THE GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME

PHOTO STORY TOOLKIT

CREATING YOUR OWN UNIQUE PHOTO STORIES

A TOOLKIT TO GUIDE YOU FROM A-Z

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INTRODUCTION

Photo stories are powerful communication tools that can be used to bring innovative narratives of on-the-ground community projects in a visually appealing manner to a larger audience. A simple way to look at photo stories is as a slide show which may include captions, audio narration, background music and other features. The final product is in video format that can be easily shared with a larger audience.

The GEF Small Grants Programme worked with several local communities and pilot tested this knowledge product in the fall of 2009 with great rates of success. Through this process SGP communities created 5 photo stories and realized that photo stories can be created in easy-to follow steps by collecting photos, creating captions and audio narration using the a free user- friendly software from Microsoft called Photo Story, which you can download here:

http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=92755126-a008-49b3-b3f4-6f33852af9c1&displaylang=en

Here is a brief synopsis of what needs to be done to create your own photo stories:

a) Choose at least *2 SGP projects* from your country portfolio which you feel are exemplary in addressing the issues in our SGP focal areas: biodiversity conservation, climate change, land degradation, international waters and POPs.

b) Gather *10-20 high quality photos* and illustrations of the chosen projects, which will serve as the basis of the photo story.

c) Access *members of the chosen community* to either come to the SGP field office to discuss the project in detail.

d) Work with the community *to prepare and record a brief narration* for the audio piece of the photo story describing the key achievements of the projects from the perspective of the communities themselves. If grantees or community members have the capability to create the photostories remotely, this is optimal, otherwise, we suggest they be invited to country offices.

Each photo story should be *approx. 2-4 minutes long* and should include photos and audio narration with a limited amount of caption text (1-2 sentences) per slide.

WHAT IS A PHOTO STORY?
Key Elements and useful tips

What are photo stories?

Microsoft Photo Story is a free application that provides a user-friendly way for individuals and communities to their story using digital photos and combining them with narration, effects, transitions and background music to create to create a powerful visual and narrative product. The software is available in English, French and Spanish.

Why use photo stories?

Photo Story is a powerful communication tool that offers a great opportunity to showcase the work done at the local level by allowing communities themselves to narrate in their own voices and in a short, concise and visually attractive way, a story about a project, an idea or a process, capturing the viewer and inviting reflection.

Photo stories allow users to create slideshows using digital photos. The GEF SGP has already created several photo stories as part of the "Biodiversity for Local Livelihoods project," a collaborative project between the CBD and the UNDP Equator Initiative.

Photo Stories are a tool with great potential to stimulate local innovation processes and allows people in the field to monitor their projects from conception, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation. The process of creating a photo story can serve as a basis for reflection and offers an opportunity for the creative exchange of ideas. It stimulates community members to "visualize" what they are currently doing and to consider jointly how they can do things better. This process can strengthen links between community members and help them develop consensus.

In addition, photo stories enhance knowledge exchange between practitioners, help to highlight a community's project accomplishments and can assist communities and country programme offices in monitoring projects in an interesting and participative way (from conception, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation). Photo stories also be shown to partner communities and agencies and people may feel recognized for their contribution to their society and gain greater visibility.

Photos

Photos are a fundamental part of the photo story as they are the visual representation of the story. Photo stories created using the attached software should include between 10 and 15 pictures with captions and a 2 to 3 minute narration, preferably narrated by someone in country or community who is closely connected to the project. The pictures selected must narrate the story and therefore, the order and selection of pictures is very important. Specifically, the photos should tell a story. Pictures can showcase people, a process, technologic innovation, landscapes, etc. Pictures can also include different angles, for instance:

- **Action Shots** - Showing someone or something in motion.

Community members fishing in Sarstoon-Temash

- **Staged shots** - Shots where the subjects involved are arranged and are posing for the photograph.

Community members posing with an Atlantic Sea Turtle, Benin

- **Long shots** - Photographs in which the subject is shown at a relatively small scale.

Photo A) Aerial long shot of Yelnia Raised Bog, Belarus
Photo B) Long shot of subject in the middle of the photo, shown with dried trees in the background and a dam in the foreground

- **Mid shots** – This is a shot where the subject and background share equal dominance in the picture. For example, a medium shot of an individual will take in the body from the knees or waist up.

Mid shot of an individual (shown waist up) carrying turtle shells, with scenic background, Benin

- **Close-up shots** - A photograph in which the subject (a person or an object) is tightly framed and shown at a relatively large scale. A certain feature, such as someone's head, takes up the whole frame.

Atlantic Sea Turtle close up shot, Benin

Photo Captions

Photo captions require information, judgment and imagination. The purpose of captions is not only to explain the photo but to gain the interest of the viewer. When writing your captions please keep in mind the following things:

1. Text for captions: 1-2 sentences (max) per slide.
2. Briefly explain the photo: what is happening, who is in the picture, why and where.
3. Provide context: Name the people, places and things that appear in the picture.
4. Describe important details in the photo.
5. If you feel the caption and narration are conflicting, you may choose to omit captions in some slides or keep them very briefly only using an identifier (Ex: "The Nile River in 2002")

Photo story narration

Once the photos are selected and captions are created, narration which can vary between 2-4 minutes can be recorded. The narration should follow the progression of the photos and tell the story of the project. The narration should be no more than 10-15 seconds per slide and should be recorded per slide. Ideally the narration should be done by the National Coordinator, Programme Assistant, Grantee, community member or someone otherwise very close to the project. It is important that the narration be slow, clear and loud enough so that the audience understands the narrative and it effectively complements the story being told through photographs.

Suggested Photo Story Outline

Then it's time to put it all together by amassing your photos, placing them in an order that tells a story, developing sample captions and developing the narration. Here is a suggested order of a photostory:

A. **Title page**

B. **Photos, captions and narration that highlight project data and environment (2-3 photos)**

- o Photos - include photos that highlight the location: e.g. map of your country, location of project and special characteristics of the location or environment.

- o *Caption and narrative* – Include project title, organization, logos, number of people participating, location and start date.

Sample of a photo (map) which can be used in this section:

C. **Highlighting the environmental challenge (2-3 photos)**

- o *Photos* – Include photos illustrating the problem and risk (whether it relates to biodiversity, land degradation, POPs, climate change or threats to international waters).

- o *Caption and narrative* – Complementing the photos, the titles and narrative can explain the problem and associated risks and then discussing how these will impact the community.(before and after)

Sample of photos displaying environmental challenges which can be used in this section:

One of the many unfortunate accidents that kills a number of leopards each year

D. Project overview (2-3 photos)

o *Photos* – Include photos that highlight the community, location, and livelihoods.

o *Caption and narrative* - Information summarizing a brief description of the community (numbers, livelihoods, social dynamics, most vulnerable/discriminated groups, history, politics, government, etc.). This should give the reader a feel for the community, how it lives, what is important to it.

Sample of community photos which can be used in this section:

E. Project description & project development (2-3 photos)

o *Photos* – Include photos that show the project from inception to present, describing the goal, mission and how the project is addressing the environmental challenges that have been described.

o *Caption and narrative* – Give a brief project description and discuss project development, participatory process (our role as facilitator only), and techniques to build on local knowledge/skills/resources, project highlights and milestones.

F. Project successes (2-3 photos)

o *Photos* – Include photos that show the success of the project.

o *Caption and narrative* – Explain why and how the project was successful (i.e what ere the positive environmental and community impacts of the project). You may wish to

highlight challenges you have encountered and how these are being or have been addressed. You may show photos before and after the project.

Sample of photo which can be used in this section:

Coral being restored

G. Lessons learned and conclusion (2-3 photos)

- *Photos* – Include photos that illustrate any lessons that may have been learned to date.

- *Caption and narrative* - Lessons learned from projects that could help other communities to successfully create and implement biodiversity projects. Comments may be made about the future of the problem, the project and plans for future success.

**A note about photo resolution:

Ideally, photos being used for photo stories should have as high a resolution as possible. The key for the use of digital images is understanding resolution. Resolution can great enhance the quality and efficiency of digital image use, as much as it can threaten the image quality and limit the ability to use the image. Digital image resolution varies and both high and low resolution has its purposes and advantages. For instance, high resolution is key for print publications and low resolution for web based applications.

Digital Images are composed by pixels, square units of measurement composed of smaller units called bits. More bits per pixel increases the pixels ability to render colors. More pixels in an image increase its definition. The appropriate resolution for publication is 300 dpi.

Resolution is expressed in two ways:
- Dimension: The number of pixels in an image by width and height like for example 3000 x 2000 pixels
- Megapixels: the number of pixels by width and height times a million: 3000x2000=6 megapixels. Usually, megapixels are used to indicate the maximum image size of a digital camera.

Image size: Images are often measured in kilobytes(KB), megabytes(MB) or gigabytes (GB) that represents the amount of space it occupies in a Hard drive, CD, USB, etc. Most images when they are closed they are compressed, to see the image size the image should be open for viewing. Once you have chosen your 15-20 photos, make sure to compress the photos before use in the photostory. The proper image size for reproduction or publications is:

Image Size	Resolution	Pixel dimension	Bytes
11 X 7.35 inches	300 dpi	3300 x 2257 pix	20.9 MB

While the above parameters can serve as guidelines, this should not limit a community from creating a photostory with existing photos that may be on hand. Also, if photos are not available, one can also improvise by taking a screen shot of a map, a website, a newspaper, a sign and so on.

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A STEP-BY-STEP PHOTOSTORY SOFTWARE TUTORIAL

Downloading the software:
Microsoft Photo Story 3 for Windows XP is a free accessible user-friendly software. To begin creating your new story, first install the photostory software onto your computer:

    A. ENGLISH LANGUAGE VERSION:

    http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=92755126-a008-49b3-b3f4-6f33852af9c1&displaylang=en

    B. FRENCH LANGUAGE VERSION:

    http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=92755126-a008-49b3-b3f4-6f33852af9c1&DisplayLang=fr

    C. SPANISH LANGUAGE VERSION:

    http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=92755126-a008-49b3-b3f4-6f33852af9c1&DisplayLang=es

1. **Open the program:** Open photo story from your computer's Start menu by clicking "Start." Then point to "All Programs," and then click "Photo Story 3 for Windows."

2. **Create the file:** On the Photo Story welcome page, click "Begin a new story," and then click "Next." See below:
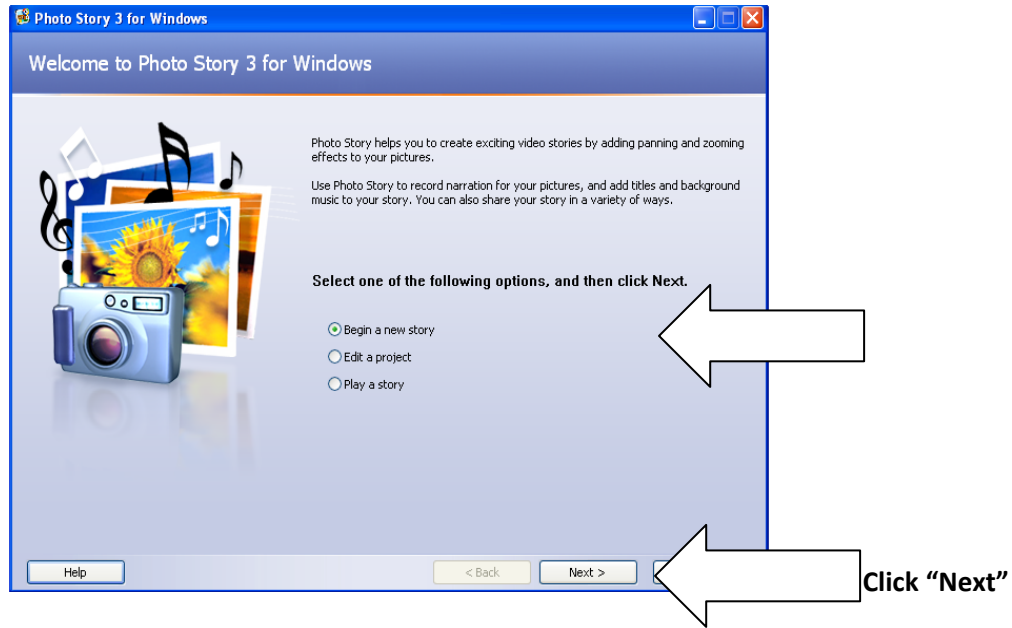
Click "Next"

3. **Import and arrange your pictures**

- After you click "Next" above, you will come to the screen which says "Import and arrange your pictures"

- Chose 10-20 photos you plan to use for your photostory and arrange them in the order that they will be viewed.
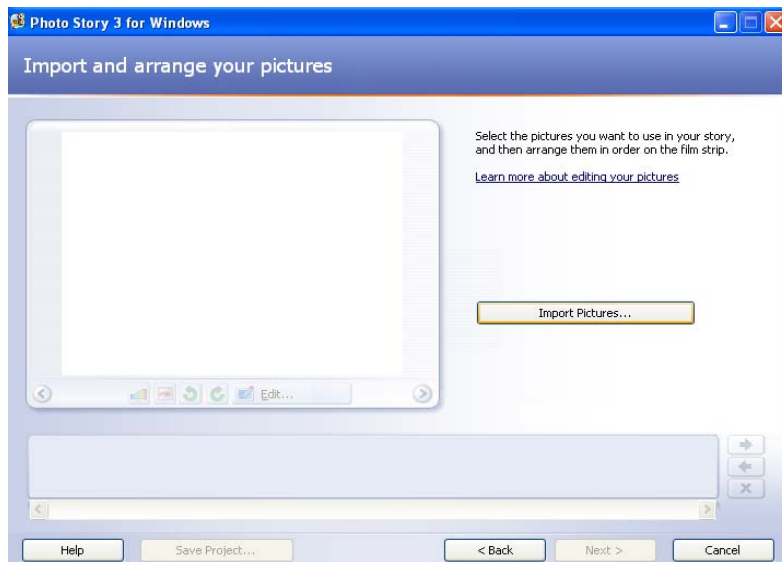
4. **Add pictures to your photo story**

- On the Import and arrange your pictures page, click "Import Pictures."

- In the File Browser dialog box, browse to My Documents\My Pictures\

- Add the photos you want by holding down the "Ctrl" button, while clicking and highlighting all the photos you wish to include. See below:
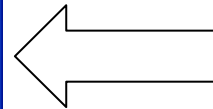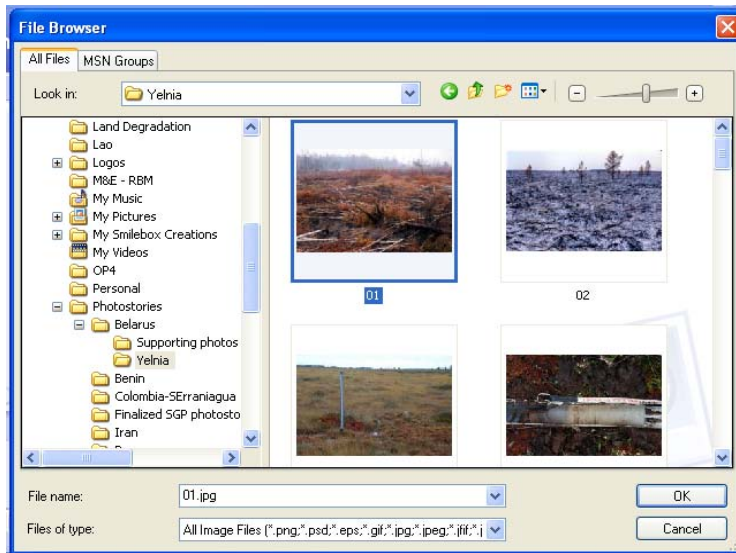
After choosing, click ok.

- Once your photos have been imported, there will be a button just below the "import pictures" tab that says "remove black borders." Click on this and then click on "yes to all" to remove the borders.
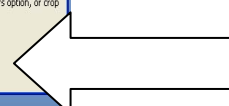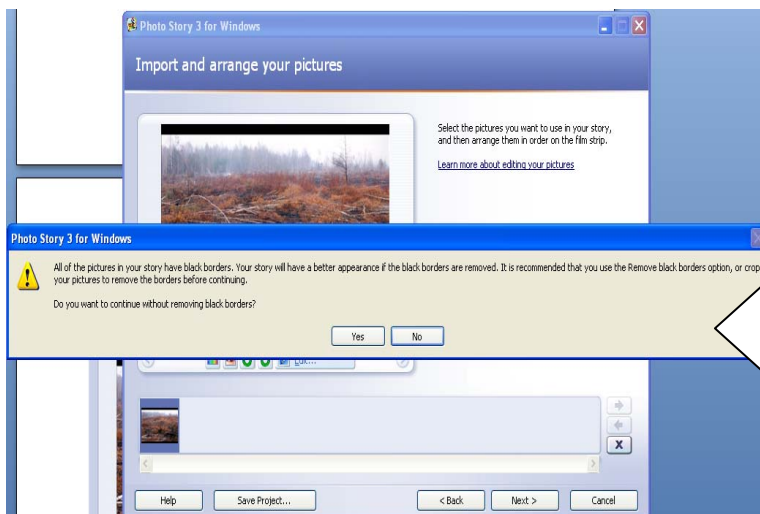
When finished, click " Next"

- The filmstrip in Photo Story is a great place to quickly changes to your pictures and story. For example, you can drag a picture in the filmstrip to change the sequence.
- Underneath each photo, you will see an "edit" button
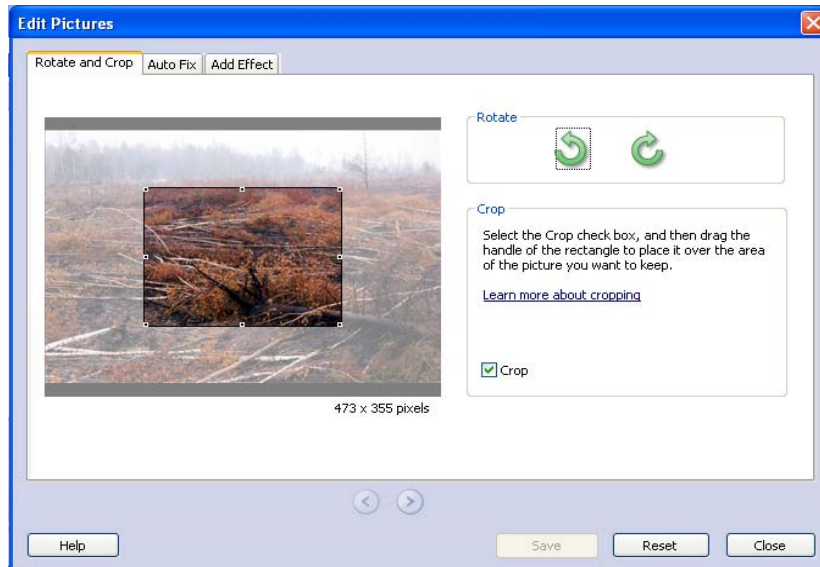
- You can click a picture in the filmstrip and click Edit to change the appearance of the picture by rotating it, adjusting the color, fixing red eye or adding effects. You can also right-click a picture in the filmstrip to perform these actions. Try adding an effect to one of the pictures to see what they look like.

- When you are finished making changes to your pictures, click "Next" to continue.

5. **Add titles and text to your pictures**
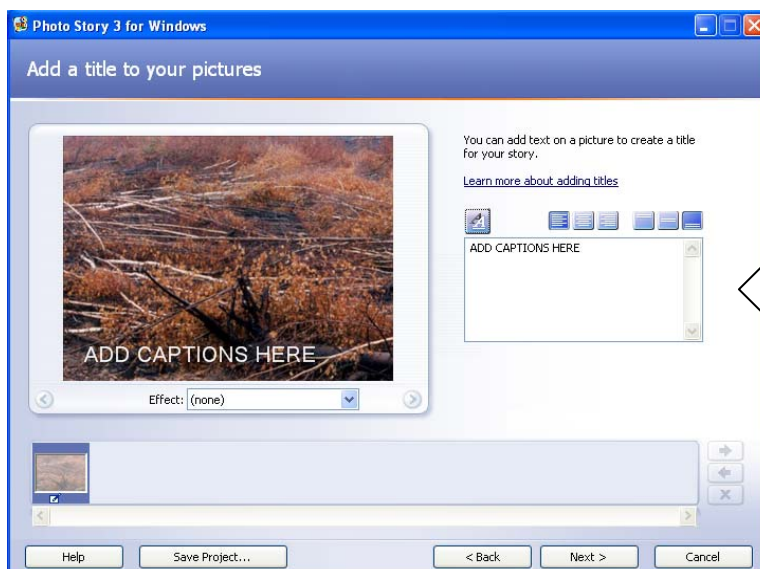
- With Photo Story 3 you can add text to a picture to create a title for your story.

- To add text to your pictures, on the Add a title to your pictures page, click the box to the right of the first picture, and then type your text, for example "My first photo story" in the text box.

- There are small icons above the text box where you can choose font, bold, and alignment of your text.
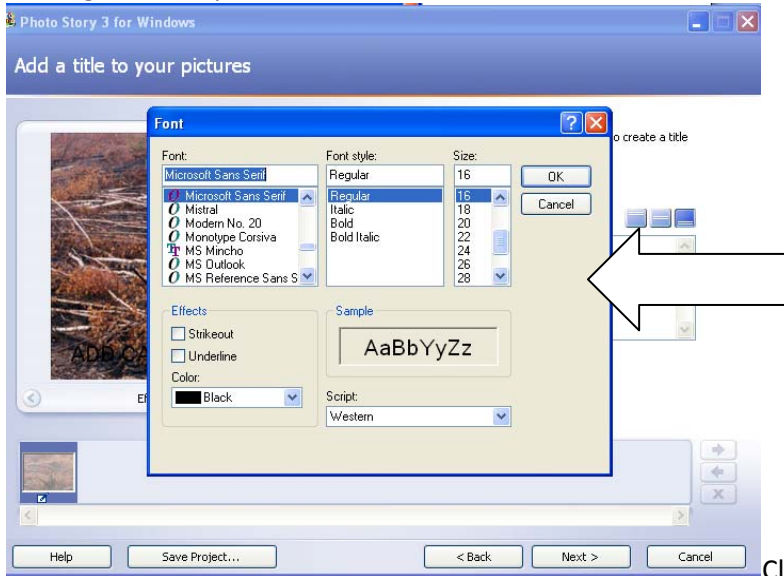
Click on icons to edit text.

- Repeat these steps to add text to another picture, and experiment with different text styles, sizes, and alignments, using different formatting buttons.

- When you are finished adding text to your pictures and choosing font and other attributes (as shown below), click "Next."

- Repeat for all photos

6. **Narrate your pictures**
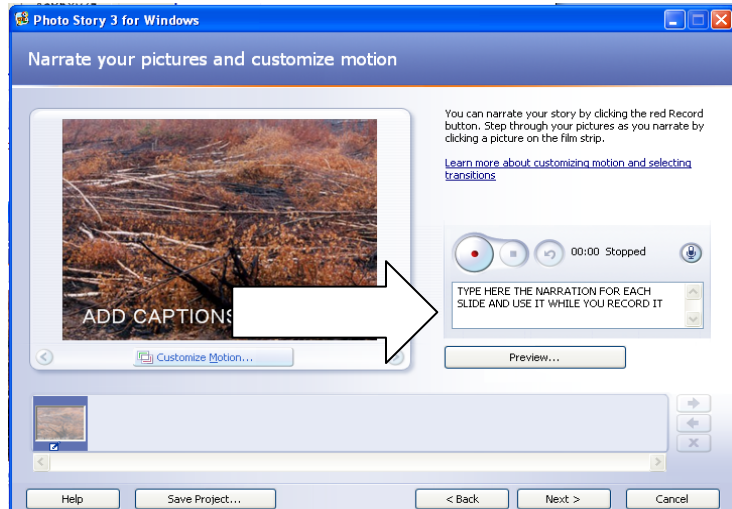
- You can add narration, pan the image in and out, or add zoom effects to your photo story to make it more unique and personal.

- To add narration to your story you need to have a working microphone attached to your computer and set up correctly.

- A wizard will help you set up your microphone to record narration.

- There is also a text input area to create cue cards which can be a helpful memory aid when narrating your pictures.

7. **To add narration to your story:**

- On the "Narrate your pictures and customize motion" page, click the Microphone button. This will launch the Sound Hardware Test Wizard.

- Complete the wizard by following the onscreen instructions. Once you have completed the wizard, your microphone should be ready to record narration.

- Click a picture in the filmstrip.

- Add any desired text in the cue card area.

- Click the Record Narration button to start recording narration.

- The red dot in the record button will flash indicating recording is taking place.
- A timer is provided to help you keep track of your narration length.

- When you have finished narrating the picture, click the Stop Recording button.

- Repeat steps 2 thru 4 for each picture for which you want to add narration.

- Once you have added narration, click the first picture in the filmstrip, and then click Preview to see how your story looks and sounds.

- Close the preview window, and click "Next" to continue.

8.   Add background music
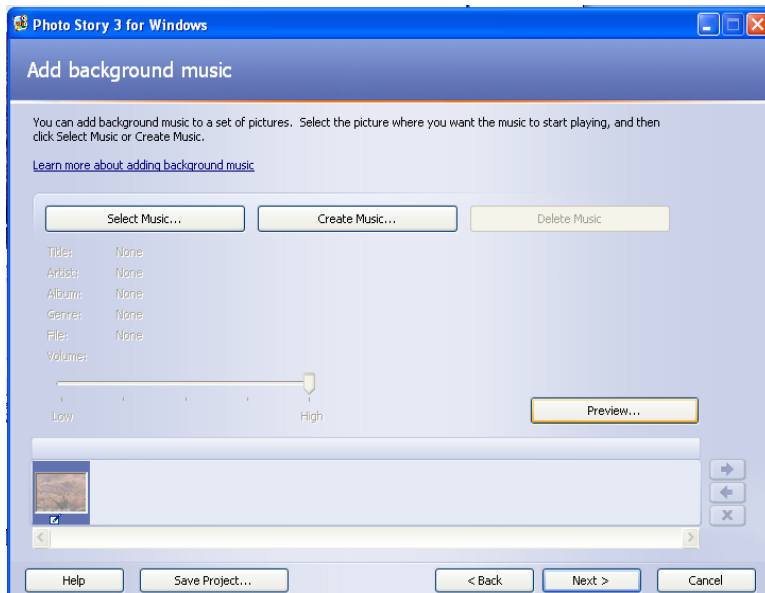
- With Photo Story 3 you can add music to your story by using Windows Media Audio (WMA), MP3, or WAV files or by using the Create Music option to create custom music that suites your story and taste.

- To add pre-recorded music to your story, On the Add background music page, click the first picture in the filmstrip and then click

9.   Select Music

- On the File Open dialog box, click My Documents from the left menu.

- Browse to My Music\Sample Music, click Beethoven's Symphony No9 (Scherzo).wma, and then click Open.

- The music you just added is shown as a colored bar above the picture in the filmstrip, as shown in the following screen shot. This helps determine which pictures will be shown for each piece of music you add.

- Note: if you are using music to accompany the photostory, please note that this can only be conducted according to the principle of "fair use" applicable to educational and non-lucrative purposes.

10. Save your story
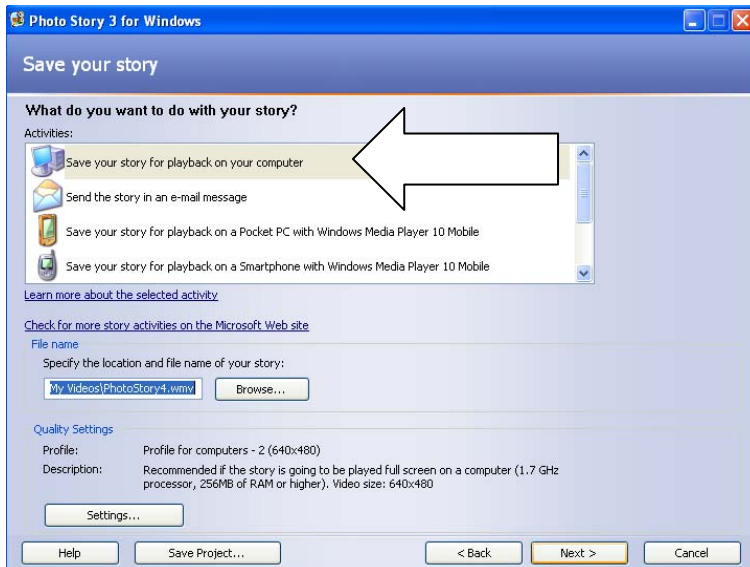
- When you save your photo story, all the pictures, narrations, and music are compiled into a video file that you can view in Windows Media Player.

- On the Save your story page, verify that Save your story for playback on your computer is selected in the activities list.

- Click Browse to specify the location and file name of your story.

- On the Save As dialog box, browse to My Documents\My Videos.

- Find the file, click Save and then click Next.

11. View and edit your story

- When your story is built and saved, the Completing Photo Story 3 for Windows page will appear.

- You can view your newly created story or you begin a new story from here (you may wish to use the same story and narrate it in a different language as well).

- To see what you have created, click "View your story." Windows Media Player will open and your story will begin to play.
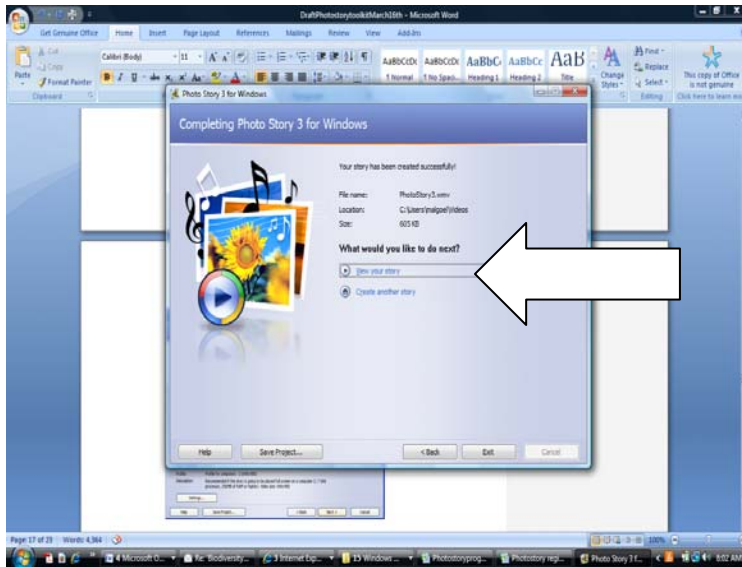
- Should you wish to edit your completed story, go back to Welcome page, and click "edit a project"
- Save, view and there you have your story!
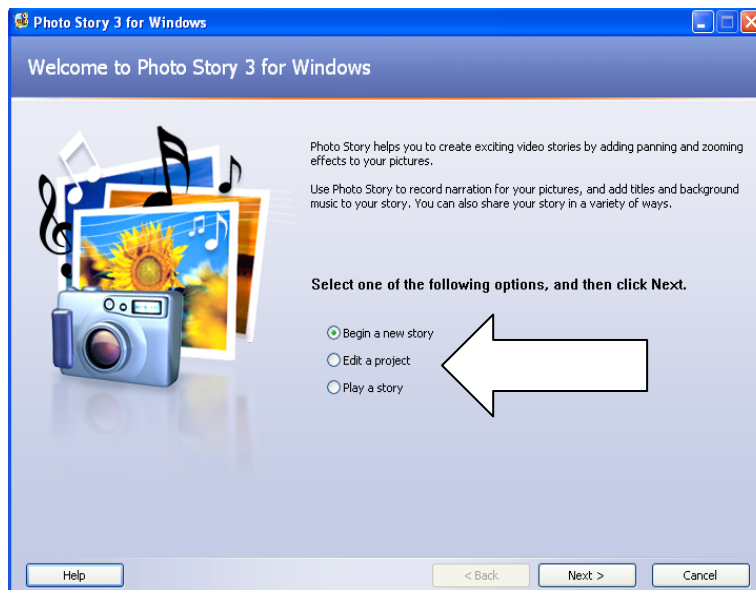
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SAMPLE PHOTO STORY SCRIPT TEMPLATE

SLIDE No.	PICTURE	NARRATION AND CAPTIONS
TITLE PAGE	Insert your slide here:	**Audio Narration:** The project on optimization of hydrological regime of the central part of raised bog Yelnia, was implemented in 2007 to 2009 with financial support of the GEF Small Grants Programme. Here, feel free to include introductory information about the project (what, where, when) and the executing and supporting organizations. **Written caption on Title page:** Include the title and dates of the project and any organizational logos such as those of GEF, SGP and the Grantee organization.
1		**Audio Narration:** "Located in the North of the Republic of Belarus, covering an area of more than 200 square kilometers, Yelnia Mire is one of the largest Belorussian and one of the largest European raised bogs." **Written Caption:** None. (Note: If the picture requires captions, please include them, otherwise leave as it is. Not all pictures require explanatory captions. With some, the narration is enough).
2		**Audio Narration:** Yelnia plays a very important role in supporting biological diversity and is home to a number of globally threatened species and animals and plants, and supports large numbers of migrating geese and cranes. The site is a nature reserve, an IBA and Ramsar site. **Written Caption:** Ramsar and IBA-designated Yelnia is an important stopover site for thousands of migrating cranes.
3		**Audio Narration:** From the air, Yelnia looks surprisingly colorful. But on the ground, the problems become much more apparent. The key reason for this is that the network of drainage canals was dug in the central part of the bog in the mid-20th century. **Written Caption:** None

\4		**Audio Narration:** As a result of the drainage, the water table in the central part of Yelnia dropped by one meter. Dried peat started to mineralize, releasing thousands of tons of CO_2 into the air, but what is much worst is that drainage made the peatland prone to fires. **Written Caption:** None.
5		**Audio Narration:** In the last two decades, fires began to occur regularly, usually starting from dry areas around the canals. In 2002, an exceptionally large fire burnt over 70% of the surface of Yelnia, destroying much of its vegetation and threatening its biodiversity. **Written Caption:** Ashed peatland after the fire of 2002. *Note*: A map image has been juxtaposed on top of a photo.
6		**Audio Narration:** Restoration of the vegetation layer was hampered by low water tables. Even five years after the fire, at the time of a joint field trip by conservationists and scientists, the central part of the bog looked like desert. It was then that the project to restore the hydrology of the central part of Yelnia was conceived. **Written Caption:** None
7		**Audio Narration:** Detailed research was implemented prior to planning conservation activities. In order to monitor the process of restoration of the vegetation and water level regime, a system of permanent hydrological monitoring was set up. **Written Caption:** None *Note:* A collage of three photos has been used.
8		**Audio Narration:** Volunteers and local community members were engaged in rehabilitating the mire. Over 35 dams made of burnt trees and peat were constructed on the canals during joint camps. The use of local materials and simple design, makes maintenance of these dams very easy. **Written Caption:** None *Note:* A collage of photos showing volunteers at work is used.
9		**Audio Narration:** Six more solid dams of similar design, were also built by a local construction company. The caretaker network, involving local communities, was established around Yelnia to monitor the changes and condition of the dams. **Written Caption: None**

10		**Audio Narration:** Thanks to the dams, the water levels in the canals and lakes at Yelnia significantly increased. **Written Caption:** None
11		**Audio Narration:** But for some inhabitants of Yelnia, restoring hydrology is not sufficient. Every autumn, the willow grouse moults into completely white disguising colors. Now when winters become much softer due to climate change, the white bird becomes an easy prey during the solstice. **Written Caption:** Every winter, the Willow Grouse moults into white plumage. In a warming climate, this disguising white plumage becomes visible.
12		**Audio Narration:** Peatlands play a huge role in the climate balance. In the boreal zone, it contains 7 times more carbon per hectare than forests. Restoring and conserving peatlands helps mitigate the effects of the climate change, bringing hope to species which would otherwise have no chance to adapt to a changing climate. **Written Caption:** None.
13		**Audio Narration:** However, many species that were threatened by the fires, such as charismatic black grouses, are already benefiting from restoration of hydrological regime. **Written Caption:** Black grouse numbers in Yelnia decreased after the fires but are now benefiting from hydrological restoration.
14		**Audio Narration:** While standing dead trees still remind of the fires, the vegetation layer is showing its first signs of recovery, especially along the canals. **Written Caption:** None.
15		**Audio Narration:** The cranberry, an important source of additional sustainable livelihood for thousands of local families, may need more time to restore, but the restoration process has started. **Written Caption:** None *Note:* Notice the audio narration in the last three slides describes challenges and progress and makes a statement about the future.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PHOTO STORIES

Q: Is the photostory software compatible with my operating system?

A: Microsoft photostory software is designed to be compatible with XP, but also works with Vista. Some computers automatically convert from Vista.

Q: What limitations does the photostory software have?

A: In the interest of using a free and user-friendly software, the chosen software has some limitations, including:

- The more caption text one adds per slide, the more unclear or grainy the text will appear. The more text and audio one adds per slide, the heavier the file will become.
- The longer the narration time that is allocated per slide, the heavier the file will become.
- Photos that are not compressed can make the file very heavy as well.
- One can customize and manipulate the photos only slightly in this software.
- Only one size and type of font can be used per slide (although the font can be different on different slides).

Given these considerations, we suggest the following *solutions:*

- Keep the text captions to 1-2 sentences (max) per slide
- Keep the audio to 10-12 seconds per slide
- Ensure that each photo story ideally has a maximum of 10-20 slides
- Compress the photos before putting them in the photo story.
- The narration should be kept between 2-4 minutes maximum.

Q: If I am narrating the audio portion in a native language that is not English, French or Spanish, should I create English subtitles?

A: Subtitles will make the files extremely heavy. Therefore, we suggest doing one photo story in your native language and one in English, French or Spanish wherever possible.

Q: Must I use high resolution photos.

A: It is optimal to use them, but not prohibitive to creating a wonderful photo story. One should aim to use the clearest and highest quality photos available.