Using Data Part 2: Writing with Data

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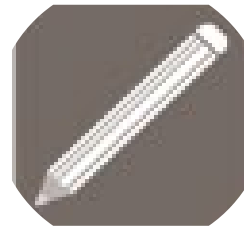
March 30, 2023

Part 2 of a 3-part series!

March 23, 2023
Learning Evidence and Impact (LEAP)

Topic: turning data points into visualizations keeping target audience, communities and cultures in mind

March 30, 2023
Technical Writers and Editors (TWE)

Topic: integrating data into products by knowing your audience and their interests

April 5, 2023
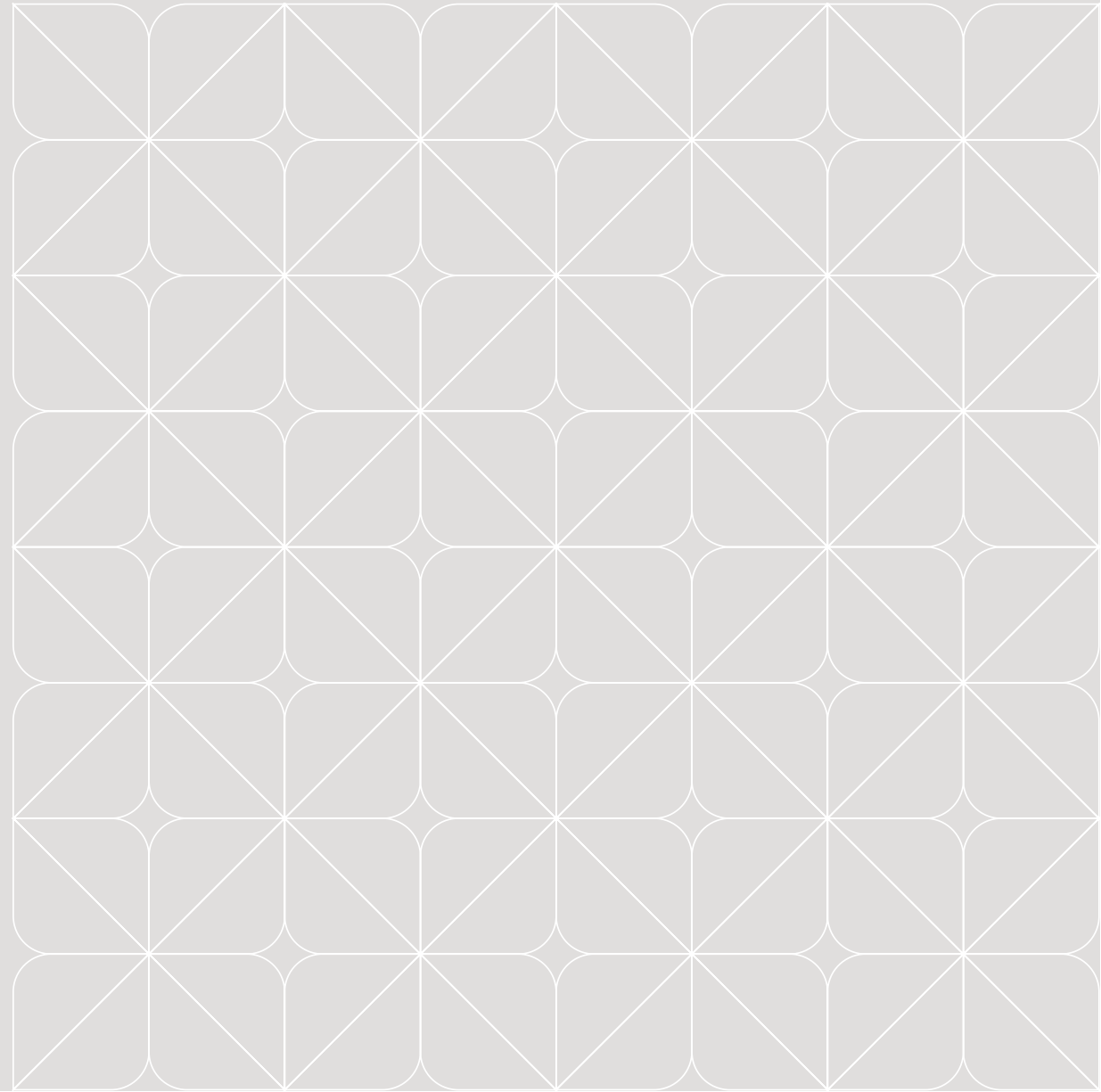**Integrated Communications (iComms)**

Topic: dissemination strategies and contextualizing data for various audiences

Data use: tips, tricks and best practices

Agenda

- Updates on TWE
- Setting the stage/overview
- Writing with qualitative data
- Writing with quantitative data
- Examples throughout: real world + case study
- Time for your questions and your sharing challenges to using data in your technical writing
- More examples of "good use" + additional resources for your reference

Setting the Stage

Assumptions for this presentation

- You've already conducted research.
- You've already cleaned and analyzed your data.
- You've already drafted data visualizations.
- You've already thought about or determined the topic.
- You've already thought about or determined your audience.

- You've shared some of your writing challenges – we'll do our best to address them!

Determine purpose and audience

Ask: *Who will read this piece? What should their take-away be? What do they need to know?*

	Persuasive writing	**Informative writing**
What does it do?	• Make a point • Argue and support case • Advocate for someone or something • Push someone to do something	• Impart knowledge • Share results • Describe activities • Discuss challenges
Who is the audience?	Funders, US Government, other federal and local governments, development space, international partners, local partners/CSOs, communities/beneficiaries, general public	
How do I use data?	• Show the argument's value and accuracy • Provide evidence for the argument • Mostly, but not always, secondary – a supportive role	• Show outputs, outcomes, and reach • Provide evidence for achievements • Mostly, but not always, primary – the main focus
How do I structure the piece?	Depends on the piece! See the Document Typology on Mosaic: https://mosaic.pactworld.org/communities/cops/twcop/resources/tw_resources_wiki/document_typology_what_type_of_document_should_i_createa.	

What type of writing does it use?

Use 👍 for persuasive and 😲 for informative

1. Training manual	1. Informative
2. White paper	2. Persuasive
3. Research report	3. Informative
4. Programmatic report	4. Informative
5. Proposal	5. Persuasive
6. Blog post	6. Both/either

Document typology on Mosaic:
https://mosaic.pactworld.org/communities/cops/twcop/resources/tw_resources_wiki/document_typology_what_type_of_document_should_i_createa

What is the writing style's purpose?

informational
- Standard operating procedure (SOP)
- Factsheet
- Handbook
- Terms of reference (TOR)
- Compendium
- Technical brief
- Guide
- Case study
- Workplan
- Memo
- Magazine
- Report, results
- Conference poster
- Report, research
- Journal article
- E-learning course
- Training package
- Training manual
- Job aid
- Media article
- Blog post
- White paper
- Capability statement
- Success story
- Newsletter
- Op-ed
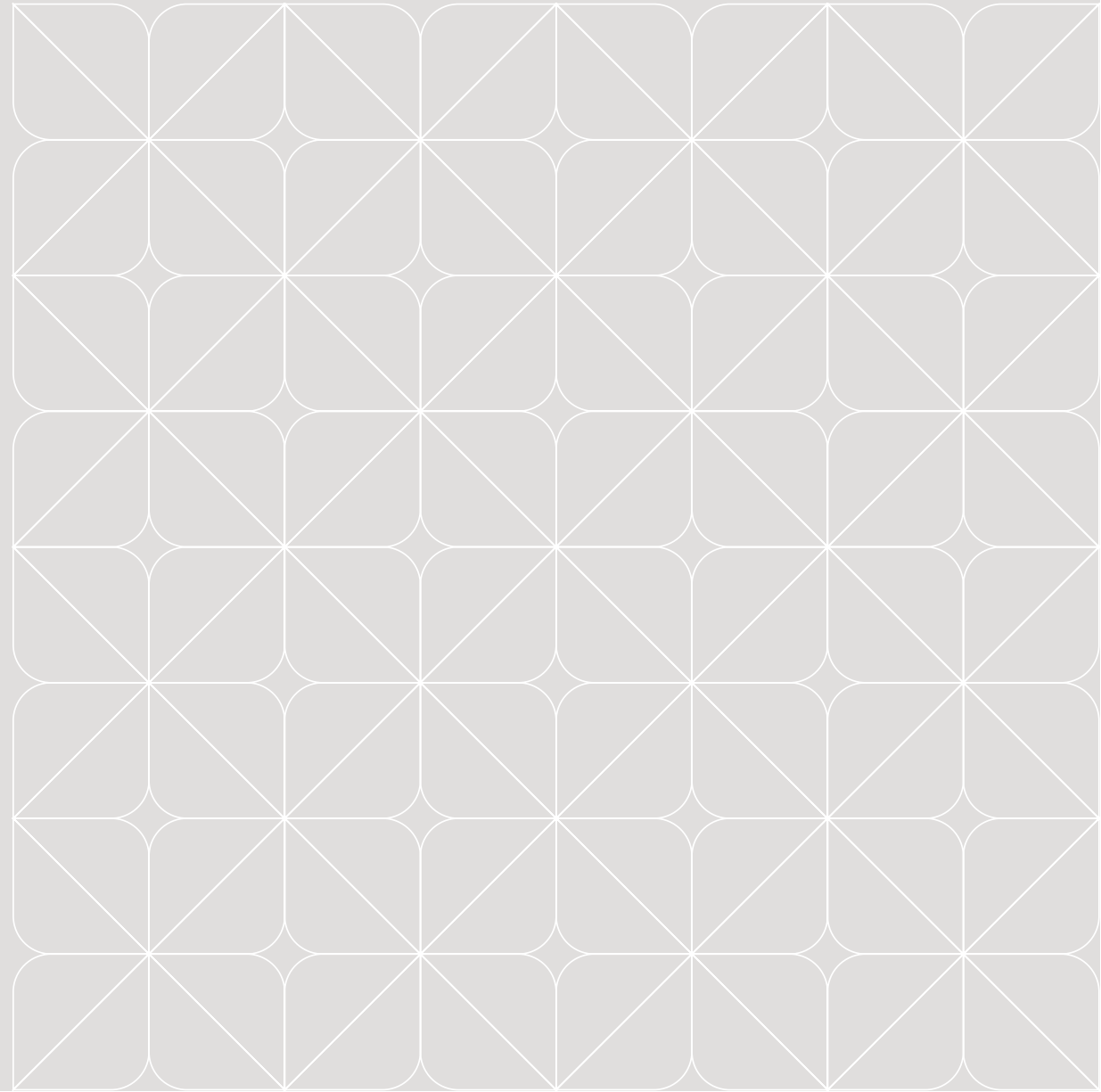- Concept note
- Conference submission
- Proposal

persuasive

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Considerations for choosing and using your data

Ask before you write:

- *Why am I using this data?*
  - Relates to purpose and audience, persuasive vs. informative writing
- *Does my audience need to know it?*
  - Use only as much data as you need, make sure the data supports the piece's purpose and intent, don't use data just to use data, data that does not "fit" distracts the reader
- *Do I need to share perspectives or facts?*
  - Qualitative vs. quantitative data, emotion or value attached to the data
- *How will my audience relate to the data?*
  - The audience must be open to seeing the data, they must care enough about the subject
- *How does the audience understand data?*
  - Account for learning styles (seeing, hearing, experiencing), determine reading level (10th grade at most)
- *Am I using the data in the way it was originally intended?*
  - No picking and choosing, distorting words or facts, using data for your own gain
- *Am I being true to those who provided the data?*
  - Those who provided the data (respondents) should approve

Writing with Quantitative Data

Best practices for using quantitative data: basic writing rules

- Between graphic and text – the data are usually the "star" with the text complementing the star.

- Instead of restating in the text what's in the graphic, use the text to explain trends, notable points, and *why* these are happening.

- Generally, it's OK to use numerals for cardinal numbers (one/1, two/2, three/3, etc.), but always spell out ordinal numbers (first not 1st, second not 2nd, etc.).

- Follow traditional rules of spelling and grammar when using data:

  - Sentences that start with a number need to have that number written out: e.g., "Forty-five civil society stakeholders joined the government meeting."

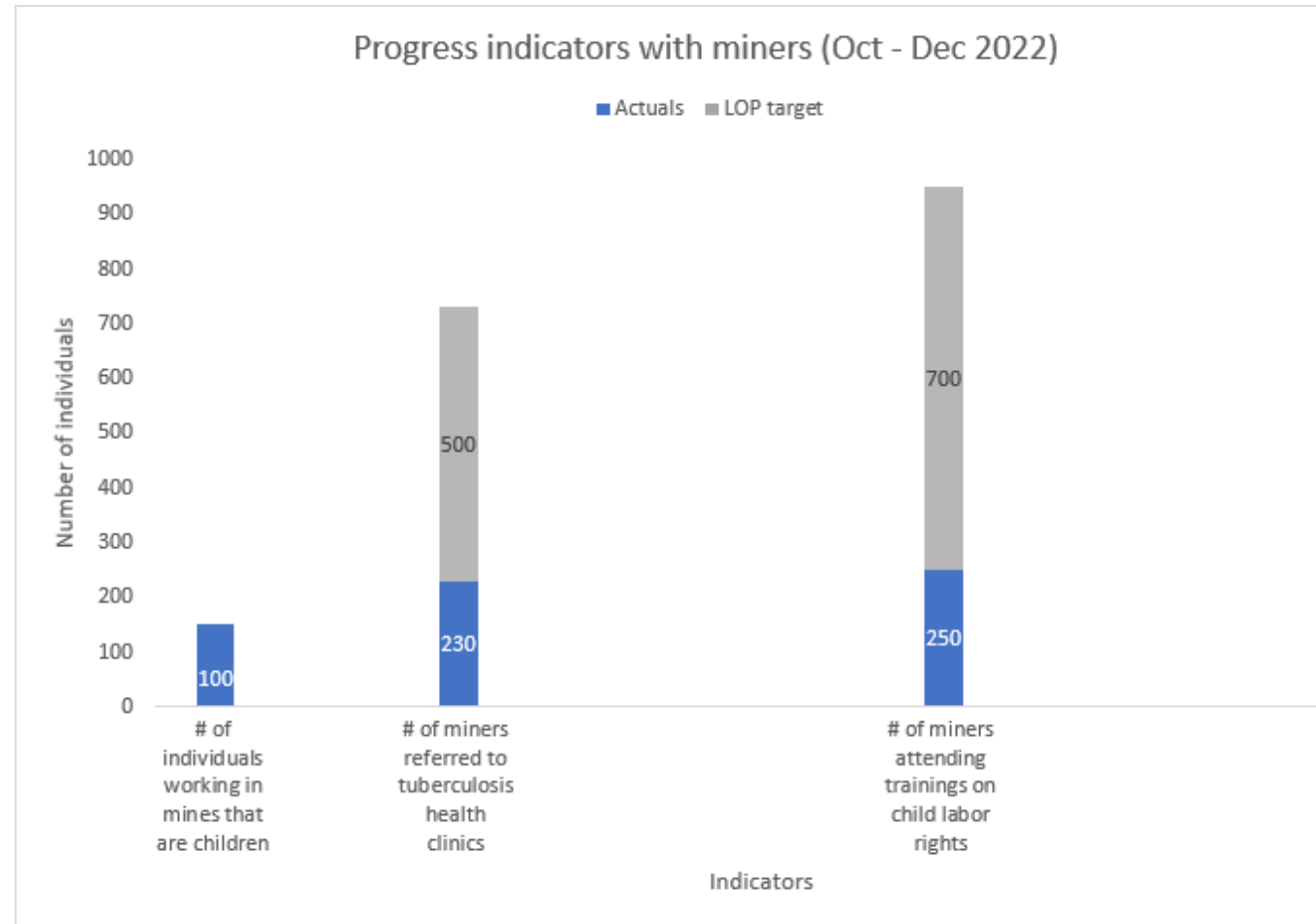 - Or, rewrite the sentence: e.g., "Participants in the government meeting included 45 civil society stakeholders."

Check out the forthcoming Pact Style Guide!

Project reporting

- Focus on higher-level results and impact
- Data, then a narrative description of impact
- Present data in simple tables and figures
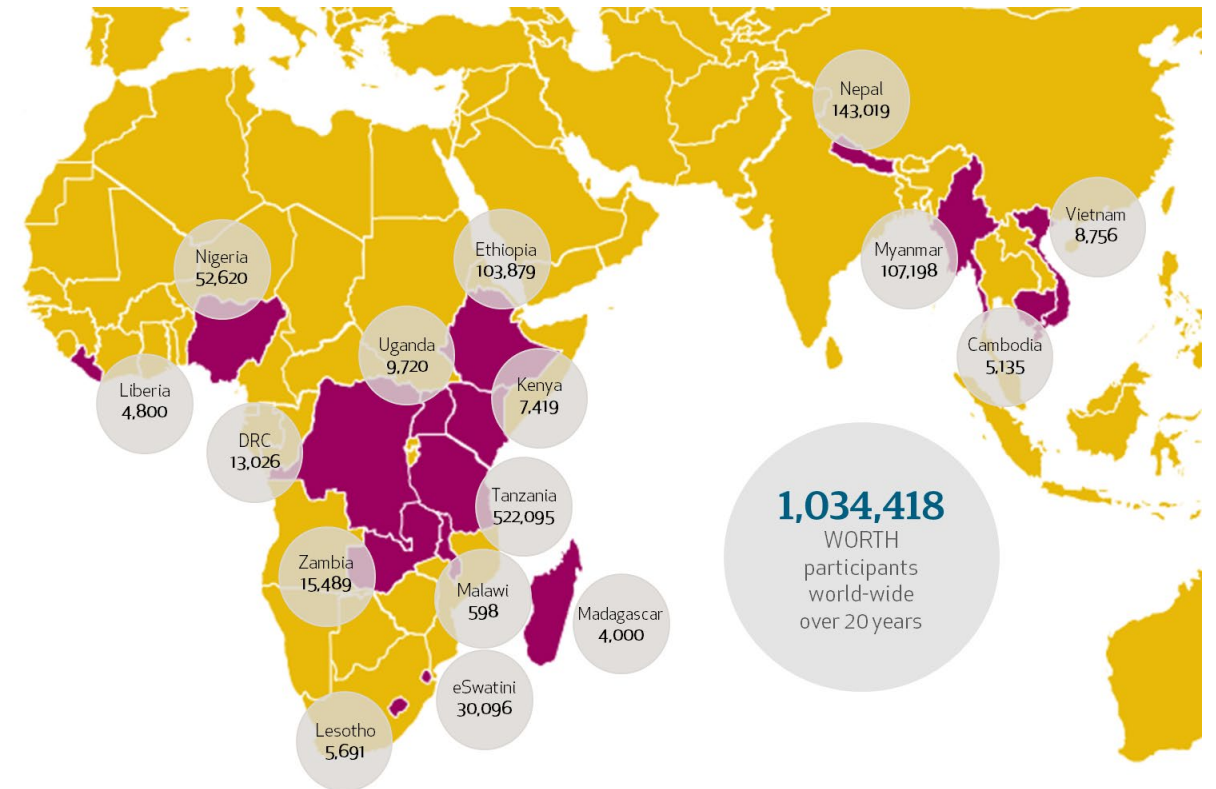- Reporting is a record of project activities: Explain trends – don't restate, say *why:*

"At project midterm, we are on track for most indicators to reach LOP targets, but have yet to see anticipated results for some indicators. This is because it takes time for training on child rights to result in reductions in child labor. Because the target for children working in mining is 50, in Year 3, the project will focus more on child labor."

- It's OK to start sentences with numerals that are heavy on data. *Only in project reporting to make your lives easier!*

Progress indicators with miners (Oct - Dec 2022)

Thought leadership

- Do we use quantitative data in thought leadership?
  - *Yes:* Blog posts, compendiums, factsheets, case studies, media articles, presentations, posters, research reports, technical briefs, white papers
  - *No:* Standard operating procedures (SOPs), job aids
  - *Maybe:* Guides, e-learning, training materials, success and photo stories

Reference: Melissa Nemon. 2019. *WORTH Meta-Analysis: 20 Years of WORTH.* Pact.

Shout out to LEAP for help and advice with academic writing! (journal articles, conference posters and papers)