

Edges to Centre: A Global Intergenerational Leadership Project for Marginalized Communities “Nothing About Us Without Us”

NextGen Rights Lab: Global South Intersectional Rights & Leadership Accelerator

Effective Rights-Based Communication for Caste-Affected & Minority Leaders
Session – 1 (40 mins) -Universal Laws of Effective Rights-Based Communication

1. Effective Rights-Based Communication for Caste-Affected & Minority Leaders



- **Who this session is for:** This is for **Dalit, caste-affected, Indigenous, minority leaders and allies** who already do the work—organising, caregiving, documenting—but want sharper skills to **speak, write, and show** their realities in ways that move power, not just feelings.
- **What we'll do in 40 minutes:** Understand what rights-based communication actually means (beyond “good speaking”). Learn 5 universal laws that make our messages clearer and more powerful. Start applying these laws to our own real situations.
- **Why this matters now:** For caste-affected communities, power is not only courts and budgets; it's also narratives. If we don't speak in a rights language, caste becomes “culture” or “misfortune”, not discrimination and injustice. Rights-based communication helps us name violations, call out duty-bearers, and demand remedies.
- **How we'll work:** This is skills practice, not performance. You don't need perfect English. You need clarity, honesty, and courage in your own voice.

2. From “Sad Stories” & Chaos to Rights-Based Communication



How we usually talk about injustice

We often fall into two traps:

- **Charity framing** – “Please help these poor people, they are suffering.”
- **Raw venting** – sharing everything at once with no structure or clear ask. These are understandable, but they often **do not challenge power**
- What rights-based communication does differently
- Names harm as a violation of rights (dignity, equality, non-discrimination). Makes duty-bearers visible (state, institutions, employers, platforms). Points toward remedies (services, protection, budget, policy change)

Why this is non-negotiable for caste-affected groups

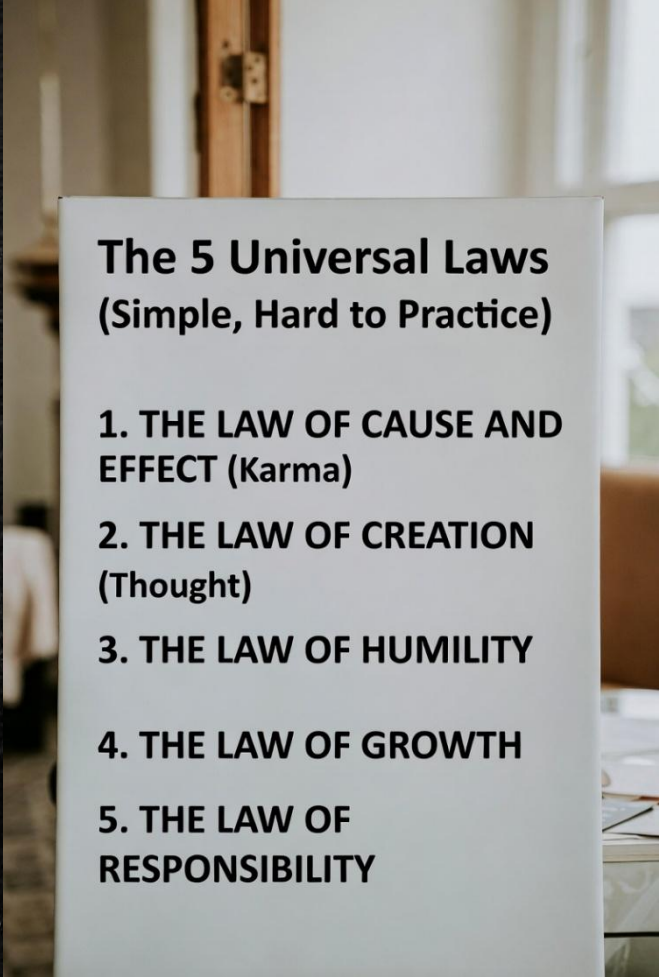
Without rights language, caste violence is framed as “personal fight”, “clash”, “culture”. With rights language we say:

- “This is **caste-based discrimination** and **work-and-descent-based exploitation**.”
- “This violates **our constitutional and human rights**.”

Mini reflection (2–3 min)

Think of one recent case from your community. Did you describe it as **tragedy**, **injustice**, or **rights violation**? How would wording change if you used rights language?

3. The 5 Universal Laws (Simple, Hard to Practice)



The 5 Universal Laws (Simple, Hard to Practice)

- 1. THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT (Karma)**
- 2. THE LAW OF CREATION (Thought)**
- 3. THE LAW OF HUMILITY**
- 4. THE LAW OF GROWTH**
- 5. THE LAW OF RESPONSIBILITY**

1. Purpose First – “Which right, why now?” Always ask: What am I trying to do with this message? Document? Influence a decision? Mobilise? Without purpose, we talk a lot and move nothing.
2. Audience Specificity – “Who decides? Who is affected? “Your message to a survivor, journalist, bureaucrat, donor, or UN expert cannot be identical. You adjust entry point, tone, detail, and ask—but keep your values constant.
3. Dignity as Golden Rule: Never trade dignity for attention. We refuse to show our people only as beggars, victims, or spectacle. We protect survivors’ identities and honour their agency.
4. Clarity Over Cleverness: Simple, concrete, verifiable statements beat long, jargon-heavy speeches. Jargon often hides weak evidence. Plain language + clear facts = power.
5. Consistency Across Channels: Whether we’re on WhatsApp, in a panchayat, in court, or at the UN, our core lexicon for caste, discrimination, and rights should stay stable. This builds trust and recognizability.

4. Law 1 – Purpose First: What Are You Trying to Change?



- Why purpose matters: Without a clear purpose, we: Over-share details that endanger people. Feel pressure to “say everything”. Leave meetings and calls feeling used and unheard.
- Three core purposes (you can mix, but choose a main one): Inform – Make something visible and credible. Influence – Change a decision, policy, or behaviour. Mobilise – Move people to act (attend, sign, donate, join).
- Quick written activity (5 min) Ask participants to write: “In the next 6 months, one situation where I will need to communicate effectively is...” “In that situation, my primary purpose is: Inform / Influence / Mobilise (circle one). Secondary purpose is...”
- Debrief (2–3 min) Invite a couple of participants to share. Highlight how the same story changes when the main purpose changes (for judge vs community vs media).

5. Law 2 – Audience Specificity: Speak To People, Not At Them



- Not “general public” Effective communication always asks: “Who is literally in front of me now?” “What do they care about?” “What power do they have?”
- “Three common audiences in our work: Grassroots/community – need safety, clarity, and next steps, not jargon. State/administration – need jurisdiction, evidence, obligations, and feasible asks. Media/public – need clear, memorable lines and dignified visuals.
- Mini practice (5–7 min) Use one basic fact, for example: “Dalit sanitation workers in X town still clean sewers by hand, without protection.” Ask participants to write this for a community meeting and for a district official. Discuss: What changed—tone, detail, “ask”, evidence?
- Key lesson: We do not change our politics for an audience. We change our entry point and language so our politics can land.

6. Law 3 & 4 – Dignity First, Clarity Always



DIGNITY FIRST,
EN
CLARITY
ALWAYS

- Dignity in practice- No trauma porn: we don't use graphic images just to shock people. We protect survivors' names, faces, locations unless truly necessary and consented. We show people resisting, organising, surviving, not just suffering.
- Clarity in practice - Instead of: "There is a lot of discrimination; we are suffering." Try: "In the last 6 months, 12 Dalit students reported caste-based harassment in this college. Only 1 case was formally registered. "Then name: which right is violated, and who is responsible.
- Pair practice (5–7 min) Vague sentence: "Our community is facing many problems and nobody is helping. "Ask pairs to: Make it more dignified (no begging/shaming). Make it more concrete (who, what, where, when). Invite a couple of pairs to share.

7. Law 5 – One Lexicon, Many Channels + Your Presence



One lexicon-We try to stabilise key terms across languages: "Caste-based discrimination / work-and-descent-based discrimination" "Gender-based violence / patriarchy" "Right to life with dignity / non-discrimination / freedom of belief" This makes our movement's language coherent across courts, media, and streets.

Your body and voice also communicate - You don't need to be "perfect", but: A slower pace helps people follow. Pauses after key lines let things land. A grounded posture signals calm strength, not apology.

For Dalit & caste-affected leaders Many of us were socialised to be grateful, small, over-polite. Rights-based communication allows us to be respectful but not submissive, clear but not over-explaining, angry but still strategic.

8. Bringing It Together – Your One-Minute Rights Message



- Individual practice (7–8 min)- Ask participants to write a 1-minute message about one issue they care about. They should: State their purpose (inform / influence / mobilise). Name the right at stake and who is responsible. Use simple language, not jargon. Keep dignity of their people central. Imagine a specific audience.
- Optional sharing (if time) 2–3 participants present. Use the 5 laws as a gentle feedback tool.
- Key takeaways- Effective communication is not about accent or English; it is about purpose, audience, dignity, clarity, and consistency. These are survival tools and power tools for caste-affected and minority leaders.
- Link to Session 2- “Now that we know the laws, the next session will go deeper into storytelling—how stories work in the brain, and how we can use them ethically as intergenerational leaders.”

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Effective Rights-Based Communication for Caste-Affected & Minority Leaders
Session – 2 (40 mins) - Storytelling as a Superpower: Brain, Structure & Style

1. Storytelling as a Superpower for Rights & Justice



- Where we're coming from- In Session 1, we learnt the 5 laws of rights-based communication. Today, we build on that by focusing on stories—how we shape them and how they shape us.
- Why stories, not just data- People do not remember long lists. People remember faces, journeys, turning points. Storytelling, done ethically, turns memory into mandate.
- Objectives for this session- By the end of these 40 minutes, participants will: Understand why stories move the brain (dopamine, oxytocin, threat signals). Learn a simple rights-based story structure. Practice crafting short, powerful stories grounded in caste/minority justice.
- Framing- Our goal is not manipulation. Our goal is to tell stories in ways that are true, dignified, and effective.

2. Why Stories Cut Through Noise



The brain loves patterns, not bullet lists -Stories give the brain a beginning–middle–end to hold onto. This helps people focus, feel, and remember.

Three key brain chemicals (in very simple terms): Dopamine – released with curiosity and anticipation; keeps attention. Oxytocin – linked to empathy and care; builds connection with characters. Cortisol/adrenaline – released when there's a sense of threat; makes us alert.

What this means for rights story-telling -We can create curiosity ("What happened when...?"). We can invite empathy (not pity) by showing real lives. We can show real danger without turning people into props.

Ethical reminder-We never fake or exaggerate danger. We honour the real risks communities face without turning them into spectacles.

3. Simple Structure: Character → Context → Conflict → Choice → Consequence → Remedy



- Character (Who?) A person or group affected by caste or minority injustice. Not just a stereotype; give them age, role, small details that feel real.
- Context (Where/When?) Place, time, and social setting: village, basti, campus, factory, border. Insert caste, gender, religion, class context quietly but clearly.
- Conflict (What went wrong?) The injustice or violation: discrimination, violence, exclusion, theft of wages, denial of services. This is where you name the right being violated.
- Choice (What did someone do or not do?) The character, community, or authority faces a decision. Shows agency, even under constraint.
- Consequence & Remedy -What happened next—and what remedy is needed now? This is where you connect to demands, policies, or next steps. This structure works across formats -You can use this for testimonies, speeches, op-eds, reels, threads, podcasts.

4. Do / Don't for Dalit & Minority Storytelling - Do / Don't for Dalit & Minority Storytelling



- Do: Centre people's dignity and agency, not just their suffering. Explain systems (caste, patriarchy, majoritarianism, capitalism) – not just "bad individuals". Get informed consent for using names, images, and audio. Where needed, use anonymity (changed names, blurred faces). Don't: Don't tell someone's story just because it is "shocking". Don't give details that can identify survivors when it's unsafe.
- Don't let donors, media, or institutions force you into pity narratives that strip people of power.
- Key principle "Nothing about us without us" applies to stories too: no storytelling about communities without their involvement and control over how they are represented.

5. Micro-Story Exercise – 3 Sentences, One Powerful Arc



- Why micro-stories? Many of our communication spaces are short: reels, posts, intros in meetings. Learning to tell 3-sentence stories helps us be precise and impactful.
- Structure for 3 sentences: Situation – Introduce character + context. Injustice – Name the violation / conflict. Next Step – Show agency + remedy / demand.
- Example (you can adapt): “Rekha, a Dalit nursing student in X city, was the first in her family to reach college.” “For two years, professors and seniors mocked her surname, pushed her to do unpaid cleaning, and blocked her from clinical rotations.”
- “Now she and other students are filing a formal complaint, demanding an anti-caste policy and an independent complaints committee.
- “Activity (7–8 min) Ask participants to write a 3-sentence story about one real or composite person from their context, using this structure.

6. Same Story, Different Format: Testimony, Post, Reel, Op-Ed



- Testimony (court, commission, fact-finding) More detail, dates, names (when safe). Focus on facts + rights language. Social media post Short, emotionally resonant, with one key takeaway.
- Use visuals that protect dignity and safety. Reel / short video Use 1 key visual + 1–2 on-screen lines + voice or music. Still follow Situation → Injustice → Next Step. Op-ed / longer article More context, history, and systemic analysis.
- Use one or two anchor stories as entry point, not 50 cases.
- Key reminder.
- Never let the format push you to break your ethics. Safety and dignity come before virality.

7. Bringing Laws & Story Together



- Check your story against the 5 laws: Is my purpose clear? Is it shaped for a specific audience? Does it protect dignity? Is the language simple and concrete? Is my rights lexicon consistent with our movement?
- Short pair exercise (5–7 min) Each participant chooses their 3-sentence story from earlier. In pairs, they give feedback using the 5 laws checklist (not to judge, but to sharpen).
- Highlight -The goal is not perfection. The goal is to become more intentional about every story we share.

8. Key Lessons & Next Step: Framing & Narrative Power



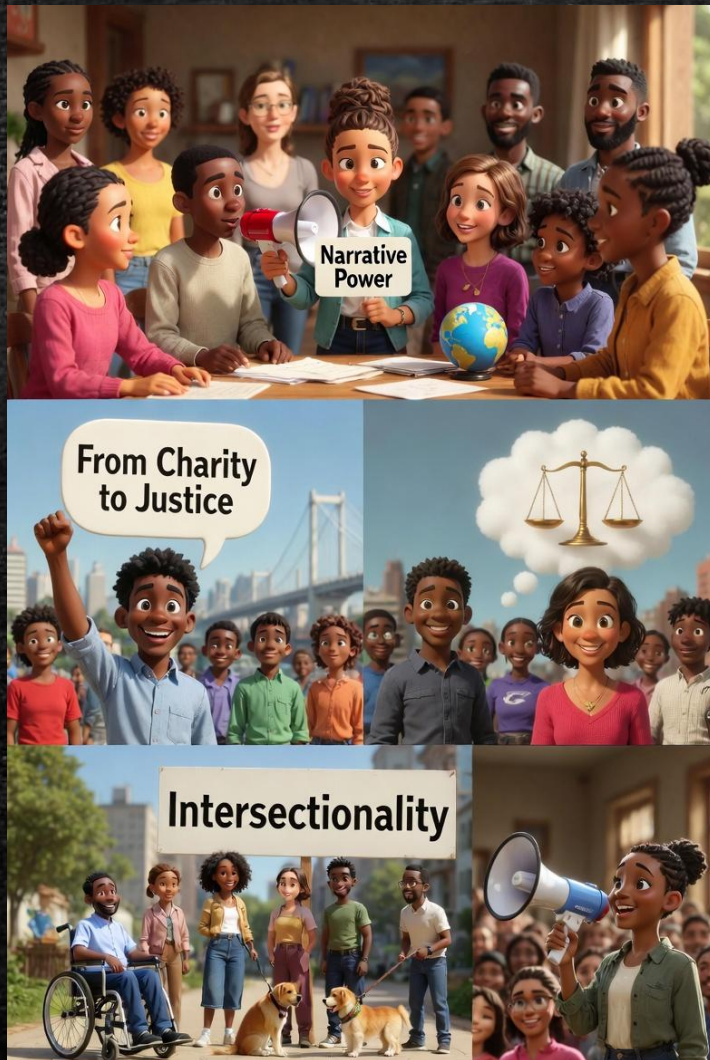
- Key lessons from this session: Stories move brains and hearts; they are not “extra”, they are central to rights work. A simple structure helps us be clear, not mechanical. Ethical storytelling is part of protection, not just “branding”.
- Your practice commitment Invite participants: “In the next month, I will consciously tell one story about my community in a more structured, rights-based way—whether in a meeting, a post, a video, or a report.
- “Bridge to Session 3”Next, we will zoom out from individual stories to frames and narratives—how media, states, and NGOs define the problem itself. We’ll practice shifting from charity and development language to rights and justice language.”

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Effective Rights-Based Communication for Caste-Affected & Minority Leaders
Session – 3 (40 mins) - Rights Framing & Narrative Power: From Charity to Justice

1. From Charity to Justice: Frames, Narratives & Power



- Recap Session 1: the 5 laws of rights communication. Session 2: story structure and ethical storytelling. Now: the bigger picture—how issues are framed in public conversation.
- What is a frame? A frame is the basic story in people's heads that answers: What is the problem? Who is to blame? Who is the victim? What is the solution?
- Why this matters for caste & minority rights If caste is framed as "culture", "community clash", or "poverty", then wrong solutions follow. We want frames that name discrimination, power, and duty-bearers, not just "misfortune"

2. Harmful Frames About Caste & Minorities



"Law and order" frame - State violence and vigilante attacks are framed as necessary to "maintain peace". Caste or majoritarian power is hidden; victims are criminalised.

"Communal clash" frame- Systematic attacks on minorities are called "clashes between two groups". Power difference, planning, state role, and impunity disappear.

"Development vs environment" frame- Indigenous and forest communities are framed as obstacles to "progress". Their rights to land, culture, and self-determination vanish.

"Charity" frame- Dalit, Indigenous, Muslim, refugee communities are shown as passive recipients of help. Structural discrimination and state obligations are never discussed.

Question for the group (2–3 min): "Which of these frames do you see most often in your context? What damage do they do?"

3. Same Reality, Different Frame



- Charity frame example "These poor Dalit families have nothing. We are requesting donations so they can survive."
- "Justice frame example "These Dalit families were denied land titles and equal wages for years, in violation of constitutional guarantees. We are demanding land regularisation, back wages, and enforcement of anti-discrimination laws."
- "What changes when we shift the frame? From "kind donors" to "duty-bearers and systems". From "grateful beneficiaries" to "rights-holders". From one-time relief to long-term remedies and accountability."
- Mini exercise (5–7 min) Ask participants to take one sentence they've used in the past that sounds like charity/development, and rewrite it in a rights/justice frame.

4. A Simple Rights Framing Formula



1. Situation – What is happening? (Use concrete, recent details.)
2. Structural Cause – Name caste, patriarchy, racism, majoritarianism, economic exploitation, not just “bad people”.
3. Rights Violation – Name the specific right or principle (equality, non-discrimination, freedom of religion, labour rights).
4. Duty-Bearer – Who is responsible to fix this? (State agency, institution, employer, platform, police, etc.)
5. Remedy & Next Step – What should happen now? (Policy, protection, compensation, legal action, services.) Example (you can adapt): Situation: “In X district, Dalit workers are still forced to do hazardous manual scavenging.” Structural cause: “Because of caste-based job segregation and lack of enforcement of bans.” Rights violation: “This violates their right to life with dignity, health, and non-discrimination.” Duty-bearer: “The municipal authority and state labour department are responsible.” Remedy: “We demand immediate mechanisation, compensation, and criminal action against contractors.”
6. “Practice idea - Encourage participants to try this formula in media statements, petitions, social posts, and meetings.

5. One Core Frame, Different Audiences



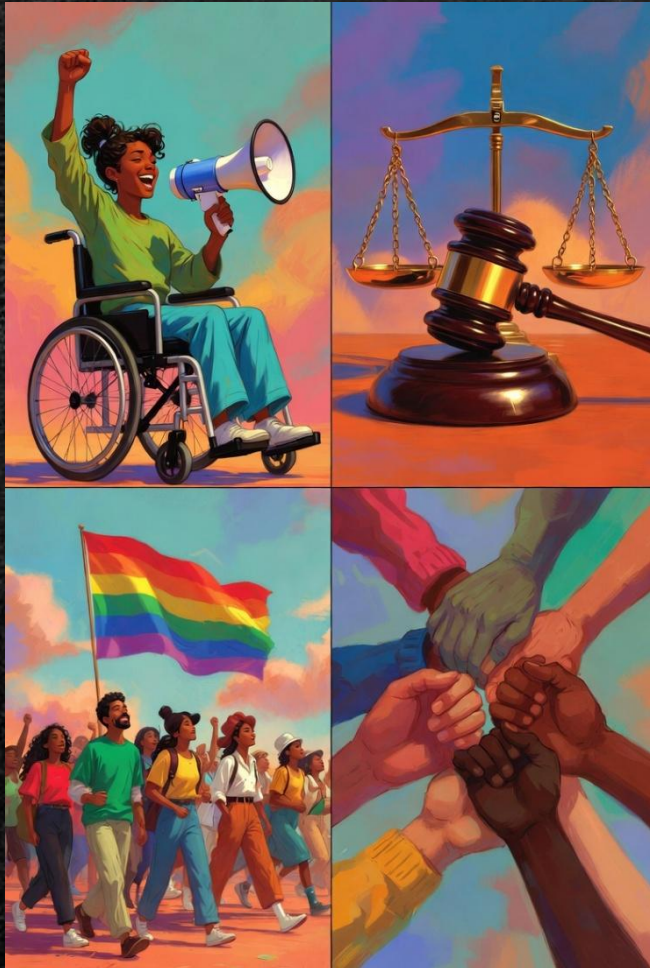
- Grassroots / community: Use plain language, local idioms, stories. Focus on safety, solidarity, and practical steps. Example: "This is not just bad luck; this is caste discrimination, and together we have the right to resist it."
- "Policymakers / administration: Be brief and concrete. Use jurisdiction, laws, policies, budget levers, precedents. Example: "Your department is mandated under X Act and Article Y; these cases show non-compliance."
- "Media / public Use clear headlines and quotable lines, avoid sensationalism. Emphasise patterns, not isolated "shocking" events."
- International forums (UN, SRs, UPR, donors) Use concise facts, link to treaties and international norms, and make specific asks. Example: "This pattern of caste-based forced labour violates obligations under ILO Convention X and CERD."

6. Linking Struggles Without Erasing Difference



- Comparative solidarity- We can link caste justice with global struggles against slavery, racism, apartheid, Indigenous dispossession, Islamophobia, etc. This helps build alliances and makes international audiences listen.
- But with care- We don't flatten everything into "same as racism/slavery". We honour specific histories, laws, and social dynamics.
- Lexicon discipline Inside our teams and networks we try not to switch constantly between "caste issue", "Dalit issue", "social evil", "backwardness", "poverty". We consistently use rights language: discrimination, segregation, violence, exclusion, exploitation, reparations.
- Mini prompt- "If you had to choose 5 key terms for your work that you want to use consistently for the next year, what would they be? "Ask participants to write them down.

7. Hands-On: Reframe & Retarget One Message



- Step 1 – Choose a “bad” message (5 min) - Ask participants to think of: A past press release, tweet, speech, or appeal that felt too charity-based, too emotional, or too vague.
- Step 2 – Rewrite using the rights formula (10 min) They rebuild it using: Situation → Structural cause → Rights violation → Duty-bearer → Remedy & next step.
- Step 3 – Adjust for two audiences (10 min) Ask them to tweak this revised message for: 1 grassroots/community audience, and 1 institutional audience (official, donor, or international forum).
- Optional sharing (if time) Invite 1–2 volunteers to share their “before and after”.

8. Message Architecture, Safety & Your Next Move



- Message architecture (simple version) - Over time, your team can build: A small FAQ with consistent answers and frames. A bank of rights-based stories and examples. A shared glossary of key terms in all relevant languages. This makes your communication coherent across generations and platforms.
- Safety reminder- Framing is powerful but can also make you a target.
- Combine strong messages with safety plans: digital hygiene, legal support, care circles, organisational backing.
- Final commitment round (5–7 min)- Ask each participant to finish this sentence: “From this capacity track on communication, one practice I will change or adopt in my work is...”
- Close- Emphasise that effective, rights-based, ethical communication is not decoration; it is part of strategy, protection, and intergenerational leadership for caste-affected and minority communities.

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Effective Rights-Based Communication for Caste-Affected & Minority Leaders
Session – 4 (40 mins) – Learning from the best video sessions and analysis

Thank You for your attention.