

Key contents in Narrative Report Writing



What Experienced Report Writers Do Differently?

Average writers

- Describe activities
- Repeat proposal language
- Report everything

Strong writers

- Focus on key results
- Select strong evidence
- Explain why results matter



From “What” to “How”

- How do we actually write a narrative report?”
- Process \neq good writing
- Data \neq strong reporting

\Rightarrow Logic + structure = strong reporting

Examples

- a) Training was conducted for CSOs. Participants gained knowledge.
- b) Following a 3-day M&E training, 45 CSO staff applied indicator tracking tools in their projects, with 78% submitting complete reports on time, improving reporting quality across partner organizations.

Note

- If you remove **one sentence** and the **meaning breaks** → your logic is working.
- If sentences feel **independent** → logic is weak.



Most reports fail because:

- They describe activities
 - They list data
 - They miss meaning
-
- Example: Training conducted for 60 participants
 - Is this enough? What is missing?

Write it AGAIN!

- Using this suggested form:

WHO + DID WHAT + WHAT CHANGED + EVIDENCE + SO WHAT

60 CSO staff (WHO) participated in a 3-day M&E training (DID WHAT), resulting in improved ability to develop and use indicators (WHAT CHANGED), with 82% correctly applying logframe indicators in post-training assessments (EVIDENCE), leading to more accurate and timely project reporting across partner organizations (SO WHAT).

Reporting Checklist (For Reflective Writing)

1. Clarity of Change

- Did I clearly state what changed (not just what happened)?
- Is the change linked to a specific activity?

2. Cause–Effect Link

- Did I explain HOW the activity led to the change?
- Is there a clear cause → effect relationship?

3. Evidence-Based Reporting

- Did I include data (numbers, %, frequency)?
- Did I include qualitative evidence (quotes, examples)?
- Can a donor verify or trust this claim?

4. No Logical Gaps

- Are there any missing steps in the story?
- Does each sentence lead naturally to the next?

5. “So What” (Critical for Donors)

- Did I explain why this result matters?
- Is the result linked to project objectives or impact?

6. Avoid Common Weaknesses

- No vague words: “improved,” “enhanced,” “successful” (without proof)
- No activity-only reporting
- No assumptions without evidence

why do reports still focus more on activities
and outputs rather than outcomes?

Structured Outcome Writing

- A strong narrative sentence must clearly show who changed, what changed, how you know, and why it matters
- WHO → CHANGE → EVIDENCE → SO WHAT

Improved:

- 60 CSO staff applied advocacy skills, verified through follow-up monitoring, improving their engagement with local authorities.

What counts as “evidence”?

Indicator = what you plan to measure

Evidence = what you collect to prove it

For each indicator, define:

- Data source (where evidence comes from)
- Collection method (how)
- Frequency (when)
- Responsible person

How to get evidence



Before-After Measurement: Pre-test post-test, Baseline endline



Observation: Checklist, assessing real application



Output Verification: Reports, policy brief...



Surveys / Questionnaires



Interviews / Quotes



Administrative / System Data

What is the most difficult type of evidence to collect when reporting outcomes, and why?

Why This Formula Matters

- You already have:
 - Data ✓
 - Process ✓
- ❑ But without structure
- ❑ Reporting becomes descriptive

Example:

1. 60 participants attended.
2. 60 participants applied skills, improving performance.

👉 Structure turns data → evidence of results

Rule-Based Writing: Step-by-Step

1. Outcome →What changed
2. Who →Who changed
3. Evidence →How do you know
4. So What →Why it matters
5. Context →Why/how it happened

Ex:

60 CSO staff applied advocacy skills (Outcome), based on monitoring data (Evidence), improving engagement with authorities (So What).

👉 Follow this order every time you write

“So What”

- “So What” explains why the result matters for beneficiaries, systems, or policy
- Example:
 - 60% applied skills.
 - 60% applied skills, improving organizational performance and accountability.

Why is it difficult to explain “So What” in reports, even when results are available?

Report Checklist



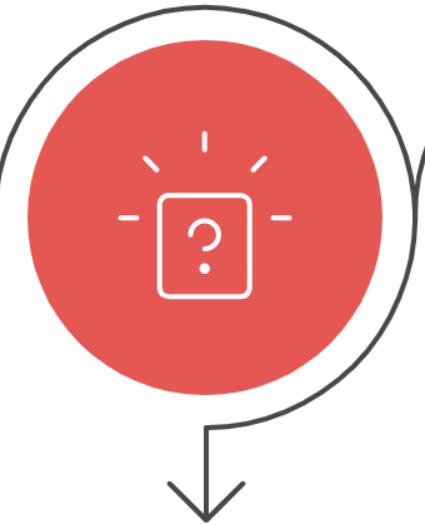
Change

Did I describe the change or outcome?



Evidence

Did I include numbers or evidence to support my claims?



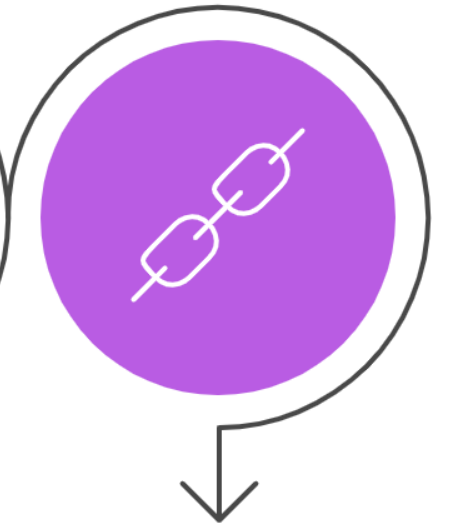
Importance

Did I explain why the report matters or its significance?



Clarity

Did I avoid using vague or unclear language?



Link

Did I link the report to a specific indicator or target?

The 1-2-1 Rule for Strong Writing

What is the 1-2-1 Rule?

In every paragraph, use 1 sentence for the result, 2 sentences for evidence and explanation, and 1 sentence for the "so what."

Can you give me an example?

"CSOs improved advocacy capacity. This was evidenced by 60% applying tools in real engagement. This was supported by monitoring data. As a result, CSOs strengthened their role in local governance."



Common Errors



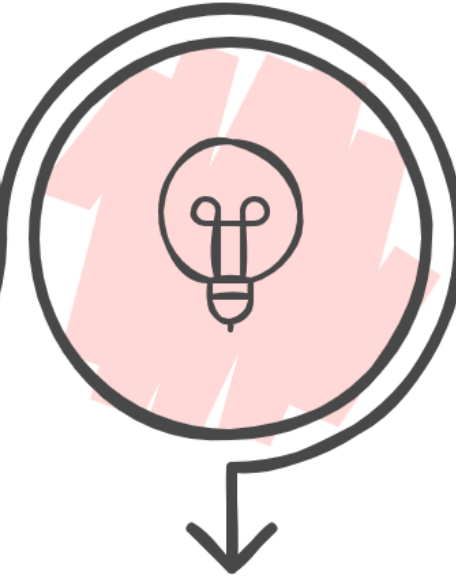
Activity Trap

Using phrases like "We conducted..." focuses on the activity itself, not the outcome.



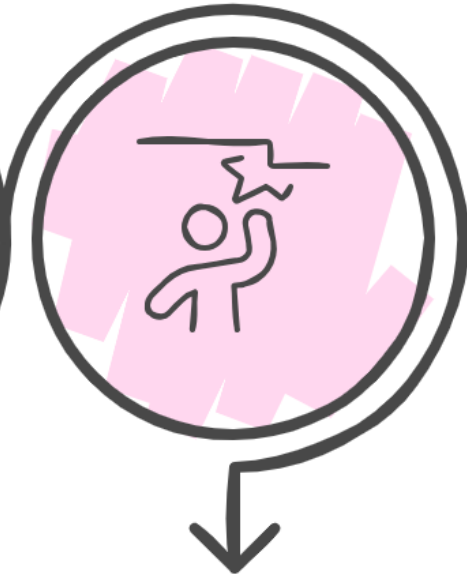
No Evidence

Stating "Participants improved" without providing data lacks credibility.



No Meaning

Saying "Training completed successfully" is vague and doesn't explain the impact.



Over-claiming

Asserting "We changed national policy" without proof is an overstatement.

How do you balance honest reporting
(including challenges) with pressure to show
success to donors?

What is **ONE** practical change you will make in your next report to improve quality?

EU Reporting Template

Report Content

1. Description

2. Assessment of the
Implementation of
the Action Activities
and Its Results

2.1 Executive
Summary of the
Action

2.2 Results and
Activities

2.3 Logframe Matrix
Updated

2.4 Activity Matrix

2.5 Updated Action
Plan for Future
Activities

2.6 SEA-H
Self-Evaluation
Update (if applicable)

3. Beneficiaries /
Affiliated Entities,
Trainees and Other
Cooperation

4. Visibility