



Part Eight: Sharing Lessons and Best Practices in Participatory Video for Social Change

Photo: Cross-training: sharing the work of a Ugandan community video team with Karen and Burmese workshop participants (Thailand, 2009).

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By sharing what they have learned through their work, organizations using community video and other person-centered forms of communication for social change can advance understanding of these approaches, identify best practices, and help inspire new initiatives.

This final section of the Toolkit suggests ways in which program lessons can be shared within and among organizations and across international borders. It also offers some examples of how program experiences can be shared with government, aid, and donor agencies to advance humanitarian and advocacy goals. Lastly, this section summarizes some of the key evaluation findings and substantive lessons from the Through Our Eyes project regarding the use of participatory video to help prevent gender-based violence, harmful practices, and HIV/AIDS.

Opportunities for sharing program lessons

Sharing within organizations

Sharing project experiences with colleagues will help them learn about participatory communication methods and consider ways of applying them across different sectors. Cross-sharing can be especially important—and challenging—in large organizations

with multiple divisions and/or offices across several sites. Without ample intra-organizational communication, staff may be unaware of valuable work being carried out by their colleagues and unable to benefit from program lessons. (See also **Part 5, “Generating support for community video work.”**)

Organizations that implement community video activities can share project experiences and materials internally through a variety of methods. These include:

- Screenings/discussions of productions among staff and field workers working in diverse sectors and geographical areas
- Video exchanges across project sites
- Cross-training and facilitation (see **“Sharing skills across borders”** textbox below)
- Presentations at annual meetings, technical gatherings, retreats, and other organizational events
- Exchange-of-experience gatherings for program staff and community/team members from different locations

Exchange-of-experience meetings are especially valuable if an organization is engaged in community-

Sharing skills across borders

Within community video teams, there are always individuals who show special aptitude in participatory communication, along with an ability to help others gain skills and confidence. With appropriate practical support, several Through Our Eyes participants grew into the role of “master trainer,” and helped carry the initiative to new locations. In addition to establishing strong technical capacity within ARC, this enabled the sharing of skills and insights across borders and even continents, as trainers from Liberia and Uganda co-facilitated workshops for fledgling teams in southern Sudan, Rwanda, and Thailand.



Pamela Anena from the Uganda Through Our Eyes team conducts a training at Nupo refugee camp in Thailand. (2009)



Master Trainer intensive session at the Through Our Eyes Global Workshop (July 2010)

Through Our Eyes Global Workshop participants hearing from team members via videotaped statements (July 2010)

The Through Our Eyes Global Workshop

Under the Through Our Eyes project, participants from each of the five program sites gathered for a week-long “Global Workshop” after all sites had acquired at least 9 months of implementation experience. Attendees include video team members, program staff, and several members of local partner organizations in Liberia, Southern Sudan, Rwanda, northern Uganda, and Thailand.

The Global Workshop enabled participants to share achievements, anticipate project assessment activities, discuss common challenges, and exchange methods for addressing them. Team members from Liberia and Southern Sudan exchanged perspectives on addressing such issues as gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, and reproductive health in contexts where many services and structures are still under reconstruction. Field staff from refugee camps in Thailand and Rwanda exchanged ideas on how to work effectively with camp committees and authorities. Team members unable to attend shared their thoughts via videotaped statements that were viewed by the group. While learning about the distinctive cultural issues that shaped project activities in each community, the participants also discovered many common themes and practical strategies. Together, they compiled experience-based lessons, which are summarized below (“**Lessons from the field: reflections from the Through Our Eyes experience**”).

based communication/sensitization activities in multiple sites. These gatherings can take place periodically over the course of a project, to help foster mutual support and cross-learning. They can also serve as important end-of-project culminating events. (See textbox “**The Through Our Eyes Global Workshop**.”)

Sharing across organizations and agencies

On a broader, inter-agency level, organizations can share experiences, project materials and program information through:

- Conferences, seminars, consortium gatherings and other professional events
- Briefings for policy-makers, decision makers and other authorities

- Local, national and regional video festivals and gatherings
- Intra- and Inter-organizational websites, portals, newsletters, and blogs (see text box, “**Internet resources and forums**”)
- Video postings on organizational or online sites, such as YouTube or Vimeo

NOTE, however, that videos produced by and with community members should *never* be posted on the internet unless informed consent and explicit permission for such use has been provided by the program producers and participants.

Internet resources and forums

There are many excellent Internet sites for both gathering and sharing information about communication for social change, participatory media, and intersecting themes of gender, health, rights, and development issues in humanitarian settings. Most of these feature extensive program descriptions and resource listings. Many of them also welcome postings and articles about different initiatives and serve as a forum for dialogue between practitioners. Leading Internet resources on development communication practice include the Communication Initiative and the websites of the Communication for Social Change Consortium and the Participation, Power and Social Change team at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex. Internet resources on gender issues and women's health and rights in humanitarian and other contexts include the Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium (RHRC), The Women's Refugee Commission, Siyanda, U.N. Women, the Inter-Agency Gender Working Group, and the Forced Migration Online site of the Refugee Studies Center at Oxford University. (For additional Internet resources, see the websites included in the Annexes of this Toolkit).

Highlighting the role of communication in humanitarian context

By sharing program experiences, implementing organizations can help other humanitarian aid agencies, government entities and donors understand the value and cost-effectiveness of participatory communication. This may be especially important for development and donor agencies in the U.S., where mass media approaches and short-term “campaigns” still tend to dominate much of the thinking about communication for social and behavior change. Research-based results, stories of change, video testimonials and other evidence from the field can help strategic partners better understand the value and effectiveness of participatory communication approaches and how they can support humanitarian and development work across highly diverse settings.

Using video to advocate for humanitarian work

Community-made videos can also serve as powerful tools in advocating for support for programs and services in humanitarian settings. Documentary and testimonial-based videos, in particular, can strengthen funding efforts aimed at policy-makers, government agencies and donors. Used in such



Survivors, peer educators and program personnel speak out in an advocacy video filmed in collaboration with local teams in Rwanda, Southern Sudan, and Liberia (March, 2011)

contexts as policy briefings, inter-agency meetings, and consortium gatherings, community videos can provide direct, compelling statements of need. They can also provide documentation of program achievements and of ongoing challenges in the field.

As an example, material filmed at several Through Our Eyes project sites was edited into a documentary on the vital role of gender-based violence prevention and response programs, and used to advocate for strengthened multi-sectoral efforts in conflict-affected settings. On another occasion, interview footage featured at a Washington, D.C. congressional briefing on World Refugee Day enabled a Liberian refugee woman to speak directly to policy makers about impact of gender-based violence on her life.

Key evaluation findings from the Through Our Eyes project

In late 2010, an endline evaluation was carried out in focal communities in all five Through Our Eyes project sites. The study used a variety of methods, including household surveys (576 respondents); focus group discussions (125 participants); and 82 in-depth interviews with community members, video team members, program and partner agency staff, and others. Quantitative analysis assessed the extent to which exposure to project activities was associated with key intermediate outcomes, including knowledge, beliefs, intention, and behavior related to gender-based violence. Qualitative analysis focused on changes that individuals perceived in themselves and in their communities, as well as specific aspects elements of project activities were responsible for the observed changes.

Key findings included the following:

- Respondents felt that the participatory processes that shaped the project were central to its credibility.
- Project videotapes enabled observational learning, with actors serving as role models in various scenarios related to the consequences and prevention of GBV and harmful traditional practices.
- People who had participated in playback discussions were much more likely to:
 - disagree that a woman who is raped should keep it to herself, as compared with those who had never participated in a playback.
 - have higher confidence in their ability to seek help related to gender-based violence from at least one type of individual (such as a family member, doctor, or police).
 - have spoken with family members or trusted others about GBV-related issues.
- Across all sites, focus group and interview participants expressed the wish that project activities would continue and be expanded to other communities.

Statements from interview and focus group participants help underscore these changes in real-life terms:

I realized that if a man abused or violated me at home and tried to harm me or my children, I would then report my case so that justice is done. I have learned to break the silence and report GBV cases.

- woman, Uganda

Before this project was started, there were no cases of rape and sexual assault reported in the hospital because people did not know where to seek help...But now people do come to seek for these services in the hospital after getting to know that there is help.

- service provider, Southern Sudan

I used to believe when I see people fighting especially a husband beating his wife that it was normal, but now I advise people. And more important is that I stopped beating my girl.

- man, Liberia

And, finally, two last quotes from evaluation participants help summarize the effectiveness of the participatory video approach:

It is always good when people are involved in things that they feel they are a part of and able to have a big role to play. This raises their interest and participation more than initiatives from abroad.

- service provider, Rwanda

There is no need to have people from outside the camp because if the videos are acted by the same people who live [in] and best understand these conditions, they would pass on the message very well and also sensitize their own people to fight against gender-based violence.

- man, Rwanda

Both qualitative and quantitative findings from the Through Our Eyes evaluation indicated that community-based, participatory video activities had contributed to changes not only in awareness and attitudes, but in behavior related to gender-based violence prevention and response as well as related issues. At the same time, the evaluation process highlighted the importance of maintaining continuity in communication activities, following through on commitments made at the local level, and ensuring appropriate referral and access to relevant services.

Lessons from the field: best practices from the Through Our Eyes experience

Summarized here are some of the most important lessons learned by the Through Our Eyes teams over the course of their participatory video work. They range from technical suggestions on production and playback activities to recommendations on fostering social change in the community.

Lessons on video production

Video content and development

- Focus on one main message in each video.
- Make sure that every scene is related to or reinforces that message.
- Do not make scenes longer than they need to be. If no new information is being shared, then the scene should come to an end.
- Show, don't tell. Drama, action, and different settings are more interesting to watch than long shots of people sitting and talking.
- Make storyboards as you plan your video, and use them to guide the filming.
- When making a video that shows health procedures, medical care or counseling services, work with an appropriate health/counseling professional to ensure that the action and information are correct.

- Collaborate with local advocates for gender-based violence prevention.
- Work with real-life role models within the community—both men and women.
- Allow enough time to plan with video participants/rehearse with actors before filming.
- Review each scene immediately after filming; discuss it with team members and video participants to decide if anything needs to be re-shot before continuing with the next shot.

Technical issues

- Use different types of shots for variety and storytelling impact.
- Always check sound quality while recording. Even if the video is well filmed, the message will not be communicated if the sound quality is poor.
- Use the directional (shotgun) microphone for best sound quality.
- Use voice-overs and/or title cards to show passage of time (e.g., “Six months later..”).
- Use “fade-in” and “fade-out” (if your camera has this effect function) to add visual emphasis to scene transitions or program openings/endings.
- Use other special effects (dissolve, strobe, etc.) very sparingly, if at all; they can distract people from your story.



Storyboard for a drama...



...and scene being filmed (Thailand, 2009)



Directional microphones provide high-quality sound. They can be mounted on a boompole (as shown), used with a handheld grip, or mounted directly on certain cameras. (Southern Sudan, 2007)

- Ask questions that take the playback discussion deeper. For example, encourage audience members to consider the causes and effects of the decisions or actions of certain characters. And always ask: “What can we do, as community members, to help create change?”
- Show videos on related themes in a “series” for cumulative impact.
- Establish permanent playback sites: work with local peers to identify these sites, which might include community centers, schools, clinics, churches or mosques.

- Keep videos to 20-30 minutes in length. Longer videos can become difficult to follow. Also, shorter videos allow for more discussion time during playback sessions.
- Always label your videotapes immediately after filming. Write the production title or a description of what was recorded, along with the date. Do the same on the label insert for the cassette case.
- Slide open the “erase-protect” tab on the tape when you are finished filming, to avoid recording over the tape by mistake and erasing your work.

Lessons on community video playbacks

- Focus on reaching the intended audience group for each individual video.
- Conduct playbacks with small groups (from 10 to 35 people).
- If too many people show up for the video playback, try to show the video in two shifts.
- When sensitive topics are being addressed, hold separate playbacks for different gender and age groups; this will enable more open discussion.

Lessons on supporting social change in the community

In working toward change, it is important to:

- Appreciate and amplify positive cultural practices and beneficial traditions.
- Involve diverse community members in activities to broaden engagement and ownership.
- Involve men in the process of change, for they are part of the solution. In particular, engage men who are working against gender-based violence or living in a positive, non-violent way with their spouses and families. They are models that other men in the community can learn from.
- Recognize that providing new information and promoting reflection and discussion are ways of helping people progress along the stages of behavior change.
- Use complementary approaches to reinforce the themes and messages of the community videos.
- Be patient; recognize that change will not happen in a day.

Images that empower: last words on the impact of community video

The Through Our Eyes teams and their partner organizations have found that participatory video energizes and significantly advances community awareness and prevention of gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, and harmful practices. Their work has demonstrated that community video activities can:

- Open discussion about sensitive topics that people rarely talk about.
- Empower women to express themselves about issues that deeply affect them.
- Help survivors realize they are not alone, and that there are services available to help them.
- Have an immediate beneficial effect in terms of helping survivors access services.
- Help family and community members know what to do when cases of gender-based violence occur.
- Raise awareness of the health and psychosocial consequences of gender-based violence.
- Help survivors themselves speak out against gender-based violence and harmful practices.
- Engage men in advocacy activities.
- Attract the attention and involvement of religious leaders, community leaders, and government officials.
- Strengthen engagement and motivation on the part of both program staff and community members.
- Help people question deep-rooted attitudes and practices and consider alternatives to violence.
- Raise awareness of reproductive health issues, including STI treatment and care for fistula survivors.



A peer educator/counselor with a local women's organization films a community video drama in Yei, Southern Sudan (2009)

- De-mystify and encourage people to make use of voluntary counseling and testing services for HIV/AIDS.
- Help encourage people to discontinue such practices as forced marriage, wife beating, and treating rape as a private, “family” matter.
- Build self-confidence and advocacy skills among participating community members.
- Enable communities to prioritize issues through planning and playback discussions.
- Prompt people to identify solutions and suggest realistic actions that they can undertake themselves.

In all of these ways, community-based video can help catalyze the shifts in attitudes and practice that contribute to sustained social change—even within the challenging context of conflict-affected areas.

“Participating in the project had an effect on me...now I am free to speak without fear.”

Female Through Our Eyes
community peer educator and
video team member, Liberia