Part Six: Program Quality and Sustainability

*Photo: Checking a camera exercise during follow-up training
(Uganda, 2009).*

Part Six: Program Quality and Sustainability

Once the activities of the community video team are fully underway, programmatic and logistical support on the part of the lead implementing agency will help ensure effectiveness and continuity. Responsiveness to emerging needs will remain essential. At the same time, responsibility and ownership should steadily shift toward local partners and community members. This is especially vital if the initiating organization expects to scale down or phase out its operations over time.

This section of the Toolkit discusses ways of maintaining the programmatic integrity of a community video project, consolidating the skills of team members, and addressing challenges that may arise. It also suggests methods of sustaining activities into the future by reinforcing local capacities and partnerships, with the eventual goal of project handover.

Prioritizing program quality versus pressures to "scale up"

As community video activities become integrated into an organization's work, local demand for productions and playbacks often increases. The implementing organization itself may also feel pressure from donors or partners to expand activities to different geographical areas. At the same time, videos that depict particular services tend to increase utilization and generate further demand for such services.

It is extremely important that community media activities in humanitarian settings not be expanded beyond the point at which appropriate follow-up, programmatic, and logistical support can be provided. This is especially critical when media messages

are linked with specific programs, such as GBV response or HIV/AIDS testing and care. As already emphasized, communication activities on these issues involve an ethical responsibility to provide appropriate referral to available services. Further, when video productions address highly sensitive themes, responsible organizations will help ensure that trained personnel such as counselors or social workers are available to provide psychosocial support on-site.

Any plans for scale-up or expansion should therefore carefully assess the capability of the implementing organizations and partners to provide these supportive services.

Troubleshooting community video challenges

During the course of production and playback activities, community video teams will inevitably face a variety of challenges. Some of these will be tied to cultural or interpersonal dynamics; others will be related to programmatic or logistical issues. Several of the challenges encountered by the Through Our Eyes teams are described here, along with some strategies for addressing them.

Collectively identifying and discussing different forms of gender-based violence (Uganda, 2009)

Theme and content issues

During the course of participatory video work, contrasting views may emerge around program theme and content. Issues of power, perspective, and voice are often involved. These should be addressed with sensitivity to local dynamics and conditions.

Hearing different perspectives on violence

In Rwanda, for example, the video teams received feedback from audience members about the importance of addressing the violence experienced by men as well as women in the refugee camps. In particular, many men described "disrespect" as a frequent form of abuse. This is a very sensitive issue, linked to feelings of impotence and loss of men's traditional roles, and heightened by the fact that women receive family ration cards and are often the chief beneficiaries of skills training/income-generating activities. Given these realities, it was important for the camp-based video teams to make some programs that stressed the need for mutual respect between spouses. These videos also helped convey the message that violence can take different forms—psychological and emotional as well as physical.

Dealing with domineering voices

At other times, teams may encounter individuals who seek to advance their own agendas through community video productions. These may include traditional or religious leaders, elders, or others who may be more accustomed to propounding their views than taking part in dialogue-based, participatory processes. This situation can be tricky to negotiate, especially if their views tend toward conservative or patriarchal norms that underlie prevailing gender imbalances.

In these cases, team members and field staff can make use of the following strategies:

- Conducting in-depth sensitization and awareness activities for influential people around program goals and themes

- Helping them understand that inclusive, collaborative project activities can help let their voices be heard without dominating over the views of others

- Recruiting them as allies in advancing community well-being and rights

Planning a video production with community members (Southern Sudan, 2007)

> *"...we join hand-in-hand, we cooperate together and share our experience... it has an effect on the people in the community, because when we record and take the tapes to the community, we show the tape and the things that we recorded are really things that happen... So, that's why we say the video is for the community, made by the community, and to be used by the community."*
>
> Moses Bidali, Home-based care manager/ Community video team member, Southern Sudan

Through a combination of such approaches, authority figures can become valuable supporters of project activities. Under the Through Our Eyes project, many local leaders and elders have become strong supporters of project goals as they take part in content-related training, and as they come to see the beneficial effects of the video team's activities. Cultivating the involvement of these individuals is a long-term investment that can contribute not only to program impact but also to long-term, normative change.

Giving screen-time to other topics

Community members may at times prioritize a topic that is not directly related to the main themes of a project. Again, this situation should be addressed with care and sensitivity. Guided by respect for local needs, and for participatory principles, the video team should place itself in the service of the community's concerns.

As an example, residents of a town in Margibi county, Liberia, were angered over the fact that a community water pump had been closed to local use since the departure of the NGO that built it. The video team helped produce a program about the situation. The resulting video was credited with helping to resolve the problem and re-open the well for community use. One community member

described the video playback discussion as a "giant palava hut" because people felt empowered to share their views and help bring about a positive outcome.

Transport issues

Transport can be a chronic challenge in development and humanitarian settings. Vehicles are often in short supply and high demand. Community video teams will rarely have a vehicle available for their use on a regular basis. Transport to remote communities can be especially difficult—a programmatic dilemma, given that the need for outreach and sensitization in such areas is especially high.

The following approaches can help participatory video teams address transport issues:

*   Coordinate travel to production and playback sites with program staff from other sectors, or with local partners

*   Make use of public transportation or rental vehicles. In Southern Sudan and Liberia, Through Our Eyes video teams have used taxis and for-hire mini-vans when project vehicles are not available

*   When possible, keep production and playback equipment in a central location within the project community

Established fixed playbacks sites whenever possible (see more on the following page)

Playback session (Liberia, 2008)

Playback challenges

Managing audience size

Because video generates such interest and excitement in the community, it may be difficult to limit audience sizes. This is especially the case when videos are shown in open-air or large, centralized locations.

Overly large audience size will prevent people from being able to see and hear the video properly (unless a projection system and large screen are being used). Even more importantly, it will decrease the participation level and depth of the post-screening discussion, since fewer people will be able to take a meaningful part. Further, as already noted, the social dynamics in some settings may prevent some community members from expressing themselves freely in the presence of others.

The Through Our Eyes teams have developed several responses to these challenges. They include:

- Letting people know in advance that there will be several local screenings

- Planning several small-group playbacks, with group size ideally under 35 people

- Holding video playbacks among different cohort groups (for example, women, men, female youth, male youth)

- Dividing up large audiences into post-screening discussion groups. For example, if audience size ends up exceeding 60-70 people, the team may screen the video for the large group, but then divide it afterward into smaller discussion groups, facilitated by different team members

    Another variation on this approach, developed by the Liberia team, is to have audiences members form sub-groups, with each presenting

> *"Much as they [the community audiences] are being entertained, they're also learning; they are getting to know some information that touches them."*
>
> Pamella Anena, Through Our Eyes
> Program Assistant/video trainer

Troubleshooting cable problems (Uganda, 2010)

its questions or comments through a designated spokesperson.

Expanding video playback options and sites

Reaching out to different audiences is an ongoing goal, and teams should seek new sites and opportunities for carrying out community playbacks. Possibilities include facilities operated by local NGOs and community-based groups, social centers, health clinics, colleges, vocational training centers, schools and churches. Partnering with such groups can expand local involvement with the video project, increase its resource base, and widen mobilization.

For some video teams, it may be ideal to establish one or more fixed playback sites while also maintaining a mobile playback unit for accessing more remote sites. Reaching out to other local organizations can result in resource-sharing and prove mutually beneficial in both logistical and program terms. If a local group already has a building, hall or room that is used for educational and outreach activities, this could potentially become a site for regular video playbacks.

Owners of local video shops constitute another potential partner group. Video boutiques are ubiquitous in towns and villages throughout the developing world. As places that already draw viewers on a regular basis, they may be valuable auxiliary locations for community video screenings. Note, however, that video shops will generally be

- Keep equipment stored in a safe and well-organized way: store the camera and other major items in hard cases or cabinets; coil cables properly so that they do not kink; keep everything safe from dust, damp, and damage from rodents

- Provide ample padding for equipment when it is being transported over rough roads. Monitors and other items can be carried in simple wood-frame boxes outfitted with handles and mattress foam or pillows

- Inventory and test equipment periodically

- Carry out basic maintenance, such as video head-cleaning for cameras and VCRs, using the supplied head-cleaning tapes

- Keep batteries charged and ready for use

- Always use voltage stabilizers and properly grounded power cables and plugs

- In the case of accessories (cables, batteries, blank tapes) always bring along one or two extras during field-work

- Make immediate note of items that need to be repaired or replaced, and follow up promptly

- Maintain a small fund for equipment repair/replacement needs

- Fill out warranty information to ensure the possibility of replacement or repair within the allotted period

- Try to have a back-up plan in mind for all

more appropriate for reaching adolescent boys and younger men, since they are the usual patrons. It is important to identify other venues that are welcoming for women, girls, older people, and mixed groups.

Equipment maintenance and management

Video equipment will last longer and perform better if stored and used with care. The accompanying **Practical Guide to Community Video Training** includes a session on basic equipment care and maintenance, as well as technical tips and equipment checklists for production and playback activities. Problems will inevitably arise, however: a cable will go missing, a generator will falter, a battery will fail to charge.

The following measures can help teams avoid problems and address them effectively when they arise:

Reviewing use of a tripod during follow-up training (Southern Sudan, 2009)

Practicing interview skills during follow-up training (Southern Sudan, 2009)

production and playback activities. In case of technical problems, for example, use the occasion for planning, rehearsal, or discussion of project themes.

Providing follow-up/refresher training

Follow-up training helps consolidate the capabilities of community video teams. A short follow-up workshop three to five months after the initial training is especially beneficial. This length of time gives the fledgling team a chance to carry out several productions and playback activities, encounter challenges, and garner lessons from their experiences.

Suggested activities for follow-up workshops include:

- Appreciative review of community video team activities since the first training workshop

- Cross-sharing of video productions and exchange of experience (in projects that involve more than one video team)

- Team identification and collective review of

   ◦ challenges they've confronted, and ways to address them

   ◦ opportunities they've encountered, and how to build on them

   ◦ "lessons learned" over the course of their activities, and how to apply these to the team's ongoing work

   Note: A useful variation is a SWOT

exercise—as shown in the photo at the start of **Part 7, "Monitoring and Evaluation,"**—in which participants identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that affect their program work.

- Refresher training in technical, interpersonal, and teamwork skills, based on needs that emerge through group review of production and playback activities

- Reviewing equipment storage and access issues

- Checking on how equipment is holding up, and identifying any repair/ maintenance needs

- Introducing new equipment items/accessories, based on practical needs. Such items may include:

   ◦ a shotgun microphone and boompole (especially useful for filming dramas)

   ◦ a camera tripod (for filming fixed scenes or interviews)

   ◦ a video projector and screen (if a playback conditions are appropriate)

   ◦ solar panels for charging batteries (if electricity is scarce)

- Reviewing methods for documenting and monitoring team activities

- Developing a team Action Plan for ongoing activities, based on collectively-identified priority issues and program needs

- Planning for project sustainability

- Planning participatory assessment/community inquiry activities to gather community members' perceptions of the video project and learn if it has helped contributed to signs of change (see **Part 7, "Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation"**).

Whether or not follow-up training is feasible, participants should periodically review and refresh their technical and teamwork skills. Watching recent productions as a group and noting strengths and shortcomings is an ideal way to identify areas for practice. Similarly, team members should regularly assess playbacks with an eye to strengthening their facilitation skills and taking discussions deeper. The exercises and Source Sheets in the accompanying

Training new staff on video production. By building local capacity, participatory video projects enable training to take place from within, as experienced team members share skills with newer ones. (Rwanda, 2011)

Practical Guide to Community Video Training can be used as resources.

Recruiting and training new team members

Video teams will want to share skills with others and engage new members over time. Original project participants may be shifted to other programs or sites, or become otherwise unavailable. In Thailand and Rwanda, where Through Our Eyes participants are refugees from Burma and the Democratic Republic of Congo respectively, teams have periodically lost members due to resettlement, return, or other reasons. New recruits are trained by experienced team members over the course of several days, and consolidate their skills "on the job," by taking part in planning, production, and playback activities.

As in the case for project start-up, new team members should be identified with attention to diversity and non-discrimination in terms of gender, age, and ethnic/linguistic group.

Various workshop sessions and exercises in the accompanying **Practical Guide to Community Video Training** can serve as resources in training new team members.

Increasing community engagement and empowerment

When enacted with commitment, the processes of dialogue, collaboration and response described in this Toolkit engage community members in progressively deeper and more active roles in creating change, both as individuals and collectively.

Audience members share what they have learned with others and encourage them to attend future discussion sessions. People decide to talk about sensitive issues with family members and friends for the first time. Many seek out services that will help them and their family members. Others propose or volunteer to take part in productions that address issues that deeply concern them.

Peer and cohort groups become mobilized as agents of change. In several Through Our Eyes sites, youth and other community members, motivated by project activities, have stepped forward to help sensitize others. Once identified, such groups can become important partners in outreach and education. They are also good candidates for skills training that can help build their capacity as communicators and advocates.

Strengthening local partners through corollary training activities

Relevant auxiliary training for local partner groups can deepen their engagement in project activities while strengthening their long-term role in supporting social change.

Depending on local needs and resources, partner groups can benefit from training in such areas as:

- peer education and animation skills
- use of participatory drama techniques, including "forum" and "magnet" theater methods
- development and effective use of culturally and linguistically-appropriate print materials
- producing programming for local radio broadcast, and
- interpersonal communication skills

as well as content-based training in gender norms, human rights, gender-based violence, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and other relevant issues.

Sustaining project activities through local partners

The sustainability of participatory video activities in the long term depends on the degree to which community members and partner groups have been meaningfully engaged in the collaborative and capacity-building processes described here.

Also key is the ability of local partners to integrate these activities effectively into their ongoing work.

In some cases, a single well-established partner may be most strategic. In other instances, activities may best be carried on through a constellation of local groups. In northern Uganda, the Through Our Eyes project team has several local partners, each with distinctive strengths. One of these groups, Gulu Women's Economic Development and Globalization (GWED-G), carries out video playbacks in areas that are not covered by ARC's own program activities. The videos created by the Through Our Eyes team support GWED-G's sensitization work, and help the video team reach a wider regional audience in the process. Another partner, Straight Talk, has a strong and credible presence in local outreach on HIV/AIDs, reproductive and family health issues.

To consolidate these partnerships and inviting new possibilities for collaboration, the Uganda team carried out a regional "stakeholders' meeting." This gathering brought together local leaders, partner agency representatives and participants. Team members shared achievements and challenges, described upcoming assessment activities, and invited ideas on managing the transition from the main period of project funding. This type of activity can be a useful way of generating ideas, strengthening different levels of partnership, and laying the groundwork for shifting activities into local hands.

Generating support for community video work

Building broad support for community video activities will involve education and advocacy, both within organizations and externally, to partners and donors. People may have difficulty grasping

Community drama about dating performed at a camp for internally displaced persons. Community theater presentations can be readily adapted into video dramas. (Uganda, 2007)

the concept of participatory media; they may not readily understand the importance of the processes involved, or may dismiss the tapes as non-professional-looking. Others may see the approach as interesting or novel, but may not perceive the scope of its potential.

Very often, the best way to help people appreciate the strengths of community media is by sharing some videos, the specific stories behind them—why they were made, how, who was involved—and examples of their impact. Even better, invite program personnel or donors to attend a local playback. When people see a locally-made tape and hear how community members respond during discussions, the power of participatory video becomes very clear.

Fiscal sustainability

Basic support for ongoing activities should be included in various funding proposals and "core" budgets. Community video can be pitched to donors as an innovative and effective organizational asset that can be built upon and diversified. Alternatively, it could be included under funding rubrics for general communication, awareness-raising or outreach activities, or "BCC and IEC activities." When developing budgets, funding for fungibles like videotapes and DVDs as well as occasional equipment maintenance or repair should be included, as well as materials and personnel for office or field activities and refresher trainings.

As mentioned in **Part 5, "Implementing a Community Video Initiative,"** participatory video can be used to support programs in multiple sectors, such as HIV, water and sanitation, and livelihoods development. When community video activities support diverse sectors and different types of activities (which may include training, monitoring and evaluation, and advocacy), funding sources can also be diversified, which increases the potential for financial sustainability.

To help partner agencies and inter-organizational colleagues include participatory video in their funding proposals, new programs and budgets, it will be useful to provide them guidance on program planning and implementation. Such guidance

Project handover should ensure that (a) oversight and control of the video project is retained by the community, potentially through a local partner, and that (b) community members will have ongoing access to relevant services, such as gender-based violence response and HIV services and care.

could take the form of meetings as well as support materials that describe core activities, timelines, and costs; personnel and equipment needs; basic monitoring and evaluation measures; benefits and uses of participatory video; and video project achievements to date, if relevant. (See also **Part 4, "Planning a Community Video Project".**) Good planning will avoid guesswork and help ensure consistency in program components across agencies and over time.

Project handover

In the course of development and humanitarian work, project implementation is inevitably affected by changes in overall operations or resources: funding shifts, programs are scaled down or discontinued, and agencies phase out activities.

If an organization that initiated a participatory video project anticipates phase-out, it should prioritize plans for handing over the project to an appropriate local partner. This partner may have specific strengths in outreach and sensitization, direct service provision, or program areas that intersect with key project themes (see the suggestions provided in **"Identifying local partners for a community video project"** in **Part 4, "Planning a Community Video Project"**). Ideally, this partner will have been closely engaged in activities over the course of implementation, and handover will be an outcome of collaboration and progressive capacity-building.

As suggested above, handover may involve more than one partner. For example, if a particular organization has been a major co-producer of community videos, it could inherit production equipment and a playback unit. Another local group, well-poised to use videos for outreach and sensitization in a different sector of the community, could make good use of a second set of playback equipment.

If needed, refresher training in participatory production techniques and playback facilitation skills should accompany the transition process.

Maintaining linkages with services

When community video activities have been closely tied to specific programs, such as gender-based violence response or HIV testing and care, continuity in these services must be a major consideration in phase-out and handover. Local partners who take the lead in project management must be able to provide high-quality services and/or appropriate referrals to available programs. They must also take care not to screen videos that depict services or programs that may no longer exist.

In many humanitarian and development settings, services relating to gender violence, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS are provided by several different organizations. In this case, the agency that originally implemented the community video project should seek to strengthen links between relevant groups well prior to phase-out/handover, and help them understand how participatory video activities can support program goals and increase access and use.

As they assume full ownership of activities, local partners and community members will be able to apply participatory video capacity to both ongoing and new priorities.

References

Beattie, Sally (2008). *Process/Impact Assessment, "Through Our Eyes" Participatory Video Project.* GBV Prevention and Response Program, ARC Liberia.