



Workbook
Nº2

Narratives for social change

YOUTH TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURE:
a toolkit for storytelling, leadership, and advocacy



Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), 2026



Youth Transforming Agriculture. A Toolkit for Storytelling, Leadership, and Advocacy
Narratives for social change

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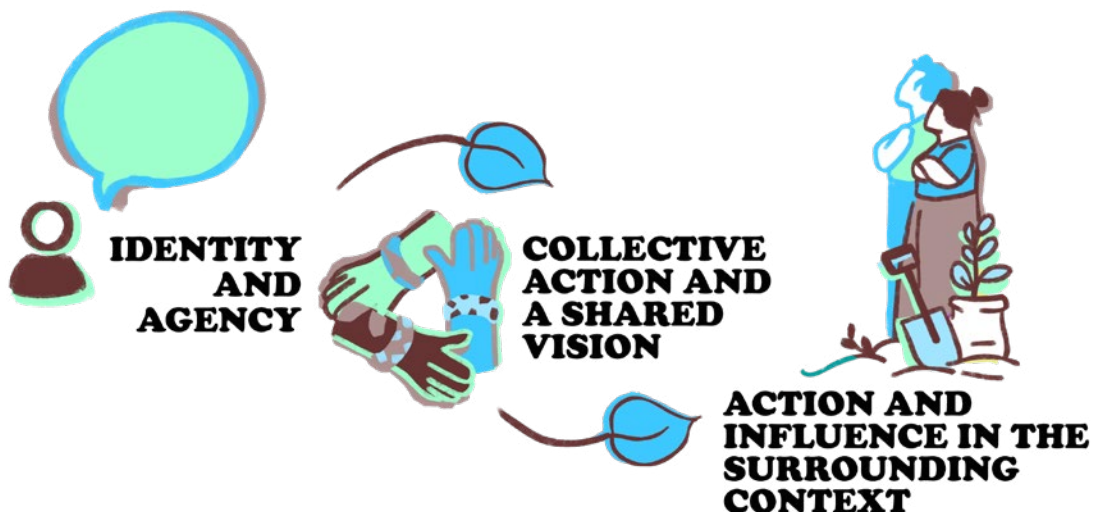
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How to use this guide

This workbook is part of the collection *Youth transforming agriculture: a toolkit for storytelling, leadership, and advocacy*, designed to empower rural youth through participatory workshops. Each workbook, which offers conceptual and practical content on a key theme (narratives, leadership, or advocacy), can be used independently or as part of a training sequence.

There is no strict rule regarding the order in which the workshops should be delivered, but it is recommended to follow a logical sequence, which is the one proposed below: first, address the topic of narratives so that young people can define how they want to tell their reality and generate positive messages; then, study the content related to leadership to strengthen their self-confidence, values, and capacities for collective coordination; and finally, explore the content related to advocacy in order to channel those narratives and leadership toward concrete plans for action and influence.

In this way, those who participate in the workshops experience a gradual process of empowerment that includes:





It is recommended that, before conducting this workshop, Workbook No.1: Facilitator's Guide be reviewed in detail.

This is Workbook No. 2: Narratives for Social Change

It focuses on the power of narratives and on strategic communication. It provides concepts related to narratives and their characteristics. It also offers guidance for developing new narratives and a strategic communication plan. It includes practical exercises for young people to reflect on the narratives surrounding the rural world and to learn how to tell their own story in an impactful way. It is used to facilitate workshops aimed at strengthening the capacity to communicate and shift perceptions; for example, it helps groups of young people create hopeful messages about their community or project.

Each workbook is structured in three main sections.

1. The first, entitled “**Preparing to Facilitate**,” presents key concepts and recommendations for introducing the topic.
2. The section “**Getting started**” includes the script and activities organized into thematic blocks, with detailed instructions for each stage of the workshop.
3. The third section, called “**Resources**,” provides templates, visual guides, and other supporting materials needed to facilitate the activities.

Each workbook is designed so that any facilitator, even without specialized training, can effectively lead the learning process.

Cross-cutting principles

All workshops should be facilitated in accordance with the following principles:

Ensure the necessary conditions for women to express themselves, take leading roles, and make decisions, as well as identify structural barriers that may hinder their effective participation.

Recognize that not all youth experience the same realities; therefore, their differences in terms of sex, ethnicity, territory, and disability, among others, must be taken into account.

Start from the experiences of rural youth as protagonists. It is necessary to understand the experiences, knowledge, and transformative potential of young people in order to recognize the challenges they face and the specific opportunities they can seize in rural areas.

Promote the rights of youth as active subjects, with special emphasis on the right to participation.

Recommendations for Facilitating the Workshop

Creating an environment of trust. Efforts should be made to foster horizontal relationships and ensure a safe space where all voices are valued.

Practicing horizontality and mutual respect. A key principle of this methodology is horizontality, as it translates into mutual respect and balanced power dynamics within the group.

Using active and participatory methodologies. Experiential learning, critical reflection, and constant participation should be prioritized.

Adapting the content to the territory and local culture. Examples, language, and activities should be tailored to the specific rural context in which the workshop is delivered.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Each workshop may include brief evaluation activities before, during, and after its implementation (e.g., entry and exit surveys, closing rounds, and self-assessment matrices). This makes it possible to adjust the training process according to the needs of the group and assess the learning achieved.

2

Preparing to facilitate: conceptual keys and useful bibliography

Let's talk about narratives

A narrative, which is a way of organizing and presenting information about a topic, aims to tell a story with a specific purpose, from a particular perspective or approach. It is an articulated, coherent and meaningful discourse that guides our interpretation of reality and runs through all communication products or actions.



According to C. K. Riessman, a US theorist specializing in the subject, a narrative is a way of telling and organizing our experiences to make sense of them. It is not only about stating what happened, but also about deciding how to tell it, which includes determining which details to include, in what order to present them, what tone to use and what role we assign to ourselves and to other people in the story¹.

According to Roland Barthes, another leading scholar who has worked on this topic, narratives are everywhere: in speech, writing and images, and they are a constant in human life². Jerome Bruner argues that there are two fundamental forms of thought: logical-scientific thinking and narrative thinking, which allows us to understand human experience through stories with characters, actions and consequences³.

¹Riessman, CK. 2002. Analysis of personal narratives (online). In Gubrium, JF; Holstein, JA (eds.). Handbook of interview research: context & method. California, United States, Sage Publications. p. 695-710. Consulted 15 Oct. 2025. Available at <https://marcuse.faculty.history.ucsb.edu/projects/oralhistory/2002RiessmanAnalysisOfPersonalNarratives.pdf>.

²Barthes, R. 1966. Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits (online). Communications (8):1-27. Consulted 15 Oct. 2025. Available at <https://doi.org/10.3406/comm.1966.1113>.

³Bruner, J. 1990. Acts of meaning (online). Massachusetts, United States, HUP. 139 p. Consulted 18 Oct. 2025. Available at https://mf.media.mit.edu/courses/2006/mas845/readings/files/bruner_Acts.pdf.

A narrative not only makes it easier to understand a topic, but also captures attention, a very important aspect in the current context of saturation of data, messages and information.

The objective of a narrative is to ensure that its way of understanding things becomes the most widely accepted and that its interpretation of the world is perceived as the most “normal” when addressing a particular topic. For this reason, narratives are said to be ways of organizing and communicating meaning about the world. They involve communicating with purpose, generating meaning and transforming how people think and feel about an issue.

The most widely accepted narrative regarding a topic is known as the “dominant narrative” and is considered the “natural idea” about that particular issue, that is, something perceived as true or legitimate. This ability to shape social perception around a topic makes narratives central tools of symbolic and cultural power.



More than a communication product, a narrative is a set of articulated ideas and messages included in all communication materials related to a particular topic or project. In the case of an agricultural plan, for example, the narrative would be expressed in the discourse that defines how agriculture is represented, who its protagonists are and which values or visions are legitimized in that context, through videos or photographs.

Defining a narrative can be even more important than producing a video or another communication product. For this reason, it is essential that all young people involved in agricultural activity develop their own narratives and use them to change perceptions about rural youth and the agri-food sector, in order to promote changes in their environment.

A narrative, which must make sense and act as a guiding thread that helps people understand, remember or appropriate an idea or value, appeals to both reason and emotion: two key dimensions of human behavior. It also inspires, motivates and can change attitudes and behaviors, through which identification with our situations is produced and empathy and trust are generated.

How can we know whether the message we have developed has a narrative? Imagine that an organization wants to communicate the importance of protecting native seeds in the face of the expansion of industrial monocultures. Below is an example of how this message is conveyed with and without a narrative.



Without a narrative

Native seeds are important because they ensure biodiversity, food sovereignty and the sustainability of smallholder agriculture.



With a narrative

When Rosa was a child, her grandmother kept maize seeds in glass jars and gave them names: “The cheerful yellow,” “The strong black” and “The sweet rain.” Although many neighbors now buy hybrids, Rosa continues planting those same seeds on her farm. She says that each ear of corn reminds her of her grandmother and that caring for those seeds means caring for her family’s history. That is why she joined a network of women farmers who exchange seeds and teach younger women how to protect them.

As can be observed, although it is the same message, it is presented in different ways. The one that uses a narrative includes a character (Rosa, a farmer with whom the audience can identify), a conflict (the loss of native seeds), different emotions (nostalgia, pride and a sense of heritage) and a purpose (to value traditional agriculture). The other, by contrast, contains no people, emotions or conflict. It is an informative message rather than a story; it neither creates identification nor invites imagination. It is a technical statement rather than a narrative intended to establish a connection with the audience.

In short, a narrative does not simply inform; it tells a story with human meaning. In other words, it brings messages to life through faces, voices and emotions.

Characteristics of a good narrative

As mentioned earlier, narratives influence how people think and act. A strong narrative generates emotional resonance and captures attention, which is particularly important when the aim is to motivate individuals to exercise leadership or engage in political advocacy. In line with the above, a strong narrative⁴:



- 1. Is clear and easy to understand.** It makes it possible to convey complex ideas or facts in an accessible way, helping people remember and process them more easily. When information is organized into meaningful and understandable parts, abstract or difficult concepts become significant.
- 2. Generates emotions.** It awakens pride, empathy or interest and allows people to imagine the lives of others or place themselves in different realities. This process produces a “temporary suspension of disbelief,” which opens the possibility of reconsidering what we think about ourselves and about social problems. It is important to consider that a strong narrative not only informs, but also connects emotionally with its audience⁴.

4. FrameWorks Institute. 2021. The features of narratives: a model of narrative form for social change efforts (online). Washington D. C., United States of America. 54 p. Consulted 18 Oct. 2025. Available at <https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/app/uploads/2021/09/The-features-of-narratives.pdf>

5. Fisher, WR. 1984. Narration as a human communication paradigm: the case of public moral argument (online). Communication Monographs 51(1):1-22. Consulted 20 Oct. 2025. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758409390180>

- 3. Is relevant.** It connects with the everyday experiences of the audience and engages with their social and emotional context: their environment, climate conditions, prices and community life, among other aspects.
- 4. Understands its target audience.** It recognizes their values, aspirations and concerns, thereby influencing how people understand themselves, their relationships and the contexts in which they live, and thus plays a central role in shaping social meaning and a sense of belonging.

A strong narrative inspires, connects and transforms. It allows us to recognize ourselves in others and to envision possible futures. For this reason, developing solid and human narratives is not only a matter of communication: it is a way of imagining and bringing about the change we want to see.

What is the dominant narrative about agriculture?



In many Latin American countries, the dominant narrative surrounding agriculture associates this work and this sector with poverty, lack of opportunities and backwardness. It is a narrative that portrays life in the countryside as a fate from which one must escape and reinforces the idea that working in the agricultural sector is a sign of low levels of education, limited social prestige or an inability to “get ahead.” It also reproduces the stereotype that agriculture, especially when practiced on a small scale, is an unprofitable activity dependent on subsistence and disconnected from

innovation, thereby obscuring the real technical knowledge, community organization and productive capacity of those who work the land.

Within this narrative, agriculture is considered an occupation “for older people,” unattractive to young people and disconnected from urban and technological dynamics. From this perspective, rural youth are portrayed as people who must migrate to “seek better horizons,” reinforcing the idea that the countryside does not offer them a promising future.

In the case of women, these negative narratives carry even greater weight. They are often portrayed merely as “helpers” on farms, which minimizes their productive and decision-making roles, despite the fact that they are essential in crop management, seed stewardship, household management and the family economy.

This dominant narrative also reinforces the idea that agricultural work “is mainly for men,” as it associates it with physically demanding tasks or male spaces. This obscures the burden of women’s unpaid labor and limits their access to land, credit, training and technologies. This narrative reproduces prejudices by hiding the key contribution women make to food security and to the sustainability of rural communities.

As we can see, these narratives not only stigmatize those who work in the agricultural sector, but also hinder the development of public policies that recognize agriculture as strategic, diverse and fundamental to food security, local development and environmental sustainability. For this reason, it is essential to change the stories, narratives and ways in which agriculture is presented in the field of communication.

Transforming the dominant narrative

Changing the dominant narrative around a topic is not an easy task. It requires time, creativity and a communication strategy to disseminate and establish new ideas. It is also necessary to generate a counter-narrative that promotes narrative change. Although these two concepts are very similar, they present some differences (see the following box).

Concepts that are similar, but different

Counternarrative.

It is a narrative that challenges dominant narratives by offering a different way of approaching and making sense of an issue or problem. It may emerge organically from the experiences of a community or be “cultivated” and developed deliberately and strategically by activists, human rights defenders or collectives seeking change, with the aim of proposing an alternative vision on a particular issue.



Change in the narrative.

This change occurs when the stories that circulate widely in society are transformed, that is, when new narratives emerge that challenge and replace dominant ideas regarding a particular issue. In other words, it involves a shift in the narratives used to explain or understand a topic in public debate.

In summary, every narrative transformation begins with a counternarrative that opens space for thinking differently. When these new ways of telling a story spread and gain legitimacy, they can modify the way society understands a topic. Therefore, changing the dominant narrative does not only mean communicating differently, but also transforming the collective conversation around the issue.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) recognizes that, in order to transform agriculture, it is necessary to change the way it is talked about. For this reason, it promotes a narrative that recognizes youth as key actors in innovation, sustainability and rural development. This vision seeks to counter the traditional idea that associates agricultural work solely with physical labor, low remuneration or an uncertain future, while proposing a counternarrative that presents agriculture as a strategic, technologically advanced and creative sector with real opportunities for entrepreneurship and youth leadership.

Through this narrative, the aim is also to dispel the perception that agriculture is an activity of the past or reserved only for older people. By placing youth as protagonists of the present, and not only as a promise for the future, their role in transforming agri-food systems is reaffirmed. Agriculture is thus presented as a dynamic space connected to technology, the knowledge economy and climate action, where fresh ideas and youthful energy are essential. Changing the story we tell about who cultivates the land is also about changing the story of where we want rural development to go.

By promoting this new way of telling and understanding the relationship between youth and agriculture, the Institute seeks to position itself as an agent of narrative change, one that not only communicates but also helps reimagine public policies and redefine what is possible in rural areas.

Tips for developing a new narrative

As mentioned earlier, a strong narrative is clear and easy to understand, evokes emotions and connects with its audience. Creating it is not easy: it requires work, reflection and consistency between what is said and what is done. It involves dedicating time to developing the message, reviewing how it is communicated and ensuring that all actions are aligned with the story one seeks to tell. Although there is no single formula, ten tips for developing it are presented below.



Develop your own narrative, not a repetition of the dominant one. The first step is to stop using the dominant narrative. False ideas and prejudices (such as the supposed link between agriculture and poverty or the notion that the countryside is synonymous with low levels of education or innovation) should not be validated or referenced. It is always better to build new and positive messages rather than respond to dominant narratives; for example, it is preferable to say “Agriculture drives development” rather than “Agriculture is not poverty,” in order to avoid reinforcing already established negative narratives.

Educate without scolding. The new narrative should have an educational purpose and explain in a simple and clear way why agriculture is essential for life, the economy and the environment. Educating does not mean scolding. The tone used should be respectful and empathetic in order to encourage dialogue. To avoid making people feel guilty for not knowing about the issue, positive and accessible examples should be used, inviting reflection and participation.

Do not prioritize opponents. A great deal of energy is often spent trying to convince those who firmly oppose our ideas or messages. This is a mistake because such individuals are unlikely to change their minds. Our priority should be people who do not have a defined position, as well as allies.

Generate collective and human-centered stories. Our narratives should show the human face of agricultural work: people, families and communities who cultivate the land, care for the soil and produce food, along with their dreams, projects and valuable knowledge. Space should be given to collective stories that highlight cooperatives, associations or community groups, rather than always focusing on an individual figure.

Prioritize emotions over data. A common mistake is to believe that presenting data on production, land area or yields is sufficient. Emotions are more powerful and easier to remember; therefore, our narrative should appeal to empathy, pride, hope and admiration for those who work the land. Data should be turned into stories.

Believe that your narrative can become dominant. The new narrative should reflect confidence and hope, which requires avoiding pessimistic messages that assume the countryside is doomed to abandonment. Show how sustainable, innovative and equitable agricultural solutions can improve people's lives and protect the environment, bearing in mind that this requires imagination, since creating a more just and sustainable vision of the future demands more effort than simply describing current difficulties.

Talk about solutions rather than problems. Solutions attract more attention than denunciations. A proposal generates more interest than a complaint.

Explore all narrative resources. Communication about agriculture can be creative rather than a serious or boring story. Fiction can be used to show how a community transforms its environment, as can humor or a cartoon to convey the new narrative.

Strategic communication

To ensure that our narrative becomes the most widely accepted, it is essential to disseminate it, that is, to spread it in a planned and consistent way. It must be told, shared and repeated until it becomes dominant and transforms reality, which requires the use of strategic communication.



What is strategic communication? It is a communication approach that uses a planned and carefully designed process to convey messages effectively to specific audiences. In simple terms, it means thinking strategically about what we want to say, to whom we say it and how to do it so that our narrative becomes dominant and can produce real change.

Strategic communication goes beyond the simple transmission of ideas or information. It involves establishing authentic connections with defined audiences in order to generate impact and achieve previously established objectives.

Organizations, collectives, leaders and activists who adopt this approach optimize their time and resources. They also enhance the creativity and

capacities of their teams and members and achieve better results in their advocacy actions. At the same time, they strengthen their internal culture, as collective efforts are more clearly oriented toward shared goals. To adopt the strategic communication approach, it is recommended to follow the following four steps:

1. ASSESSMENT

an assessment of the issue to be addressed must be carried out.



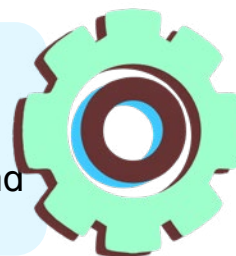
2. PLANNING

it is necessary to plan all communication actions, which includes defining objectives, targets, audiences and products. In addition, the new narrative must be defined. At this stage, the communication plan is developed (see the following section).



3. IMPLEMENTATION

all those actions must be implemented, that is, the planned content must be produced and the activities carried out.



4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

the work carried out must be monitored and evaluated in accordance with the planning.



These steps function as a guide to maintain order, but they do not constitute a fixed or mandatory formula. In some cases, it may be possible to apply only some steps of the process, while in others it may be appropriate to move through all four phases. What matters is developing stories directed at our audience, with defined objectives that guide each action and with narratives that are coherent, clear and simple.

Preparing a strategic communication plan

The strategic communication plan is an operational tool for disseminating the new narrative and its messages. It is an instrument that guides actions, defines audiences and establishes the most appropriate media and channels to achieve the proposed objectives. It makes it possible to organize communication work in a coherent and planned manner, ensuring that each action contributes to strengthening the narrative that is intended to be positioned. It also facilitates advocacy and the exercise of leadership in the agricultural sector.



The communication plan, which is developed once the assessment has been completed, falls within the planning and implementation stages explained in the previous section. There is no single formula for preparing this type of plan, but there are steps that are worth following. Each of them is explained in detail below.

Basic steps for preparing a communication plan

1. Establishing communication objectives

First, it is necessary to define what the communication actions aim to achieve. The objectives that guide these actions should be simple, achievable, and measurable, and should align with the narrative that is intended to be promoted.

2. Defining the target audience

The groups that will receive our messages and products must be clearly identified. It is crucial to gather as much information as possible about them: how they access information, how they speak and what they think about different issues, particularly those related to our narrative.

3. Identifying the channels

Channels are the communication media or platforms through which our products will be disseminated. These may include social media, traditional media such as radio or television, events and websites, among others. When selecting them, it is important to consider that their use and accessibility often depend on socioeconomic, ethnic-racial and personal factors, among others.

4. Designing key messages

Son las ideas centrales que deben ser transmitidas. Los mensajes clave deben ser claros, consistentes y alineados con los objetivos y los públicos. Además, se deben vincular con la narrativa que hemos definido.

5. Generating the products or executing communication activities

These are the specific products that will be created or the activities that will be carried out to disseminate the messages. Different formats may be used, including video, infographics, workshops and social media campaigns.

6. Implementing the communication plan

The communication plan is implemented once the communication products and activities have been defined.



Key recommended approaches for strategic communication

Ideally, the narrative and the strategic communication plan should include human rights, women's rights and multiple social factors in its approach, in order to ensure respect for all people and to promote equality.

In the field of communication, the human rights approach seeks to ensure that all people receive reliable and timely information and that the content produced respects their fundamental rights. In essence, it means that communication should observe Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which protects the right to hold opinions and to seek, receive and share information without interference or barriers⁶.

In practical terms, applying this approach in communication involves promoting content and products that respect and guarantee human rights, in accordance with their doctrine, principles and standards. It also means using communication as a tool to demand that entities with responsibilities in the field of human rights fulfill their obligations, while contributing—through truthful information—to ensuring that all people know their rights, exercise them and claim them.

In the agricultural sector, applying this approach entails generating content that respects and promotes the rights of agricultural workers, based on human rights principles and standards; for example, providing information on decent working conditions, access to clean water, safety in the use of agrochemicals or equal treatment between women and men on farms. It also involves using communication to demand that responsible institutions fulfill their duties of oversight and protection and to ensure that farmers know their rights, understand how to exercise them and have the tools to claim them.

⁶ UN (United Nations, United States of America). 1948. Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos (online). Consulted 14 Oct. 2025. Available at: <https://www.un.org/es/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

The second approach to be considered is the women's rights approach, which recognizes that women have historically faced inequalities, discrimination and structural barriers that limit the full exercise of their rights. Communication grounded in this approach places women's experiences, needs and rights at the center, makes visible the inequalities they face and conveys messages that promote equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

For example, in a campaign on access to agricultural credit, applying this approach would involve explaining that many women producers face greater difficulties in obtaining financing due to the lack of land ownership or institutional biases. In this case, it would be important to highlight the need to remove these barriers, share testimonies of women farmers and call on financial and state institutions to ensure equitable conditions for access to credit.

The third and final approach to consider is intersectionality. This concept was introduced in 1989 by the US scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw⁷. Its main idea is that people may experience multiple forms of discrimination simultaneously; for example, an Afro-descendant woman from a rural area may face at the same time the particular effects of inequalities associated with her ethnic background and her socioeconomic status.

This concept is important because, according to it, people are not necessarily defined by a single characteristic, but rather live with multiple identities that influence their experiences and the forms of exclusion they face.

⁷ Crenshaw, K. 1989. Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics (online). The University of Chicago Legal Forum (1):139-167. Consulted 15 Oct. 2025. Available at <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>.

Understanding the multiple social and identity-related factors that shape a person helps recognize that many injustices are interconnected and that people's realities are more complex than they may appear at first glance. If policies and actions that adopt this approach fail to consider these multiple dimensions, the solutions may be incomplete or may not adequately respond to those who face more than one form of inequality at the same time.

3

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4

Getting started: practical guide for facilitating the workshop

General information about the workshop

Purpose of the workshop

Reflect on narratives for social change in rural contexts and create positive counternarratives. Through experiential activities, young people will identify the prevailing dominant narrative, explore how to build counter-narratives based on stories and emotions, and design strategic communication strategies to disseminate their new messages within the community.



Total recommended duration

3 hours



Number of participants

Between 15 and 30 young participants from rural areas

Before beginning, it is essential to create an environment of trust and openness. Ensure that the physical space feels welcoming: place flip charts, markers, cards and adhesive tape within reach and, if possible, use soft music for the welcome.

Remember that the purpose of the workshop is to inspire and strengthen, not to evaluate knowledge. Your role as facilitator is to support a process of collective discovery rather than deliver a traditional class. Begin the workshop by introducing yourself warmly and explaining the agenda, as well as important logistical details (location of emergency exits and restrooms, break times, etc.).

Block 1

Dominant narratives versus our reality

Duration
 **1 hora**

Break the ice and identify the prevailing stereotypes and messages surrounding rural life and youth. The aim is to make visible the dominant narrative that often associates rural areas with negative aspects (backwardness, poverty, lack of opportunities, etc.) and then question it. In this block, participants will begin to recognize themselves as protagonists of their own stories and understand that they are capable of creating new narratives about their lives and communities.

Block 2

The power of our stories and emotions

Duration
 **1 hora**

Explore how to develop alternative narratives that inspire and create an emotional connection. In this block, participants will learn what makes a story effective and why emotions are so important in communication. Through the collective creation of stories, they will put these concepts into practice and generate positive narratives about rural youth and agriculture.

Block 3

Communication for change: narrative strategies

Duration
 **1 hora**

Apply what has been learned to develop a simple strategic communication plan aimed at disseminating the new narratives created by the group. In this final block, participants will connect their stories with concrete actions, identify whom they want to share their narrative with, determine through which medium or format they will do so and how to do it effectively in order to generate a positive impact in their community.

Content guide for the workshop



A script for developing the blocks is presented below, which includes a series of resources to be used in each block.

Duration

Block 1 - Dominant narratives versus our reality



1 hora

Purpose: Break the ice and identify the prevailing stereotypes and messages about rural life and youth. The aim is to make visible the dominant narrative that often associates rural areas with negative aspects (backwardness, poverty, lack of opportunities, etc.) and then question it. In this block, participants will begin to recognize themselves as protagonists of their own stories and understand that they are capable of creating new narratives about their lives and communities.

Resources: A template to complete with narratives about the countryside.

1.1. Intro (10 minutes)

At the beginning of the workshop, introduce yourself and explain the agenda, as well as all relevant logistical matters, such as the location of emergency exits and restrooms and the break schedule.

Before the introduction, give each participant a card on which they will complete the sentence.

**“Something many people
say about the countryside
is that...”**

Next, ask participants, when introducing themselves, to say their name, which community they belong to and the sentence they completed. This activity will help identify the existing ideas about rural life and youth. Ideas such as “There is no future in the countryside” or “Young people leave because there are no opportunities” may emerge.

1.2. Block 1 activity: “Myth or reality” (30 minutes)

Project on a screen or bring a poster board or flip chart with written common statements that reflect the dominant narrative about agriculture and rural youth. Several of the statements may be related to the phrases participants completed during the opening activity. Some examples of statements you can use are:

Agriculture is synonymous with poverty.

Young people have no future in the countryside.

Innovation happens in the city, not in the countryside.

You are either a farmer or an educated person.

Women only help; men are the ones who work the land.

Those who can leave the countryside do; only those with no other option stay.

To change something in the community, you have to be an official or come from outside.

After reading each statement, invite the group to decide whether they consider it a myth (false) or a reality (true). To add dynamism to the activity, designate one side of the room as “myth” and the other as “reality,” and ask participants to physically move to the side that corresponds to their opinion. Once they have chosen a side, ask some of them to voluntarily explain why they think that way.

The intention is not to judge their answers as correct or incorrect, but rather for the group to collectively uncover shared stereotypes; for example, if someone believes that the statement “Agriculture is synonymous with poverty” is true, this indicates that the dominant narrative has taken deep root, which will serve as a basis for discussing how that idea obscures the positive and innovative aspects of agriculture.

After this exercise, participants may want to express their opinions. It is recommended to use the following question to guide the discussion:

What did we discover about what people (and we ourselves) think about agriculture and rural youth?

1.3. Lecture segment (20 minutes))

Once the exercise has concluded, move to a brief lecture segment. Use the contributions from the previous activity as a basis to introduce the topic.

This is the moment to introduce the key concepts. Explain what is meant by a narrative, mentioning that the dominant narrative surrounding agriculture in Latin America often links the countryside with poverty and a lack of progress and portrays this occupation as a fate from which one must escape. You may include concrete examples, such as the tendency to depict rural life as something “backward” and young people from rural areas as those who “must migrate to seek better opportunities,” according to the idea that “The countryside does not offer a promising future.”

You may also highlight how these narratives reduce or distort the role of certain groups; for example, many stories claim that “Agricultural work is not for women,” portraying them merely as helpers, which obscures their central contribution and their historical presence in agricultural work.

Then introduce the concept of a counternarrative as a way of challenging dominant narratives and reinterpreting reality. Emphasize that, in order to change the way society values agriculture and rural youth, it is necessary to create and disseminate our own positive narratives.

Explain how the statements discussed in the previous activity represent the dominant narrative. From this point on, the workshop should focus on how participants can change that conversation by telling their own stories and experiences.

Duration

Block 2 - The power of our stories and emotions



1 hour

Purpose: To explore how to develop alternative narratives that inspire and create an emotional connection. In this block, participants will learn what makes a story effective and why emotions are so important in communication. Through the collective creation of stories, they will put these concepts into practice and generate positive narratives about rural youth and agriculture.

Resources: A template for posting a story on social media.

2.1. Lecture segment (25 minutes)

Begin this block by presenting some of the principles of a strong narrative. Explain that an effective narrative does not consist only of providing information, but also of telling a story with human meaning.

Use one of the examples discussed in the conceptual section of the workbook. Instead of saying “Many seed varieties have been lost over time” (a technical statement), the story of Rosa can be told—a young farmer who preserves the native seeds that her grandmother taught her to care for. That concrete story includes a character with whom we can identify, a conflict (the loss of seeds), emotions (nostalgia, pride and hope) and a clear purpose.

Explain how the informational message does not generate a connection, whereas the narrative version brings it to life through faces, voices and emotions. With this example, the group will understand that a strong narrative includes real people, some type of conflict or challenge, emotions that move us and a vision of change or solution.

Next, summarize the key characteristics of powerful narratives, drawing on the conceptual material: they are clear and easy to understand (they

do not contain technical jargon), they resonate emotionally (awakening empathy, pride and hope), they are relevant to the everyday life of the audience (they speak about what people know and value) and they are directed at a target audience (they consider the values and aspirations of those who hear them).

Highlight the role of emotions and note how numerous studies and experiences show that figures and data, important as they may be, rarely change a mindset on their own. By contrast, a story that touches the heart can become unforgettable. As the workbook states in the theoretical section: “Emotions are more powerful and easier to remember” than isolated data. For this reason, counternarratives should appeal to positive feelings (pride in rural life, love for the land, a sense of community, etc.) rather than relying solely on logical arguments.

2.2. Block activity 2: “Creating our counternarrative” (30 minutes)

Divide the group into subgroups of three to five people, depending on the total number of participants. Ask each team to turn one myth or negative idea analyzed in Block 1 into a new positive story that challenges that myth.

To clarify this part, write one of the statements used in the previous activity on a flip chart and provide it to each group. Ask each group to develop a short story that demonstrates that the statement is false and emphasizes the opposite perspective (the counter-narrative).

In this case, the stories may be fictional or based on real events from their community. They should include specific characters, preferably rural young people who face the challenge related to the myth and overcome it in some way.

They should also present a conflict or problem to be resolved (for example, young people who are unsure whether to migrate or stay; a woman farmer who, against the opinion of others, decides to adopt innovations; or a community that comes together to overcome a difficulty) and, above all, a transformation or a lesson learned. The stories should also reflect the emotions of those who are part of them, such as pride, indignation or hope.

Each group will have 20 minutes to prepare their stories, which they will present to the plenary in the way they prefer: they may draw them or write them on the flip chart, beneath the corresponding statement.

Once all the groups have presented their stories, it is useful to conduct a brief reflection on the emotions or ideas that emerged from these new stories. Participants may mention that they felt inspired, identified or motivated.

2.3. Closing (5 minutes)

To close the session, establish an explicit connection with the conceptual theme and point out that what they have just done is create a counternarrative.

Duration

Block 3 – Communication for change: narrative strategies



1 hour

Purpose: Apply what has been learned to develop a simple strategic communication plan aimed at disseminating the new narratives created by the group. In this final block, participants will connect their stories with concrete actions, identify whom they want to share their narrative with, determine through which medium or format they will do so and how to do it effectively in order to generate a positive impact in their community. The objective is for them to recognize the importance of planning in communication (defining audiences, messages and channels) and to understand that narrative change requires not only strong stories, but also strategy and collective work.

Resources: one template to prepare a communication plan

3.1. Lecture segment (20 minutes)

Introduce the concept of strategic communication in a clear and accessible way, relating it to the planning of what we want to say, to whom and how, in order to achieve our objective.

Explain the central components of a communication plan:

1. Definition of communication objectives
2. Identification of audiences
3. Selection of channels
4. Design of key messages
5. Development of communication products or activities
6. Implementation of the communication plan

Remember that strategic communication involves an ongoing process. If this were a real campaign, the situation would first need to be assessed, followed by planning and implementing actions and evaluating the results. Emphasize that, due to time constraints, planning in the workshop will be carried out in a simplified way. What should remain clear is that behind every major narrative change there is strategy and persistence.

3.2. Block 3 activity: Our campaign! (30 minutes)

In subgroups, participants design a concrete initiative to disseminate the stories and messages they have developed, ideally keeping the same subgroups from the previous block.

To begin the activity, ask participants to think about how to turn the counter-narrative they previously created into a communication action or product that they could implement or use in their community. Then give each team a flip chart or poster board and colored markers so they can develop their plan for turning the counter-narrative into communication products. To do so, they should answer the following questions, which will be written in a visible place (board or screen):

- What narrative or message do we want to disseminate?
- Who do we want to reach with this narrative?
- Which channels and formats will we use?
- What will be our key message or slogan?
- What type of communication products or activities will we produce?

Each group has 15 minutes to discuss and record their ideas on the paper. They may create a table including elements such as audience, message and medium, or draw something that represents their activity (for example, a radio if it is a radio program; people on a stage if it is a play, etc.), which will help them present their proposal. Once the planning time is over, each group has five minutes to explain their idea and all the components of their proposal.

3.3. Closing (5 minutes)

To conclude the block (and the workshop), guide participants through a final reflection on the theoretical content covered, reviewing the concepts of narrative, counternarrative and the power of stories to change realities.