

COLLABORATING ON AWARENESS RAISING AND ENGAGEMENT: BETWEEN ACTORS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH AND THE GLOBAL NORTH

? WHY

CISU believes that everyone has the right to tell their own stories. Stories about global development can and should never be told without the people, the stories are about. It is a great way to give Danish citizens a nuanced and true picture of the world.

Many Danish communication practitioners have always collaborated closely with actors in the global south on awareness raising and engagement work about global development in Denmark. They strive to put the decisions and voices from the global south at the centre of the communication in Denmark. However, we can and must never stop improving in this area. Many Danes still have limited knowledge or stereotypical views about global development issues, which shows us that our work is not yet done. Actors must dare to re-think their approaches.

DEFINITION

"Awareness raising and engagement work" encompasses activities that inform the public about global issues and engage them in understanding and acting upon solutions to these challenges.

WHO

This tool-paper is relevant for all kinds of actors working with awareness raising and engagement of citizens in the global north on global development issues. (Such as civil society organisations, journalists, media, educational and cultural institutions, etc.)

WHAT

This paper is about collaboration about awareness raising and engagement projects.

It questions who initiates the project, who gets to choose the themes, the platforms and the target group. And how the tasks and the responsibility are distributed between the actors in a project or when making a single product.

The tool-paper offers practical advice from Southern actors to Danish practitioners to foster meaningful inclusion and cooperation. The practical advice is gathered through conversations with a number of Ghanaian civil society organisations.

? WHY INVOLVE LOCAL VOICES IN YOUR AWARENESS-RAISING AND ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES IN DENMARK?

This is a valid question. After all, effective communication starts with understanding and collaborating with the target audience you wish to reach – in this case a Danish target group.

CISU believes communication practitioners should also be mindful of the broader implications of communication.

The way we communicate shapes reality.

Therefore, we must be intentional about our communication and have courage to challenge colonial narratives.

Collaboration with partners from the global south is key. It helps fostering mutual understanding and respect.

We emphasize the importance of knowing your target group, and to start planning your project focusing on how to reach them – in this case Danish citizens. But we believe actively promoting global solidarity and reducing inequalities is better done in collaboration with the people your work is about.

We have developed an **analytical model** designed to initiate a conversation about how to envision a collaboration. It can be used when starting a collaboration with a new partner or to facilitate a dialogue within an already established partnership*.

The highest level in the model represents the greatest involvement of all actors, where decisions are made collectively.

The highest level generally creates the most equal cooperation and ensures that perspectives, expertise and lived experiences from the local actor shape the narrative. Sometimes, for practical reasons, it is not possible, and a compromise must be found at a lower level. The key point is that the decision about which level is most suitable should not be made by the Danish actor but through conversation.

1

CO-CREATION

Co-creation: Actors in the global south or north take the initiative and decisions are shared:

One of the involved actors takes the initiative to make a project or a communication product. Decisions about e.g. the theme of the product are shared among the actors, as well as how it should be implemented and who the target group should be. At this level the storyteller is the one affected by the issue.

2

CONSULTATION

The Danish actor consults the actor/individual from the global south:

The Danish actor seeks advice from the actor of the global south about a project or a specific product. The actor in the south is consulted on how stories in the project should be told and how they should be used. At this level the storyteller is not necessarily but most likely the one affected by the issue.

3

ORIENTATION

The Danish actor informs the actor/individual from the global south:

The Danish actor shares knowledge with the global south actor about a project or product they intend to produce. The actor in the south is (only) informed about decisions taken by the Danish actor on reasons behind a project or how the products will be used in Denmark. At this level the storyteller may or may not be the one affected by the issue.

4

TOKENISM

The Danish actor only involves the global south actor/individual in a symbolic way, only giving the appearance of involvement in the project or in production of a product. The global south actor is included in the project or story, but their role is very limited, and they do not have any real influence on the decisions or the narrative. At this level, the storyteller is often used as a token representation, maybe without even being genuinely affected by the issue.

5

MANIPULATION

The Danish actor pressures the global south actor/individual to participate in a project or the production of a product, sometimes using deceptive methods or in ways withholding information about how the story will be used. The global south actor is manipulated into joining, without their full consent or understanding of the project they are involved in. At this level, the storyteller is forced into participation, often without being fully aware of the narrative's implications

? DID YOU KNOW...

...that more than 50% of the projects supported by the OpEn-fund in 2023 and 2024 were about climate change, but Ghanaian think that education, the power of youth and economic challenges are just as important – if not more?

...that Ghanaian actors prefer to work with narratives that can be told to a target group in both the global south and global north?

HOW TO MOVE UP THE LADDER IN YOUR COLLABORATION:

In CISU we believe that the two lowest levels of the ladder never should be practiced. In fact, it is not collaboration at all. However, good collaboration can take place on all of the three highest levels as long as this is agreed upon between actors.

If you want to move your collaboration up the ladder, you could use the following questions for reflection to get started.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION :

1. What story do we want to tell?
2. Who should be the target group (in Denmark)?
3. How do we want to tell the story?
4. What parts of the projects do we want to co-create – the whole project or smaller elements of the project?

**This tool-paper is about awareness raising and engagement projects taking place in Denmark with Danish target groups. Therefore, the ladder takes point of departure in the role of the Danish actor. If the project took place in the global South, it would be the other way around.*

ADVICE ON COLLABORATION: FROM GHANA TO DENMARK

The below presented pieces of advice have been developed through dialogue and talks with actors in Denmark and Ghana.

There is no doubt that it is easier to create a project or product with true and nuanced information, when it is based on an already established partnership and when we work on themes and with actors we already know.

However, this is not always possible. If you are not working in an established partnership—for example, if you are a journalist working in various contexts for each new story—consider using the suggestions in the box to help you identify experts or informants.

FOR COMMUNICATION PRACTITIONERS WHO DO NOT KNOW WHO TO COLLABORATE WITH:

- Identify a regional or national network of journalists or civil society organisations in the country/area, the project is about, as for example Media Foundation for West Africa and WACSI – West African Civil Society Institute or CISU – Civil Society in Development in Denmark.
- Reach out to civil society organisations in Denmark and/or the global south working with the theme and/or in the country, your project is about and ask if they can assist you/want to collaborate with you. Both Danish organisations and organisations in the global south can be identified e.g. through CISUs World Map.
- Check if there is a diaspora or expat group or organization from the country your story is about or context it should be published in. Reach out to them for insights and knowledge or to help establish contacts in the country.



ADVISE CONCERNING THE CREATION OF SPECIFIC PRODUCTS (E.G., JOURNALISTIC ARTICLES, PHOTOS):

Consent: Involve relevant actors before publishing content about them, their context, or the project. While not everything needs to be 'co-created', obtaining consent on the use of specific products or the wording of quotes is crucial.

Interviews: Consider using a local person to interview the target group to avoid cultural misunderstandings. If possible, ask a local journalist to conduct or co-conduct interviews.

Unknown digital methods and platforms: Be cautious when considering communicating to Danish audiences with digital platforms or methods e.g. Virtual Reality and computer games, if they are not familiar to the participants in the global south, who may not be fully aware of their consent to participate. Explain how it works and how it is used in the Danish context.

Perception: Remember that content published online can be interpreted differently in the global south and the global north contexts. For example, humour intended for a Danish audience may be perceived differently elsewhere. Consult local actors to understand how content might be received and if relevant ask if they are comfortable being associated with it.

Target group in Denmark: Be specific about who you want to reach in Denmark. Share demographic details (e.g., age), common interests, and preferred platforms. This helps your partner understand the audience and contribute meaningfully to co-creation.

EXAMPLE

CO-CREATION

Collaboration between artists in the global south and the global north

In the partnership between the Ghanaian CSO, YEFL-Ghana, and the Danish CSO, Ghana Venskab, both already worked with art as an expression form.

During a period of six months a group of young artists from Ghana and a group of young artists from Denmark met at online workshops, where they co-created art together. The art took form as both poetry and painting, and the themes they showcased were mainly on climate change. The art was exhibited in the Ghanaian district at an art fair and at Danish festivals.

Through co-creation, the young artists gained a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how global challenges like climate change are addressed in different contexts. The art exhibiting amplified the power of art to connect and inspire action across borders.

In this case, Ghana Venskab also took initiative but co-created all aspects of the project with YEFL-Ghana.



ADVISE CONCERNING PROJECT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

EXAMPLE

CO-CREATION

Creating space for the target group in the global south to voice their own stories:

The community based Ghanaian CSO, Dalun Community Library, and the Danish CSO, Ghana Biblioteksvenner had been collaborating in a community in Ghana for more than ten years, while at the same time creating awareness about Ghana among especially kids and teachers in Denmark.

A volunteer in Ghana Biblioteksvenner noticed the lack of children books about Ghanaian children in the community. He suggested to facilitate a process where children from the Ghanaian community would identify stories for a photo book that they wanted to read themselves and share with Danish kids. For instance, the kids chose to tell a story about how they collected garbage in the community and one on how they can help elderly people.

The approach not only produced authentic narratives but also respected the agency and creativity of the Ghanaian children.

In this case, Ghana Biblioteksvenner took the first initiative and shared decisions with Dalun Community Library but the stories were chosen and told by Ghanaian kids.



Co-creation: Seek to plan and implement projects together with actors from the relevant context in the global south. As a Danish actor, you may know of an upcoming funding opportunity. Remember to tell partners about the funding opportunity before you start working and take the initiative to collaboratively design and implement activities or projects that could give funding to and benefit both partners. This could involve jointly identifying themes, target groups, setting goals and making implementation plans where division of responsibility is agreed upon.

Agreement: Discuss and agree on how each actor wishes to be involved when creating products. For long-term projects or longstanding partnerships, consider a joint communication strategy that outlines when each party must inform or involve the other.

Relevance: Discuss with local actors which development issues are most relevant. Issues important from a Danish perspective may differ from those prioritized by partners in the global south. While you should always ensure that the themes are relevant for a Danish audience, exploring themes that hold significance in both Danish and global south contexts can foster stronger collaboration and mutual interest from actors in the global south, while also involving Danes in topics they may be unaware of.

Cultural Exchange: Elements of exchange between actors in the global north and south often enhance projects and stimulate engagements in both contexts. Such exchanges can include visits to each other's contexts, which are highly stimulating for individual engagement. However, it may not always be the most cost-effective or climate-friendly approach.

Alternative forms of exchange, such as virtual connections, should also be considered and can be used to achieve meaningful engagement.

MOTIVATION FOR ACTORS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Here are some of the main reasons for wanting to collaborate about awareness raising and engagement, that some of the Ghanaian civil society organisations highlighted:

- It is an opportunity to change stereotypes about ones country
- More information about global development is an important part of creating a more sustainable and just world for all
- Motivation to show the results of the good work the organisations are doing

READ MORE

There are many good sources to learn more on this topic. We recommend the following:

- FINGOs Guideline on Ethical Communication

- 'Reframing the Message' made by Frame, Voice, Report!

- Rethink Reframe Redefine - Co-Creation and Storytelling - Testing the Contributor Centred Storytelling methodology with UNHCR by Jess Crombie

