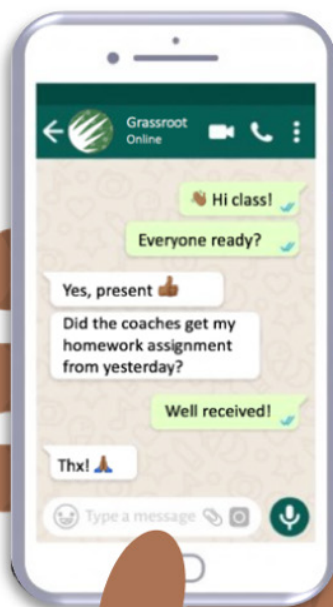GRASSROOT

A how to guide

10:48 AM

Teaching on WhatsApp
Leadership and Storytelling for Grassroots Community Organizers

10:50 AM

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Summary

This guide provides instructions on how to design and deliver an interactive training course through an app-based messaging platform. Drawing from Grassroot's pilot teaching leadership and storytelling through WhatsApp, we share tips on pedagogy, participant engagement, and the technical aspects of launching a distance-learning course. Part I of the guide describes the pilot course and Part II delves into the details of teaching on WhatsApp. Along with MIT GOV/LAB, our collaborative research partner, we also include lessons on evaluation and learning.

*This is a work in progress and we want to hear from you. Please be in touch if you use the guide and give us your recommendations (*contact@grassroot.org.za*; *mitgovlab@mit.edu*).*

Grassroot

Grassroot is a tech platform built for low-bandwidth, low-data settings that allows for smart-messaging through text message (www.grassroot.org.za).

MIT GOV/LAB

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Governance Lab (MIT GOV/LAB) is a group of political scientists focusing on innovation in citizen engagement and government responsiveness (www.mitgovlab.org).

Contents

Part I: The Grassroot WhatsApp Course & Pilot

1 Introduction

What is Grassroot?

Grassroot is an organization based in South Africa that builds technology for ground-up social movements and community organizations. The Grassroot tech platform is built for low-bandwidth, low-data settings and allows smart messaging through text message (USSD and SMS). Group organizers can send messages to their members and be sure of delivery, at no cost to the receiver. This makes it easier to notify people of meetings or ask for volunteers regardless of data or device. The platform is available in South Africa and has reached over half a million unique users in the country.

Choosing a message-based app course

After four years of product development and field testing, people have used Grassroot to create hundreds of new groups and events each month, for everything from community organizing to local football meetups. With such promising numbers, Grassroot wanted to see if there was a way to help active users become better at mobilizing and organizing for improved outcomes and government responsiveness.

Though the movement to end Apartheid in South Africa is a successful case of this type of mass collective action, the current generations of activists face new challenges. Some of the social movements

that were instrumental to ending Apartheid have since aligned themselves with political parties; others have struggled to move on from organizing models that were more suited to a very different time.

The course, first piloted in 2019 and ongoing today, is an attempt to build leadership skills for long-term organizing and mobilization, and to help participants realize and confront entrenched, systemic issues.

By hosting the class on WhatsApp, the aim is to reach those who typically cannot attend in-person trainings. Though Grassroot is an ideal platform for sending messages for community organizing, it's not meant to support the kind of interactive group discussions that WhatsApp does. That's why we looked outside of our own platform for a teaching solution.

Leadership through Storytelling Course

Goal: Stories that drive change

8 online classes

- 8 interactive "live" sessions, twice per week over 1 month
- Storytelling based on teachings of Professor Marshall Ganz
- Learning about legislation and rights
- Designed for adult learning with questions and answers drawing on participant experience
- Also, coaching and homework!

Above: Extract from the Grassroot pilot

2 Course Basics

**What the course covers**

The course, Leadership through Storytelling, focuses on three main aspects:

1 Storytelling for leadership development

2 Rights and legislation

3 Strategic-problem solving

The storytelling content is based on Harvard Professor Marshall Ganz's "Public Narrative" work, which focuses on identifying sources of hope and motivation to build shared visions for future change. We also include information on rights and legislation related to water and housing, specifically referencing South Africa's constitutional and legislative provisions, because people often noted human rights in their advocacy work, but may not be familiar with the specifics. We wanted to see if additional information would help them gain traction with government officials.
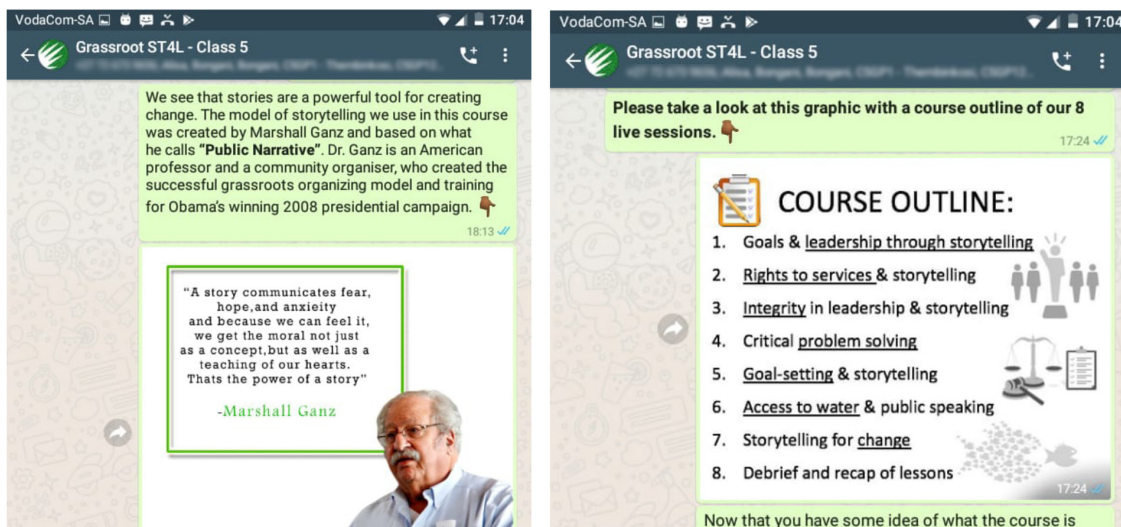
Above: Infographics used in the WhatsApp course. Developed by Grassroot and MIT GOV/LAB

The last course component focuses on strategic problem-solving as a way to move organizers past reactive responses, and towards more deliberate plans of action that are required for long-term campaigns and systemic change. We weren't sure how impactful or useful each course component would be, but we wanted to try them out.

[1]Ganz, Marshall. (2011). "Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power." Accountability Through Public Opinion: From Inertia to Public Action: 273-289. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

How the course works

The **Leadership through Storytelling** course is held entirely on WhatsApp over four weeks, and takes place in both large and small group chats.

In the large group chat, all participants (10-15 people) are expected to join at a designated time for a one-hour interactive session twice a week. A facilitator leads the class in a participatory discussion using a diversity of media, including text, voicenotes, images, and infographics. Each class ends with a homework assignment to be submitted the next day in the large group chat.

Each participant is also part of a one-hour small group chat (3-5 people) that takes place once a week at a designated time, led by a coach who provides more individualized support and encourages participation in a more intimate setting.

For the pilot, we had one facilitator and four coaches, each in charge of 1-2 small groups.


COURSE OUTLINE:
1. Goals & leadership through storytelling
2. Rights to services & storytelling
3. Integrity in leadership & storytelling
4. Critical problem solving
5. Goal-setting & storytelling
6. Access to water & public speaking
7. Storytelling for change
8. Debrief and recap of lessons

Participants were expected to commit to a total of 4 hours a week for class time, coaching, and homework assignments. As described below, the precise rhythm and mechanics of how these groups are established and relate to each other makes a large difference to how these groups work in practice.

Large Group Chat

Small Group Chat
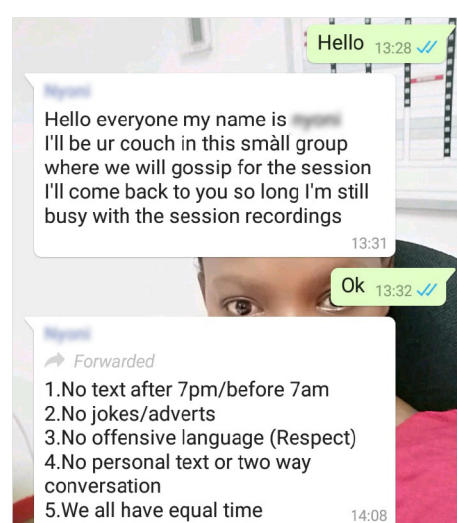
Above: Screenshots from the large and small group "welcome" chats in the Grassroot course

The course was piloted over five cohorts in 2019 with 61 participants, 44 of whom received certificates of completion. Through iteration, we determined that offering a small data incentive (R50 or approximately USD $3.50 per week) helped maintain participation. This amount was enough to cover data for class plus a bit extra for personal use. Coaching sessions that required group calls were also subsidized with R30 (~USD $2) of airtime for buying data. Additional participation incentivizes are discussed in more detail below.

The course content itself has been adapted and improved through Grassroot's collaboration with MIT GOV/LAB to test the different course components. Drawing on adult pedagogy, we included a mix of participatory questions and tasks for participants to complete in real time.
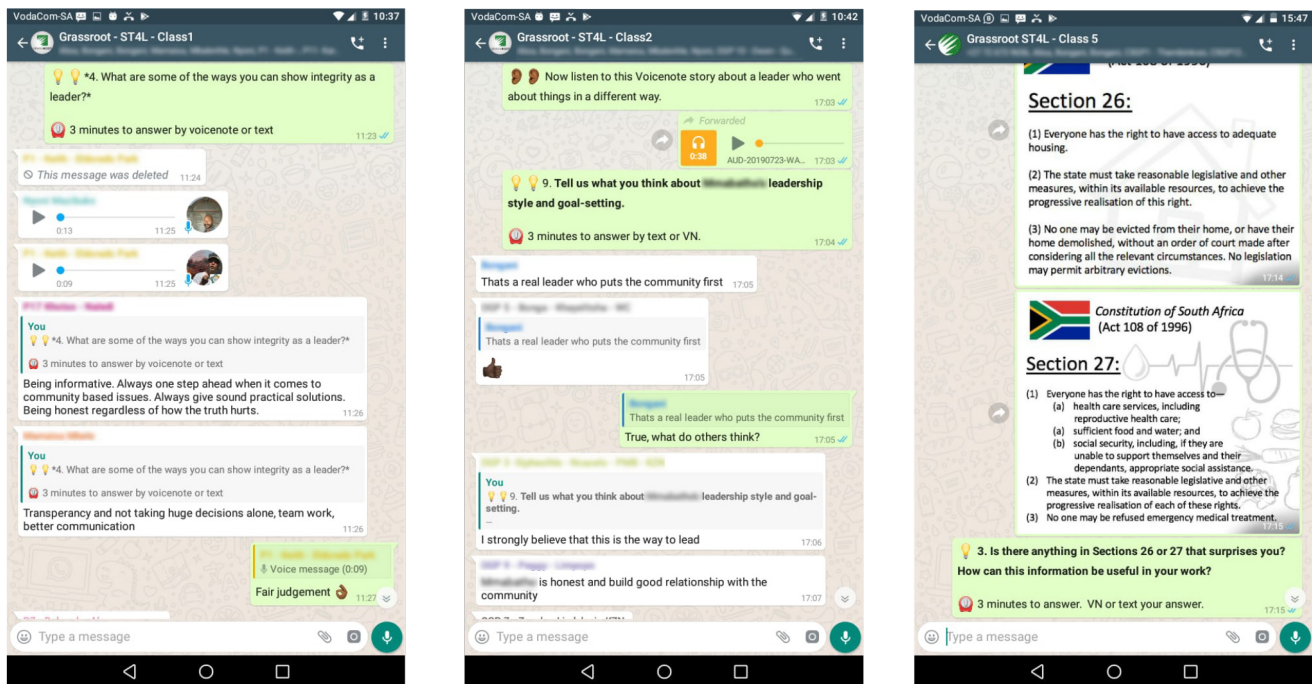
Above: Screenshots of example assignments and course content from the live Grassroot course

3 Learning and Iteration

In technology and engineering, teams use short design sprints to work rapidly, try new things, and learn from what works and what doesn't. We approached piloting the course similarly by teaching one cohort of participants, learning from what worked and what didn't, and then making changes for the next cohort.

A key part of this process was building in points for reflection for our team during the course and documenting what we learned along the way. The pilot was also accompanied by a research plan developed with MIT GOV/LAB, which included surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gather data on the course's impact after participants completed it.

KEY STEPS IN OUR ITERATIVE PROCESS:

User research
The course content was tailored to Grassroot platform users. Grassroot used the deep, qualitative research from our strategic review and prior user research to determine community priorities and demand for learning.

In-person focus groups
The initial draft content was first tested with focus groups in communities where Grassroot operates in Gauteng Province (near Johannesburg). Facilitators tried out the content by running in-person classes with 5-6 participants, followed by a survey and group feedback discussion.

Online simulations
We also ran online simulations, where participants came into the office in small groups of 4-6 and participated in one class using WhatsApp on their mobile phones. Simulations were also followed by surveys and group conversations.

Participant observation
Based on initial findings from the focus groups and simulations, we adapted the course content and tried it with two online cohorts. We then drew observations directly from class behavior in the large and small group chats, and wrote up additional recommendations for implementation.

Iteration and learning
We conducted three additional cohorts as part of the pilot with adjustments at each stage, including the introduction of behavioral and monetary incentives.

Phone surveys and interviews
MIT GOV/LAB conducted baseline and endline phone surveys and qualitative interviews to document course outcomes.

Sharing what we learned
This guide is one outcome, but we also plan to share the outcomes of our study and pilot process as we evaluate the course's impact.

Part II: How to Set up a WhatsApp Course — Tips and Lessons

As might be expected, developing an engaging course on WhatsApp is challenging both in terms of the technical aspects (how to create rich course content in a data poor context) and also pedagogically (how to maintain interest without face-to-face interaction). Most of the tips in this guide are based on the lessons from the pilot, and we continue to make changes and adapt the content according to feedback and behavior after each iteration.

1 Planning and Preparation

Deciding if a message-based course is the right fit
The decision tree below can help determine if teaching a messaging app-based course on a platform like WhatsApp makes sense for your organization.

1. **Identify your teaching goals and audience.**
    What do you want to teach and who is your target audience? What concrete knowledge, skills, or experience do you want participants to come away with? Is there an intrinsic link between your teaching goals and your intended audience's incentive to learn? Ensuring there is demand for the course, and motivation to participate, is essential to building a virtual classroom.

2. **Determine if teaching goals align with existing goals and activities.**
    Is there a direct link between the online course and your current plans and strategy? By design, online courses don't have a physical classroom to help maintain accountability. You need to have dedicated time and energy to build a credible team, develop the material, and adapt the course to hold participant energy.

3. **Decide if online makes sense for your goals and audience.**
    Teaching online has benefits and drawbacks. In the case of Grassroot, we knew that we didn't have the capacity or geography for an in-person course. At the same time, because of our platform, we knew that many of our users were using mobile devices to interact with us and their communities and that there might therefore be an appetite for a message-based course. We also knew that WhatsApp is widely-used and that data requirements would make a course difficult on other platforms.

TABLE: DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO TEACH OVER WHATSAPP?

All teaching requires:

✓ Time and resources to develop curriculum   ✓ Clear structure and incentives

✓ Committed teachers and participants   ✓ Opportunities for feedback and adjustments

+ Benefits of teaching via Whatsapp:

- Low maintenance costs
- Relatively low costs for participants
- Builds connections through social media and distance learning
- Easy to replicate and repeat
- Flexible timing, making it easier to catch up if participants miss class

— Challenges for Whatsapp teaching:

- Maintaining participant attention
- Content development
- Technology requirements (may exclude some participants)
- Connectivity issues (speed and quality of the internet connection may vary according to location)
- Relationships can be weak, shallow

Building a teaching team

To teach an online course, building a team is key. First, you need a facilitator who will lead and respond to participants in the scheduled large group sessions. Next, you need a team of trained coaches who are responsible for small group chats to answer questions, encourage participation, and provide feedback on homework assignments.

Takeaways

- **Structure matters.** It is worth investing significant time in composing your team, defining rules, and creating a rhythm of check-ins and iterations of the structure. Assign one point person to act as the course facilitator and coordinator to manage coaches and participants.
- **Train the coaches in the course material and pedagogy.** Coaches should have taken the course or be very familiar with the content at a minimum. Have them go through and do all the course assignments.
- **Define the roles.** There should be clearly-defined roles and expectations for coaches and facilitators, so there is no confusion among participants. We found that it's best if facilitators don't double as coaches.
- **Schedule regular check-ins for coaches.** These ensure that coaches are on track and can make adjustments during the course. Develop indicators and questions for coaches that allow monitoring of the small groups without being directly part of them.

How we built and trained our team

- **Defining roles.** Coaches should provide participants with more individualized attention and help keep everyone in their small groups on track with workshops and homework assignments. In our first

cohorts we did not define this role properly, and found that the coaches would crowd out participation in the main group and not focus enough on their small groups. When we changed this in the second and third cohorts, it significantly improved the coaches' effectiveness.

- **Recruiting, training, and qualifications for coaches.** In the beginning, we gave coaches and facilitators the same training. Once the course was underway, we were able to recruit additional coaches from among participants who excelled in the course. In assessing coaches, our top priority was whether they knew the course material. After that, we looked at how well they understood and executed the course procedures and how well they conducted their small-group sessions.
- **Coaching sessions.** The day after each large-group session, the coach has a 30-minute check-in with the participants that are assigned to his/her group. During these coaching sessions, the coach reviews the class attendance and gives feedback on participants' assignments. The coach also conducts occasional group calls with all the participants to find out how they are progressing and to discuss any issues with the course. These check-ins are important to help participants improve and to make sure that each class progresses at the same pace.

Recruiting participants

How do you recruit the "right" people? Below we talk about different ways we advertised for the class and, through trial and error, figured out how to recruit people who became active participants. Please note that in reaching out to potential participants, it's important to be aware of any applicable data protection and privacy laws, for example, the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Takeaways

- **Recruitment takes time.** At the beginning, we recruited from the Grassroot network and then used existing participants to recruit additional people. This was a time-intensive process, and took longer than we thought.
- **Participants should opt in, not be chosen.** Importantly, we learned that people who respond to recruitment advertisements and contact us to participate are much more likely to finish the course than those we invite directly.
- **Give recruits a task to prove their commitment.** Before allowing someone to join the course, we had them complete an assignment to demonstrate interest, motivation, and whether they could follow instructions online.

How we learned to recruit

Initial recruitment

- For the first two cohorts, we recruited participants from the Grassroot platform via phone survey who were high-frequency users and who had access to WhatsApp. The participants all consented to be
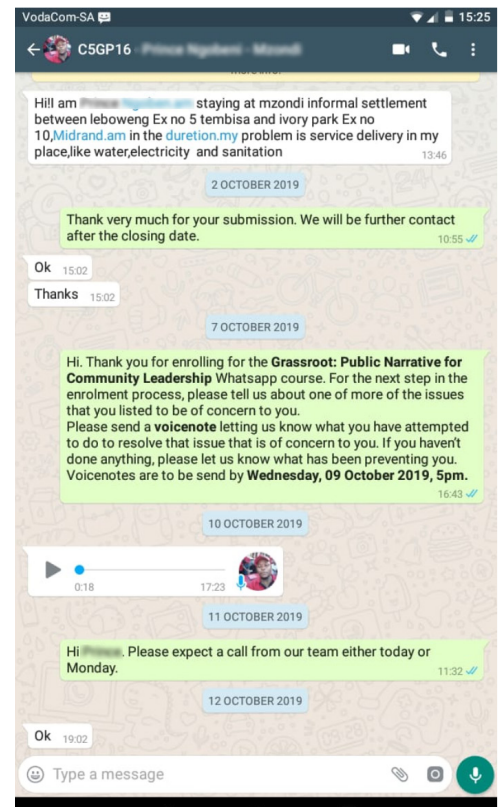
contacted in a Whatsapp training course. This resulted in 49 people.

- To advertise, we sent WhatsApp messages, e.g., "Grassroot: Public Narrative for Community Leadership WhatsApp course will begin its third cohort on 14 October 2019. To enroll, send your name, surname, location and tell us what issue you are concerned with (e.g. access to housing, water, electricity, unemployment, etc). Send via WhatsApp to 079 364 4718. Entries close 4 October 2019. Please note that the course runs entirely on WhatsApp for a period of 4 weeks so access to it is a requirement.

- For the third, fourth, and fifth cohorts, we displayed the message above to participants in the first and second classes, and asked them to share it with their networks.

- Additionally, the facilitator and coaches displayed the message as their WhatsApp statuses for a week, which was successful in recruiting a few participants.
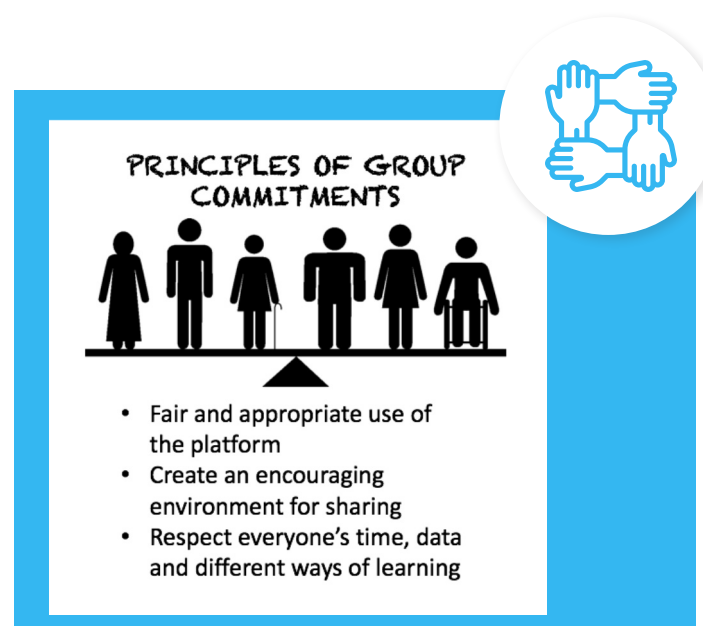
Choosing applicants

- Applicants who sent text messages with all the required items were given a second task to prove their commitment. They had to send a voicenote within three days elaborating on an issue of concern and how they attempted to resolve it or what prevented them from doing so.

- Applicants were accepted if they sent initial messages (criteria 1: has access to WhatsApp), completed the voicenote assignment (criteria 2: wants to use course content for a specific purpose), and completed these tasks before the deadline (criteria 3: is engaged and follows instruction).

- The course facilitator then used WhatsApp to schedule a phone call with each accepted applicant. During the phone call, the facilitator collected some personal details, determined the applicant's ideal class time and availability, explained how the class would run, and answered any questions. The facilitator tracked information from these phone calls in a Google Form.

Preparing before class begins

Once class participants are set, a number of tasks need to be completed to set everything up. These are important logistics to cover at the beginning.

Takeaways

- **Get the timing right.** It's important to be precise and deliberate with the exact sequencing and timing of the first parts of the course. For example, we learned that it's best to add participants to the main group right before the session starts. If you add them too early, people start chatting or asking questions, which can derail the first session. The entire tone of the class and people's general understanding may be altered by a few minutes difference in when people are added to a group or when messages are distributed.

PRINCIPLES OF GROUP COMMITMENTS

- Fair and appropriate use of the platform
- Create an encouraging environment for sharing
- Respect everyone's time, data and different ways of learning

- **Set and reinforce class rules and expectations.** Because online classes are different than in-person classes, it's important to set rules of engagement and demonstrate what good behavior looks like (see graphic).
- **Make sure coaching groups are not too big.** Small groups should be around 3-5 people to maximize interactions and build closer relationships.
- **Create backups**. Keep offline files in case you lose power or have technical difficulties. Keep the content for the whole course in Google Docs and make the files available offline as one of the options under the "File" tab.

Tips on how to prepare before each class

Course preparation checklist
- Store all names and numbers on a single spreadsheet for easy reference.
- Get lesson documents ready, along with all the multimedia files (an offline copy is helpful where internet service providers (ISPs) sometimes offer exclusive WhatsApp data).
- Assign participants to coaching groups.
- Know what network providers your participants use, as well as their phone numbers if you will be providing them with data to access the course.
- Enable WhatsApp for desktop. This makes it easier to cut and paste the course content into the large group chats.

CLASS RULES

✔ 1. **Attendance.** Each class we will do a roll call to see who is online.

✔ 2. **Active participation.** Respond to *every* question in the session.

✔ 3. **Engage with others.** Comment to encourage your classmates.

✔ 4. **Homework.** Complete each homework assignment.

🏆 Good class attendance and participation will be recorded.

Setting up coaching groups
- The ideal coaching group size is 3-5 people per coach.
- Putting people with similar interests or circumstances in the same group can make it easier to build a rapport. This is a chance to experiment with different groupings to see what makes a difference, including making groups according to where people live, issues of interest, employment status, community leaders vs members.
- Coaches should add people to their groups right after the large introductory session ends. This helps keep interest and momentum going.

Introductory session
- Start the course with an introductory session with all participants about 5 days before the first group lesson. Use this session to introduce the coaches and set ground rules for the group.
- Use the thumbs up 👍 or thumbs down 👎 emojis along with other variants of "yes" and "no" to check if everyone is on the same page.

② Developing and Structuring the Course

Developing a course for WhatsApp in low-data, low-bandwidth settings is not the same as for an online class taught with high-speed internet and the latest technology. It is also different from a traditional class taught in person. A key difference is designing content to keep people engaged and using WhatsApp as a social messaging platform to effectively build connections.

Takeaways

- **Find a curriculum designer who knows online learning and your target audience.** Developing course content for WhatsApp is not simple. It requires knowledge of pedagogy and creativity. While you don't need an expert, it's important to find someone who understands different ways of teaching and learning for your target audience.

- **Play with the mix of media and question types.** In today's online culture, many people are used to rapid responses that don't go too deep (think about how emojis have replaced emotions in online conversations). We found it was important to ask a mix of quick response and deeper questions (no more than 3 in an hour-long session), because people tend to check out if there were too many deep questions.
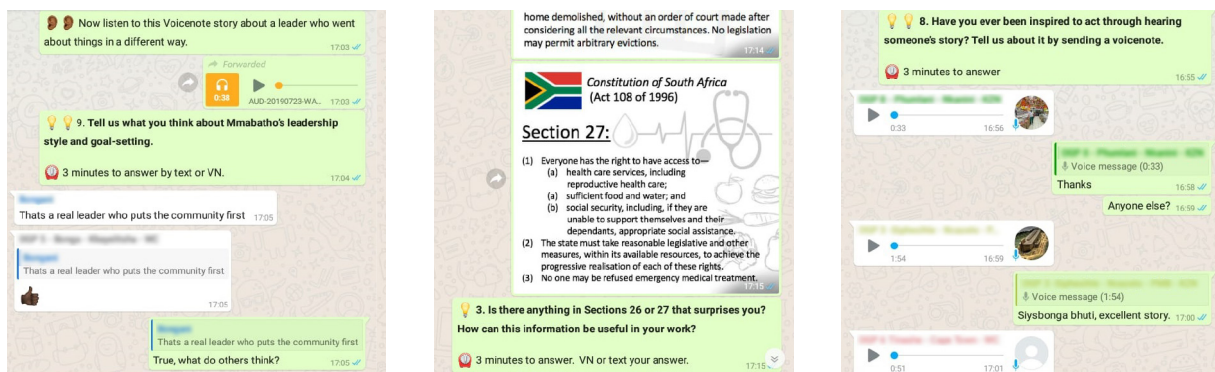

Above: Examples of different question types throughout the course, including listening and responding to voicenotes, reading legislation, and answering questions.

- **Practice the timing.** Everything works more slowly online, especially when you are competing for people's attention. Participants often took a long time to respond to prompts. Deeper questions often took 7-10 minutes for people to answer. Test how long it takes people to respond and build in extra time.

How we developed the course content

- **Research and consultations.** We consulted with Marshall Ganz's team to receive tips, guides, and course syllabi from his traditional online course on Public Narrative. For the legislative content, we asked community members in informal settlements and underdeveloped areas what their biggest issues of concern were and then researched the relevant laws and rights.

- **Hiring a local curriculum developer.** This process took some adjustment, and shows the importance of testing along the way. Our curriculum developer started by creating initial content divided into eight sessions, with some material transformed into graphics or other formats. After initial tests, we found that this version had too much material for eight one-hour sessions. Furthermore, the language was too technical and academic for the target audience and so required further adaptation. Since this will be a new medium for almost any developer, assume that you will need a substantial amount of time to iterate.

- **Testing and adapting content based on focus groups and simulations led by MIT GOV/LAB.** In some cases we ended up shortening and restructuring entire lessons to facilitate better online participation. Then we continued to iterate further based on actual participation in the initial online classes and feedback from the coaching team and MIT GOV/LAB.
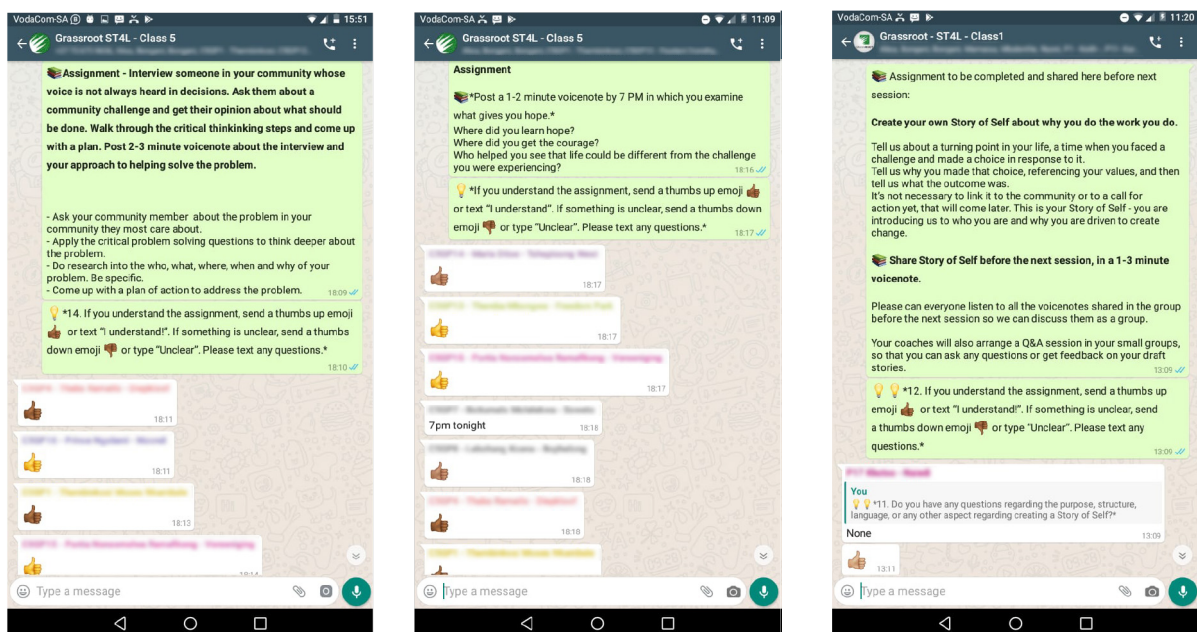
Above: Examples of homework assignments from the Grassroot pilot

Designing for WhatsApp

WhatsApp makes it possible to present class content in a number of different formats, including text, graphics, images, and voicenotes. Check out the legends to see how we drafted and organized content that would be copied and pasted into the class WhatsApp chat. Through trial and error, we have come to use the following media types in the course:

- A **colour legend** helps the facilitator organize content in a Google Doc that is colour-coded according to the content type. Content can then be pasted directly from the documents into WhatsApp Desktop.

Right: Example of colour coding legend in Google Docs

COLOUR LEGEND	
	TEXT
	PARTICIPANT RESPONSE
	GRAPHIC
	VOICENOTE
	GROUP CALL

- **Emojis** are the best tool for helping participants understand the course structure and what is expected. Different emojis signal when participants need to take action, for example the lightbulb emoji 💡 indicates a question to be answered, the ear emoji 👂indicates a voicenote to listen to, and the pile of books emoji 📚 indicates a homework assignment.

  Right: Example of emojis legend in Google Docs

EMOJIS LEGEND	
👏👏	Beginning and end of a session
💡	Request to respond to a task
👂	Listen to a voicenote
👆👀	Check out an image or graphic
👍👎	Acknowledge agreement and/or understanding
⏱	How much time for response
📚	Homework assignment

- **Bold letters and numbers** help distinguish between the actual questions and additional information that comes within the question or assignment. Numbering questions helps everyone keep track throughout each session, which is especially important given the flow and jumpiness of WhatsApp conversations.

- **Images and infographics** make up the majority of information shared in class. They are the lightest type of media (i.e., less data intensive) and are easier to share on instant messengers.

- **Voicenotes** are mainly used to share the stories and examples for assignments. Infographics with lots of text are also reposted as voicenotes for those who cannot see clearly. In a few sessions, participants are asked to submit voicenotes in response to questions that require critical thinking. This is easier than typing a long response on a phone keypad.

3 Running the Course

Incentivizing participation

Once you develop a great course and participants are ready, how do you ensure people show up and participate online? Setting expectations for online participation is tricky because there is no in-person social pressure and the course is free. The nature of messaging platforms like WhatsApp compound this problem because they are designed for quick interactions, not a sustained class.

Takeaways

- **Personalize communications.** When possible, use participants' names when acknowledging good participation, attendance, and completing assignments. This establishes a more personalized connection and people look for their names to make sure they get credit.

- **Give detailed feedback often.** If you only say "thank you," participants don't know that anyone reviewed their work and they feel assignments aren't worth anything. Provide specific feedback and notes on all assignments.

- **Consider offering data incentives.** We offer airtime for small group calls, and later for good participation, though this is not promised. We define "good participation" as showing up for sessions on time, answering all the questions, and handing in assignments on time.

- **Award certificates of completion.** Offer a formal acknowledgement of people's participation in the course. People asked for this at the very beginning and now participants can receive hard copy certificates and/or PDF versions sent via WhatsApp. Templates for creating these kinds of certificates can be found on Microsoft Powerpoint's featured templates and themes or on Canva.com. (See example to the right).

How we tried out different ways to incentivize participation

Incentives
- For the first two cohorts, we didn't offer any monetary incentive and participation dropped off noticeably midway through the class. In the third and fourth cohorts we experimented with providing airtime commensurate with participation, which helped.
- We sent "thank you" messages at the beginning of each session with names of people who had submitted their assignments. That worked to get more people submitting assignments but it did not necessarily get more people to participate in the live classes.
- By the fifth cohort, we figured out a good system. Participants were told that all coaching sessions that required group calls would be subsidized with R30 (approx. USD $2) of airtime for the purpose of buying internet data.
- After session 2 and every second session thereafter, those who answered every question and submitted their assignments on time received R50 (approx. USD $3.50) airtime and those who didn't received R15 (approx. USD $1) airtime.

Feedback on assignments
- Participants who submitted their assignments on time received a "thank you" in the group where each individual was mentioned by name. About midway through the pilot, we were still experimenting with content delivery and we started testing out a combination of personalized recognition and more in-depth feedback on assignments. This mix came after some experimentation, and really once we figured out how to best deliver the main content.
- Participation rates tended to drop halfway through the course. But once coaches started to provide feedback on all assignments, rates of assignment completion improved.

Interactions between participants

- Participants were encouraged to comment on each other's answers and assignments to endorse ideas, talk about shared experiences, and offer assistance where necessary.
- Each session was designed to last one hour, but sessions often ran longer than expected. The average session ran an hour and fifteen minutes, with the longest running for an hour and forty minutes with our most active class.
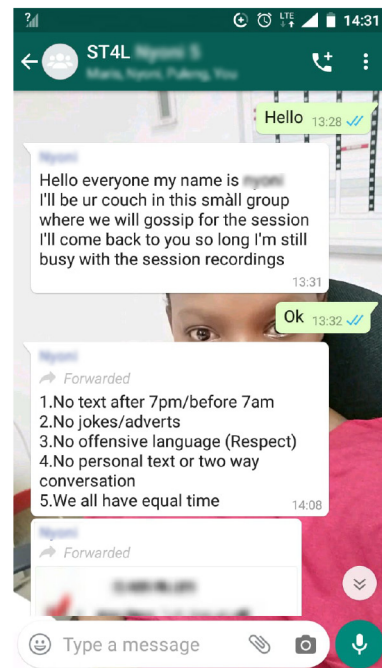
④ FAQs

What *if someone is late to a session or unable to join?*

Sometimes participants cannot join the live large group session due to work commitments, family issues, connectivity problems, or other technical issues. If people miss a session, they should review the session content on their own time and, importantly, still complete the homework assignment on time. If they are late, they should wait until the end of the live session to answer questions that they missed.

In our pilot, at first we encouraged people to catch up during the session and answer questions, but this created confusion in the thread. We therefore determined it was better for people to catch up later, and we emphasized completing the homework assignment. Note that people should respect group rules and avoid sending catch-up messages outside of set hours.

As a facilitator, *should I be concerned if people don't answer every question?*

People generally use instant messengers while performing other tasks or with something else in the immediate vicinity competing for their attention. So even the most active participants will have delayed responses or skip certain questions altogether.

You should be concerned if the majority of your participants skip a majority of the questions. Ask the coaches to probe into the matter. Some of the reasons people gave for skipping questions in our pilot included: not being comfortable / finding it convenient to record a voicenote for a question that required it, having to attend to household matters, childcare, or unexpected visitors, and not feeling like they are extracting value out of that particular session or lesson.

As a facilitator, should I comment on each person's response?

You can comment on people's responses as it helps build rapport and makes people feel that their input is valued. However, time will likely not allow for you to respond to everyone. It is most convenient to comment on people's responses in the quiet periods while others are still typing. If the same participants are always first to respond, start alternating who you ask to respond first, and start varying who you comment on so that everybody is covered by the end of the session.

To keep the session from running overtime, only comment on the responses that you are able to address within the specified timeframe. If the participants have five minutes to answer a question, do not comment on any of the responses once the five minutes are up. That will keep things moving.

Prioritize questions and requests for clarification but do not comment on these after the class has moved on to the next question, since going back and forth will confuse the rest of the class. Instead, ask the coaches to follow up with those people after the session.

How do I encourage participation in class and engagement with each other in group chats?

Emphasize the importance of engagement in the class rules, and lead by example by commenting on people's responses. Ask what others think when someone goes out on a limb and answers a question that other people didn't respond to.

As a facilitator, you might notice similarities amongst your participants' circumstances, ways of thinking, or any other common factors. Use this common ground to suggest collaboration or ask one participant if they think another participant's suggestion might work.

How do I manage coaches when I'm not part of their small groups?

The facilitator must create a group for coaches, similar to the ones that they use to coach others. This is where the facilitator gets feedback on the coaches' daily tasks and checks for updates if things do not go as planned during the session.

The coaches' group is also where coaches can report absences, share feedback they have sent to participants, and communicate in general.