

STORYTELLING HANDBOOK

C4 COMMUNICATION
FOR HEALTH



World Health
Organization

Western Pacific Region

Storytelling handbook

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1. WHY STORIES MATTER

For at least **40 000 years** – dating to the earliest known cave paintings – oral and visual stories have been a part of people's lives.

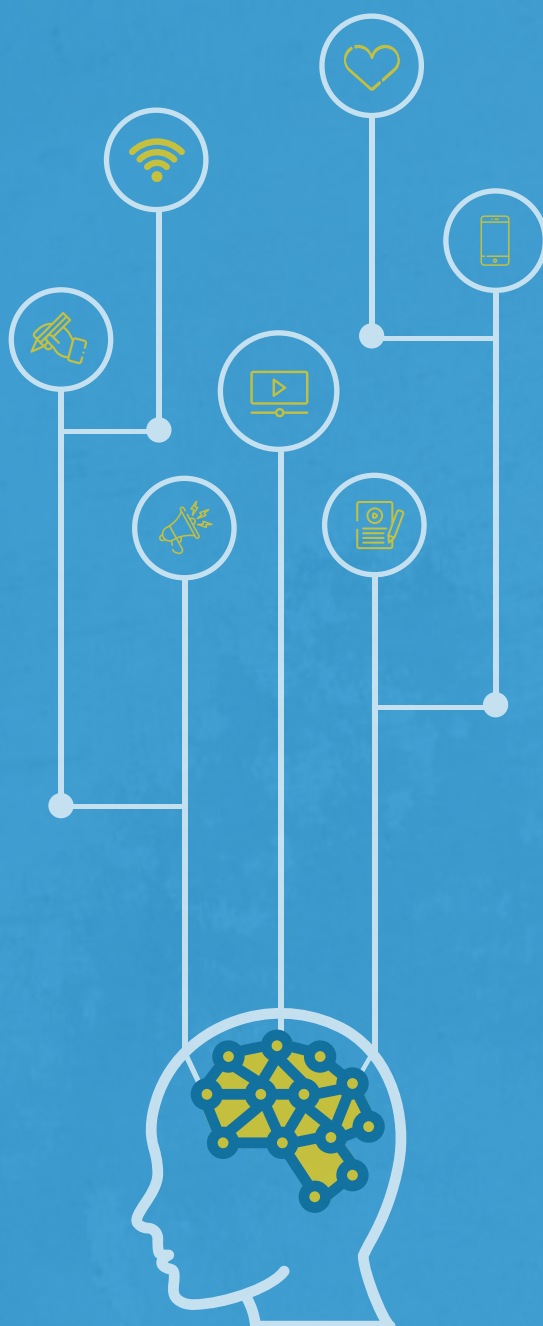
The first stories were probably told long before then, passed from generation to generation, connecting people, shaping their worlds, changing lives – even changing history.



STORYTELLING IS BOTH A SCIENCE AND AN ART. STORIES ARE IN OUR NATURE. OUR BRAINS ARE WIRED FOR THEM.

They make us experience information, as opposed to just consuming it.

They help us see '**cause and effect**' relationships, beyond facts and data, **by triggering at least seven major areas of the human brain that shape our thinking and trigger our emotions.**



In today's digital age, **stories can be created and shared like never before**. Just over half of the world's **7.7 BILLION** people can now create, consume and share digital content socially.

Increasingly, social media platforms are where people turn for discovery, information and entertainment. About **970 million** people used social media in 2010, compared to **4.2 billion** users in 2021.

With this increased digital connectivity, misinformation can spread very easily. As we've experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, the circulation of incorrect health information can influence political discourse and decision-making and undermine adoption of protective behaviours, creating the conditions for faster disease transmission.



This can cause a great deal of human suffering and loss of lives.

In this world of information overload, widespread misinformation and shrinking attention spans, great stories are more important than ever. They can cut through digital noise in ways that other forms of communication cannot.



STORIES ESTABLISH CONNECTIONS. THEY STIMULATE BOTH OUR EMOTIONS AND THOUGHTS SO THAT WE FEEL CONNECTED NOT JUST TO THE STORY, BUT ALSO TO THE STORYTELLER.



When we advocate for something, we tend to rely on convincing arguments, facts and figures.

But research shows that **PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO BELIEVE A PERSON OR ORGANIZATION WHOSE STORIES RESONATE WITH THEM.**

And when information and stories are communicated together, people are persuaded both **intellectually and emotionally.**

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