

BUILDING GENDER EQUALITY IN URBAN LIFE

BUILDING BRIDGES WITH THE GRASSROOTS: EMPOWERING LOW-INCOME WOMEN THROUGH INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

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Background and Justification

Poor women in informal settlements are often more disadvantaged than men in terms of representation and participation in decision making, income generation opportunities, physical and tenure security, shelter, and legal and human rights. Many of them appear marginalized, even hidden, from ongoing events in their communities because of lack of skills, literacy, status, mobility, and self-confidence.

The fact that women are seldom involved in decision making or policy formulation processes has impeded their socio-economic development and has led to most key issues affecting them remaining untouched. However women know that the acquisition of knowledge constitutes the first step towards the process of change, be it social, economic, cultural, or political. Information is the catalyst, the driving force, and the product of such an evolutionary process of change. Good information flow is an integral part of social and economic development.

Mathare and Redeemed Village are two of the numerous informal settlements in Nairobi. Mathare started to develop in the 1960s when informal settlers moved onto the parts of the area that some of the landowners had not yet been able to develop. The owners then began forced evictions of the illegal settlers using arson, skirmishes, and other methods.

Redeemed Village was originally a playing field belonging to a school. In 1978, people from a neighboring informal settlement were displaced and allowed to settle temporarily on the land set aside for a school. They built temporary shelter made out of waste paper and packaging and hence the place got the nickname of 'city carton'. In 1986, when a fire reduced the whole village to ashes, a priest from the Redeemed Church contributed iron sheets, building poles, doors, windows, and other building materials for the inhabitants. The settlement was thus renamed Redeemed Village. The inhabitants of the village came together and formed 'Muungano wa Redeemed Village' (Unity of Redeemed Village) and have been actively involved in a daily savings scheme geared towards purchasing land to settle on.

From 1995 agitation started against forced evictions in informal settlements as it became clear that ownership and acquisition of many of these land areas had not been straightforward. Kenyan human rights activists and organizations started a sensitization campaign on land rights. These NGOs included – among others – Mazingira Institute, Action Aid, Shelter Forum, Kenya Human Rights Commission, and Kituo Cha Sheria. By 1996 their advocacy campaigns had resulted in the formation of Muungano wa Wanavijiji (unity of people living in informal settlements). The activists visited and actively promoted a doctrine of active resistance to illegal evictions in other informal settlements in Nairobi.

Quite a number of the inhabitants of Mathare and the Redeemed villages are members of Muungano wa Wanavijiji and Muungano wa Vikundi and hence involved in the land rights activities. Both organizations are coalitions of interested individuals and groups involved in fighting for the rights of the poor, particularly those in informal settlements in Nairobi.

The poverty and lack of security of tenure of many of the residents has contributed to the difficult living conditions in the two settlements. The problems encountered include:

- An almost complete lack of permanent roads and drainage resulting in flooding hazards.

- Completely inadequate water supply, with most residents buying water in containers from vendors at several times the official rate.
- Poor sanitation, with some people using pit latrines that are managed by the community for which users pay a charge; though 'flying toilets' – feces put in plastic bags then thrown a considerable distance – are also common.
- Limited coverage of health service provision.
- Very limited ranges of economic opportunities – most people who work are vendors on roadside stalls; some people are engaged in brewing illicit liquor and prostitution.

Visits to the two settlements by the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) identified that women's groups, largely very informally organized, did undertake neighborhood improvement activities and waste management, and functioned as self-help and action groups. The impact of the women's actions was constrained by their lack of status in their own communities, remoteness from decision making processes, limited contacts outside their own group, and inadequate access to information.

Access to information is becoming increasingly important to people's everyday lives throughout the world. The development of new information and communications technologies (ICTs) such as the internet, email, and CD-ROM has been a significant factor in this accelerating trend. Much of the information disseminated through new ICTs, however, is in written format and often in English or another European language. The women's groups in the informal settlements in Nairobi had gained little from the development of new ICTs. Many of the women had limited or no literacy and did not use English.

Video was therefore chosen as a new ICT medium that could be made more accessible to the women's groups as literacy is not a primary requirement to make videos. Also, as the medium is largely visual, and it is the images that leave an impression on the viewer, the commentary can be added in the language of the intended audience. The Women's Information and Communications Technology (WICT) project was a small pilot project, implemented between September 2000 and May 2001 looking at how ICTs can effectively be used by poor marginalized women to strengthen their largely oral skills to communicate their need for improved livelihoods.

Participants, Planning, Preparation, and Piloting

The principal stakeholders in this activity were two women's groups from the informal settlements of Mathare 3B and Redeemed Village, who produced the videos. The latter group was also part of a CBO, Muungano wa Redeemed Village, whose main role was daily savings towards buying land for housing. This highlighted the differentiation between the two groups. The Redeemed Group was a well-established group of mature women, mostly in their 60s, that already had a permanent meeting place and their own song. The women were mostly single grandmothers, often responsible for bringing up orphaned grandchildren. As well as daily savings they were involved in a range of self-help welfare and mutual support activities among the members. As the women had known each other for a long time and engaged in daily savings they had developed a lot of trust in each other.

The Mathare group membership was mostly young women, aged between 20 and 35, better educated but generally unemployed. They had only been established for a relatively short time and group cohesion was less evident than with the Redeemed Group. The members' support to each other was predominantly geared towards finding work and it was this group that identified the potential for using video making skills for income generation. Some of the women in fact left the group when they were successful in obtaining employment despite the video production experience.

ITDG was the other key participant in the project. It obtained the funding and also facilitated the selection of the women's groups together with Shelter Forum, an advocacy group focusing on shelter, and the

Pamoja Trust, and identified the video trainer. ITDG-EA has maintained contact with the two women's groups and continues to provide encouragement.

The project was initiated through a project inception workshop in November 2000, which brought together key players including Shelter Forum, ITDG East Africa, the Pamoja Trust, and a video technician. This workshop identified the two project locations on the outskirts of Nairobi. Discussions were held on local project methodologies, activities, and a time frame for the activities. At the end of the workshop, key activities to be undertaken during the project implementation were identified and agreed.

ITDG staff made several visits to the settlements of Mathare 3B and Redeemed Village and talked with leaders of the women's groups. The women were very receptive to the idea of making a video, which they saw as a very good opportunity to air their grievances. The women from Mathare 3B and Redeemed Village selected who from among their group would be trained in video production. Funds for the video camera and films and for paying the trainers had been secured from the Knowledge and Research fund of the Department for International Development of the British Government.

A four-day video training workshop was organized with the selected 19 women from Mathare and Redeemed. The main aim of the workshop was to train the women in the necessary skills for video production. During the workshop, the women were briefed on the WICT project, taught how to operate a video camera, how to write a simple script, and how to direct a production. Two crews, one from each settlement, consisting of producers, cameramen, and floor/site managers, were established to guide the video production process. The end of this workshop laid the foundation of the production of the interactive video called 'Telling our stories'.

Video production comprised the following activities:

Pre-production: This consisted of camera practice and script writing sessions. The first few days were spent on camera exercises to master the operations of the camera before embarking on the video production. The camera practice sessions involved shooting in the morning and viewing of the shot material in the afternoon for discussion purposes. During the camera practice sessions, the two teams also found time to finalize their scripts.

Production, which involved:

1. *Shooting of the script* – This was carried out simultaneously in both settlements and basically involved shooting sessions in the morning and viewing of the shot material late in the afternoon.
2. *Reviewing the shot material* – After shooting, a day was fixed in each village to review all the shot material against the script. Additional material was shot if there was a demand for this during the review.
3. *Editing of the footage* – After the two teams were satisfied that they had captured everything that they had set out to, the editing of the raw footage was the next phase. Each team chose representatives for this exercise. They viewed all the shot materials and developed cue sheets for adding the narrative.
4. *Rough cut* – All the footage was assembled into the rough cut. This involved arranging the flow of the shot material as guided by the script but without music, narration, or even strictly timing the production.
5. *Community feedback video show* – The rough cut was shared with the community members to get their opinions and feelings. The community gave their consent to the finalization of the production.
6. *Fine cut* – This involved developing and incorporating the narration into the production, music, credits, and incorporating the title of the production. Each production had an English and Kiswahili narrative. Kiswahili is the local language widely spoken in Eastern Africa.

The video production of the two groups was entirely participatory and they had complete control over what scenes they wanted to show and how they wanted to sequence and present them. ITDG and the video technician did not intervene, apart from providing some technical advice if required, but made visits to document the process. Both video-making teams actively fed back what they were doing to the remaining members of their groups and sought their views. The subject areas to be covered were agreed among all the women in the groups and they also viewed and commented on the initial shot material about what they wanted to include in the final output.

The Mathare 3B group chose to focus their video on single mothers who were experiencing particular problems and are unable to provide satisfactorily for their children. The children find themselves on the streets and not at school and drift into a life of petty crime and alcohol. It is not easy for them to find an adequate job. The women also wanted to highlight the difficult living conditions in the settlement showing illicit brewing and drinking dens, waste dumped in the streets, fires, and congestion.

The women from Redeemed Village decided to focus on their group activities, and challenges they face in endeavoring to improve their lives. This showed the women's daily savings activities, the roadside vegetable stalls run by some of the women, how some of the women were getting an income from maintaining community latrines, and meetings of the 'Muungano wa Redeemed Village' (Unity of Redeemed Village) group.

The media in Kenya and globally was instrumental in disseminating the background, process, and outcomes of the women video makers in Kenya. The main media collaborations were:

- The *East African Standard* and the *Daily Nation*, two leading Kenyan newspapers.
- A talk show on Kenya Television Network (KTN) featured representatives from the project office and the women video makers.
- The group from Redeemed Village also had an opportunity to speak on a live talk show on Kameme FM, a regional radio station that broadcasts in the Kikuyu language.
- A 12-minute feature was made by Reuters Television.
- ZDF, a major broadcast channel in Germany ran a TV feature on the project.
- The women's video work was featured on BBC World News and on ABC World News, America.
- The women's films were shown to the World Bank.
- An article about two settlements, the women's groups, and their video project was featured in the *New Scientist*, the leading British journal on topical scientific and technical issues.

The video production process has been a key factor in enabling the two women's groups develop and strengthen their links to supportive networks and alliances such as the Nairobi Informal Settlements Coordinating Committee (NISCC), Muungano wa Wanavijiji, and the Pamoja Trust. Through these links and directly the groups have also started the process of negotiation with local leaders and politicians, local authority representatives, and financial organizations about their needs. These institutions have also been made much more aware of the challenges the women face in their settlements as a result of seeing or hearing about their videos.

Strengthening Capacity

As the training and learning aspects of the process of video production by the two women's groups have already been covered in the previous section, here it is intended to consider how the video-making activities of the women have raised their abilities and capacities within a wider development context. These include the women's potential to find possible solutions to address their needs and problems and persuade other organizations to become involved in and plan and act jointly in developing these solutions. Another issue the research aimed to assess was whether the women could start to address

their low standing with institutions and, for some of the women, in their communities through making and presenting their videos.

The outcomes on capacity building of both the women's groups through the participatory video experience have been very positive indeed. The profile and status of the two women's groups and of individual women in these groups has increased noticeably. People in the two settlements noticed the woman video makers and were impressed generally by what they were doing. The discussions the women had about the production of the video helped them to improve their level of articulation of needs. It helped them to understand the power of dialogue and information; they came to appreciate reliable information and to recognize their right to this, and also to recognize the destructive power of misinformation. The women also gained confidence in their own abilities as they neared completion of their videos and were satisfied with what they had done.

During the whole process, the women worked together as a team and gathered valuable organizational and team building skills. Each woman had a role to play – producer, scriptwriter, and camera operator. This drew the members of the groups closer together.

The women appeared proficient, confident, and well-organized when they gathered to present their videos at the British Council Auditorium in Nairobi for an invited audience. The women took the leading role in the organization of this event. Over 120 participants attended the launch including some from central and local government. These guests included the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Director of Housing for Nairobi, representatives from the project partners – ITDG, Shelter Forum, and Pamoja Trust – and a host of guests from the international donor community, NGOs, women's groups, and local people. The women's video making experience enabled the women to establish rapport with the minister and senior officials. Everyone present that day was moved by the women's skill, eloquence, and humanity.

This event was a greatly empowering experience for the women, and the groups have built on their links with the local authority and NGOs to negotiate with them to contribute to their development efforts. This has also raised the prominence of the two women's groups within their communities and local people are increasingly getting behind the women's development initiatives.

Experience with Scaling-up

The WICT project was primarily envisaged as a small research study to test the feasibility of participatory video as a process for empowering poor marginalized women in urban informal settlements; so scaling-up was not a principal concern of the project. However, as the project in Kenya proved to be a very successful demonstration, fortuitous scaling-up could be expected. This scaling-up took the following forms.

1. Scaling-up through use of participatory video by other NGOs and community groups: This is already happening, but not much directly as a result of the project. One small scale example of direct scaling-up has been the training by the women from Mathare 3B of a rural women's group in Magadi to produce their own video. The chairwoman of the Redeemed Group has visited South Africa and India to exchange experiences with counterpart grassroots poor urban women in those countries. However, it is not known if this has led to wider take up of participatory video by the organizations involved in the exchanges. ITDG subsequently was involved with some participatory video activities with the University of Hyderabad and women living in a low income settlement in Hyderabad in India. However, the women showed little interest to be involved in the filming. This was possibly because the women in Hyderabad had no apparent organization or leadership and because of conflicts and violence in the settlement that made the women anxious about venturing outside their immediate neighborhood with a video camera. This shows that participatory video is not always a successful experience.

2. Scaling-up by the two women's groups continuing to make films and the films reaching a wider audience: The British Council event proved to be a landmark in the coverage the project received. The project attracted the attention of Kenyan and world press, and ITDG received many enquiries about the project. However, the women took this all in their stride and continued with their lives. The Mathare 3B group has continued to make films, commissioned by one of the Kenyan television stations, about significant events that take place in the settlement. The women also recorded videos on local celebrations such as the International Women's Day, World AIDS Day, and some ITDG-EA documentaries.
3. Scaling-up the impact on addressing the women's development needs: This has become much more evident since the two women's groups made and presented their videos. Some examples of this include:
 - The waiving of bank charges by Barclays Bank and compensation for past charges for the Mathare 3B women's group's savings scheme.
 - The Redeemed Village group has negotiated with the local authority to buy land, using their own savings and money they received from winning an international prize for the project. They have become members of NACHU, the National Cooperative Housing Union which provides housing loans to the poor, with the aim of accumulating enough savings to acquire loans for building. In the long term they also aspire towards building a nursery school on an adjoining plot of land that would generate income.
4. Scaling-up integrating institutional processes with the women's development needs and raising the standing of the women's groups in their own communities. Some of the achievements have included:
 - ITDG-EA linked the women to the stakeholder committee of the Nairobi Informal Settlements Coordinating Committee (NISCC). The NISCC was formed in 1996 by stakeholders concerned with informal settlements and poverty in Nairobi who felt that there was a need for a coordinating body to maximize the impact of their poverty reduction efforts in Nairobi's informal settlements. The organizational structure of the NISCC includes sub-committees at the community level whose role is to identify and prioritize issues of particular concern to the community and to communicate these to sector specific working groups at the city level.
 - The linking up with NISCC has helped the women to identify more easily and approach more confidently the correct local authority official on specific issues; something that would have been difficult for them to do in the past. The women were able to easily access official information, for example, on boundaries of informal settlements.
 - Through dialogue and discussions with the local authority and landowners, demolition of homes in both Mathare and Redeemed Village has stopped.
 - Administrative chiefs in the two settlements have increased consultation with neighborhood committees about any construction or repair activities on houses.
 - Almost everybody in Mathare 3B and Redeemed Village knows about the videos the women's groups have produced. The residents were pleased that the women's videos had highlighted the problems and needs for their communities and that this had led to achieving real improvements in practice. The standing of and respect for the women has risen significantly.

It is very unlikely that most of the above scaling-up achievements of the two women's groups would have been possible without their video production experience.

Dissemination and Communications Issues

Before the women in Redeemed Village and Mathare 3B produced their videos their information and development needs were being scarcely met. Because many of the women had limited or no literacy and

remained mostly in their own settlements their main sources of information were other women or, in some cases, male relatives. They also had very few opportunities to raise their concerns with policy makers and other organizations that have an impact on their communities and settlements. The main way they could try to do this was through barazas, or large organized public gatherings; but even at these it was difficult for the women to get representation or for their views not to be distorted or misrepresented.

The two women's groups had complete control over the selection of who from their group would be involved in the planning and production of the video. During the production process the video makers had continuous discussions among themselves and with the rest of the women in their group. As well as helping the women learn about the video production process the discussions also assisted the women pinpoint the most important needs and issues in their settlement and discuss how they could be addressed. This also greatly strengthened group cohesion.

Curious local people often followed the video camera crew as they shot the video footage. This sometimes caused a crowd control and security issue. However, it was also an opportunity for people in the wider community to find out about what the video makers were doing and what they were trying to achieve.

The ITDG–EA office as well as other NGOs and community-based networks had an instrumental role in facilitating the launch of the women's videos at the British Council Auditorium. They had the contacts with local and national government and other institutions such as banks that the women's groups individually did not have, and they were able to persuade these organizations to attend the launch. It is very significant that policy makers at the highest level – including the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Director of Housing for Nairobi – were willing to take time to participate in the event. Such involvement of people at a high level in their institutions would be an important contribution to achieving real, long-term and lasting change to unfavorable policies to poor people's development.

The powerful messages the women's videos conveyed about their struggles to improve their lives in very difficult circumstances motivated the audience of the need to facilitate the women's efforts. These, together with the backing from ITDG, contributed to the interest of the world media in the women's videos. They demonstrated the women's strengths and capabilities to bring about change in their lives and the lives of people in their communities, not as helpless victims, marginalized and condemned to endless poverty. Some of the Western media were also receptive to positive news stories, such as the Kenyan women's video experience, from sub-Saharan Africa to counter largely negative output centered on wars, famine, natural disaster, disease, and despair.

Another factor that was significant in the successful implementation of the project in Kenya was that ITDG took the opportunity to learn about what had already been achieved through previous experiences in participatory video. Contact was made, in particular, with the Deccan Development Society (DDS) based in Hyderabad in India. This organization is at the forefront of participatory video and other participatory communications media development, working with poor rural women. A group of women video makers and radio producers have formed their own organization – the Community Media Trust. The video outputs of the trust have been highly praised by professional film makers and have been used by news channels, and the trust also undertakes training of women's video making groups from India and other development countries.

Although the Kenyan women's groups had no direct contact with DDS or the Community Media Trust, ITDG, through the WICT project manager, did contact DDS several times and received valuable advice.

There is still much to learn about the use of participatory video as an empowerment tool of marginalized and powerless people, but the experience from Kenya indicates that this project got most of the necessary requirements right. Based on this experience the main aspects of achieving a successful outcome of participatory video are considered to be:

- Working with well-established groups whose members have quite a lot in common, eg all members of the group are poor women of similar age, they are all contributing to a common and savings fund, they have or are looking for similar or related occupations, they have a group meeting place and set of rules, they are all from the same local neighborhood, etc.
- The members of the group always have the final say on decisions on how the video would be produced. External input should largely focus on technical training and support to the process of video production; even if the grassroots video makers might be novices it is important not to consider them as ignorant. They might lack the technical skills of a professional film crew in the short term, but the messages they might want to put across can be very powerful and deeply felt.
- The organization supporting the video makers needs to carry out a publicity drive alongside the production of the video to create awareness among appropriate policy and decision makers. This would need to be targeted at institutional stakeholders in the same field as the video coverage, eg if the video is about land and tenure issues then appropriate landowners, local authority representatives, and senior officials of the government department that deal with land regulation would need to be targeted.
- The institutional stakeholders would need to be invited to a showing of the video, and this event would need to be publicized skillfully so that decision and policy makers at an appropriate level are persuaded to attend.
- It is important that the community video makers set the agenda for the video presentation event. Skillful and tactful facilitation might be required if any of the institutional representatives try to direct the proceedings. In reality this rarely happens as it seems that the video presentation can bring the institutional representatives to appreciate the community's situation and position. Their esteem of the community would also be raised as people with skills and capabilities. Generally they are likely to be polite and respectful. Additionally the production of the video would have given the video makers and others from the community greater self-confidence and they would usually be able to answer challenges from the institutional representatives themselves. This would always be better than for someone else to intercede on the community's behalf.
- The video launch event has to be regarded as just a starting point for a process of change that leads to an improvement in the lives of the video makers and the people in their communities. Having a follow-up plan is therefore important. This would need to be focused on anticipated bottlenecks to achieving better collaborative partnerships between communities, NGOs, and institutions and better access to resources by communities. Some follow-up activities which could be relevant include:
 - Production of additional videos if there are additional issues community members want to see addressed or if there are other audiences that need to be influenced.
 - Making links to other community groups and organizations, for example through exchange visits. These can be other video making groups, but this need not be a particular requirement. These linkages can be further strengthened, based on community demand, to build community networks, coalitions, and movements for change.
 - The development of additional community information resources, eg a radio station, a meeting place which also contains information about the community's assets and resources, and a school or skills training centre.
 - Taking opportunities to get the community members to present their video at organized events, especially those of institutions. In India, for example, DDS managed to get an opening for women farmers from the Community Media Trust to make a presentation at a conference on agricultural research. They were able to highlight the biodiversity of their traditional crops and counter the arguments of some scientists promoting monoculture and genetically modified crops.
 - Being available to provide advice and information when required by the communities for their development efforts or to engage better with institutional stakeholders.

Highlights and Achievements

The video production experience has been a great learning experience for the two women's groups involved. It has enabled them to create links with organizations that can facilitate development with them. It has helped to reduce the institutional and policy barriers that hindered the groups' achieving sustainable improvements and also strengthened the groups' participation in community and NGO organized networks for putting into practice improvements in informal urban settlements in Kenya.

The production of the video has given the women greater self-confidence and has led them to value more their own experience and knowledge. It has also raised their aspirations and self-belief in what they would be able to achieve. The women have been able to demonstrate their capabilities to institutional stakeholders and have given these institutions confidence that the women would be well able to manage development in their settlement.

The project succeeded in 2001 in winning the Association for Progressive Communications Betinho Communications Prize. Some of the money from the prize, together with the funds the women have saved, has enabled the Redeemed Village group to acquire land for building their own homes. They have negotiated with the local authorities for the provision of infrastructure and services and have joined NACHU. They have also been busy saving to start building their new homes.

Some of the women from the Mathare 3B group have found employment. The video production experience might have helped them to find out about their skills and capabilities and utilize these in their search for work. Unfortunately this has resulted in some of the women leaving the group.

Lessons Learned

The project has demonstrated that the medium of video, as a new ICT development, is appropriate to strengthen the skills and capacities of poor women's groups and other poor and marginalized groups. The most important issue to include is for the community video makers to be given complete decision making control over the video production process. Participatory video is an addition to a whole range of participatory techniques and processes, such as an identification of community resources and assets, for stakeholders to have an influence on their lives and needs and problems. The important issue of participatory processes is that they are truly participatory and that the resources developed through the processes are wholly owned by the community.

On this basis, participatory video can be a catalyst for change for poor communities that facilitate their access to decision makers and give them a greater insight into the skills, capacities, and assets that they have to make changes in their lives. Participatory video can meet the challenge of reaching poor and vulnerable people, provided that they have some form of long-term organization as groups or cooperatives. It is particularly appropriate for women whose needs and problems often remain hidden as more powerful and better connected male community leaders claim to speak on the community's behalf. It can assist women to overcome the barrier to their access to information caused by a truncated education during childhood and limited or no literacy.

Communities, on their own, would generally not acquire their own video equipment, at least not unless they already have some experience with it. Therefore NGOs or other organizations working with the communities would need to buy the video equipment for communities or lend it to them, and arrange or provide training. The project in Kenya has demonstrated that for a capital outlay of a few thousand US dollars on video equipment and training significant improvement can be achieved in the lives of groups producing the videos. The groups might need additional support, for example in making institutional links, but the cost of this need not be high. The making of the video can lead community groups to gain the capacities for themselves to negotiate with institutions, and to mobilize their own and institutional resources.

Participatory video can also become a powerful advocacy tool in the hands of community based networks and coalitions to bring about policy changes that are more favorable towards pro-poor development. However, this requires a long-term commitment from NGOs, researchers, and other organizations to support the development of the networks and coalitions. In Kenya a process of policy making decentralization and local government reform is taking place. Increasing civil society participation in decision making is one of the objectives of this decentralization process; but some local authorities are still not effective at informing and involving citizens on local development issues. The consequences of this are that consultations with the public are badly publicized, local authority representatives frequently fail to attend important community meetings and, if they do, no record is made of them so there is no independent archive of what was discussed and what was decided.

Top-down consultations organized by local authorities with local people in developing countries have rarely been successful at reaching the poorer residents. The main problem is that it is often the most powerful and well-connected people, such as formal sector business leaders and wealthy residents, who dominate the proceedings at these consultations to ensure that their demands feature high on the municipal development agenda. The voices of the poor rarely get heard. Participatory video can be a component of an alternative bottom-up strategy in which poor people are at the center of the development process that involves local authorities as well as other institutional stakeholders in it.

Encouraging donor interest in participatory video with poor communities would be important. Of potential attraction to donors could be that for a relatively small funding contribution there is the possibility to leverage several times this amount in terms of community and local institutional contributions for community focused development initiated as a result of the video production. There have been failures with participatory video, generally when communities were poorly organized, when the organization working with the video makers tried to direct the production, or when the video production did not lead to further development processes. However, the knowledge about participatory video is growing, so the risk of failure of future projects would be likely to get less.

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