



# The power of problems.

How to open your next  
fundraising pitch with force

You should lead most  
of your fundraising  
communications with a  
**problem statement.**

Because donors must understand the issue before caring about your solution.

**They need to lean in.**

**Be invested.**

This psychology dates back 200,000 years to cave people. Humans are hard-wired to listen for how to thrive or survive.



**So never start your comms with “we” language.**

**Let’s look at a few nonprofit examples:**

THE DUAL HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

# MILLIONS OF COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS ARE NOT SALARIED, SKILLED, SUPERVISED, AND SUPPLIED.

70% of CHWs are women. Half in low- and middle-income countries are unsalaried. The ultimate injustice? One billion people will never see a health worker.

[LEARN MORE](#)

## The Challenge



**1.4 billion people live on dirt floors**, including 70% of Rwandans and Ugandans.



Mud and dirt surfaces are **breeding grounds for bacteria, parasites, and other pathogens.**



Dirt floors and mud walls are a **major cause of illnesses**, including diarrhea, malaria and malnutrition.



**Concrete flooring is not an affordable option** for the East African families currently living on dirt floors.



Millions of people in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are denied the right to access quality healthcare because of extreme poverty, armed conflict, and mass displacement – leading to an alarming range of community health challenges and concerning statistics that are entirely preventable.



## Community Challenges



Unregulated programming in rural medicine



Lack of trained, medical professionals



Under-resourced health facilities

Here's how you can embrace this narrative shift. **In three steps:**

STEP ONE

# Start with theory of change.

The first exercise in our Mighty Ally theory of change process is the problem statement — because what you ***decide*** here will greatly affect the rest of your theory of change.

And what you ***communicate*** here will greatly affect how audiences listen to your story.

STEP ONE

# **Start with theory of change.**

So describe the key social challenge your work addresses.

- Keep it concise! 6–10 sentences max.
- Align your statement with a couple of the 17 SDGs.
- Include a master data point (or two!) to reinforce the need.

STEP TWO

## **Find a soundbite that hooks.**

The full problem statement from your theory of change will be useful in some places. Like copying/pasting into a funding application. Or maybe in a more extended copy block on a website subpage.

But in many settings, you'll need ***a much shorter version.***

STEP TWO

## Find a soundbite that hooks.

We often hear leaders say,  
*“there’s no way we can reduce  
this issue to a few sentences.  
It’s too complex.”*

So think of this 1–2 sentence  
soundbite as the tip of an  
iceberg. You’re sharing the 10%  
above water. Your audience can  
ask if they want to hear the  
other 90% below the surface.

STEP THREE

## **Weave it into your marcom.**

Now that you've determined your soundbite to hook audiences, use it. ***Everywhere!***

Start your elevator pitch with the challenge. Make it the first page of your pitch deck. Explain the problem on your website — potentially a dedicated page like our client Justice Defenders:

# Why Justice?

The global justice gap is costly – with ripple effects on communities and societies. But the cost is greatest for those of us with the least.

THE PROBLEM

## IN PALACES AND PRISONS

4 of 5

prisoners in Kenya won't ever meet an attorney – not even during their hearing.

300%

occupancy level in Ugandan prisons, with 250 cases in the system 10+ years.

40%

reduction in global justice development funding in the past five years.

Half

of prisoners in low-income countries are detained pending trial.

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

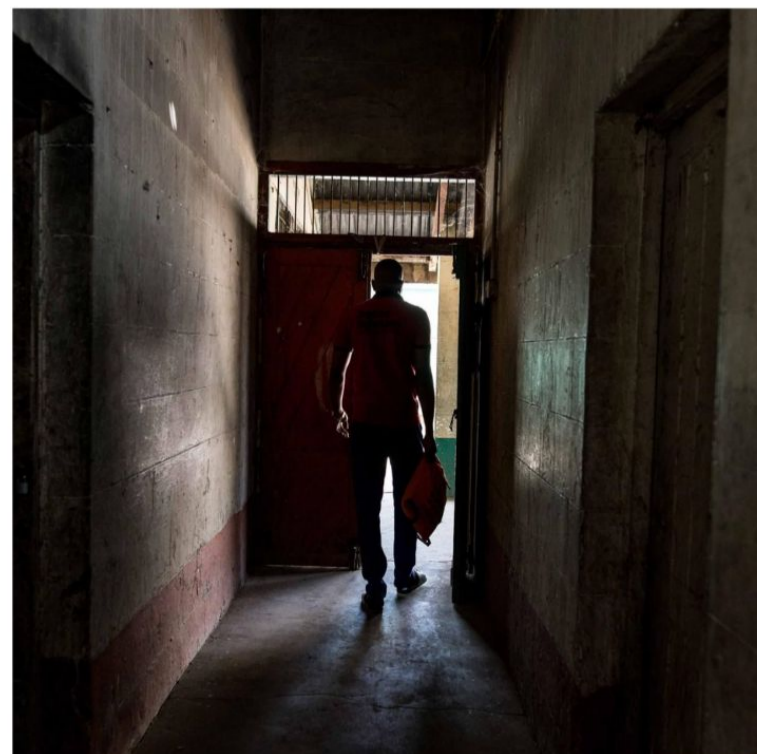
There can be no justice without peace, and there can be no peace without justice.

Injustice is not an African problem. There are flawed justice systems worldwide.

Governments now recognise the gravity of the issue and have committed to achieving the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, access to justice for all people and building

marginalised or impoverished communities, you will find an increase in criminal prosecution. We resist the idea that people from certain backgrounds, professions, or disabilities will always be overrepresented in prisons.

At the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals is a vision of an





This format has been used successfully in stories throughout time — from ancient myths to Bollywood scripts.

**So hit them with it.**

*“Conflict creates tension and tension is an essential life attribute. Without tension there is **boredom and predictability.**”*

– Susan Cohen

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