

Report Writing

Through reports, information can be shared, progress and successes identified, and consequently, lessons learned.

However, if a report is not easy to read, it will probably not be read at all. Good report writing takes time and preparation. Following a standard layout can save time, and allow comparison between reports over time. A standard report structure is as follows:

- **Executive summary:** Long reports need a summary at the beginning capturing key points and recommendations, plus a Table of Contents.
- **Introduction:** What the report is about; topics included; why it has been written and its aims.
- **Clarification of the issue:** What is the issue; why it needs to be addressed; what information/action is needed to address it.
- **Methodology:** A short description of how the information was obtained.
- **Conclusions:** Summarise key issues that have emerged from the analysis.
- **Recommendations:** Actions to be taken as a result of the findings.
- **Annexes:** Useful for detailed explanations, examples, literature list, etc.

Good reports seek to present data effectively for their audience so that they connect key findings to conclusions and recommendations.

Term	Definition	Example
Purpose	Why you are writing this report	Some documents are to persuade, others to inform
Audience	Who is the report aiming to influence	The level of background detail, technical detail and language will vary
Findings	A factual statement based on primary or secondary data.	<i>Community members reported daily income is below \$1 per day</i>
Conclusions	A combined interpretation of findings	<i>Community members are materially poor due to lack of income-generating opportunities</i>
Recommendations	Is there a maximum number of pages expected? Is an Executive Summary needed?	<i>Introduce micro-finance and micro-enterprise opportunities to community members to restart the market through culturally appropriate and economically viable income-generating business</i>
Actions	A specific prescription of action to address a recommendation	<i>By July 2016, conduct six pilot focus groups to identify potential micro-enterprise ideas and possible loan recipients</i>

Tips for writing the report

- collect information needed
 - arrange information logically and ensure the structure is well balanced
 - write in the language of your reader, clarifying jargon etc.
 - make it easy to read: short sentences, and short paragraphs
 - use charts and diagrams where possible: graphics can make points more quickly and strikingly
 - layout with space between the lines and paragraphs, and clear headings
 - proof-read for spelling, grammar and presentation mistakes
 - before sending, ask someone else to read for feedback
- Finally check:**
- are author, title and date included?
 - does it answer the questions?
 - is it logical?
 - are sections and pages numbered?
 - are photos credited and captioned?

Additional resources on All In Diary website
 Report Writing Guide © CARE International, 2009
 Writing effectively and powerfully, © Karen Hurt, CIVICUS, 2007

Web links for further information

<http://www.fundsforngos.org/featured-articles/ngos-write-project-reports>
<http://networklearning.org/index.php/component/content/article?id=77:guidelin>
https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/ELD_Reportin_g_Skills_Module_4_Planning_the_Report.pdf