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Participatory Video: an approach to community-led and community-owned development

Written by [Soledad Muñiz](#) on October 17, 2013.

The process of Participatory Video can be very empowering, enabling a group or community to take action to solve their own problems and also to communicate their needs and ideas to decision-makers and/or other groups and communities.

As such, Participatory Video can be a highly effective tool to engage and mobilise marginalised people and to help them implement their own forms of sustainable development based on local needs and home-known rights.

Basically, [Participatory Video](#) is a set of techniques to involve a group or community in shaping and creating their own film. The idea behind this is that making a video is easy and accessible, and is a great way of bringing people together to explore issues, voice concerns or simply to be creative and tell stories.

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"I'd like to say that this film was made by us Batwa. I'm happy to say that nobody else made this film." Every time I watch this video and hear this man say this with so much authority and power, it gives me goose bumps. And you may ask yourself why? Well, because at [InsightShare](#) we know that a video camera is a people magnet and it is 1000 times more powerful in the hands of a local person.

It pulls different parts of the community to bond together and join in this process. It can also be pulled outwards towards groups and individuals who would not normally take part in a community meeting. These are just the people we want to include, maybe they are too busy because they are innovators and doers. Or maybe others feel they have nothing to contribute, they may feel too powerless, too poor or too uneducated.

Whatever it is we find that all changes when the camera is brought into their space by their friends and neighbours – the places where they are busy working, in the fields, or where they hang out, in their back yard, front room or at the local café. Here, surrounded by their friends and neighbours, they find the confidence and the time to plan their message, to use the cameras, to share their ideas and experiences clearly and with confidence.

How does it work?

- Participants rapidly learn video skills through games & exercises.
- Facilitators help groups identify & analyze their important issues
- Short videos & messages are directed & filmed by participants.
- Footage is shared with the wider community at daily screenings.
- A dynamic process of community-led learning & exchange is set in motion.

- Communities always have full editorial control.

Community-led and community-owned in practice

We are recognised as global leaders in participatory video, and pioneers in adapting participatory video to fit a variety of applications and contexts. We are also known for the training and capacity building of individuals within organisations as well as of grassroots partners. We have worked in over 50 countries on more than 200 separate participatory video projects in contexts that range from the Tibetan highlands, to working with gender based violence in South African townships or with youth in London estates.

During the 15 years of experience as an organisation, InsightShare has identified the importance to support the transition from community-owned to community-led development, as we believe one should lead to the other. This thinking has taken us to offer three levels of engagement to our partners so they can move along the continuum of community ownership using participatory video as one of their approaches:

1. **Short-term Participatory Video project:** Typically we will facilitate this short-term process with the target group from beginning to end to support them achieve a specific goal. [Here](#) you have a clear example of a process that supported farmer-to-farmer sharing of community-based adaptation strategies to climate change.
2. **Capacity building:** We train local facilitators who can keep the work growing long after we leave. It is local facilitators who lead most of the work and typically a large body of work is produced during the capacity building period. Often this deeper work is carried out as part of a strategy to build or strengthen partners or networks. [Here](#) you can see a video sharing the process of a capacity building programme in Southern Africa.
3. **Hub development:** We help set up autonomous community video hubs for community-led development. Usually we seek to work directly with communities or community-based organisations. A hub is a space where video and audio equipment is stored and editing can take place, and is usually based in a local neighborhood, township or village. A hub is a catalyst for action in local communities. Local facilitators provide support, resources and equipment and reach out to include new groups in participatory video projects. In some cases local trainers become InsightShare Associates and are able to work on regional and international programmes. [Here](#) you can check the details on the Mexico Hubs in Yaqui, Comcaac and Raramuri territories. This is their [youtube channel](#).

As you might have experienced, it's not that simple for every partner in a project to commit to community-owned and community-led development. That is why it is essential for us that our partners agree with our [values and core-charter](#) that place people at the centre of a programme. This secures space for community-owned and community-led right from the start of planning a project. Once this has been agreed, we then advise partners on the kind of Participatory Video applications to add value to a community-owned or community-led development project:

- [Participatory Video for Community Action](#)
- [Participatory Video for Monitoring and Evaluation](#)
- [Participatory Video for Capacity Building](#)

- [Participatory Video for Community Consultation](#)
- [Participatory Video for Advocacy](#)
- [Participatory Video for Research](#)

Note: click on an application to learn more.



“I can see that in the future we can learn to use video very well and it will be of much use to us. When it is shown in Kampala, we will benefit from this because donors will have understood our situation.” Again the words of this wise and powerful man resonate in my ears. The Batwa women and men who created this wonderful film to represent their view point were able to get government attention to their rights, as well as to feature their video on Ugandan TV. Their film also helped them raise a small grant from UNDP to create a local Batwa organisation.

Have you seen Participatory Video in action? What has been your experience? Which successes and challenges have you faced? I'd love to hear from your experiences.

About the author



Soledad Muñiz specialises in participatory communication with particular skill and experience in deploying Participatory Video as a tool to monitor and evaluate international development programmes. Soledad is an international Participatory Video practitioner with over 5 years' experience researching, planning and implementing numerous Participatory Video projects, with a strong understanding of the application and potential of the tool in a range of contexts.

You can learn more about her experience here:

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One Response to “Participatory Video: an approach to community-led and community-owned development”

Anira G October 18, 2013

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Re interesante todo, Sole. Realmente me siento orgullosa de haber tenido la gran oportunidad de trabajar contigo y el equipo de AO en el 2011. Un gran abrazo.

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