

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

GUT HEART HEAD

IN ACTION

Creative moves to
grow your base of
support

Elizabeth
Seja Min



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Creative moves to
grow your base of
support

*A formula for communications and
resource mobilization teams*

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FOREWORD

from Spring

Money is a radical lever in the future of humanity, and the stories you tell can help unlock its power to do good.

GUT-HEART-HEAD in Action crystallizes decades' worth of knowledge from the inimitable Elizabeth Seja Min. Her work has been an integral part of Spring's Financial Innovation and Resilience (FIRE) program, which introduces participants to her powerful communications tools and how to apply them in tandem with strategic financial capacities.

An internationally acclaimed program, FIRE supports organizations in building greater mission-aligned, financial strength. At the time of publishing this e-book, more than 1,500 people from 500+ organizations in more than 70 countries have participated.

Elizabeth has worked with many of these groups with care and creativity. It's been our pleasure and honour to accompany Elizabeth and these organizations, as they safeguard human rights, fight injustice and nurture a healthy planet for us all. Breakthrough storytelling with *GUT-HEART-HEAD* isn't about social media "likes" or going viral, or even winning a crucial grant—don't get us wrong, those are important moments! But it runs deeper than that.

When you tell the story of your organization's transformative work

(see **“The Story Bridge”** Chapter 7), you can open up or shift donors’ perspectives on your whole sector. And communicating your financial needs with clear, compelling data (See **“Meaningful Numbers”**, Chapter 9), could shift the way a funder sees the importance of multi-year, flexible funding to support core cost instead of haggling over “overhead”. You could even make a case to your board for exploring alternative revenue-generating models with the goal of being less dependent on grants.

With Elizabeth’s communications tools, we’ve seen changemakers create powerful narratives about their work that can help unlock new funding opportunities. As one FIRE participant said, “I’m taking away how to ask for core mission support. From now on I’m deleting the vocabulary of ‘overhead’ and using GUT and HEART instead of just numbers.”

At Spring, we want to see more money flow towards initiatives that are building a just and life-sustaining world. That takes ingenuity and an ability to adapt to change—not to mention GUTs, a whole lot of HEART and information that your supporters can wrap their HEADs around!

How will your story change the way money flows?



-Ellen Sprenger & Archana Deshpande
Spring Co-CEOs

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INTRODUCTION

Let's make the complex simple.



A LETTER FROM ELIZABETH

The world is constantly changing.

If the speed and chaotic nature of change is straining your team in the demanding daily work for rights and justice, you are not alone.

Successful movements take hosts of people pulling together over time—even generations. Supporters and potential supporters who long for the kind of world we are working toward must know how they can join us, and as soon as possible.¹

That said, it can be hard to communicate rights and justice work in ways that sustain and grow the groundswell of support needed to stay the course.



I believe the best thing we can do to deliver on our missions is to speak to the humanity of every person who comes in contact with us. And there, I have good news. **While the world is in a constant state of change, the way people absorb information is stable.** It doesn't change. This creates tremendous opportunities for us to craft compelling communications for any scenario, even in the face of uncertainty.

1. Supporters and potential supporters may be donors, funders, volunteers (including board members), staff, partners, collaborators, colleagues, influencers, allies, program participants, documenters, and so on.

I've spent forty-plus years as a performing artist, conductor, fundraiser (of serious capital!), leadership coach, strategist and facilitator. I've worked with hundreds of organizations, projects and initiatives. And, I've learned that there are some universal truths about how we, as humans, tell—and receive—stories and information.

Organizations that successfully move people and raise funds do more than just communicate information. They intuitively connect to deeper human needs and instincts. You can therefore tap into the ways that the body and brain react to stimuli. I'll get into this more in the following chapters, but consider some of our most compelling human needs:

- * **The need to be seen.** Every little child loves a version of “Peek-a-boo! I see you/I don't see you” that puts “you” (the self) at the center. It's a ritual inviting repeated play. Humans need and love to be seen at any age.
- * **A curiosity about contrast.** Contrast gives an immediate sense of satisfaction and a clear understanding of before and after. That kind of contrast in itself is a story that invites curiosity about change.
- * **A desire to feel what's possible.** Touching hearts, connecting to emotions and imagination, empathy, compassion and aspiration—all are part of being human.
- * **A drive to develop solutions.** People want to be smart and solve problems. To do that, we humans need relevant information that motivates us.

***GUT-HEART-HEAD in Action* makes the complex simple by using natural human abilities to process information in a way that connects to our GUT (need for recognition and belonging), HEART (sense of emotion, meaning and imagination), and HEAD (drive for analysis and action).**

7 THE STORY BRIDGE

Stories create personal meaning—essential for making decisions!



There are many ways to tell a story.

If you're communicating with supporters, you need a library of stories—stories where real people's lives are changed, and your work has something to do with making the change.

A story can quickly bring difficult-to-explain rights and justice work to life. Nothing unpacks complexity more than the power of a story of possibility, of what could be (HEART) ... and when HEART is moved, HEAD is primed to act!

But can a single story demonstrate the many facets of your work? For example, if you are in an intermediary funding role or a leader of a coalition, can a story authentically claim your team's role without seeming to take credit for what your beneficiaries and partners are doing?

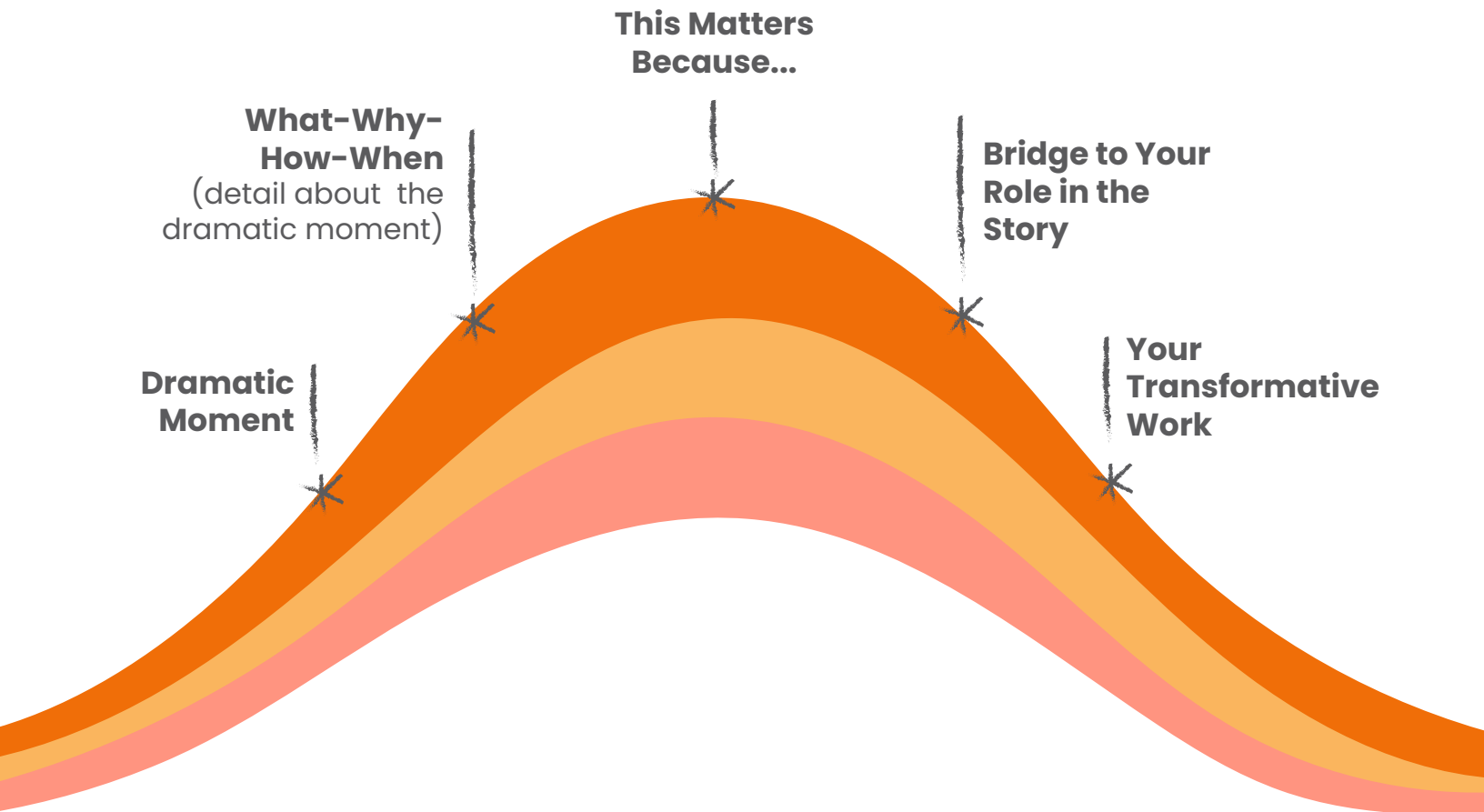
The answer is "Yes!"

I love the Story Bridge⁶ because it gives you a form to:

- ✦ tell a story of how conditions needed to change and have changed;
- ✦ make clear your team's role in facilitating the change; and
- ✦ help supporters understand how the story illustrates the whole of your work.

6. I learned this tool as "The Story Arc" from Sean D'Souza of Psychotactics, a treasure trove of resources for entrepreneurs that is in New Zealand. I adapted the form for *GUT-HEART-HEAD in Action* and named it "The Story Bridge".

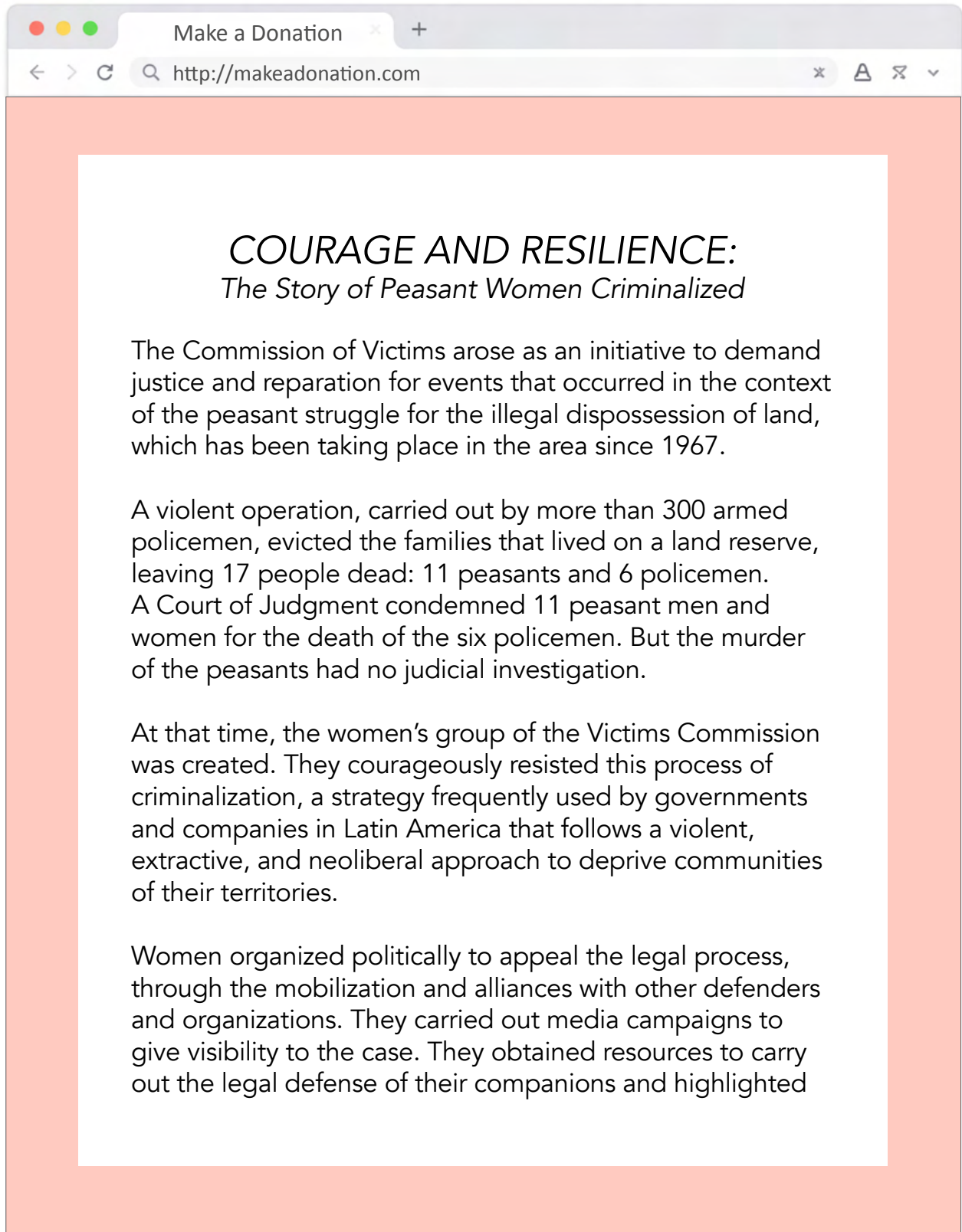
THE STORY BRIDGE



CASE STUDY: A STORY OF RESISTANCE

This story comes from a Latin American civil society organization (CSO) that works against the dispossession of people's lands, a longstanding issue in the region. Again, there is nothing wrong with this story. However, notice what happens when I reorder the text. Does GUT get it? Is HEART moved? Can HEAD integrate what the organization's work is about?

1. Read the original story on the next page.
2. Follow the notes on **"The Story Bridge"** version that follows on p. 60. The color-coding will show you how I did it.
3. See the final version, with a revised title!



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the title "Make a Donation" and the URL "http://makeadonation.com". The main content is a story titled "COURAGE AND RESILIENCE: The Story of Peasant Women Criminalized". The text describes the formation of the Commission of Victims, a violent operation by police, and the subsequent criminalization of peasant men and women. It also mentions the creation of a women's group and their political actions to appeal the legal process.

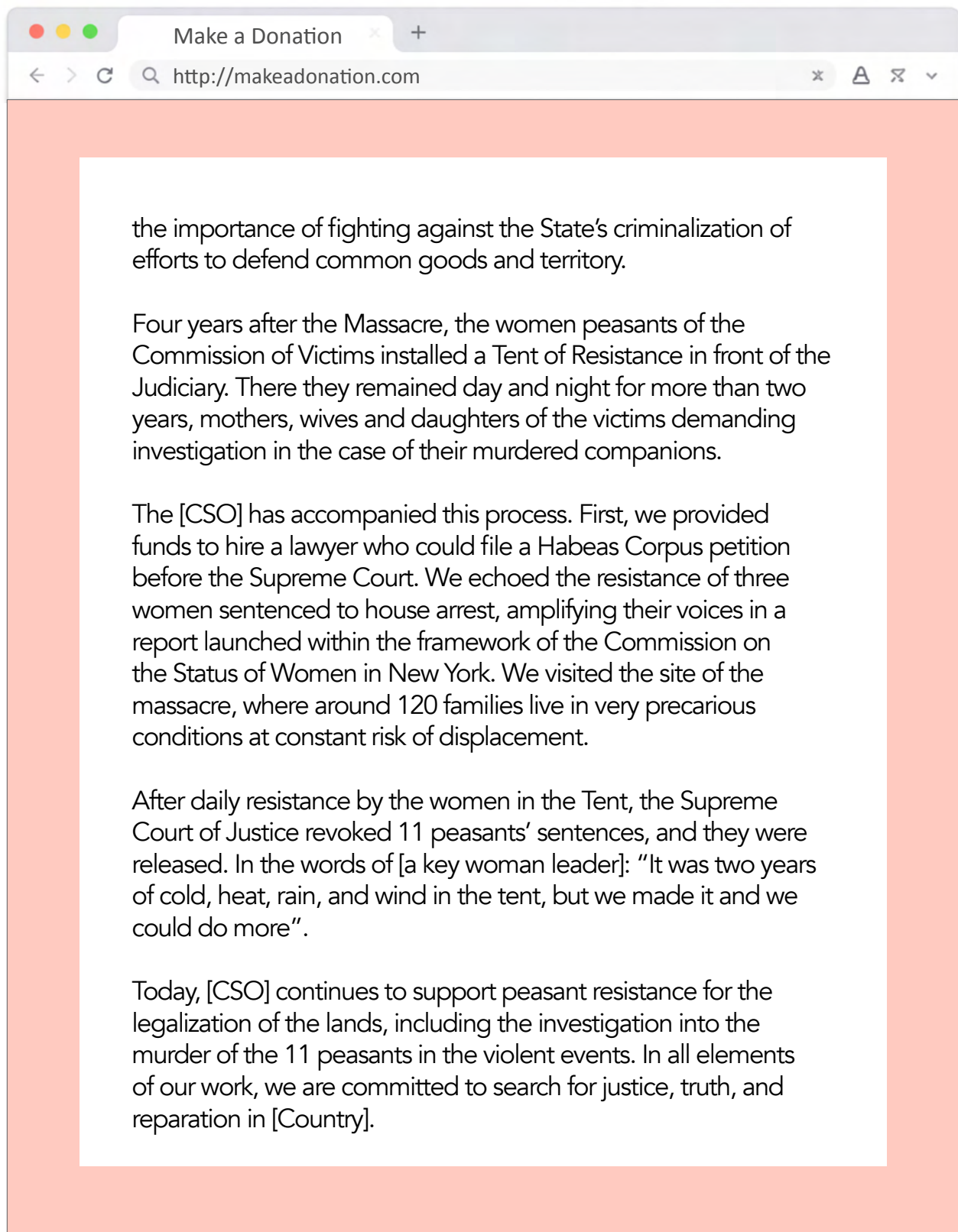
COURAGE AND RESILIENCE: *The Story of Peasant Women Criminalized*

The Commission of Victims arose as an initiative to demand justice and reparation for events that occurred in the context of the peasant struggle for the illegal dispossession of land, which has been taking place in the area since 1967.

A violent operation, carried out by more than 300 armed policemen, evicted the families that lived on a land reserve, leaving 17 people dead: 11 peasants and 6 policemen. A Court of Judgment condemned 11 peasant men and women for the death of the six policemen. But the murder of the peasants had no judicial investigation.

At that time, the women's group of the Victims Commission was created. They courageously resisted this process of criminalization, a strategy frequently used by governments and companies in Latin America that follows a violent, extractive, and neoliberal approach to deprive communities of their territories.

Women organized politically to appeal the legal process, through the mobilization and alliances with other defenders and organizations. They carried out media campaigns to give visibility to the case. They obtained resources to carry out the legal defense of their companions and highlighted



MAP OUT THE STORY BRIDGE

COURAGE AND RESILIENCE:

The story of peasant women criminalized

This Matters →
Because...

The Commission of Victims arose as an initiative to demand justice and reparation for events that occurred in June in the context of the peasant struggle for the illegal dispossession of land, which has been taking place in the area since 1967.

A Dramatic →
Moment

A violent operation, carried out by more than 300 armed policemen, evicted the families that lived on a land reserve, leaving 17 people dead: 11 peasants and 6 policemen.

What - Why -
How - When →

A Court of Judgment condemned 11 peasant men and women for the death of the six policemen. But the murder of the peasants had no judicial investigation.

This Matters
Because...

At that time, the women's group of the Victims Commission was created. They courageously resisted this process of criminalization, a strategy frequently used by governments and companies in Latin America that follows a violent, extractive, and neoliberal approach to deprive communities of their territories.

Women organized politically to appeal the legal process, through the mobilization and alliances with other defenders and organizations. They carried out media campaigns to give visibility to the case. They obtained resources to carry out the legal defense of their companions and highlighted the importance of fighting against the State's criminalization of efforts to defend common goods and territory.

What - Why -
How - When

A Dramatic
Moment

Four years later, the women peasants of the Commission of Victims installed a Tent of Resistance in front of the Judiciary. There they remained day and night for more than two years, mothers, wives and daughters of the victims, demanding investigation in the case of their murdered companions.

Bridge to the
Organization's
Role

The [CSO] has accompanied this process. First, we provided funds to hire a lawyer who could file a Habeas Corpus petition before the Supreme Court. We echoed the resistance of three women sentenced to house arrest, amplifying their voices in a report launched within the framework of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York. We visited the site of the massacre, where around 120 families live in very precarious conditions at constant risk of displacement.

What - Why -
How - When

After daily resistance by the women in the Tent, the Supreme Court of Justice revoked 11 peasants' sentences, and they were released. In the words of [a key woman leader]: "It was two years of cold, heat, rain, and wind in the tent, but we made it and we could do more".

Organization's
Transformative
Work

Today, [CSO] continues to support peasant resistance for the legalization of the lands, including the investigation into the murder of the 11 peasants in the violent events. We are committed to search for justice, truth, and reparation in [Country].

FINAL VERSION

(with "The Story Bridge")

Notice the new title! →

COURAGE AND RESILIENCE:

The story of the women in the tent

A Dramatic Moment (decide it first!)

While there are plenty of dramatic moments in the original story, I chose to lead with the women installing a tent of resistance and living in it for two years. For one thing, the organization's mission is about supporting women defenders. In addition, GUT and HEART may remember the "women's tent of resistance" as a symbol of the organization's work more than any of the other details in the story.

What - Why - How - When

Here is some detail about the dramatic moment. What happened with the women in the tent? What change occurred?

This Matters Because...

Here information places the story in a larger context. How did women take action? What were their strategies?

The women installed a Tent of Resistance in front of the Judiciary, where they remained day and night for more than two years. They were peasants, the mothers, wives and daughters of the victims of a violent massacre, where more than 300 armed policemen evicted families living on a land reserve, killing 11 and leaving 6 policemen dead.

The murders of the peasants had no investigation, but a Court of Judgment condemned 11 peasant men and women for the death of the 6 policemen. Four years later, the women in the Tent of Resistance continued to demand an investigation into the killings. After daily resistance by the women, the Supreme Court of Justice revoked 11 peasants' sentences, and they were released. In the words of [a key woman leader]: "It was two years of cold, heat, rain, and wind in the tent, but we made it, and we could do more."

The massacre happened in the context of the peasant struggle for the illegal dispossession of land, which has been taking place in the area since 1967. At that time, the Victims Commission was created as an initiative to demand justice and reparation, and the women's group arose. The women courageously resisted the

process of criminalization, a strategy frequently used by governments and companies in Latin America that follows a violent, extractive, and neoliberal approach to deprive communities of their territories. Women organized politically to appeal the legal process, through mobilization and alliances with other defenders and organizations. They carried out media campaigns to give visibility to the case. They obtained resources to carry out the legal defense of their companions and highlighted the importance of fighting against the State's criminalization of efforts to defend common goods and territory.

Added for emphasis → **And they installed the Tent of Resistance.**
(not in the original text)

Bridge to the Organization's Role

This paragraph "bridges" from the story of the women to the role the organization played in this specific story.

The [CSO] has accompanied this process. First, we provided funds to hire a lawyer who could file a Habeas Corpus petition before the Supreme Court. We echoed the resistance of three women sentenced to house arrest, amplifying their voices in a report launched within the framework of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York. We visited the site of the massacre, where around 120 families live in very precarious conditions at constant risk of displacement.

The Organization's Transformative Work

The last sentence is not in the original text. It is the CSO's mission statement. It serves to "bridge" how the one story illustrates the whole of the CSO's work.

Today, [CSO] continues to support peasant resistance for the legalization of the lands, including the investigation into the murder of the 11 peasants in the violent events. We are committed to search for justice, truth, and reparation in [Country].

[CSO] supports the resistance, struggles and demands of women defenders in the transformation of systems of injustice and inequality, placing comprehensive feminist protection and care at the center.

EXERCISE: THE DRAMATIC MOMENT

The **“The Story Bridge”** begins with a Dramatic Moment. It sets up the rest of the story to lead to the work of an organization and its role in making change. How do you find or create that moment?

- 1. The Dramatic Moment may typically be an action along with memorable physical details: actions like constructing a tent, or time of day, place, colors, weather, sounds, texture, what the main character looks like, objects, smells, feelings, and so on.

Complete these statements to construct a dramatic moment with physical detail:

“The phone rang at 8:00 AM. It was the governor calling and ...”

“There at the door was a woman wearing ...”

“None of us predicted that losing would ...”

2. Read one of your existing stories out loud to your team.

When finished, ask them to quickly write down the exact words and phrases they heard—their first thoughts, not interpretations. What do you notice? Did they list physical details, emotions, or something else? What do you take away from this exercise?

3. Interestingly, in all the sample stories about rights and justice work I've studied for GUT-HEART-HEAD clinics, the Dramatic Moment I chose occurred half to two-thirds of the way through the sample.

Test this out by selecting a Dramatic Moment in one of your own stories.

REFLECT

- * "Stories create personal meaning, essential for making decisions." On a practical level, what does this mean for you and your team?
- * Think about stories you have created or heard related to your rights and justice work. What words and phrases are sticking with you over time?

MORE RESOURCES

Story Bridge Case Study p.132. Follow the color coding to see how the **"The Story Bridge"** reorders the original text to illustrate the many aspects of one organization's work on gender-based violence.

WORK WITH ME!

Would you like a private clinic to consider your own work, with me as your coach? I'm happy to arrange online sessions for you and/or your team, in English. All time zones are welcome!

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About the author



Elizabeth Seja Min is a tone-setter, leadership coach, infrastructure geek, problem solver, strategic designer, decision-making guide, documenter, partner and shepherd-at-large. She has helped hundreds of organizations communicate with heart, raise serious capital, collaborate and lead. Elizabeth has been in the trenches with every aspect of organization life, working on the most pressing social issues of our time. She's built organizations and projects from the ground up and guided leaders and teams through times of serious strategic transition.

Elizabeth brings 40+ years of experience at the intersection of resource mobilization, leadership development, documentary film, and creating systems and cultures to bring out the best in people. She has been at the helm of 150+ projects, along with four U.S. nonprofit organizations focused on community cultural development. With Spring's FIRE program, she has coached hundreds of organizations worldwide in creating compelling communications to mobilize resources for a more just world.

Credits

I am grateful to the organizations who shared samples of their written work with me. Their work is at the heart of this book.

Countries represented in the case studies and examples:

The Bahamas
Brazil
Canada
Colombia
Egypt
Germany
Indonesia
Kenya
Lebanon

The Netherlands
Nigeria
Peru
Tanzania
Togo
Uganda
United Kingdom
United States
Virgin Islands

About Spring

Spring is a capacity accelerator and partner for changemakers on paths of transformation. We support social and climate justice organizations to make an impact through leadership coaching, financial resilience and meaningful collaboration.

This e-book was published in partnership with Spring's Financial Innovation and Resilience (FIRE) program and is available to practitioners as a free resource. FIRE is an internationally acclaimed, comprehensive training that teaches the fundamentals of financial resilience. It equips teams with new tools and strategies to better respond to an increasingly volatile and rapidly changing political and funding landscape.

Learn more at www.springstrategies.org

