

# How to Write an Effective Case Study

*Principles and Format*

**A Primer for Civil Society Organisations**

**Initiative of Centre for Strategic Communication (Vikas Samvad)**



<b>Title</b>	<b>How to Write an Effective Case Study?</b>
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#### **About Vikas Samvad**

**Vikas Samvad is a practising Social Development (Nutrition Agriculture and Food Security), Capacity Building, Research & Documentation and Communication Organisation.**

**It seeks to provide support to and network with the Civil Society Organisations for Storytelling and Strategic Communication. The intent is to widen the civic space towards creating stronger social and public good.**

**Self-learning and action manuals are prepared under the agis of Strategic Communication Centre (Vikas Samvad) capacitation programme for civil society organizations.**

**If any organization/group feels the requirement of capacity building support, please reach out to us at [office@vssmp.org](mailto:office@vssmp.org) /0755 4252789**

## Objective of the Primer

The objective of this primer is to provide basic and practical support to CSO representatives in preparing effective case studies. Through this, they will be able to factually present any special aspect or practical experience or achievements related to their subject/project.

## Necessity

The fundamental belief is that CSOs must have strong skills, capacities and interest for sharing learnings, ideas and outcomes relating to their interventions. In the absence of such sharing CSOs might end up in a situation where they might not be able to improve their interventions and their efforts will go unrecognized on Public Policy and Academic circles.

## What is Case Study?

Case Study is a factual-qualitative description of any subject, problem, situation, solution or individual/organization. Case study has a format and the writer/presenter should be clear on the point as to whom the case study is being presented to. Case study provides answers about a topic – What is the issue/subject? Why? About whom? Where? What is the impact? Since when? How was the problem/issue resolved? What are the facts?

Case Study is not a tool to propagate the identity of an Organisation, but it is a medium to narrate the issue or the problem of the community, barriers and efforts to overcome those barriers, process of intervention and the first-hand account of the community representatives and the result of any intervention.

*A case study is an in-depth study of one person, group, or event. In a case study, nearly every aspect of the subject's life and history is analyzed to seek patterns and causes of behavior. Case studies can be used in various fields, including psychology, medicine, education, anthropology, political science, and social work.*

*The purpose of a case study is to learn as much as possible about an individual or group so that the information can be generalized to many others. Unfortunately, case studies tend to be highly subjective, and it is sometimes difficult to generalize results to a larger population.*

(Source - <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-write-a-psychology-case-study-2795722>)

# Principles



## First principle

The most important thing about writing/presenting a case study is the desire to tell/write one's story. If the community workers/researchers do not have the desire to tell or speak about their experiences, experiments, challenges and achievements in an impartial manner, case studies cannot be prepared.

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## Second principle

The intention to practice preparing for case studies along with desire to write/present case studies. If we feel that we will prepare the case studies only when someone asks for it or it is required for some specific purpose, then preparing the case studies will be meaningless.

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## Third principle

Having the evidence that include facts/figures/statements or versions of affected/impacted persons without fail. These factors make the case studies credible. At least one-fourth of the case study should be devoted to evidence/facts/statements.

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## Fourth principle

Understanding the various aspects and dimensions of one's subject. For example, malnutrition might be caused due to unavailability of enough food for the children, but there are other factors involved such as lack of livelihood in the family, caste or gender discrimination or poor implementation of government schemes. Take all these aspects and related dimensions in the case study.

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## Fifth principle

You have to decide right at the outset whether the case study is a personal or an organizational/institutional presentation. If we are presenting on behalf of the institution/organization, then we should keep in mind that the presentation should be clearly in the name of institution/organization/initiative.

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### **Sixth principle**

Is the role in which you are writing the case study clear? Is it as a social worker, a researcher, a member of the community, a writer or in some other role?

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### **Seventh principle**

Do give a deep thought as to whether what you are writing about is the factual/objective situation or your own perspective or thought. The effort should be to present factual/objective situation only.

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### **Eighth principle**

While presenting case studies, we should be alert not to give importance to our prejudices.

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### **Ninth principle**

Attach such photographs and videos that match with and substantiate your points in the case study. Good photographs are essential for effective presentation of case studies. Photographs should be on the same subject as that of the case study. It has to be seen that the photos are not blurred, of low light or taken from such a distance that nothing is visible.

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### **Tenth principle**

While presenting photographs of women and children, it is important to take care of their privacy, dignity and rules related to them.

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### **Eleventh principle**

Respect whatever language you are using to write. Errors of language can change entire meaning of the writing. Therefore it is important to read and study about the subject as well as the language of the community.

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### **Twelfth principle**

Do you know who can provide authentic and factual information on the subject you have chosen to write? Why that person/source can provide the information? It is important to find out who, what and why will be sources of facts/information.

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### **Thirteenth principle**

It is very important to be a keen Observer in the natural setting. Be observant to the people living in a particular situation, to their body language, expressions and tone of their voice.

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### **Fourteenth principle**

As a representative of Civil Society Organisation, you have a responsibility to follow a system of documentation. Keep noting your observations, statements given by the community members or the service providers, so that they could be used while developing Case Studies. The best option is to keep an hour for reminding ourselves of what has happened today and its documentation.

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## Prior Preparation

- **WILLINGNESS & INCLINATION** – Are you really willing to share a Case Study? Are you really inclined to do so? **CHECK IT!**
- Do you know what you **EXACTLY** want to tell? (Tell yourself in two sentences what you want to tell)
- Do you understand the wider objectives and strategies of your initiative/project? Be Specific and Unambiguous!
- **WHERE TO STOP?** - If you want to tell just about your activities, **STOP!** You are not yet ready for presentation of case studies
- **UTILITY** - Why should any individual/organization/policy maker have interest in your story? (Decide yourself)
- Be **CLEAR** - What is the main subject matter of what you want to tell –
  - You want to tell about a problem
  - You want to tell about a solution
  - You want to tell about an experiment and its achievements
  - You want to give information about an individual/organization
- **GROUNDING** - Have you collected facts / evidence / statements of affected/impacted community necessary to make your case study credible?

## How to collect ground facts/information/statistics?

Facts, information, statistics are very important for a case study. For example, consider that you are working on the issue of food security and nutrition:

- Do you have these informations? : How many children below six years of age reside in village/project area? How many of them are undernourished? What is the situation of livelihood, drinking water facility, and health of these families? Has there been any child marriage? Are they under debt? What is the diet of pregnant and lactating women?

- You can collect these informations yourself through a survey. Get them from anganwadi centres and panchayat office. Engage in a group discussion. Do take information from the families concerned. It is important that we have clear questions and curiosities. It should be very clear what we want to know. We will also have to find out which department of government will have related information and make efforts to get the information from there. Do remember that we should be using the newest facts and statistics. Also remember that no good case study can be prepared without field work.
- Be alert on the scientific and technical aspects of the subject. You must talk/consult to the subject expert.
- Make sure you have complete details about the programs and policies relating to the subject. Check which one is the latest and updated!



# Template for a Case Study

## Summary

- First write the gist of your story/case study in 7 to 8 sentences (What is the subject /problem and Outcome?)
- Check whether there are facts and figures in this gist or not? There should not be more than 2 or 3 figures in the gist
- Also ensure that the summary includes those outcomes that you want to tell

## Start

- Start your case study with some lesson or special achievement. This sentence should be such as to create interest in the reader to move forward with the case study
- Give the background/description of the subject/project/changes that you want to tell about. (There should be mention of problem/topic including facts and evidence) (In 7-8 sentences/points)
- This description should answer the question as to why did you take this initiative? What was the need? (2-3 sentences/points)

## Build up on the Start

- What was your inspiration/motive for this initiative? (2-3 sentences/points)
- What problem you wanted to solve?
- How did you start the initiative/effort? (4-5 sentences/points)
- Mention of main strategies (5-6 sentences/points)
- What was the process of your initiative/project/effort? The writer/presenter should avoid putting forth personal ideas/opinions. Rather give more space to the statements of the people connected to the initiative/project. Also mention the facts. If your subject is directly linked to some other subject, mention that linkage here (14-15 sentences/points)
- What were the challenges to your initiative/efforts? How did you face them? What were the conducive or non-conducive situations/people? (6-7 sentences/points)

## Learnings, Achievements and Outcomes

- What were major lessons you learnt from this initiative/effort? How was it different from earlier efforts? (5-6 sentences/points)
- What was the outcome of initiative/effort? With facts, figures and statements. At this stage we will have to tell about the changes brought in (6-7 sentences/points)
- When we present the changes brought in by our initiative/project, then we will have to use facts and figures from earlier situation and present situation (before and after). Only then will we be able to establish the change.

## Check, Crosscheck and Recheck

- Read the case study prepared by you as a reader. How are you feeling after reading it?
- Is what you want to tell/inform clearly visible? What is the novelty of what you are telling?
- Are there language or factual discrepancies or errors?
- Are there evidence/facts/statements included? Are lessons and outcomes recorded?
- Content and Language do not violate any norm and values.

