

Stories from the Field

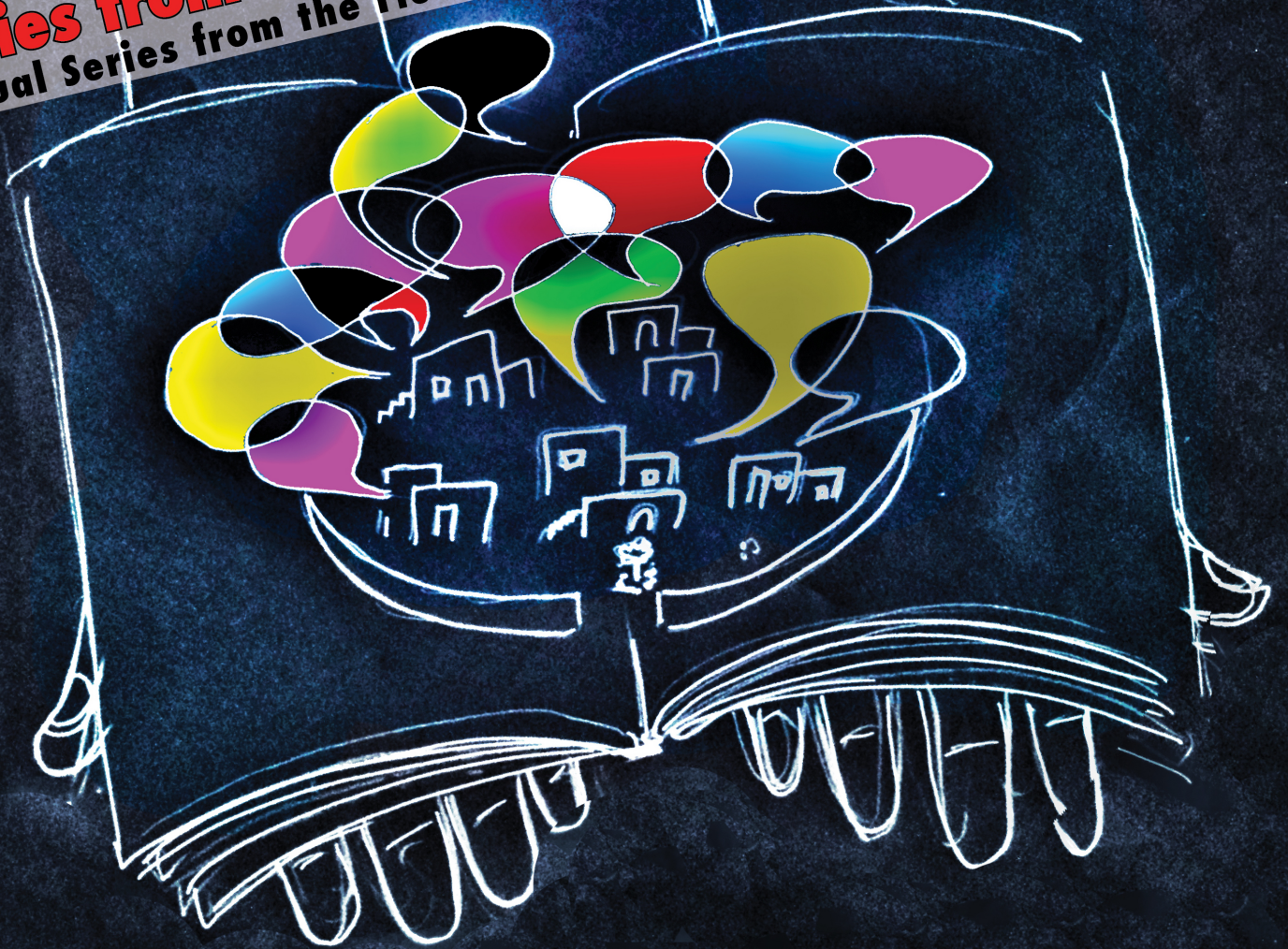
A Visual Series from the Field Innovation Team



In Pakistan, FIT partner FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS), an affiliate of the Aga Khan Foundation, has found that aggressive recruiting of female first responders leads to more successful response efforts. Amongst the population being assisted, women were primarily contributing to the spike in response success. When this phenomenon was examined more closely, it was discovered that women feel more comfortable when helped by other women, particularly when they require physical assistance, such as being pulled out of rubble or burning buildings. This important revelation led to FOCUS now ensuring that women make up 50% of its response units, up from the previous 30% female and 70% male split.

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Group story-sharing has a powerful ability to provide a coping mechanism at the community level and lead to self-empowerment. Research has found that group story-sharing is a way to combat feelings of disempowerment, anxiety, denial, despair, isolation, grief or loss, and helplessness.* This was a lesson learned when Pakistani organization, FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS), an affiliate of the Aga Khan Foundation, and FIT ran a storytelling pilot project in two Pakistani states, Gilgit-Baltistan and Sindh in 2014 and 2015. The goal of the pilot project was to explore ways in which storytelling can help in the recovery and preparedness phases of the disaster lifecycle, particularly around annual flooding that takes place throughout Pakistan.

* Kellam Stinson, C. 2009. Structured Group Reminiscence. Access online: <http://bit.ly/1VonA49>

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Due to its engaging and entertaining qualities, storytelling pedagogy can help youth learn and, subsequently, utilize important information.* This lesson was demonstrated during a pilot project constructed and run by FIT and FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS), an affiliate of the Aga Khan Foundation, during 2014 and 2015. The project revealed that youth can be excellent story-collection & lessons-learned facilitators. When given the task of collecting flood response and recovery stories from their families, they turned up with a vast amount of valuable lessons with implications for future community cohesion and disaster preparedness, regardless of whether they had lived those stories themselves or not. The goal of the project was to spread this and other lessons to help rural communities in Gilgit-Baltistan and Sindh provinces (where the pilot was carried out) and eventually other flood-afflicted regions prepare for future floods.

* Moitra, K. 2014. Storytelling as an Active Learning Tool to Engage Students in a Genetics Classroom. Accessed online <http://bit.ly/1OWguAe>