Storytelling: At the crossroads of human rights and data-journalism in the South Caucasus

Introduction

This project will address the information gap which exists in the South Caucasus - Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan - between human rights issues and how these issues reach populations, which is not through evidence, but largely through anecdotes, myth, rumor, and outside agendas - both political and special interest.

Recently, an increase in murders in Georgia have started to concern Georgians even though the Ministry of Internal Affairs' official summary data indicates that only one person was murdered in the month of July while information reported by newspapers during that month indicate many more. It is clear that there is a disparity between what the Ministry reports and what actually happens. Civil society, including JumpStart, has been requesting crime data for years with no luck. After the large amnesty of prisoners in 2012, both the new ruling party and the opposition party used the public's ignorance about crime incidents in Georgia to manipulate constituents who are now riled up about an issue they know very little about.

In Armenia, as tensions simmer in Nagorno-Karabakh and the number of dead are increasing, newspapers are reporting every casualty at the hands of Azerbaijani soldiers, yet few are reporting the number of Armenian soldiers killed by friendly fire, hazing, and poor living conditions, yet some journalists expect the number to be quite high. The same can be said in Azerbaijan. In both cases, politicians, supported by a sensationalist media, are using their citizens' ignorance to manipulate them.

In Azerbaijan, the government is systematically dissolving and silencing both human rights organizations, activists, media organizations, and journalists, in effect, enabling a corrupt government a free hand to not just trample its citizens' human rights, but to prevent anyone from documenting and reporting those transgressions.

It has become obvious for us that the intersection between human rights and journalism is blurring, if it was ever distinct to begin with. At the heart of both - protecting human rights, documenting human rights transgressions and reporting those transgressions to those in a position to make a difference - lies the evidence of those transgressions. Data is fundamental to both ensuring we understand what is happening and thus protecting human rights and how we equip the public to understand human rights issues and ultimately make decisions or act on that information.

JumpStart sees three problems contributing to this information gap which we are in a position to address. The first is the culture of sensationalism in the South Caucasus media which precludes prioritizing facts over rumor rather than being a source of accurate information and effectively equipping citizens to make better decisions about issues within society. The second is the limitations of advocacy groups and CSOs who, while they maybe are used to

working with data, aren't often able to present it to audiences in consumable and attractive ways. The third is a lack of meeting points between these two groups - media organizations which have the audience and CSOs which have the evidence - and culture of cooperation between both.

JumpStart seeks to tackle these problems head-on by continuing and building on the work begun two years ago through Visualizing the News in Georgia (VNG) and then Visualizing for Data-driven Advocacy (VDA). We will continue to partner with CSOs and media organizations to develop their data literacy, inspire them by showing how technology, design, and creativity can engage, and to equip them with tools and technologies built to meet their needs. This project will strengthen media and CSO organizations capacities to find, use, and communicate important evidence to better report human rights and social issues to citizens.

The organizations we partner with have reaped the benefits of our creative media which communicate their ideas to reach new audiences and assist in achieving their advocacy goals. JumpStart's visualizations, based soundly in data, have translated complex numbers into stories about which many Georgians might never have known.

JumpStart's tools are allowing organizations, such as Accessible Environment for Everyone, to measure human rights[1] by measuring and interpreting the state of physical and tangible indicators. We have seen how the addition of infographics have increased the online circulation of media organizations,[2] thus bringing important news to larger audiences. Advocates in support of the rights of IDPs in Georgia, such as CHCA,[3] have seen how visual storytelling can direct audiences to take action and contribute financially to their causes. In the past six months we have been approached by OSGF, UNICEF, UNFPA, Lebanese American University in Beirut, MeydanTV, and EWMI-GPAC to produce their data visually. In addition to creating tools and visual media, we have worked with a number of partners to transfer tangible skills such as how to find relevant data, how to analyze that data, and how to communicate the data so that it is engaging.[4]

Our past work has shown that exposure to data and creative ways of communicating have a motivating effect. Our partner organizations continue to want to adopt these new skills and incorporate new media towards achieving their organizational goals. We are witness to a civil society and media landscape in Georgia that only two years ago had little innovation, to one that is adopting current international trends of visual communication in the form of infographics. However, our past work has also shown us that many media organizations and CSOs don't understand that there is a difference between visualizing data and telling stories visually with data, which often results in wasted resources and opportunities.

In our past experience, most organizations have lacked the capacity or have been unaware of or undervalue:
- advocacy in general (often writing it into a proposal as an afterthought) and data-driven advocacy specifically
- how data can shed light on an issue and strengthen arguments and messages
- how there is a difference between visualizing data and telling stories visually with data
- the technical requirements/capacity to do this and how to manage these processes

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[1] The concept of using data about physical places to derive knowledge about human rights in this way is new and we are pushing the envelope in this area.
[2] Liberali Magazine's viewership increased by over 33% (from 60,000 to over 80,000) in their first month of using infographics created by JumpStart. http://www.liberali.ge/ge/liberali/infographics/
[3] http://storybuilder.jumpstart.ge/en/bavshvebi-shavshvebidan
[4] In the last two years, the following organizations have requested to partner with JumpStart to produce infographics, trainings, or other data-driven communication media for their advocacy and/or media work: Transparency International Georgia, Partnership for Road Safety, Georgian Young Lawyers Association, Liberali, Open Society Georgia Foundation, University of Washington (TASCHA), East-West Management Institute in Georgia, Lebanese-American University, GIPA, MeydanTV, Guerrilla Gardening Movement, Tiflis Hamkari, Charity Humanitarian Center Abkhazia, UNICEF, UNFPA, CRRC Georgia, National Democratic Institute, Alternative Georgia, and International Republican Institute.

- the realm of possibilities of communicating data with technology, design, and creativity; organizations just don't know and often limit their options to common denominator approaches such as the increasingly ubiquitous infographic

Well aware of what we've learned through VNG and VDA, we seek to expand the scope and geography of JumpStart's impact through capacitating media and CSO organizations throughout the South Caucasus to use data, technology, and storytelling techniques in their respective areas of journalism and advocacy. By so fostering a culture of data-journalism and visual storytelling, we think media and CSOs will be able to better work together to close this gap between human rights and social issues and the populations whose lives these issues directly affect.

Goals & Outcomes

Goal 1: To capacitate media and CSO organizations in the South Caucasus to use data, technology, and storytelling techniques to better advocate for human rights and civil society issues.
- **Outcome 1:** Participants from university journalism departments, media organizations, and CSOs will be able to demonstrate integration of data-journalism techniques into their media and advocacy work through journalism field work, storytelling, and investigative reporting.
- **Outcome 2:** Journalists, media organizations, CSOs, and advocacy groups will be able to use data and storytelling technologies - already available and those developed in-house by JumpStart - to meet their organizational and regional data, media, and human rights needs.

Goal 2: To foster a culture of data communication[5] and cooperation in the South Caucasus between media and advocacy organizations.
- **Outcome 1:** Cooperation capacities between JumpStart, ongoing project partners, and other media and CSO organizations will be strengthened to better monitor, report, and inform audiences on human rights and civil society issues.
- **Outcome 2:** JumpStart Georgia's will expand and strengthen its core capacity to implement projects and partner with media and CSO organizations to apply innovative and creative approaches to communication using data and open-source technologies.

Activities & Outputs

a. **Education**
    i. **Activity:** Four 5-day Training of Trainers (ToTs) held on the JumpStart and IREX Georgia's premises to impart essential skills of data journalism and effective training design and implementation for 1 storyteller[6] from each (3 total) from Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan
    Output: 3 trainers capable of:
    - transmitting data journalism and advocacy skills in different media to tell socially relevant news stories better using modern storytelling technologies
    - transferring the skills necessary for designing projects using data, technology, and storytelling for monitoring human rights and civil society issues
    - designing and leading workshops

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[5] By data communication, we mean the translation of data into a medium or media that target audiences can more readily consume. This can take the form of infographics, interactive visualizations, data-driven web applications, animations, videos, art, and more.
[6] By "storytellers", we mean the new journalists we are adding to our team under the 2015 program as well as their interns who will be equipped to use data, technology, and numerous storytelling media. This includes a new Georgian, Armenian, and Azeri (budget permitting) storyteller and their interns (also budget permitting). We understand that Nino Macharashvili is now the most prominent data journalist in Tbilisi and she will help train the new storytellers as well as participate in leading the workshops.

      ii. **Activity:** Monthly one-day workshops (10 per country, 2 topics per training[7]) to impart the capacities to tell newsworthy stories with data, design, web technologies, creativity, and innovation held at IREX centers and/or universities for 20 journalists, at least 4 media organizations and 4 CSOs, and other interested parties in each country.
      Outputs:
- At least 20 journalists and 8 organizations per country capable of using data journalism skills in different media to tell socially relevant news stories better using modern storytelling technologies.
- Data-journalism curriculum based on JumpStart's work, the Data Journalism Handbook, and other texts made available online.

      iii. **Activity:** Trainings specific to the tools developed during the life of the project integrated into the monthly workshops.
      Output: Continued capacity building tailored to the needs and context of the partner participants and potential audiences.

  b. **Storytelling**
      i. **Activity:** Investigate and report on stories of social and human rights
      Output: at least 2 data/multimedia (interactive, static, video, animation, or other) stories per month and up to 2 in-depth investigative stories through the life of the project per country
      ii. **Activity:** Continued development of data communication tools and methodology
      Outputs:
- storybuilder.jumpstart.ge/en
- political monitoring tool(s)
- financial monitoring tool(s)
- crime monitoring tool(s)
- other tools as needed

  c. **Advocacy**
      i. **Activity**: Storytelling
      Outputs:
- Open workshops and two final project exhibitions
- Further improve StoryBuilder to meet local needs; hold workshops specifically discussing mixed-media storytelling among local CSOs and media organizations

      ii. **Activity**: Open Government Partnership
      Output: Attend OGP forum, record and share talking points, provide feedback, and openly discuss with partners and stakeholders and raise awareness of the OGP, its principles, and its implementation in Georgia

      iii. **Activity**: Building cooperation
      Outputs:
- Open workshops and two final project exhibitions
- Hold public discussions specifically about the intersection of human rights issues and the media.

Who will attend training sessions and workshops?

The trainees in these sessions will be our storytellers and their interns from each country. We hope others would like to attend, too. We will open these trainings of trainers as much as we

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[7] Planned Topics: 1) What is data journalism? 2) Developing an advocacy strategy with data for civil society organizations? 3) Basic graphic design principles; 4) Best practices for the graphical representation of quantitative information (information design); 5) Tools for visual communication; 6) Designing for advocacy; 7) Data literacy; 8) What data exists and how to get and use it? 9) Visualization of data for analysis; 10) Data analysis in the newsroom; 11) Build mixed-media stories with Storybuilder; 12) Web scraping in the newsroom; 13) Using spreadsheets to find newsworthy stories, 14) How to clean messy data with Open Refine; 15) Don't just kill yourself if your data is in a PDF; 16) Ethics, privacy, and security in the age of ubiquitous data; 17) NGOs must learn to use the web and web technologies to communicate data better; 18) Open hardware and creative solutions to measuring, observing, and ultimately communicating, 19) Tell your own data story: Part 1; 20) Tell your own data story: Part 2

can without sacrificing the quality of the trainings, but the main focus will be on training the storytelling trainers and interns who will then lead workshops in their respective countries (and languages). The current planned activities envision two storytellers from Georgia and one each from Armenia and Azerbaijan. In these cases, there is a long-term investment in building their capacity. For example, in our previous project, we hired Nino Macharashvili right out of the university and trained and worked with her over the last two years. For the last year, she has been training other journalists at GIPA in data journalism and communication (using visualizations) and the benefits of investing in her have progressed far beyond the scope of the original projects. We view the addition of another full-time journalist to our team in Georgia and one each from Armenia and Azerbaijan in the same light (so they will be JumpStart employees, rather than borrowed from a partner organization). Our goal is to choose candidates that will eventually become ambassadors in their own right and independently of any one project.

Regarding other organizations, we think there is value in maximizing the workshops to include equally long-term civil society representatives. For example, Nana Sharia from CHCA (one of JumpStart's partner organizations under the current OSF funding) consistently attends our free and open workshops at the Multimedia Education Center and asks for the next ones. There are other similar candidates (from Accessible Environment for Everyone and the Guerrilla Gardening movement) that would benefit from these workshops, but also bring that knowledge back to their work. Nana Sharia and these lifelong activists will continue to add value through sharing their experiences and through continued workshop participation to keep building the data storytelling skills and knowledge they've been utilizing in their advocacy work. Unfortunately, we have not budgeted for CSOs from Armenia and Azerbaijan to attend these trainings, just storytellers, but we definitely see the value in it. The key is determining who in Yerevan and Baku would be those long-term investments. So far, JumpStart has a good contact in Yerevan who is in a position to identify these candidates as well as contacts we've made at American University of Yerevan and Yerevan State University. In addition, we have contacts with journalists in Azerbaijan which, now, in the current frigid political climate, are equivalent to human rights activists.

Our strategy for workshop attendee involvement and retention is to incentivize through:
- the draw and value of the material itself (intellectual/capacity incentive);
- targeting participants whose areas of work and interest receive direct benefit (incentive by addressing needs which are ready-at-hand); and
- certificates of achievement (professional incentive).

Is there a demand for the trainings?
Yes, and there is a demand for the work that will stem from the trainings. Recently, we have been flooded with requests to do this type of work; but more importantly, with requests about *how* we do this work. We are currently building partnerships with Meydan.tv, Liberali magazine, Agenda.ge, CHCA, activists from the Guerrilla Gardening movement in Tbilisi, Accessible Environment for Everyone, Lebanese-American University, UNICEF, UNDP, OSGF, EWMI, Netgazeti, and other public agencies and CSOs. In fact, we have had such a demand we have had to turn down opportunities until we can find and train new storytellers adequately. Currently, we are the only local (South Caucasus) organization that works in this area (data-driven communication/storytelling in advocacy/journalism) and, given the amount of demand, we see multiplying the number of players in the field - organizations and persons - as a vital and necessary step to increasing the impact and reach of this type of work in the region.

Will the participants come from partner organizations - those you currently work with or from new organizations?
The participants will come from a pool of current and past partners, though we are, of course, open to working with new organizations, too. As Armenia and Azerbaijan are new territory for JumpStart, our existing partners and contacts - as well as new ones - are helping us assess

the needs and commitment levels of media, civil society, and advocacy players in those countries. We ourselves need to understand the level of commitment from the organizations, as without that, we risk doing exactly what we don't want, which is training one staff member from one organization for one session. We agree that that is not a sustainable approach by any means and are approaching it accordingly.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring

JumpStart will monitor success during and after the project through quantifying the progress participants make in developing and refining their skills in data analysis and communication via visual and mixed media storytelling. Success will be derived from the number of stories produced (See Storytelling outputs above) and through measuring specific indicators for progress in using data and designing stories. We will assess the success of the workshops by the size of the audience and quality of the presentation/discussion as well as through surveys at the beginning and end of the project and through the participants' feedback forms. This data will provide the qualitative and quantitative information to assess the project's success.

The immediate impact will be measured by the successful completion of tasks (ToT participation, workshop implementation, publication of in-depth investigations, creation of tools which assist in storytelling and collecting/analysing data), participant feedback, feedback from readership and social media, and the reach and view-count for stories published online.

Each organization we work with within the framework of this project will complete a pre- and post-collaboration questionnaire to help us ascertain change in regards to understanding what a data-driven advocacy strategy is. Additionally, we will monitor their use of new skills and capacities in their future work.

Evaluation

Indicators of project success are:
- achieving the measurables enumerated in the objectives
- completing the activities enumerated in this proposal

The project will be evaluated through:
- measuring how journalists, media organizations, and civil society organizations integrate the ideas, skills, and processes into their own workflows (via web-tools usage data, questionnaire, interview)
- measuring how data is presented and shared in the organizations' work (via web-tools usage data, observation of organizational outputs)
- assessing the changes in the quality and nature of media storytelling and the adoption of the techniques and technologies for data-journalism
  - by analyzing the use of data in the journalist's work
  - by analyzing the diversity in the manner of storytelling
- measuring the number of organizations requesting trainings, consultations, and collaboration
- requesting feedback from the organizations through evaluation forms
- during workshops, we will provide evaluations to assess the quality of the workshop and to make improvements going forward
- JumpStart Georgia will continue to track organizations that approach us without solicitation as well as how our content is reused

Project Design

JumpStart requests a month at the start of the project to hire and train new staff, update and translate feradi.info into Armenian and Azerbaijani, coordinate new workflows in our broadened geographic scope, and finalize curricula for trainings and workshops.

Elements

This project seeks to capacitate partner media and CSO organizations, visualize and report the news (in cooperation with project participants), build data tools, ToTs, workshops, technology and application development, curriculum development.

Timeline

See in attached 'JumpStartMasterBudget&Timeline.xlsx'

Budget

See the attached budget, which also includes amounts requested from other donors. Unless specified, amounts requested from other donors are not yet confirmed.

Sustainability

The number of ToT's and workshops ensure that the many capacities necessary for effective data journalism are ingrained and replicable by the participants *and* that they are able to transfer these capacities. These will all provide JumpStart data for assessment. It is our experience that it is difficult for trainees and organizations to return to the same type of journalism and operational methodologies as before, such as in the case of Liberali Magazine (www.liberali.ge/ge/liberali/infographics). The exposure and the knowledge that comes with these skills irrevocably change what is possible and what journalists want.

The open-source tools developed in-house by JumpStart will exist perpetually beyond the life of the project to be used by any interested person or organization globally to integrate into their own advocacy and storytelling. Their source code will reside on Github and remain free, public licensed (copy left) and downloadable[8].

Through this project, JumpStart will continue to develop our curriculum for data journalism, which will continue to be available to journalists, NGOs, and advocacy groups for implementing similar trainings in this region and in other parts of the world. Feedback and evaluations at the end of the ToT and the training workshops will be used to ensure best practices for future trainings and for curriculum development.

We hope that this project will attract further donors and increase JumpStart's organizational profile, that of donor organizations, and most importantly of project beneficiaries. Since JumpStart began visualizing the news in Georgia in 2012, we've been approached by multiple organizations, in Georgia and internationally,[9] to share our know-how which has increased our organizational profile and technical skills. Through this project, we anticipate opening the door to future projects and funding for its beneficiaries and for our own projects. An important part of this project's sustainability is bolstering journalists and organizations' skills and qualifications, capacitating them to better design, fund, and implement journalism and civil society projects of their own in their own communities.

Organizational Information

About: JumpStart Georgia was formed in Tbilisi, Georgia in October 2009 with the purpose of creating open-source digital maps of Georgia using a network of community organizers and volunteers. JumpStart Georgia has built more than digital maps, however. It has evolved to embody the spirit of open information, improved communication, and increased citizen participation in the world around.

Past projects which centered around data or data visualization include our country-wide mapping project, OpenTaps, TbiliCity, Visualizing the News in Georgia[10], mapping CARE International's village saving and loan program in Africa, aggregating and visualizing Georgia's election and voter list data[11], making MP votes public[12], IRI's election training evaluation visualization, Visualizing for Data-driven Advocacy, and more.

Mission: The issues societies face today consist of complex mechanisms and processes. JumpStart translates this complexity into language a wider audience can understand and use to participate in fact-based discussions and ultimately make more informed decisions.

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[8] https://github.com/JumpStartGeorgia
[9] *See supra* note 4.
[10] http://www.feradi.info/
[11] http://data.electionportal.ge/
[12] http://votes.parliament.ge/

JumpStart creates informed decision-makers who in turn strengthen democratic institutions. We do this through better communication based on evidence.

Management structure: Board of Directors; Executive Director

Number of regular staff and their functions: 8 full-time staff (2 developers, 3 designers, 1 journalist, 1 executive director, 1 administrative assistant) and 2 part-time staff (1 financial assistant and 1 fundraising & sustainability coordinator)[13]

Annual income: $129,602 (2013); $122,492 (2014 to date); $160,347 (2014 projected)
Income sources: Open Society Foundations, JumpStart International, Liberali Magazine, Article 42 of the Constitution, UNICEF, OSGF, University of Washington, UNFPA, EWMI-GPAC, GIPA, and our own services for hire

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[13] http://www.jumpstart.ge/en/who-we-are/team-members