

Unlocking Storylines for Innovation Success: The role of innovation and storytelling in rural ecosystem development

This session explored how to leverage popular story frameworks with innovation plotlines to create stories that increase buy-in, engagement and feedback in innovation contexts.

The event was structured as a Fireside Chat between H  l  ne Papper, Director of IFAD's global communications and advocacy division, and Katie Trauth Taylor, CEO of Untold Content. It encompassed exploring the definition of storytelling, as well as debunking myths associated with it, and why storytelling is important to innovation. The event also included a Q&A section with lively engagement from the audience.

On Tuesday 24 May 2022, IFAD's Change, Delivery and Innovation Unit (CDI) hosted the ninth IFAD Innovation Talk to engage in a dialogue about innovation storytelling.

Opening the session, **John Laird** introduced the speakers, H  l  ne Papper and Katie Trauth Taylor.

H  l  ne and Katie started their conversation by defining what storytelling is and trying to debunk some of the mischaracterisations and myths that surround it. Although often understood as fiction, storytelling is actually rooted in the transfer of knowledge and sharing of information. H  l  ne shared her experience in war zones, explaining how being able to tell one's story is such situations crucial: not being heard can spur frustration and social tension; while giving everyone the opportunity to share difficulties and needs, and making sure these are listened to, can actually lead to the "exchange [of] weapons for microphones." In other words, storytelling is actually about how we can convey information for obtaining a reaction.

Katie built up on H  l  ne's explanation by elaborating on the science behind telling stories. She explained how humans are wired for stories, as they respond more proactively and are able to take better action when a piece of information is communicated as a story. For this reason, it has become strategic to many organizations to leverage storytelling to bring innovation to life and connect to the ultimate beneficiaries of innovation itself. Dignified storytelling is a specific way of doing this, and it is a key pillar of IFAD's approach to communication: it consists in ensuring that the way we communicate does no harm, and it is geared towards better listening and connecting to the communities IFAD is trying to serve.

Speakers and panellists at the event

(In order of appearance)

- [H  l  ne Papper](#), Director of IFAD's global communications and advocacy division
- [Katie Trauth Taylor](#), CEO of Untold Content

Moderator: [John Laird](#), Learning, knowledge-sharing and outreach analyst, CDI, IFAD.

"It is a strategic necessity to understand that storytelling is the key to moving the world forward."

H  l  ne Papper

"Storytelling is a strategic art and science that you can learn."

Katie Trauth Taylor

According to H  l  ne, it is this local dialogue, and listening to the communities and to the people on the ground, that is the key to strengthening multilateralism. IFAD has also tried to capture this dialogue and turn it into data: at the Food Systems Summit, IFAD partnered with FarmRadio International for building radio programmes to engage smallholder farmers. The data generated served as a basis for evidence-based decision-making. This, H  l  ne pointed out, is where innovation comes into the equation, as both innovation and storytelling are about action and change.

Katie underscored how for innovation to be truly impactful, it has to be close to the reality of things – which encompasses vulnerable groups and minorities too. For this reason, some organizations are actually using storytelling to communicate to the general public how everyone should care about innovation that is closer to all communities, and that is aimed at creating a more inclusive world. She then presented the five drivers of innovation storytelling (impact, empathy, alignment, evidence, engagement), and introduced research on which elements make an innovation story more successful.

During the [Live Q&A](#) that followed, speakers gave their views on a variety of topics – including, how we can tell stories of poverty malnutrition and war in an innovative way, the difficulties of storytelling in varied global contexts and if storytelling can be separated effectively from marketing. *(If you are interested in the discussion with the audience, please consult the Q&A report and the event [recording](#) on the [event page](#).)*

In summing up and final comments, **Katie** offered some thoughts around how stories matter for innovation. She suggested relying on creative thinking to increase buy-in and highlighted the importance of investing in story crafting, setting up systems and process that allow one to collect stories from the relevant communities; areas in which Untold Content provides training. **Hélène** highlighted how dignified storytelling avoids perpetuating biases, and how the way we communicate information impacts the communities we are talking about in many ways. Telling stories is therefore an opportunity and powerful mean to spur change.

CDI would like to thank the participants for taking part and for making the event such a success and showing how increasing interest and ample opportunities to create systematic approaches for improve global comprehension of progress.

Missed the event? Watch it online!

A recording of the event can be found [here](#).

Join the [IFAD Innovation Network](#) to receive our updates and to contribute to the knowledge sharing and learning of our innovation community of practice.

If you would like to skip directly to certain sections of the event, the times are listed below:

Time (minutes)	Section
00.00-02.15	Welcome by moderator John Laird
02.15-39.24	Fireside Chat featuring Hélène Papper and Katie Trauth Taylor
39.24-50.52	Q&A
50.52-58.44	Closing thoughts by Hélène Papper and Katie Trauth Taylor

Unlocking Storylines for Innovation Success: The role of innovation and storytelling in rural ecosystem development

Innovators spend 30% of their working week storytelling. Yet most lack formal training on how to use story frameworks and plotlines.

For this Innovation Talk, [Hélène Papper](#), Director of IFAD's global communication and advocacy division and [Katie Trauth Taylor](#), CEO of [Untold Content](#), discussed how to leverage popular story frameworks with innovation plotlines to create stories that increase buy-in, engagement, and feedback in innovation contexts.

The event aimed to answer the following questions:

- *What is innovation storytelling?*
- *What are examples of storytelling impacting innovation initiatives?*
- *Why is storytelling so important to innovation?*
- *How do you tell an innovation story?*