

# Writing effective case studies

## Introduction

When writing a case study, it can be easy to just record everything we know about the situation. This is not the purpose of a case study. A case study should communicate information quickly in order to help the reader's learning. When we try to write down everything we know about a project, we do not focus on the most important parts. Case studies should be clear and concise, demonstrating the successes and challenges of the project. This makes the case study useful for others in similar situations.

When writing case studies try to think of the following:

## 1. Purpose

### Consider the reason WHY you are writing this case study?

Is your aim to:

- Share learning with others who may be interested in similar work or projects?
- Record the steps taken during a project so that you can remember what happened?
- Write a case study because you have been asked by an organisation or publication?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) What do I want to achieve?
- 2) What do I want the reader to learn from this case study?
- 3) What is the most important message/learning from this case study?

An effective case study promotes action. If you can think of the action you want your readers to take, you will be better able to provide the ideas and information to help them.

## 2. Audience

It is important to remember who you are writing for, and why it is important they understand the ideas communicated. Make sure the language and style is appropriate. Choose short, simple words where possible. If it is necessary to use long or technical words that your audience is unlikely to understand, it is important to give definitions.

## Case study format

This format provides guidelines for writing case studies. Case studies should be short, clear and concise. It is important to write only the most important information and minimise repetition within sections of the case study.

### Title/ partner/ region

### Summary

- A one sentence statement giving a very broad overview of the case study.
- It is a summary of your main point.

### Background

This is a brief explanation of the situation. Describe:

- Why action was necessary
- The local situation the project addresses
- Why the organisation decided to address the situation.

Tearfund is a Christian relief and development agency building a global network of local churches to help eradicate poverty

## Response

This section should give details of the project. Describe:

- How were the issues recognised?
- What specific steps were taken in response? If possible, give a step-by-step explanation.
- Mention meetings, major decisions, key people and their actions
- What resources were required?
  - Money required
  - This can be more than just money ie: buildings, time, volunteers.
    - Record the resources provided voluntarily including: people's time and talents, as well as material resources such as food, meeting locations etc
- It can be helpful to give an indication of how much time was necessary to carry out each step.

## Challenges

This section should explain any challenges that arose during the project.

- Every project has challenges. Discussing challenges helps to improve the project for next time.
- What challenges arose while working on the project and how were they dealt with?
- Could this problem have been avoided? If so, how?
- Use examples

## Impact

Outline the outcomes of the project.

- What went well?
- Who benefited most? How?
- Has this project inspired others to address issues in their own communities? If so, how?

## Conclusion

This section should summarise (1-2 sentences) the overall outcomes of the project and the most significant lessons. It should also address the following:

- Any recommendations for future projects
- Planned next steps for the project itself

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