

# **Learnings from the Constructive Narrative experiment with journalists and journalism students**

## **Overview:**

In the context of the 5x5x5 Narrative Experiment, ISHR's communications team received a \$5000 grant to carry out a five-week experiment on extending our narrative tools and ideas to an audience outside the NGO and CSO worlds. The Communications team decided to share notions of constructive/effective such as those laid out in the "[Seat At The Table](#)" guide (2021) with journalists.

To do so, and bearing in mind the compressed timeframe of the experiment (5 weeks, starting 6 June), the Communications team reached out to the faculty of the Erasmus Mundus Master's in Journalism, seeking 5 candidates to take part in a workshop introducing them to constructive/effective narratives as applied to the coverage of human rights, followed by a writing contest where participants would seek to apply these concepts to an article covering a human rights-related issue of their choice.

All participants would be given a \$500 stipend for their participation while the winning article and the runner would receive \$1500 and \$1000 respectively.

The workshop took place on 23 June, after which participants had until 6 June (23h59 CEST) to hand in a written article of 800 to 1200 words fitting the description above.

After the 23 June meeting, participants were asked to fill a survey requesting their thoughts about and feedback on the workshop. Their opinions were collected using a Google forms questionnaire (available [here](#)). Below are the principal findings.

## **Survey findings:**

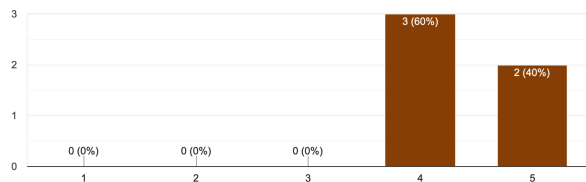
The survey had a total of 12 questions. The summary below will begin by looking at questions that required a grade or mark as an answer (on a linear scale from 1 to 5): these are questions 1 - 3; questions 6-7; and 9 - 11. We will then turn to questions that required a written answer (some of which were optional).

## Questions 1-3:

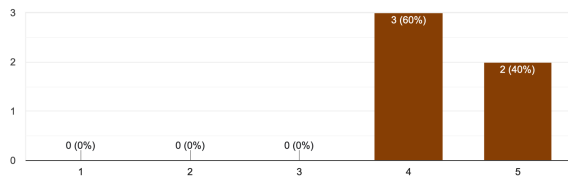
At the start of the workshop, presenters laid out the three explicit learning objectives of the workshop. These were: (1) *explore the problems with the conventional coverage of human rights*, (2) *explain what a constructive narrative framing is*, and (3) *illustrate its benefits and how to apply it to the coverage of human rights stories*. The first three questions asked participants to measure on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) whether they thought these objectives had been met.

**For both objectives 1 and 2, responses varied between 5 (40% and) and 4 (60%; 3 respondents), indicating a good degree of satisfaction on these questions.**

The workshop aimed to meet these objectives: (1) explore the problems with the conventional coverage of human rights, (2) explain what a cons...ly agree) would you say Objective 1 has been met?  
5 responses

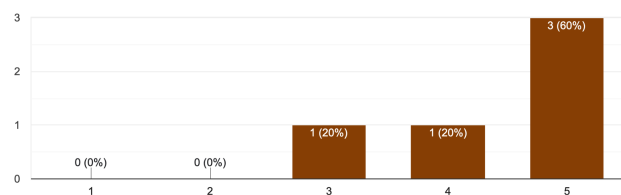


On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) would you say Objective 2 has been met?  
5 responses



**For objective 3, though there were more top marks (60% - i.e. 3 of 5 respondents - answered with 5), one of the the respondents (20%) went for a lower mark than in the previous (3), indicating that this objective had not necessarily been met for them.**

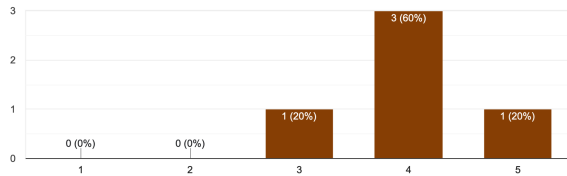
On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) would you say Objective 3 has been met?  
5 responses



## Questions 6-7:

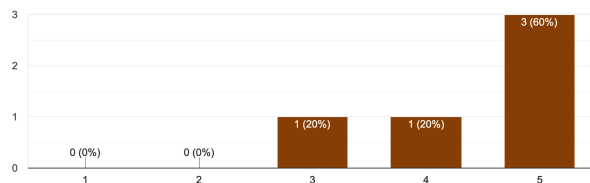
Questions 6 and 7 looked at (6) the degree to which respondents thought their own expectations - as they had shared them with on a Zoom whiteboard/comment section at the start of the meeting - had been met, and (7) the degree to which they thought the contents of the workshop had been relevant to them and their work and/or studies.

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), would you say the workshop met the expectations you shared with us at the start of the meeting?  
5 responses



**For question 6, a majority (80% - 4 out of 5 respondents) strongly agreed (5) or agreed (4) that their own learning objectives had been met. One respondent, however, neither agreed nor disagreed (answer: 3; 20%).**

On a scale from 1 (not at all relevant) to 5 (very relevant), how relevant would you say the contents of the workshop were for your work/studies?  
5 responses

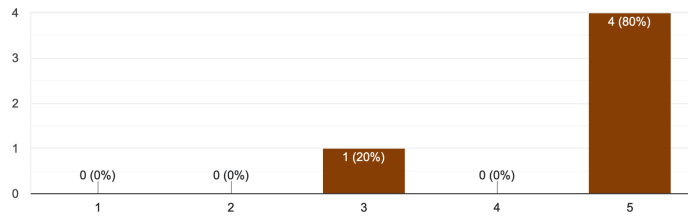


**For question 7, a majority of respondents (3 out of 5; 60%) “strongly agreed” (answer: 5) that the workshop had been relevant to them; one more had “agreed” (answer: 4; 20%). Once again, another respondent neither agreed nor disagreed.**

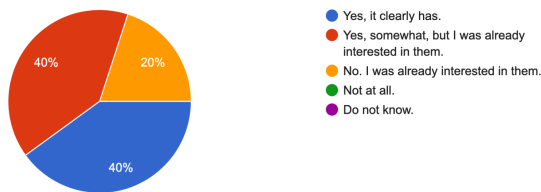
## Questions 9-11:

These questions looked at whether this workshop had made participants more likely to cover human rights, the work of HRDs and/or the, and tried to see the extent to which this had triggered an interest in covering human rights stories using the narrative framing we discussed.

On a scale from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (very likely), how likely are you to actively seek to cover stories related to human rights and/or the work of ...hts defenders or the United Nations in the future?  
5 responses



If your answer to the above was 4 or 5: would you say this workshop has contributed to your interest in these issues?  
5 responses

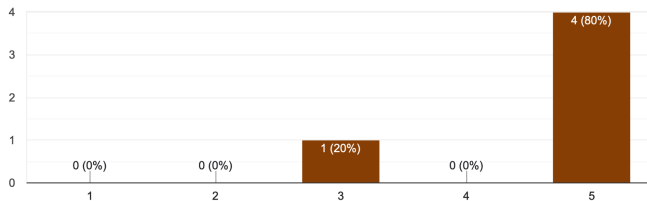


**For question 9, an overwhelming majority said the workshop had made them more interested in covering such issues in the future (4 respondents (80%) said they were “very likely” to do so; answer: 5), while only one respondent (20%) said it made them neither more or less likely to do so (anser: 3).**

**For question 10: two respondents (40%) said the workshop “clearly” contributed to their interest in these issues while another two respondents said it “somewhat” contributed to an already existing interest (40%). The fifth respondent said the workshop did not contribute to his pre-existing interest in these issues.**

Turning to question 11, we asked whether respondents would be keen on the information they were shown during the training in their future work:

On a scale from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (very likely), how likely would you say you are to apply or consider applying what you learned during this workshop in your work as a journalist in the future?  
5 responses



Though none of the five respondents (20%), said they were neither likely nor unlikely to do so, 80% of respondents (4 of 5) said they would be “very likely” (answer 5) to consider applying what they learned during the workshop in their future cover. This can be considered one of the main takeaways from his survey - despite the small scale of this experiment.

## Written feedback: questions 4, 5, 8 and 12:

For questions 4 and 5 (both optional), respondents were asked to name the aspects of the workshop that they liked the most and the aspects they liked the least. Question 8 (also optional) asked respondents if they thought the workshop had missed a specific point or discussion that they would have liked it to have. Finally, question 12 (also optional), asked respondents for any general comments on the workshop, its contents, accessibility and the performance of presenters.

- **Question 4 received 4 answers:** all four answers were about the quality of the discussions, pointing to the value of the different experiences of participants, and in one instance the discussion about narrative framing itself.
- **Question 5 received 2 answers:** one of them, strangely enough, was to state there were “no complaints”; the second regretted that there had not been “more time to discuss our story ideas and how to better find a constructive framing”, and wishing there had been a chance to “give and receive feedback on our ideas from the other colleagues, as well as the mentors”
- **Question 8 received 1 answer:** the respondent named a specific topic they wished we had discussed, namely the “trauma reporting and interviewing subjects about these sensitive issues”
- **Question 12 received 2 answers:** both expressed some praise for presenters and their exposition of the substance, though the second did express the respondent’s wish for more spent discussing “practical examples how to apply this framing”.

### **General takeaways from the written feedback:**

**Overall respondents shared positive feedback regarding the contents and general layout of the workshop. However, some responses did point to a perceived lack of detail on some aspects the workshop tried to cover or expressed the wish that we had spent more time on practical, concrete examples of the use of the framework.**