



CURRICULUM
Health Solutions Journalism and
Storytelling Capacity Building
for Health Journalists
in Africa
2023-2024



Background



Health issues in Africa deserve increased attention. The heavy disease burden in Africa, worsened by frequent outbreaks of pandemics and the climate crisis, requires new ways of thinking and doing things to deal with it effectively.

The media have a critical role to play in tackling the health challenges in Africa through effective reporting. Application of a combination of solutions journalism, investigative reporting and storytelling approaches to health reporting can be a game-changer and truly transformative in bridging the health information gap, informing policymaking processes and helping communities to cope with their health challenges.

It is in this regard that Science Africa and the Africa Health Solutions Journalism applied for and received grants from the Solutions Journalism Network and Newventure Fund respectively to enable them to strengthen health reporters' capacity in solutions journalism from a storytelling perspective through training, coaching and mentorship.

Training Goals



1. The storytelling skills of health journalists participating in the project enhanced and are producing and publishing well-written/produced health stories.
2. The public is more informed (following the publication of health stories from storytelling and SoJo perspectives by the fellows) about critical health issues facing their communities leading to demand for them to be addressed as evidenced by their (audiences) feedback through AHSJI and Science Africa feedback platforms, including the social media platforms of the article authors.
3. AHSJI and Science Africa's digital platforms, including news portals, are optimized and carry well-written, detailed, credible SoJo stories on health for the benefit of key audiences.

PHASE ONE: TRAINING

Health SoJo Training Curriculum



Learning Outcomes

After completing the training participants should be able to:

- Recognize the importance of highlighting positive responses to social issues.
- Craft engaging and impactful narratives using multimedia tools and interactive content.
- Apply advanced techniques to identify, research, and report on solutions.
- Pitch story ideas effectively, considering the new skills learned during the training.
- Collaborate with fellow journalists and media professionals across borders.
- Implement solutions-oriented journalism projects in their respective media organizations or freelance work.
- Fully understand identify and apply the four Pillars of SoJo in stories

DAY 1: LIGHT TAKE-OFF

9.00 am-9.40 am: Welcome and Introduction

Morning (9.45 am-11.00 am): The current Media Environment

The media and traditional journalism in East Africa is facing disruptive changes. This session will unpack how the media industry and individual professionals should cope with these challenges-going the SoJo way being one of the major coping strategies.

The Trainer will also help participants evaluate timeless and solution-based stories that can draw more readers looking for in-depth information.

Trainer: Lourdes.

Training method: Mini Lecture and group task

To Prepare: Handout (Re-examining news values) and PowerPoint presentation

Midmorning: (11.30 am-1.00 pm): Understanding Health Journalism: Challenges and Opportunities in Africa

Guided discussion: Trainer to gauge participants' interest and depth in health reporting by guiding a discussion on why they started doing health reporting. The trainer will identify a health story from Kenya, Uganda, or Rwanda and share what makes the stories compelling.

Subtopic: Health Policy and Systems Understanding: This session will provide context and depth to their reporting. Health journalists focused on Solutions should be fully knowledgeable about the diseases, healthcare systems, policies, and regulations. The session will help them understand how healthcare is delivered, funded, and governed in their region or country.

Trainer: John

Training method: Guided discussion and Mini Lecture

To Prepare: Sample health stories from Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda; PowerPoint Presentation on Health Policy and Systems

Afternoon (2.00 pm-3.40 pm): Ethical Considerations in Health Reporting

The trainers will lead a short presentation on ethical considerations in health reporting. Journalists need to disclose conflicts of interest, financial ties, and funding sources when relevant. This transparency helps maintain the trust of the audience and ensures that readers can assess the potential bias or motivations behind a particular health story.

The trainers will also teach about the three documents: consent form, information sheet, and release form.

Participants will break into three mixed groups and discuss ethical considerations in health reporting, including patient privacy, informed consent, and sensitivity when covering sensitive health issues. Emphasize the importance of avoiding sensationalism, fear-mongering, and pseudoscience.

Trainees to choose representatives to present their findings.

Trainer: Lourdes and John

Training Method: Mostly group tasks with a brief mini-lecture

To prepare: Sample production documentation (consent form, information sheet, release form)

3.40 pm- 4.00 pm: Check out

DAY 2: A CLOSER LOOK AT HEALTH AND SCIENCE

9.00 am-9.40 am: Check-in and recap

Morning (9.45 am-11.00 am): Fact-checking and Reliable Sources in Solutions-based Health Journalism

Fact-checking and relying on reliable sources are crucial aspects of responsible solutions-driven health journalism. Ensuring the accuracy of information is essential to maintaining the public's trust

while providing credible health-related content. This session will explore guidelines for fact-checking and identifying reliable sources in health storytelling.

Training will help journalists relearn cross-referencing information and verifying statistics, medical claims, and expert opinions. Encourage them to question and verify information, especially in the rapidly evolving health topics loaded with misinformation.

Trainer: Lourdes

Method: Mini lecture and guided discussion

To prepare: Powerpoint presentation

Midmorning: (11.30 am-1.00 pm): Reporting on clinical trials and research findings

This session will equip journalists with the knowledge and skills necessary to cover clinical trials effectively and ethically based on SoJo Perspectives. Accurate and responsible reporting on clinical trials is crucial to inform the public and promote transparency in medical research. The trainer will also delve into appropriate knowledge and skills to effectively report on research findings.

Scientific Literacy and Research Skills: Journalists covering health issues should have a strong understanding or foundation in scientific literacy. Training will emphasize the ability to critically evaluate scientific studies, including the methodology, sample size, statistical significance, findings, conclusion, and potential biases. Journalists need to be able to discern reputable sources of health information from unreliable ones and understand the nuances of medical research. They should also know how to access and interpret medical databases and journals.

Trainer: John

Method: Mini lecture and guided discussion

To Prepare: Powerpoint presentation

Afternoon: (2.00 pm–3.40 pm): Interviewing Techniques for Health Stories

Interviewing for health stories requires a delicate balance of empathy, accuracy, and respect for the interviewee's privacy. This session will explore some interviewing techniques specifically tailored for health-related stories.

Role Playing Practical Exercise: Participants will break into three mixed groups. The trainers will assign them a health-related scenario and task participants to conduct a mock health interview.

Example: Give trainees a scenario, eg WHO has found a vaccine against HIV. Who are you going to interview, and what questions will you ask each interviewee/ source?

Trainees to choose representatives to present their findings.

Trainer: John and Lourdes

Method: Group task

To Prepare: Scenarios and exercise guidelines

3.40 pm- 4.00 pm: Check out

DAY 3: DEEP DIVE INTO SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM

9.00 am-9.40 am: Check-in and recap

Morning (9.45 am-11.00 am): Advanced Solutions Journalism

Techniques: Moving Beyond Problems

- SoJo Pillars
- Understand the core principles of Solutions Journalism.
- Learn how to identify and develop solutions-focused stories.
- Gain practical techniques for implementing solutions journalism in your reporting.
- Encourage journalists to share examples of problems they've covered and brainstorm potential solutions for those issues.

Trainer: Lourdes

Method: Mini lecture and group task (participants to identify the four pillars from selected stories)

To prepare: PowerPoint presentation and samples of Health SoJo stories

Midmorning: (11.30 am-1.00 pm): Reporting Constructively

The trainer will train on the process of story ideation to story development. The session will focus on the production process.

Trainer: John

Method: Mini Lecture and guided discussion- the trainer will give the trainees a scenario and discuss the story ideas emerging and the production process.

To prepare: Powerpoint presentation

Afternoon (2.00 pm-3.40 pm): Pitching Solution Stories

Participants will break into three mixed groups. They will be asked to come up with a health story idea based on SoJo and present the pitching process.

Trainer: Lourdes and John

DAY 4: ADVANCED STORYTELLING

Morning (9.00 am-11.00am)

This will be a collaborative session between the two trainers

Narrative Techniques: Explore advanced narrative techniques such as character development, plot structure, and immersive storytelling, skills that can make newspaper, radio, TV, multimedia, and

online stories more engaging and emotionally resonant, encouraging readers to empathize with the subjects of your reporting.

Audience Engagement: Journalists will also be trained to interpret audience analytics, identify trends, and engage with their audience through comments, social media, and other interactive methods. This knowledge helps in tailoring content to meet the needs and preferences of the target audience.

Trainer: John

Method:

Multimedia storytelling: Explore multimedia formats, including video, audio, interactive graphics, and photography into solution stories. The audience will learn how to tell stories through different mediums enhances engagement and allows for a more immersive audience experience.

Audience Engagement: Journalists will also be trained to interpret audience analytics, identify trends, and engage with their audience through comments, social media, and other interactive methods. This knowledge helps in tailoring content to meet the needs and preferences of the target audience.

Trainers: Lourdes

Method: Guided discussion

Midmorning: (11 am-1 pm)

Brainstorming on story ideas delivery timelines, and decisions on the mentorship process.

Journalists will also be encouraged to be open to feedback and continuous learning, as Solutions Journalism is a rapidly evolving field. This session will also explore opportunities for peer review, collaboration and continued or ongoing education in Solutions Journalism can help them refine their skills and make a meaningful impact through their reporting.

Facilitators: John/Lourdes/ Science Africa

Lunch and departure.

PHASE TWO: MENTORSHIP

Health SoJo Mentorship Curriculum

Objective



To combine structured training, ongoing mentorship, practical assignments, and networking opportunities to empower journalists from Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda to produce high-quality health SoJo stories for their respective media outlets.

Pillar 1: Conduct monthly virtual meet-ups to recap key training points and address initial questions and challenges faced by the journalists. We intend to incorporate:

- Guest lectures from renowned health journalists and experts.
- Group discussions on recent health issues, SoJo stories, and reporting challenges.
- Interactive workshops focusing on specific skills, e.g., data visualization.

Pillar 2: Ongoing Mentorship Sessions (Bi-weekly)

Individual Check-ins:

- Bi-weekly one-on-one virtual meetings with mentors.
- Discuss progress, challenges, and story ideas.

Group Discussions:

- Bi-weekly group virtual meetings to foster a sense of community.
- Peer-to-peer feedback sessions where journalists can share and critique SoJo story pitches.

Pillar 3: Practical Assignments and Fieldwork

- Journalists submit story pitches for mentor and peer review.
- Mentors provide detailed feedback to refine story ideas.
- Journalists conduct interviews and site visits related to health topics.
- Data gathering and analysis

Pillar 4: Editorial Support and Collaboration

- Journalists submit drafts for mentor feedback and revisions.
- Mentors guide journalists in improving their stories' structure, clarity, and impact.

Pillar 5: Peer Learning and Networking

- Create a secure online platform for journalists to discuss challenges and share resources.
- Facilitate discussions on emerging health issues.
- Organize virtual networking events with experts, policymakers, and NGOs in the health sector.
- Provide opportunities for journalists to expand their professional networks.

Pillar 6: Final Review and Publication

- Journalists finalize their stories based on mentor and peer feedback.
- Mentors conduct final reviews to ensure the stories meet professional standards.
- Assist journalists in preparing multimedia elements (photos, videos) for their stories.
- Guide on submitting stories to various media outlets.

Pillar 7: Publication Celebration:

- Host a virtual event to celebrate the publication of SoJo health stories.
- Invite journalists, mentors, and key stakeholders to share their experiences.

Pillar 8: Evaluation and Feedback

- Conduct feedback sessions with journalists to assess the program's impact on their skills and knowledge.
- Gather suggestions for future mentorship programs focusing on sustainable reporting of Health SoJo Stories.

“

In theory, there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is.”

— Yogi Berra

WORKSHOP PROGRAM

HEALTH SOJO STORYTELLING TRAINING FOR HEALTH JOURNALISTS FROM KENYA, RWANDA AND UGANDA

DATE: 27TH November – 1ST December 2023

VENUE: Utali Hotel and Resort, Thika Road, Nairobi

DAY 1: MONDAY, 27TH NOVEMBER 2023

Arrival of Participants and Hotel Check-in

DAY 2: TUESDAY 28TH NOVEMBER 2023

TIME	TOPIC	TRAINER
8.30 am	Registration	Science Africa
9.00 am-09.40 am	Participants Introductions	Lourdes Walusala
9.45 am- 10.00 am	Opening Ceremony	Science Africa/ Solutions Journalism Network
10.05 am -10.35 am	Trends and Emerging Health Issues	Health Expert (TBC)
10.35 am- 10.50 am	Tea Break	ALL
10.55 am-11.55 am	The current Media Environment	Lourdes Walusala
12.00 pm- 1.00 pm	Understanding Health Journalism: Challenges and Opportunities in Africa	John Muchangi
1.00 pm - 2.00 pm	Lunch Break	ALL
2.00 pm -3.40 pm	Ethical Considerations in Health Reporting	Lourdes & John
3.40 pm-4.00 pm	Check Out	
4.00 pm	Tea Break/social hour and Departure	ALL

DAY 3: WEDNESDAY 29TH NOVEMBER 2023

TIME	TOPIC	TRAINER
8.30 am	Registration	Science Africa
9.00 am-09.40 am	Check-in and Recap	John Muchangi
9.45 am-11.00 am	Fact-checking and Reliable Sources in Solutions-based Health Journalism	Lourdes Walusala
11.00- 11.30 am	Tea Break	ALL

TIME	TOPIC	TRAINER
11.30 am- 1.00 pm	Reporting on clinical trials and research findings	John Muchangi
1.00 pm - 2.00 pm	Lunch Break	ALL
2.00 pm -3.40 pm	Interviewing Techniques for Health Stories	Lourdes & John
3.40 pm-4.00 pm	Check Out	Lourdes Walusala
4.00 pm	Tea Break/social hour and Departure	ALL

DAY 4: THURSDAY 30TH NOVEMBER 2023

TIME	TOPIC	TRAINER
8.30 am	Registration	Science Africa
9.00 am-09.40 am	Check-in and Recap	
9.45 am-11.00 am	Advanced Solutions Journalism Techniques: Moving Beyond Problems	Lourdes Walusala
11.00- 11.30 am	Tea Break	ALL
11.30 am- 1.00 pm	Reporting Constructively	John Muchangi
1.00 pm - 2.00 pm	Lunch Break	ALL
2.00 pm -3.40 pm	Pitching Solution Stories	Lourdes & John
3.40 pm-4.00 pm	Check Out	
4.00 pm	Tea Break/Social Hour and Departure	ALL

DAY 5: FRIDAY 1ST DECEMBER 2023

TIME	TOPIC	TRAINER
8.30 am	Registration	Science Africa
9.00 am-09.40 am	Check-in and Recap	Lourdes Walusala
9.40 am-11.00 am	Advanced Storytelling: Narrative Techniques, Multimedia Storytelling, and Audience Engagement.	Lourdes and John
11.00- 11.30 am	Tea Break	ALL
11.30 am- 1.00 pm	Next Steps	John & Science Africa
1.00 pm - 2.00 pm	Lunch Break and Bye!	ALL

About Africa Health Solutions Journalism Initiative (AHSJI)

Africa Health Solutions Journalism Initiative (AHSJI) was established in 2021 as a not-for-profit organization under Kenyan laws. Its main focus is to transform health journalism in Africa through training, research and publishing in a manner that would enrich the health stories, impact lives and influence policy in Africa. Since its inception, AHSJI has trained and mentored over 250 practicing journalists and journalism students. We have also introduced health solutions journalism to journalism schools in five public universities in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda. Health Solutions Journalism is a rigorous and compelling reporting that focuses on responses to health issues, evidence that the responses are working, insight (how the responses work so that others can emulate/replicate) and the limitations. To improve the credibility and technical soundness of the initiative's programs, activities and resources, we have established a panel of experts in the medical field and communication experts in the health sector to act as advisors to the initiative. We have also created a website (www.healthsojo-africa.org) where we publish credible information and articles on health and related issues, such as sanitation, nutrition, food security, climate change and the environment. The initiative's mission is to improve health reporting in Africa through training, mentorship and publishing of well-researched and written stories on health and health-related issues.

For more information, visit: www.healthsojo-africa.org

About Science Africa Limited (SA)

ScienceAfrica (SA) is a science communications consultancy firm that is keen on popularization of various aspects of STI as the driving force for sustainable socio-economic development in Africa. Since 1994, SA has been providing specialized strategic communications, research, capacity building, media and editorial advisory and hands-on support to various partner organizations in both private and public sectors at national, regional and international levels. SA has a wide network of highly skilled partners spread all over sub-Saharan Africa that are capable of meeting the needs of the most demanding and networked organization. At ScienceAfrica, we believe that no society, country or region can develop without mainstreaming STIs into its core development agenda. We have therefore designed the following menu of products and services to provide support to our partners and clients to realize their strategic goals and objectives in the most sustainable way.

For more information, visit: www.scienceafrica.co.ke



Science Africa
Fatima Apartments, Suite 6,
Marcus Garvey Road,
P.O Box 57258, 00200 Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. +254-113-109194
Email: info@scienceafrica.co.ke
Web: www.scienceafrica.co.ke



The Secretariat
Africa Health Solutions Journalism Initiative
Fatima Apartments,
Marcus Garvey Road, Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. +254-113-109194
email: info@healthsojo-africa.org
web: <http://healthsojo-africa.org>