

GOOD MORNING SYRIA. Digital storytelling from a Syrian perspective

External good practice, COSV



Short description of method

Good Morning Syria is an innovative bilingual website on politics, media and culture in Syria. It focuses on the daily lives of Syrians from all over the country, who struggle to survive in their war-torn homeland.

As a consequence of the uprising, a wide range of new channels became available to the thriving Syrian civil society, which is still struggling to raise its voice louder than the various warring factions. Journalism is part of this picture, as numerous Syrians started working for the media to inform the international community about their tragedy.

After more than half a century of harsh restrictions on professional journalism, their efforts are now in need of support in every Syrian region, regardless of the identity of the local ruler.

The project stems from the selection of a team of extremely skilled Syrian journalists in the early phase of their careers, which will liaise with a group of experts in order to reach out to Arab and international media. Furthermore, Good Morning Syria seeks to clarify the flow of information coming out of Syria, in a conflict *which is too often simplified* as a 'muddled' situation in the Western media.

Finally, the project aims at bridging the gap between Western media and Syrian journalists in a context featured by one of the highest rate of kidnappings in the world, where foreign reporters rarely get the chance to independently verify facts on the ground.

Good Morning Syria is determined to become a major source of information on the country's unfolding events in the context of global media while maintaining a *distinctively Syrian perspective*.

Digital methods of good practice

The method applied is mostly digital: collaborators have the online support of international experts, send their contents to the web master and materials are available only online. Communications and trainings are done using digital devices, also due to the difficulty to enter Syria or to move within the country: this helps people collaborating to be connected and work together despite the barriers they encounter.

Pedagogic/methodological aspects of good practice

The core of the contributors is represented by a selection of skilled Syrian journalist in the early phase of their careers. A network of experts supports those journalists to reach out to Arab and international media. The contributors are part of a broader network of civil society activists operating all over Syria. From Dayr az Zor to the Tartus, from Raqqa to Suwayda, through Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo. Daily life stories of Syrians from all over the country are presented in the vivid context of civil society resilience in the war-torn country. All contents, texts, videos and photos are uploaded to the website on creative commons and promoted through the use of social

networks. Analytics and insights are used to track the users' behavior and understand the use of contents.



Strength, weakness, opportunities and threads of good practice

Strength

Flow of information is coming from inside a country in conflict and it represented the real point of view of the citizens from all over the country.

Weakness

The initiative is connected to a funded project and if it doesn't find further funding, it's likely to stop in the next future.

Opportunities

If perceived positively by media, and generally public opinion, it can contribute to provide information about real everyday life in Syria during the conflict.

Threats

Countertrending the media mainstream, it could be not taken into consideration or even worst its contents counterfeited.

Which aspects are transferable?

The approach is fully transferable: people experiencing a situation, instead of looking at media transfiguring the reality, can become the real promoters of a correct flow of information by telling their stories. Articles, videos, audio or photos can be used to build a narrative that

Facts of method

7.000 participants (audience of events, website and social networks)

Target groups:

- general public journalists refugees in Europe
- people interested on Syrian conflict

1 time performed

15 staff involved

1 partner from 1 country Link to method:

<http://www.goodmorningsyria.org/>

starts from personal experiences and reflect the inner point of view. A pool of experts can support by training the collaborators of storytelling and with a web sites all contents can become accessible worldwide. This tool empowers people giving them back their voice and create information.

A success story of the good practice

In November 2015 two representatives of the Good Morning Syria project, together with two international media experts of the network, met a group of ten Italian journalists to present the initiative. During the meeting the two young Syrian guests explained the project, starting from their need to actively collaborate to the narrative of the crisis their country and people are experiencing, and going through the method implemented to guarantee a continuous flow of information that effectively represents the perspective of civil society still living in Syria. The journalists, thanks also to this personal meeting, understood the quality and the exclusivity of the stories told by the network and deeply appreciated the project. The digital storytelling of Good Morning Syria provides them with unique information they can use for their articles, thanks also to the release of contents in Creative Commons. Today it's not possible to have correspondents in Syria, nor to enter the country for foreigners. In this framework Good Morning Syria offers to them a reading from inside the country. The fact that after the launch of the website, end of September 2015, the web site and facebook page gathered the attention of about 7.000 people (in 45 days) is a great result in terms of public response. French and Italian media are already using the website as a source of information and it is expected to have more interest from international media on the project.

Final summary: what makes it in your opinion a good method?

Good Morning Syria represents in our opinion a great project that gives voice to people to tell their story, and to go beyond the headlines. It has many interesting aspects: it empowers young journalists and media professionals giving them

a proper and accountable space to express themselves, providing them with specific trainings and exchange moments with international experts. On the public side, it offers a different perspective of a conflict covered by media but not reflecting the civil society point of view. The structure of the project, the quality of contents, and the possibility to receive information from all around the country are a guarantee for readers and media professionals approaching the web site. The method involves several actors: young journalists, activists, international experts, digital experts. Seeing the positive feedbacks received in the first 45 days of activity and the enthusiasm of the team, we think that this methodology can be implemented in similar situations to avoid simplification, generalization, instrumentalization of information that - especially in sensitive context - lead to confusion and to stereotypes. It is, for us, a good example of digital methods used for empowerment and social change.