

OneStory

*This article is from a OneStory publication,
written by the executive committee and later modified by Annette Hall*

Introduction

Current estimates suggest that around two-thirds of the world's population processes new information by oral means. Some are oral communicators by necessity – they cannot process information by literate means. Others may have a degree of literacy for certain basic functions, but will not use literate means to process more complex information such as is in the Bible. For these oral communicators, life lessons are processed by observation, participation and oral communication – stories, proverbs, genealogies, drama, songs, chants, dance, ceremonies, rites of passage, oral histories and epic tales.

Communication of the Gospel by means of these same oral deliveries often has a greater effectiveness in largely oral societies than the literate methods that churches and mission agencies have long used. Based on grass-roots initiatives in varied situations around the world, mother-tongue storyers and cross-cultural workers are reporting the effectiveness of these oral delivery strategies, in many cases among groups previously uninterested in or resistant to the Gospel.

In recent years, a growing number of individuals and agencies have been periodically gathering for consultations on orality, networking on issues such as chronological Bible storying, as well as related oral and audio-visual expressions.

An intersection of these different streams has resulted in OneStory (formerly called 'Epic'), a partnership managed by the five largest global organizations involved in both oral and audio-visual means. These agencies have a common motivation, goal and focus in reaching the least-reached people groups and Bibleless language groups of the world. Each organization brings a unique set of strengths to a partnership centred on Bible storying. Besides these five managing agencies, OneStory partners with other compatible agencies, churches and individuals, and the partnership is open to many more. Such like-minded agencies are welcome to partner with OneStory regionally or globally.

Vision

By 2020, OneStory seeks to spark a global revolution in the availability of God's Word to oral cultures, so that all unreached and Bibleless people groups will hear and respond to the Gospel, resulting in healthy, indigenous, reproducing churches. A core value that pervades all other values is that of reaching ALL peoples. This means that the proclamation of God's Word will not be limited by the level of literacy of a people group, their geographic or socio-political context, the size of the group or any other parameter. OneStory values EVERY unreached people group and desires to see a church-planting movement addressing all segments of the

society, including oral communicators, among EACH AND EVERY group.

OneStory honours the communication style, preference and tradition of each distinct people group. God's Word is full of the stories God chose to reveal to us his character, his plan of redemption and his loving relationship with man. The Bible preserves these stories in a written record, but much of their original communication was oral, and the primary means of communicating them over the millennia was oral. A first generation of mother-tongue storyers telling a carefully crafted and carefully selected set of Bible stories and equipping others to tell them accurately provides for effective, deeply understood evangelism that results in indigenously led and reproducing churches.

OneStory envisions the effective communication of God's Word resulting in evangelism and discipleship spreading broadly through every people group, deeply influencing lives. The result of this movement is the planting and growth of healthy churches that respond to the unique, God-given culture of each people group while at the same time staying firmly grounded in God's Word. As part of this movement, spiritual leaders are developed and equipped to pastor and spiritually nourish believers. This encourages the mutual building up of the body of Christ as individuals exercise their spiritual gifts and reproduce themselves by training more spiritual leaders. Church planting becomes a movement as the members of each local church plant new churches within their own people group and beyond.

Outcomes

An initial outcome of the partnering effort is a three-part introductory set of around forty to fifty chronological Bible stories developed to support a reproducing evangelism, discipleship and church life. There is no standard or universal story set being promoted. Rather, the particular set of stories varies for each people group – a redemptive panorama developed to best interact with each particular world view and socio-cultural setting. The three parts of the redemptive panorama generally consist of:

- ◆ A series of Old Testament stories covering the creation of the world, the nature of God and his love for people, their need for reconciliation with God, and his dealings with his people in preparing the way for the coming Saviour.
- ◆ A series of stories from the Gospels, covering the birth, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and how his act brought about reconciliation between God and man.
- ◆ A series of stories from Acts and the Epistles that show people coming to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, the growth of the Church and the promise of Christ's return.

With a redemptive panorama consisting of these sorts of stories, then, primary outcomes for a OneStory project include:

- ◆ A first generation of mother-tongue storyers telling the stories within their people group – engaged in evangelism, discipleship and planting

and leading churches that reproduce themselves.

- ♦ High-quality audio recordings of the stories to ensure a mutually approved standard that can be referred to and archived, with distribution in broad sowing as appropriate to the local situation.
- ♦ Archived documentation of the project consisting of notes from world view observation:
 - ♦ a written back translation¹ of the stories with notes on key biblical terms used
 - ♦ notes from a consultant review of biblical integrity and naturalness
 - ♦ a description of the project results for evangelism, discipleship, church planting movements or other spiritual movements.
- ♦ Planning by the local church and regional ministry network for subsequent ministry phases.
- ♦ Groups of people listening to the stories and forming reproducing churches.

Project Models

The OneStory partnership provides two project models for achieving these outcomes, Quest and Venture.

A Quest project engages in a two-year storying project with a people group by assigning a new team. The two-year Quest team normally consists of two or three members formed from among various sources: national Chris-

tians called to cross-cultural ministry, short-term expatriate teams mobilized through a partnering agency, members of advocate churches and believers from among the receptor people group. Trainers, mentors and consultants support these teams in reaching the outcomes of the project.

Quest teams participate in a two-year training and consulting cycle which involves training sessions and onsite mentoring at intervals of approximately every three months. Regular debriefing periods, spiritual retreats and vacation times are planned for the Quest teams as part of the two-year term.

In a Venture project, a church, agency or individual team has an established work among a particular people group and sees the need for a well-rounded chronological storying approach. The partnership provides the assistance that the long-term team may need, each partner doing this from his/her areas of expertise, experience and strength, usually around the time frame of an existing OneStory training and consulting cycle. That is, the long-term team members will participate in those aspects of a training and consulting cycle that enable them to achieve OneStory project outcomes.

In some Venture projects, where the long-term team already has training in multiple areas covered in the training cycle, or where there are significant

¹ Back translation is translating the story, which has been crafted by a native speaker storyteller into another language such as English or French so that it can be anchored to Scripture and checked by Wycliffe consultants who work with OneStory. This back translation is usually

done by a non-Christian or someone who does not know the Bible well. A translator who is a native speaker, though not necessarily literate, has to be fluent in another language so that the translation can be accurate. The translation can be recorded and transcribed later.

available resources in place, the project outcomes may be attainable in a short time period. In other cases, the Venture project may take the same time frame as Quest to achieve its goals, particularly if the long-term team needs to participate in most of a training and consulting cycle, or is engaging in the project as only one aspect of a broader ministry. At the moment five Venture teams are working in North Africa.

Training and Consulting Cycles

To enable the outcomes of a OneStory project, the partnership jointly manages training and consulting cycles in various locations. Training is in a predominantly oral, narrative format, where the storying processes to be implemented are modelled, discussed, practiced and debriefed. There are Quest or Venture Training and Consulting cycles, which begin in March/April and October/November each year.

For Quest cycles, after an initial one-month training session, the subsequent cycle of training and mentoring involves 'just-in-time' training interspersed with periods of observation, research and implementation of the OneStory project. There are major training events and spiritual retreats at six-month intervals, with further shorter training sessions or onsite consultations at the midpoint between each of the major six-month events. With this structure, the teams have a significant face-to-face contact with mentors, trainers and other participants in OneStory projects every three months.

In addition to regional Quest cycles, where there is a viable regional cluster of teams ready to engage in Venture projects and move along on the same timetable, a special Venture cycle may be arranged. Venture cycles may also move at a different pace from the two-year Quest cycles and involve only those parts of the cycle for which the teams have not already been trained.

Each of the five agencies managing the OneStory partnership provides aspects of training or consulting in these cycles. For this training each partner works from competencies his or her agency has developed for the trainees and for the trainers in their areas of responsibility – competencies that are vetted by the OneStory executive team.

Mobilization

Local entities, sections or affiliates of one of the managing agencies of OneStory, or compatible mission agencies or churches wanting to mobilize workers to engage in a OneStory project coordinate with a member of the OneStory executive team or designee. Other agencies are welcome to partner with OneStory in mobilizing Quest and Venture teams – mother-tongue team members, national cross-cultural workers and expatriates.

The mobilizing agency recruits, screens, orients and assigns its candidates according to its normal processes. The agency may assign the candidate to a OneStory project managed by its own field entity or affiliate. Or the mobilizing agency may work with a partner agency to cross-assign the candidate. Cross-agency teams

are common – for example, one team is composed of a single Wycliffe team mem-

ber and a single Pioneer team member who work in an IMB-managed project.

To contact the OneStory executive:

Churches, individuals, mission agencies or those involved in ministry among a people group are invited to ask for more information or get involved with OneStory by contacting either:

- ♦ Annette Hall, email: gatewaycity@pobox.com
- ♦ www.epicpartners.org
- ♦ Epic@newlife-world.org
- ♦ 1-866-His-Epic (1-866-447-3742 – toll free in the USA)