USING UNESCO STORY CIRCLES VIRTUALLY

UNESCO Story Circles can be used virtually and here are some tips and lessons learned. Be sure to read through the online Manual first, especially pages 71-74. The online process is quite similar to the face-to-face process.

General online format

20-30 minutes	Welcome, Overview, and review instructions (p. 71-72 of the Manual)
45 minutes	Story Circles (break out rooms of 4-6)
20-30 minutes	Whole Group Debrief and Discussion

Tips

• Use a web-based video conferencing software platform with breakout rooms that allow you to split your meeting into separate sessions (for example, Zoom, Cisco Webex…).
• Be sure to have one technical person to manage the technical aspects.
•   When possible, make it feasible for participants to participate in their first language
• If possible, pre-assign participants into groups of 5-6 to ensure diversity within the groups
• If possible, send out the selected prompts in advance to the participants
• Broadcast the prompts to all groups throughout the 45 minutes that they are in breakout rooms (do not post in chat but broadcast to all
groups) – Post Prompt 1 first; then about 10 minutes later, post Prompt 2; then about 15 minutes later, post instructions for the "flashback" and then in the last 5 minutes, post a couple of the discussion questions. These broadcasts are usually done by the tech person.
• If you plan on using the "Think of someone who activity" from the Manual, you would simply ask participants to type into chat the words or phrases that describe the person… This activity should only take 5 minutes.
• Be sure to let participants know in advance that they will need to turn on their cameras – at least for the 45-minute Story Circles part (this instruction can be reviewed in case of internet connection problems).
• Be sure to let participant know that they will need to commit to the full time (which is 90 minutes at a minimum) of the training. It is not possible to have participants coming later or leaving early, especially during the Story Circles part.
• If 5 or less groups, debrief by each small group – asking each group to share how the experience was and what they learned.
• If 6 or more groups, invite participants to type into chat about how the experience was and what they learned – and then call on individuals to elaborate on their comments.

Other recommendations

• Don't assume participants are familiar with the online platform and breakout "rooms"

• Consider providing an orientation to the online platform (for those who need it) prior to the start of the Story Circles event – this could include explaining how the breakout rooms work, practicing clicking on the button to go to breakouts; this could also involve providing participants with a tutorial/instructional video in advance
• Consider having a "social" time as participants gather where they can talk informally with each other and begin to get to know each other
• Consider organizing a follow up meeting for participants to facilitate extension of the methodology