevant: it is preparatory writing

3. Good writing is all about stories

The narrative report – as the word "narrative" suggests, is about _the story of a project_. Data collection sheets capture data and facts of the program, and this does not need to be presented in the narrative report. Get the story out before writing it down: **This is why we encourage regular team meetings.**

> ## nar·ra·tive
> /ˈnerədiv/
>
> _noun_
>
> 1. a spoken or written account of connected events; a story.
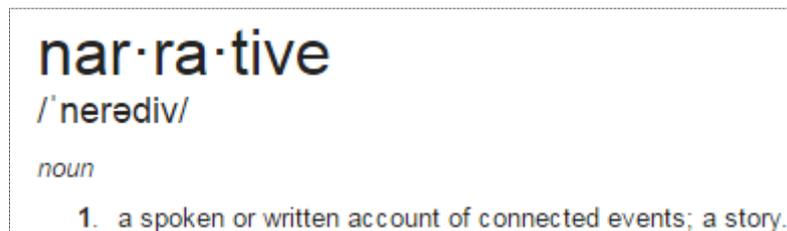
Roles[2]:

(1) **Story teller:** Share your _personal_ aspiration and leadership challenge as a project coordinator for the ESAP bridging phase. Present your case in 10 min – focus on issues for which you would like to receive feedback from your peers. Include your personal learning needs – what you would like to be able to do better?

(2) **Peers:** Listen deeply — do not try to "fix" the challenges or problems presented, but listen deeply to the story teller. What images, metaphors, feelings and gestures does the story evoke in you?

(3) **MA plus:** manages the process steps and the time.

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[2] Adapted from: U-Lab Presencing institute / case clinic process

Process steps story telling – 45 minutes:

	time	Activity
		time · **Activity**
1	2 min	**Select story teller**
2	10 min	**Story teller's intentions and case**
		Take a moment to reflect on your sense of calling: your <u>personal </u>aspiration and leadership challenge as a project coordinator for the ESAP bridging phase. Then clarify these questions: • Current situation: What key challenge or question are you up against? • Intention: What future are you trying to create? (situation at the end of the bridging phase) • Learning edge: What do you need to let-go of – and what do you need • to learn? • Help: Where do you need input or help?
		Coaches listen deeply and may ask clarifying questions (don't give advice!)
3	3 min	**Stillness**
		• Listen to your heart: Connect with your heart to what you're hearing • Listen to what resonates: What images, metaphors, feelings and gestures come up for you that capture the essence of what you heard?
4	4 min	**Mirroring**
		MA plus and then each peer shares images, metaphors, feelings, and/or gestures that came up. (don't give advice!)
5	15 min	**Generative dialogue**
		• *the story teller reflects back on what these images, stories and collective gestures evoke:* Seeing myself from the outside, what touched me, what resonated with me, what questions and reflections come up for me now? • All reflect on case giver's remarks and move into generative dialogue (build on each other's points – do not just forward your own points) exploring new perspectives and views on story teller's situation and journey.
6	6 min	**Closing remarks**
		• By peers • By story teller: How do I now see my situation and path forward? • **Thank you:** An expression of appreciation to one another
7	2 min	**Individual journaling** to capture the learning points
		Write the key points you want to remember

Discussion – usefulness of the story telling process with peers / team

The PCs found the process very interesting and they got a deep learning from it. The main difference is in the way of listening: not wanting to fix problems presented in the case, but _to observe your own response to the case and to share that_. There is interest to use this format for the monthly team meetings, and to let one staff share a case per month, each month another staff. This will help to share the real work, to discuss next steps, and to write it all down regularly so that we can have a good report at the end of the quarter.

4. Gender and inclusion / sectors, tools and kebeles

In this quarter PCs need to write about the project start-up activities. They may not yet have conducted the project start-up meetings, and that is fine. In that case they explained the plans for it.

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5 Woreda level project stakeholder meetings – start-up

- Explain below **how** the meeting involved citizen groups, SAC, service providers and local government in project planning (e.g. which sector, which vulnerabilities, which kebeles, which tools, how to mainstream gender, how to do SA in additional kebeles)
- Describe below the **main** findings, results and decisions of the meetings. Give woreda specific information where situations differ or interesting experiences exist.

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Groups of 3: two PC's and one MA plus

Roles:
- The MA plus person takes notes and facilitates where needed to ensure all points are covered.
- The PCs explain / listens carefully.
- Both can ask clarifying questions before moving to the next step.

Steps / time
1. **10 min** - One PC explains orally the "how" (first bullet above).
2. **10 min** - The other PC first indicates what has been similar, and then continues with what has been different in his/her case.
3. **5 min** - The second PC continues to talk, moving to the second bullet: "main" outcomes of the meeting (or expected outcomes, in case the start-up meetings have not yet taken place).
4. **5 min** - The PC who started now indicates first what has been similar, and then continues with what has been different in his/her case.
5. **10 min - The PC's** now give each other the printout of their draft report. They individually study what has been written, and compare it to what was shared orally. They make suggestions for improvements:

    a. Are most interesting aspects are covered?
    b. Is the structure of the writing is clear? (see below)
6. **10 min** – Discuss the feedback together.
7. While the PCs give and discuss feedback to each other's report (step 5 and 6), **the MA plus** types his/her notes and gives it to Marijke for printing – the PCs can compare these notes with their own write-up.

The structure of writing
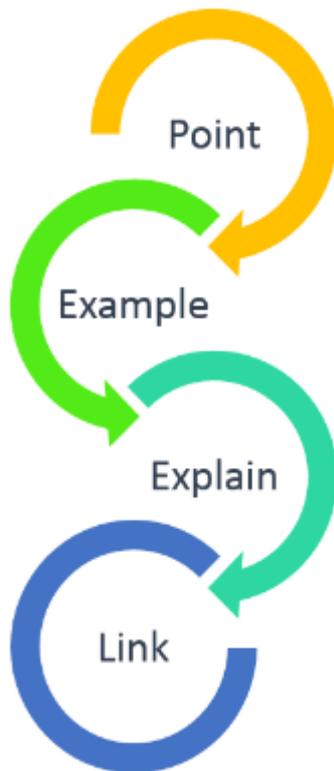
Point – Introduce what the paragraph will be about.

"We organised start-up meetings in all 7 woredas, bringing together all the different stakeholders, especially vulnerable groups."

Example – support with evidence, an example, a quote.

"In XYZ woreda, we were pleased to see many of the SAC members we worked with before. They reviewed their experiences from last year, and expressed their interest to bring SA to neighbouring woredas."

Explain – analyse and comment on the example, why it is relevant?

"The women are still eager to make a contribution to the SAC and to scaling. They are taking leadership, which will be an example for women in other kebeles. We think that the people who have experienced SA are the best promotors."

Link – Make a bridge from the point in this paragraph to the next point.

"During the meeting stakeholders agreed on how to bring SA to the neighbouring woredas."

Are we on track?

Reporting is also a time to reflect. Is your project on track? What are you planning to do next?

Individual exercise - Read the "Food for thought – scaling SA" article (if you haven't seen it yet in the newsflash of July 2016). Use it as a checklist for the quality of your start-up activities. What scaling innovations are you testing in your project? What did you not yet think about, and would like to plan for in the next quarter? Your report needs to **comment on the way forward** at the end of each section.

Food for thought: scaling social accountability

By Lucia Nass – SA expert at the ESAP Management Agency

The ESAP bridging phase aims at deepening social accountability in the 223 woredas where ESAP2 has been operating. Deepening means that we would like to spread social accountability to at least 50% of all kebeles in the woreda, **_and_** to reach pro-poor sectors that were not yet targeted under ESAP2. In many scaling efforts the risk is that processes loose quality, so the challenge that lies before us is the following. More than 200,000 citizens have been engaged in social accountability processes that have achieved great results for many more people. This is a great mass of people! Service providers have also been trained and supported, but early results from the ESAP2 evaluation point at the high turn-over in local governments. SA trained citizens must therefore become the driving force for scaling social accountability. More than ever we must put citizens in the driver's seat of social accountability!

We must also consider that we have fewer resources for the bridging phase, so the support from implementing partners to a woreda is far less than before. We have to count more on SAC members, **_especially the citizens and elected councillors_**, to promote SA to other kebeles and pro-poor sectors that have not yet been targeted. Here are some tips for implementing partners:

1. **START-UP** In the woreda start-up meeting, invite as many trained citizens and elected council members as possible, and spend some time to review the successes of ESAP2 in the woreda. Use the conference resources: there are 2 page sector result papers in Amharic developed for your use (http://esap2.org.et/esap2-national-conference/ Make sure new sector staff can ask questions. Work towards a selection of kebeles and sectors that may benefit from social accountability. Always remember to consider kebeles with vulnerable groups and services that are under-performing.

2. **SAC** Make a plan with Woreda and kebele SACs to scale SA – possibly to neighbouring woredas, as they may be easier to reach. Can SAC members join forces with government, for instance join monitoring trips, to reach new kebeles? What role can community based organisations play to spread SA?

3. **TOOLS** Carefully consider your tool choice. Community Score Card is preferred by many, and it has an empowering effect. But the citizens empowered under ESAP2, may become much more influential with the Citizen Report Card, because they can cover many more facilities in the CRC exercise?! How will you ensure mainstreaming of Gender responsive Budget principles? Be wise!!!

4. **PV and TSA** Help the SAC with sensitization methods such as showing the Documentary or Participatory Video (the MA has made special DVDs for your language area: make sure you get your copies to share with the woreda SAC!). We also encourage you to developing capacity of youth drama groups for Theatre for Social Accountability (get in touch with Mihret Massresha at the MA for more information and support). These methods are more powerful than "talks". Government can be encouraged to use these sensitization and awareness raising methods in their kebele level meetings. Always make sure people know how to contact the SAC members for follow-up.

Finally, MoFEC and the BoFEDs remain strong allies in the social accountability process. Please work closely with WOFEDs, and if you feel some "power from above" will smoothen the working relationships with the woreda authorities, do not hesitate to contact the BoFED in your region for support.

Formal or informal writing style?

Participants watched a video on formal and informal writing styles[3] and discussed which style they would like to adopt for reports to the MA?

And informal style is appropriate for narrative reports – the content is more important than the correct grammar and use of formal vocabulary. The MA compiles a report to the donors which also has a more informal than formal style, in particular for the technical section which covers progress in the projects.

INFORMAL	FORMAL
Ask	Enquire
Ask for	Request
Book	Reserve
Check	Verify
From (company)	On the behalf of
Get	Receive
Give	Provide
Help	Assist
Need	Request
Say sorry	Apologise
Say hello to	Give my regards to
Tell	Inform

Final writing exercise – evaluation of the day

What was the best thing you learned and why?

This is a compilation of the last writing exercise of the day – in the words of participants. It serves as evaluation of the learning of the day. The diversity of learning may serve as an indicator of the high quality of the writeshop.

- I learned that report writing is interesting if it is done carefully and gets to the heart of the story. It requires us to be well prepared with our team and give it enough time, because it reflects the exact work done.

- Writing while thinking – makes the writing process simple as the mind does not get stuck on checking what is written. It makes ideas flow freely, and contains many points and answers what happens and how, for whom and when. Regular writing like this will help me get quality ideas and save me a lot of time when I need to write the report, as I will not forget issues.

- The way to organise the report is to tell the story from the beginning of the quarter to the end, to provide the story of what happened. This will help us reflect, and be more complete in our report, and show the reality on the ground (which is differenmt from providing factual data in words which we used to do). In future I will do team meetings with story-telling before I start writing the report.

- The importance of incorporating important points in the report, and to make is complete, concise and readable. Free writing will generate many points, which I can then structure.

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[3] http://ezinearticles.com/videos/watch/142/formal-vs-informal-writing-what-is-the-difference-and-when-to-use-them/

- I learned that all work of the project is worth writing about, and it is important to come up with a good quality report. I never thought in this way before, and it will help me come up with a good report that is readable and communicates to the point.

- I learned how to write a sensible report, because I got good comments to my draft report. The comments were very open and showed my shortcomings. I will organise better to write about my activities.

- How to structure content of the points that should be in the report of project activities. It will help me produce quality reports. I will do it much better now, and include relevant information from all the woredas in an understandable manner.

- I must use the logframe for better and relevant communication through my reports. I will train the woreda project facilitators, focal persons and SAC members on this, for better accomplishment of the project activities.

- I should write reports to communicate and should not bother writing long sentences with complex words, because the objective is to be clear and understood. Using formal words can make things very vague, although it depends on the persons' language skills. I can write in a simple way, and this will help me make much better reports. I understand much better what ESAP is expecting of the reports, which I did not understand well before.

- Formal and informal styles can both be useful for the narrative report of ESAP. Informal is good for capturing stories from the field.

- The meeting format that brings together all PCs to learn from each other. It helped to share interesting ideas, and showed were each of us is in the process. The sharing was very helpful, and contributed ideas, knowledge and experience for bringing the desired change in the bridging phase. I will use the format with my project team.

- In future I will have a story telling meeting with partners, staff and woreda facilitators to prepare for the report. When we come together with responsible persons to discuss and tell about our challenges and mirroring each other we learn a lot while writing the report. We explain, remember, learn and discuss, so we become more objective in what we write.

- Tools and approaches to undertake stakeholder meetings for project planning and review, because it includes review, reflection and design of future actions. I will use it for ESAP and beyond. The participant selection is very important, because all citizen groups should be included to deepen the SA process. I will do this better in the 6 remaining woredas.

- The progress in other projects. The PCs shared a lot and seem committed to learn from each others experience which will all help us to perform (and write) better.

What needs follow-up?

- PCs need to be better representatives of the partners
- AFD - Guji zone will be split into 2: low and highlands
- Somali needs in-depth follow-up – partners are behind (muslim fasting season) and not strong on SA scaling
- Gambella is really very different from the other regions, and it may be difficult for LIA to achieve 50% coverage of kebeles: people move and there is no way of contacting them
- Tigray scaling experiences came out strongly – example for others

- EUWCA is concerned about scaling in sub-cities – follow-up on urban and rural strategies
- Guide supportive supervision by MA plus members – the idea behind scaling and how to spot innovation / quality work by SAIPs
- Adjust datasheets – and follow-up their use during monitoring visits
- Some PCs expressed interest in taking up journaling (regular "free writing" on work) – follow-up during monitoring visits
- One PC was ill and needs to be introduced to better writing