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Practical Project with the Swiss Agency for Development and  
Cooperation (SDC)



## Participatory Video as a New Method for Measuring and Generating Empowerment

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May 14, 2012

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## Foreword

*“Those who do not have power over the stories that dominate their lives, power to retell them, rethink them, deconstruct them, [...] and change them as times change, truly are powerless because they cannot think new thoughts.”* – Salman Rushdie<sup>1</sup>

The average living standard in the world has never been as high as of 2012, but inequalities and poverty seem to persist or even widen amongst societies worldwide. The UN has developed Millennium Goals which should be reached by 2015 and which, in case of completion, would symbolize to a considerable step towards more equality within and amongst societies. Whether those goals will be attained or not is yet to be seen – however the importance of enabling people to gain more control about their own lives, to make informed decisions and have access to knowledge has prevailed over time. These endeavours can be summarized under the concept of empowerment.

This paper shall be a contribution to the ongoing discussion on how to reliably measure and generate empowerment – towards a world with fewer inequalities.

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<sup>1</sup> White (2003): 103.

## **Executive Summary**

This paper explores the potential of participatory video for the measurement of empowerment. It is meant to be an evaluation of the potential, but also the possible threats of using PV as a tool to measure empowerment.

In the course of this paper, we will show that PV can not only be used for the mensuration, but also for the generation of empowerment. This basically means that through the production and use of participatory videos, individuals and communities can be empowered. This paper should serve as a practical and theoretical guide to the SDC (and potentially other development agencies) when considering to implement the participatory video method as an evaluation/empowerment tool.

# 1. Introduction

Empowerment is a rather unclear and vast concept which is not new, but has found its way into development work only rather recently. Over time, it has become one of the most important maxims in development aid projects. Especially women and the poor seem to be groups of people at which empowerment is often targeted at. An important question of development aid projects is often the kind and strength of impact. Thus, when talking about empowerment projects, empowerment also has to be measured. In the past, this evaluation has often happened through interviews and/or questionnaires. However, these techniques have shown some severe flaws. Therefore, new methods to evaluate empowerment have been developed. In the ages of globalization and multimedia, video technique has emerged as one possible option for measuring empowerment.

In this paper, we want to show whether (and if so, how) the participatory video method can be used as an additional tool for measuring empowerment outcomes of projects.

Firstly, an overview on the concept of empowerment will be given to be clear on what is trying to be measured and achieved. Secondly, this paper will enter into the relevance and difficulties of appropriate measurement of project impacts in general, and empowerment in particular. For this purpose, debilities of classical methods will be pointed out, so that the new methods, which have emerged over time, can be presented as possible solutions to these problems. Within the new methods, we will mainly focus on the so-called participatory video. Also, the use of media to generate empowerment (not only to measure it) has already been acknowledged<sup>2</sup>. In this paper, we will thus furthermore inquire on whether participatory video can also be used to generate empowerment, and if so, in which ways this tool might contribute towards a more empowered community and/or individual. Also, an evaluation of the potential and the threats of the use of participatory for the measurement and the generation of empowerment will be made.

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g. the Empowerment Project: <<http://www.empowermentproject.org/films.html>> > [Accessed in April 2012].

## 2. Empowerment

### 2.1. An elusive concept

Some say that empowerment is “nothing more than the most recently popular buzzword to [...] make sure old programs get new funding”.<sup>3</sup> But what is empowerment at all? Although it is not a new concept, there is not a clear consensus when it comes to defining it. The idea of empowerment basically was derived from the acknowledgement of the fact that, no matter of the geographical location, the common underlying factors which seem to be causing people’s exclusion is a lack of power and voice.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, a concept for fighting what almost seems a systemic reason for people’s exclusion had to be found so that these issues could be addressed properly. Thus, in very brief, empowerment targets at giving people power and voice, either on an individual and on a collective level. However, and as will be explained later on, the exact specifics on what it takes and means to try to achieve this goal are highly dependent on the context.

Empowerment is also an expression that is often used in gender-related topics. Many scholars and professionals<sup>5</sup> believe that (women’s) empowerment is the key to alleviate gender inequalities and consequently also poverty. In this specific, sometimes called feminist perspective that works mainly with participatory approaches, empowerment should lead to more self-confidence in women which is supposed to subsequently lead towards a break-up and change of the current, mostly repressive, system of role.<sup>6</sup> However, this is not only true for women’s empowerment, but for various target groups of empowerment and can therefore be generalized: empowerment wants to raise self-confidence in individuals and/or communities to lead to an increase in their share of power and voice. Obviously, there are more dimensions to empowerment than just the effects on self-confidence. Also, there’s a physical element to empowerment, such as the integrity of one’s body, for example, which shows in protection against sexual violence on the individual level. Furthermore, there’s an economic side to empowerment. More access and control over resources (and also income, which has been a big topic in the micro-finance debate) will lead to an increased share in the market and thus more voice. Additionally, on the political side, one can identify an increase in the access to information and

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<sup>3</sup> Jupp, Ali (2010): 28.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank (2002): 10.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Esther Duflo (2011), the United Nations Development Programme, Annika Akdeniz-Taxer

<sup>6</sup> Akdeniz-Taxer: 76.

control over resources which will consequently lead to more informed political decisions.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 1: A women in Yemen showing her passport and ink- stained finger on February 21, 2012 after having participated in elections.**

To sum up, the concept of empowerment roughly includes a strengthening of the social, political, educational and economic strength of individuals or communities. One of the most important characteristics of the approach of empowerment is that it follows the bottom-up idea.<sup>8</sup> This basically means that empowerment tries to find the start at the very bottom of the pyramid. The conviction behind this has gained prominence in the past years: the people that are most affected by a problem most of the time are the also the key to the solution, because nobody has a higher issue at stake in the solution of their problems than they do.<sup>9</sup>

As mentioned previously, empowerment is influenced by values, ideas and convictions. There is no universal consensus on what is desirable in, say, terms of educational or political standards. Furthermore, empowerment has an intrinsic value, but can also be seen as instrumental.

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<sup>7</sup> Claessen, Van Wesemael (1992): 14 - 20.

<sup>8</sup> Participatory video as a bottom-up approach will be further explained in Chapter 4.

<sup>9</sup> See i.e. Narayan (2005).

## 2.2. A definition attempt

Due to the complexity of the issue and the previously mentioned cultural influence on the elements of empowerment, it does not seem surprising that there is no universal definition on empowerment. The basic textbook definition of empowerment is to “give somebody more control over their own life or the situation they are in”<sup>10</sup>. Since this is a somewhat basic and general definition for this paper, we will work with another definition of empowerment which is still general (as for target groups of empowerment, for example), but already somewhat more specific. This definition, which has been put forth by the World Bank, seems to be more inclusive and vast.

*“Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives”<sup>d1</sup>.*

The common elements that one can find when looking for and at definitions for empowerment are that most of them, independently from the fact if it’s a definition of empowerment in general or, say, women’s empowerment, mention control and access over certain material and intellectual assets and the ability to make (informed) choices. The mentioned intellectual assets mostly include education, knowledge, information and ideas. Material assets include land, water, property, sanitation and the like. On a more abstract and general level, successful empowerment projects in the past have shown that most of the time, the following factors are contributing significantly to their success: access to information, inclusion & participation, accountability and local organizational capacity (on a community level).<sup>12</sup> Obviously, also these four elements have to be closely interconnected and produce synergies, too.

Also, the dimensions of empowerment are not easily defined. Apart from the dimension of impact, there are other dimensions that are particular to empowerment. For example, there are the three highly related elements of agency, achievements and resources. Those three elements conjointly lead to a self-led life and a bigger share in power and voice. One example for this is agency. In an empowerment context, agency leads to a questioning of current (power) relationships. Together with the necessary resources, agency is one of the crucial conditions for a self-dominated life.<sup>13</sup> One also must not forget the

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<sup>10</sup> Wehmeier (2000).

<sup>11</sup> World Bank (2001): vi.

<sup>12</sup> World Bank (2011): 14.

<sup>13</sup> Kabeer (2005).

influencing factors that will have their share of impact on the empowerment outcome of projects, for example, the form of public interaction, structures of inclusion and conflict, the degree of decentralization in a community or the degree of political freedom.<sup>14</sup> It seems important to underline that empowerment is not static, but rather dynamic and has to be constantly renewed and targeted.

### **2.2.1. Levels & Target groups**

Empowerment can be realized and implemented on two levels: the individual and the collective level. This means that either the individual abilities of a person should be boosted, or the abilities of a whole community. The actions that will follow the empowerment process than also ideally will take place on two levels, the individual and the collective level. As previously mentioned, empowerment can target different groups of people, such as, most prominently, women's empowerment does, especially since 1976, the beginning of the UN decade of the women. But there is also empowerment of the poor in general, or empowerment of the rural population. On the other hand, empowerment projects can aim at the establishment of a specific skill or resource, such as for example political or social empowerment does. Furthermore, the term employee empowerment has found its way into business language and practice.<sup>15</sup>

### **2.2.2. Processes vs. Outcomes**

The difference between processes and outcomes of empowerment is a crucial one, also with regard to measurement of empowerment. Processes are aiming at the help of people to develop the necessary skills and capabilities to become active problem solvers. Outcomes however are the consequences of the efforts to empower people and have more influences on the community level and the like; one example could be the reduction of power distance or a de facto increase in political participation.<sup>16</sup> Empowerment is thus visible in both of these elements.

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<sup>14</sup> World Bank (2001).

<sup>15</sup> See i.e. Robert Quinn or Sanjay Menon.

<sup>16</sup> Jupp, Ali (2010).

To sum up, empowerment is an outcome (and a process) that is aimed at by some development projects. The following section contains an introduction to impact evaluation with the objective to clarify why it is important to measure outcomes (such as empowerment) of development projects and to show the differences between classical and new methods of measuring those elements.

## **3. Impact evaluation**

### **3.1. Relevance of accounting for project outcomes**

Measuring the impact of project interventions is of interest for mainly two reasons. First, it is important to provide professional agencies with tools to systematically evaluate their work and come up with evidence which helps to constantly improve their operations in the field. Secondly, ensuring good practice including reliable project evaluation is expected of an organization that wants to be supported by donors and the public. It is a tool for accountability and transparency purposes which is used to present results to senior authorities. Communication on effective use of resources is of fundamental importance to the humanitarian sector since aid agencies need to secure long term funding. This is illustrated by initiatives with the aim to bring more effectiveness, transparency and accountability to aid agencies. In Switzerland this is mostly known as the seal of approval by ZEWO<sup>17</sup>. The foundation marks fundraising organizations which are reliable and credible. As suggested by the Feinstein International Center, in the United States there are the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP-I), the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP), the Organizational Learning Partnership (OLP) or the Fritz Institute Humanitarian Impact Project with the aim to ensure qualitatively sound project implementation<sup>18</sup>.

#### **3.1.1. Development cooperation as principal-agent dilemma**

Although project evaluation is expected to be one of the best tools to ensure effective use of development aid (money), evaluation results themselves are often biased. Such distortions occur due to several reasons; however, mainly

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<sup>17</sup> ZWEO-Schweizerische Zertifizierungsstelle für gemeinnützige, Spenden sammelnde Organisationen: <http://www.zewo.ch/>

<sup>18</sup> Catley, Burns, Abebe, Suji (2008): 7.

they are inherent to the evaluation system i.e. the institutional setting itself as shown by Michaelowa and Borrman in their paper *“Evaluation Bias and Incentive Structures in Bi-and Multilateral Aid Agencies”*. These authors have gained inside in the problematic subject by analyzing data from the World Bank as well as several German development agencies. They analyze the incentive structure of evaluators in a political economic framework, a field of research which has rather been neglected by academics before. The results shall be shortly summarized here in order to prepare the grounds for evaluating the use of participatory methods to reduce the information asymmetry prevailing in many aid projects.

The evaluation of a development project can be seen as politico-economic model following the classical principal agent theory.<sup>19</sup> The principal agent dilemma originally stems from economics but is also widely applied in political science. The model implies that the principal is the actor who mandates tasks and the agent is the one who needs to execute these tasks. The theory states that the relationship between the principal and agent is hierarchical but the agent has more insight knowledge of the subject than the principal does. This information asymmetry leads to what is called a “broken feedback loop”, whereby the principal cannot control what the agent does. To sum up, the principal agent theory provides us with a useful framework to explain human behavior in institutions which are hierarchical and is thus applicable to aid agencies.

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<sup>19</sup> The problem was first described by Michael Jensen and William Meckling in their article „Theory of the firm. Managerial behavior, agency costs, and ownership structure“ in Journal of Financial Economics. Band 3, 1976. Nr.4, S. 305-360.

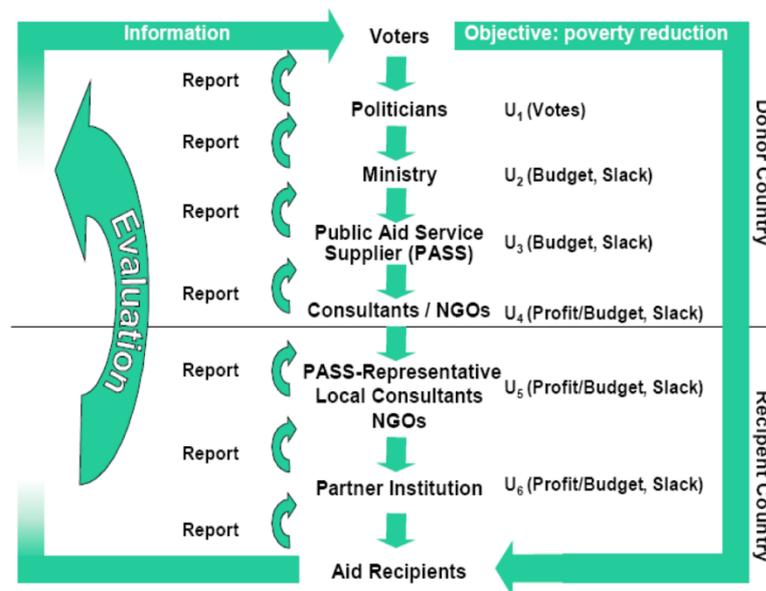


Figure 2: The broken feedback loop in the case of bilateral development cooperation.

In the case of bilateral development aid, we often face a multi-level principal agent problem as illustrated in the graph above. Voters, as principals, mandate their politicians to provide aid, this task is then delegated to government and further to the aid agency or non-governmental organization which needs to implement the duty on the ground. In the developing country, this mandate is given to representatives of the donor aid agency and further to locals or again NGOs or partner institutions. Each level represents one principal agent problem in itself, since members or institutions at each level have interests or goals which do not always coincide with the objective of the principle, which is, in our case, the efficient use of development aid on the ground. Furthermore, „each report requested by the principal from his direct agent passes through the filter of the agent’s utility function“.<sup>20</sup>

Evaluation reports are considered to be a mean to solve the issue by directly controlling the agent’s work. Evaluations are, however, not only used to control the agent but also to demonstrate the overall effectiveness of development assistance to the parliamentarians and not at least to the citizens for legitimacy purposes. This leads to the fact that each principal is himself the agent of some other principal (i.e. the voters) and thus has a genuine interest in presenting good evaluation outcomes of the effective development cooperation. Also, this utility maximization problem can be described by

<sup>20</sup> Michaelowa, Borrmann (2006): 314.

deriving different utility functions showing the incentives each principal and agent has. The main findings can be summarized as follows. Reliable evaluation results depend on two basic factors. Firstly, they depend on the evaluators dependency of the acceptance of his/her results by the aid organization and secondly, the reliable results depend on the potential collusion between the evaluator and the project manager.

The authors suggest further that the institutional setting is the most important factor to ensure transparency and minimize the two problematic factors mentioned above. Institutional and professional independence of the evaluator can significantly reduce biased evaluations. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that the unit commissioned to conduct evaluations should be placed at the highest hierarchical level in the aid agency to attach the necessary importance to evaluations. Most importantly, it is stressed that ex-post evaluations which undermine collusion between evaluator and project manager are to be favored over mid-term reviews or joint inspections of project managers and evaluator in the field.<sup>21</sup> Policy recommendations in this regard target institutional reform as first priority. However, this paper shall go beyond and explore the potential of participatory video (PV), which will be introduced at a later stage, in contributing to the credibility of evaluation reports. It can be assumed that direct feedback from local people does reduce evaluation bias. By giving beneficiaries of aid a tool to analyze the impact of development projects through their own perspective, particular interests of third parties in biased evaluation reports are assumed to be prevented.

### 3.2. Measuring Empowerment in Particular

*“The best people to assess empowerment are the people who may or may not be empowered. One of the slogans which is used [...] is ‘Ask them’.”*

– Robert Chambers<sup>22</sup>

As previously mentioned, empowerment is not a new concept. However it is rather recently observable that scholars and fieldworkers alike try to measure it systematically.<sup>23</sup> The measurement of empowerment is, mainly due to the

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<sup>21</sup> Michaelowa, Borrmann (2006): 328.

<sup>22</sup> Jupp, Ali (2010): 6.

<sup>23</sup> Narayan (2005): 3.

rather blurry concept, not an easy task. The plurality of understandings of the term, but also the fact that empowerment is a dynamic process and is highly influenced by the cultural context leads to difficulties in the development of indicators for the measurement. Traditionally, empowerment has been measured by questionnaires and through personal interviews with the people who may have been empowered. Also, when for example considering political empowerment, one could think of indicators such as participation rates in elections or quota. As to other forms of empowerment, such as the previously mentioned ones, possible indicators are social justice, increased protection of rights or an increased and better interaction between civil society and the political class.<sup>24</sup> Again, there are the different levels that come into play. On an individual level for example, the previously mentioned element of agency is often measured, split up into individual assets and capabilities. Examples for these are land, livestock and savings. Those indicators are relatively easy to measure, because one is talking about absolute numbers, but there's also the possible indicator of well-being, for example, which is obviously harder to measure.<sup>25</sup> On the collective level, the capability to get organized in groups is an important feature of empowerment. Additionally, there have also been efforts to measure empowerment on a national level, where it was researched whether the state institutions of a given country were more responsive to people without power and voice and whether previously existing social barriers had been removed.<sup>26</sup> Further criteria and indicators on the different levels include improvement in governance, provision of basic services, market development of the bottom of the pyramid (since this is where voiceless people often tend to find themselves).

This list of indicators presented here is not exhaustive in any way, which also points us towards one of the biggest problems when it comes to measuring empowerment. It is difficult to capture the "help to self-help" idea which is implied by empowerment since it is mostly charged with cultural elements.

### **3.2.1. Problems with Measuring Empowerment**

As mentioned, the cultural influence on empowerment often leads to difficulties in the measurement of empowerment; not only when setting the target and answering the question what outcome would be desirable, but also when

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<sup>24</sup> For indicators see World Bank (2001).

<sup>25</sup> Narayan (2005): 10.

<sup>26</sup> Narayan (2005): 310.

imagining that the evaluator of an empowerment project has a different cultural background than the recipients of the project. Some other problems that have emerged in the past when scholars or fieldworkers tried to evaluate empowerment were that sometimes, the person who evaluated the project was at the same time the person who implemented the project. Thus, a certain bias was at times inevitable. Also, the questionnaires that have been used sometimes also were prejudicial, meaning that the questions that were asked were potentially suggestive.

The following graph<sup>27</sup> shows the problem of different stakeholder groups and what they might be looking for in an evaluation.

ISSUE	PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY	INTERMEDIARY	DONOR
Empowerment	Belief that they have the trust, respect and means to influence decisions which affect them.	People living in poverty can exercise their rights .	Empowered electorate holding Government to account. Responsible citizenry taking action for their own benefit.

Figure 3: Challenges of different stakeholder groups

Also, one of the major problems that have risen during the evaluation of empowerment is that empowerment is a latent phenomenon. This means that it'll dynamically change, be it improve or decrease. This means then that "most observed behaviors are proxies for the underlying phenomenon"<sup>28</sup>.

Faced with all these problems, new methods for measuring the impact of development projects in general and empowerment in particular, have been developed. In this paper, we will specialize on participatory evaluation methods, especially on participatory video.

In the following section, we will thus give an introduction on participatory development and the method of participatory video, and we will discuss under what circumstances those methods should and can be used.

<sup>27</sup> Jupp, Ali (2010): 34.

<sup>28</sup> Narayan (2005): 15.

## 4. The idea of Participatory Video (PV)

### 4.1. Evolution of Participatory Development

The philosophical foundation of Participatory Video (PV) is the participatory approach to development. The basic idea of participatory development, as the name suggests, is that effective development projects should be planned, implemented and evaluated in a participatory effort between donor, facilitator and the local community. Participatory development became an important topic from the 1970s onwards as an alternative to the conventional mainstream approach to development that mainly involved hierarchical, top-down measures and where planning and evaluation of projects usually took place far away from the local communities<sup>29</sup>. The distinction between hierarchical and participatory approaches can be thought of as corresponding to the distinction between a blueprint and a learning process approach.<sup>30</sup>

From an academic perspective, among many, two authors have been particularly influential in spreading the conviction that communities need to be an integral part in the whole development process: In his 1983 book "Rural Development: Putting the Last First" Robert Chambers asserts that "outsiders", i.e. the general public but also development practitioners, have a rather arrogant view of the sources of poverty, viewing poor people as lazy, stupid and responsible for their own misery. However, case studies have shown repeatedly that poor people are often hard working, tough and resilient, but that they happen to be in a deprivation trap of poverty itself, facing physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability and powerlessness<sup>31</sup>. By bringing this evidence to light, Chambers calls for a reversal of several processes in development activities, one of which is how outsiders learn about the conditions of the poor by letting them learn from the poor, e.g. by just sitting, asking and listening but also by working together<sup>32</sup>. Chambers is a longtime research associate at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex, which is among the leading academic institutions in participatory approaches and one of the pioneers of PV. The other influential author is David C. Korten, who assembled a great number of development

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<sup>29</sup> Jennings (2000).

<sup>30</sup> Chambers (1983): 211.

<sup>31</sup> Chambers (1983): 103.

<sup>32</sup> Chambers (1983): 201 ff.

scholars to call for a new framework of development, so called "People-Centered Development"<sup>33</sup>.

In implementing the ideas brought forward by Chambers, Korten and others into actual policies and thus raising awareness of the participatory approach in a broader public, two major international institutions have been crucial<sup>34</sup>: the United Nations Food and Agriculture Association (FOA), who already jumped on the bandwagon very early on, and the World Bank since the late 1990s.

Although it should be evident that participatory approaches are not necessarily feasible in all settings, overall participatory approaches are widely recognized in development work today.

## 4.2. PV as one tool of Participatory Development

In a participatory video project, the members of a community use video to document ideas and innovations they came up with or to focus on specific issues that affect their community in any way<sup>35</sup>. There is the saying that an image can say more than a thousand words. It is the premise of PV that this is also true for moving images: short video sequences can immediate large amounts of very precise information both in terms of knowledge and sentiments.

As the participatory approach suggests, the community collectively decides on what issue it wants to tackle, what the overall goal of the project will be, what kind of story they want to tell and how, in what way the video should be edited and, finally, whether the project did have any impact. PV teaches the technical skills of video production, filming and editing but more importantly, it opens up local communication channels and thus enables a dialogue that facilitates the exchange of ideas and solutions. The process by design is one of incremental learning, letting the participants make their own mistakes, but at the same time combine learning, creativity and fun. The self-driven production of video can have an empowering effect on individuals and communities<sup>36</sup>. At the same time there is a justified hope that PV can, under certain circumstances, generate very useful data for the evaluation of development

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<sup>33</sup> Korten, Klauss (1984).

<sup>34</sup> White (2003): 34.

<sup>35</sup> Lunch (2007): 28.

<sup>36</sup> Further discussed in Chapter 5.

projects and thus address the challenges discussed above<sup>37</sup>. While overall there is a lot of potential in this rather new approach some challenges of PV and the participatory approach in general remain<sup>38</sup>.

#### 4.2.1. Facilitator as team members

The attitude and behavior of the facilitator in a PV project is crucial. PV is almost entirely a bottom-up process. Obviously, donor organizations still have to decide that they want to realize a project in a certain place, define its broad goals and allocate the required funds but after that the course of the project as well as the outcome are very open. An enlightened facilitator will not try to interfere with the PV process, consider herself primarily as an equal member of the team creating the video and accept that most often neither the process nor its outcome will be exactly as she would wish.

#### 4.2.2. New possibilities through technological progress

Even though Chambers mentions that the basic idea of PV, local people making videos themselves, has been around for three more than 30 years<sup>39</sup> the technological progress over the last 5-10 year has certainly changed the nature of PV in a fundamental way both with regard to costs and the ease of use. In the year 2000, a cheap camcorder did cost around \$ 700-1'000, a cheap computer or laptop, capable of editing the footage, would cost around \$ 2'000-3'000 and basic editing software another \$ 200-300 bringing the total cost to around \$ 3'000-4'000 for a very basic setup<sup>40</sup>. Accounted for inflation this amounts to \$ 4'000-5'000 today<sup>41</sup>. At present even the most basic smartphone for around \$ 100 can record video while a dedicated device might cost \$ 200-300 and a capable laptop will cost another \$ 500-600. The Editing software, if not already part of the operating system, will cost another \$ 50-100, bringing the total costs to around \$ 700-1'000<sup>42</sup>. This is thus already significantly cheaper than at the turn of the millennium. Alternatively, a recent iPad with a

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<sup>37</sup> Further discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>38</sup> Further discussed in Chapter 7.

<sup>39</sup> Chambers (2006).

<sup>40</sup> Prices in the year 2000: <<http://www.videomaker.com/article/8059/>> [Accessed in April 2012].

<sup>41</sup> See Inflation Calculator of the United States Department of Labor <[http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm)> [Accessed in April 2012].

<sup>42</sup> See, for instance, the offerings on <[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)>.

video-editing application for around \$ 500<sup>43</sup> is capable of both recording and editing video, meaning that today the same capabilities for recording and editing video will cost around 10-15 percent of what it used to cost in the year 2000. To put it another way: for the same budget as in 2000 today 8-10 groups within a community could contribute to a PV project at the same time. This would allow for a whole new scale of and scope of PV.

Arguably, tablet computers with their touch-based interfaces are also far more accessible than traditional PCs and therefore easier to interact with. The skill development phase of a PV project could, therefore, be made much less time-consuming. It is likely that tablet computers could not only prove to be the future of computing in general, particularly in developing countries<sup>44</sup>, but also of PV in particular. Technological progress has not only been immense with regard to the means of production of PV but also the ways to distribute them. The internet and particularly video sharing sites, such as Youtube or Vimeo, have exponentially augmented the number of potential consumers of any participatory video.

### 4.3. Typical process of a PV project

The participatory approach implies that projects that integrate PV are never identical. Inputs from a large number of community members are considered and integrated as the process is tailored to a specific context. However, it is possible to outline a typical process that can serve almost as a template to PV projects. In the remainder of this chapter the process of PV is outlined in a rather descriptive fashion based on the approach by InsightShare<sup>45</sup>. Implications for the generation and the measurement of empowerment are discussed in the following chapters.

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<sup>43</sup> See <[http://store.apple.com/us/browse/home/shop\\_ipad/family/ipad](http://store.apple.com/us/browse/home/shop_ipad/family/ipad)> and <<http://www.apple.com/ipad/from-the-app-store/apps-by-apple/imovie.html>> [Accessed in April 2012].

<sup>44</sup> See e.g. Aakash <<http://www.akashtablet.com>> and One Tablet per Child <<http://one.laptop.org/about/xo-3>> [Accessed in Mai 2012].

<sup>45</sup> Benest (2010). InsightShare is a longstanding player in the field of participatory video with a good reputation (see Chambers (2006)).

### **Step 1: Group Development, Bonding**

This first step is crucial and one that might be overlooked, if the organizers of a project are new to PV. Prerequisite for the whole PV project is the establishment of an atmosphere of trust where participants listen to and respect each other. This doesn't mean that they necessarily need to agree with each other on every step of the way but rather that agree to a fair and save discourse where people feel it save to participate in. One way to facilitate this process is to early on draft some kind of "group agreement" on the ground rules of the process members of the group voluntarily impose upon themselves. In the spirit of participatory development facilitators should consider themselves as part of the group, not superordinate managers who in the end make the decisions themselves.

The steps of the process up to the actual video production can be facilitated by games and exercises. InsightShare, for instance, has collected a number of games and exercises they have applied successfully over the years and made them available online free of charge<sup>46</sup>.

### **Step 2: Capacity Building and Skill Development**

Step two of the process builds on step one by improving the capacity within the group to make and communicate decisions. Furthermore, participants learn to handle the video equipment. The capability to work the video equipment is the most significant technical skill mediated by the PV process.

### **Step 3: Problem Identification and Analysis**

The setup of what a PV project is supposed to be about content wise happens in the third step. Participants identify and prioritize the problems their communities face. And they analyze in depth the sources of the problems. Methods of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) can be particularly useful in this step, too.

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<sup>46</sup> See e.g. <<http://insightshare.org/resources/pv-handbook>> [Accessed in Mai 2012].

#### **Step 4: Message and Strategy Development**

After the group has decided what problems they want to tackle and have understood in detail the factors and dynamics behind the problem the next step is to develop a strategy relating to how the problem should best be approached and what message the video produced should deliver at the end. The goal of a video could be, for instance, to communicate the needs of participants to duty-bearers or to disperse knowledge acquired by the group to other members of the community or to initiate a dialogue on an important topic. An important element of this step is, therefore, audience identification. Another is the development of so-called "storyboards". Storyboard are scene-by-scene visualizations, e.g. by paper and pen, or just as drawings in the sand, of how the video should look in the end.

This step has a significant influence on how people that are not involved in the video production will see the final product. It is worth keeping in mind here that people tend to respond more positively to messages that are framed in a constructive way rather than the ones which are full of anger and accusations.

#### **Step 5: Video Production**

This step is rather straightforward. Participants apply the skills which they have acquired in the previous steps to produce the video as they have outlined in storyboards. A good planning in the previous stages avoids the generation of many hours of unplanned and often irrelevant footage. Ideally, participants should continuously rotate their roles in the video production, e.g. "camera operator", "director" or "narrator". Everybody who is contributing to the video, i.e. who appears on screen, needs to give his or her informed consent for the filming to take place and the use of the footage in the video.



Figure 4: Participatory Video production in Africa

### Step 6: Community Screening and Consultation I

To allow for informed consent and for other members of the community to see what the participatory video team is doing, continuous screenings of the raw material are required. At the same time it allows all community member to give feedback and to discuss the current state of the PV project and what should be done to improve and complete it. The film - screen - discuss pattern ensures that all members of a community feel a certain ownership in the video produced and should therefore be at the heart of the whole PV project. Ideally, the raw footage produced is screened at the end of every day. Although this sounds rather obvious, before the screening it must be ensured that all technical aspects work right from the start, not just the video but also the sound. Otherwise, people will be disappointed.

### Step 7: Participatory Editing

The editing stage is very powerful and at the same time probably the biggest challenge to the PV process as a whole. Different stakeholders will become

more interested as the video moves towards the final product and might try to impose their views. The nature of video editing makes it very easy to distort or even manipulate what was recorded. It could either reinforce or dispel stereotypes and allow for a productive and positive further discussions and collaborations or shut the whole communication process down altogether. The editing process determines how individuals and the community are represented and thereby can have an impact on the safety and wellbeing of the participants. Organizers of PV projects have the responsibility to always keep this in mind. Ideally, the participants in the videos would edit the parts where they are on screen themselves. However, this is not always possible. The editing stage is, from a technical point of view, certainly the most complex of the whole process. Editors need a certain degree of computer literacy to begin with and need the time to learn how the editing software works. In some cases it might therefore make sense for either the facilitator or even a third party to do the editing in cooperation with the community.

### **Step 8: Community Screening and Consultation II**

As soon as a rough cut has been edited, further screenings should be organized. These again provide the community an opportunity to give feedback on the video, particularly on details, and increase the confidence in the editing process overall. As with the previous screening step the participants will, ideally, organize the screening events on their own and also try to encourage the audience to give honest feedback and involve them in a discussion. Very simple tools can be used to facilitate discussions. For instance, participants could designate a "talking stick" or "talking stone" that is passed on from one person to the other where only the person holding it at a given moment is allowed to talk while the others listen.



Figure 5: Community discussion in Sierra Leone<sup>47</sup>

Even as the video moves towards the final cut, it is important that sufficient time is available to react to the feedback from the discussions. Sometimes a few different cuts might do the trick, other times it could even be necessary to record new footage to bring the message across. In this case the process takes an additional loop starting from step 5. The final video should be compared with the goals of the project the community decided on in the earlier steps of the process and reflect those as closely as possible.

### Step 9: Advocacy and Dissemination

A common goal in a PV project is to use the final product as an advocacy tool, i.e. to communicate challenges to an agent who can do something about it. The strategy for the dissemination of a video the use as an advocacy tool will have emerged in earlier stages of the process. The point of this final stage of the process is to actually get the information out to the intended audience. This could happen via targeted screening for important decision makers or via wider screening and dissemination, e.g. by producing DVDs for distribution or posting the final video on a video sharing site such as Youtube or vimeo. If a target screening takes place and it is not possible for a large number of

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<sup>47</sup> <<http://tinyurl.com/cflzyf4>> [Accessed in Mai 2012].

participants in the PV project to be part of the targeted screening a good approach would be for the decision maker who was targeted to respond to the whole group also via video. This gives the community an opportunity to discuss the new information and, if appropriate, to fine tune their overall goals and strategy.

### **Step 10: Start from the top**

The PV process in its narrower sense concludes with the previous step. Facilitators can obviously not stay indefinitely with the community they conducted the PV with. It is crucial to plan ahead for their departure so that the community is not left disappointed after their expectations have been raised. The optimal case would be for the community to be left with the video equipment so they could start again from the top, build on the skills and knowledge they acquired in the initial run and produce additional videos all by themselves. The facilitators might try to return occasionally to maintain the video equipment and resolve potential conflicts. This way PV could truly be a virtuous cycle.

## **5. PV and Impact Evaluation**

### **5.1. Participatory Methods used for Project Evaluation**

In this part, we would like to show how participatory methods can be used as tools to measure impacts of projects, also in the light of the previously presented challenges of project evaluation. The most frequent evaluation methods used in development cooperation agencies, including the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), are project reviews, implementation, outcome and Impact Analysis Controlling.<sup>48</sup> Such methods heavily rely on classical measurement techniques, i.e. statistical analysis of pre-determined indicators.

As confirmed by experiences made by researchers at the Feinstein Centre, evidence of project impacts is largely obtained by the agencies own monitoring and evaluation systems. They focus on measuring the process of project implementation and service delivery. Although this data is certainly useful for project management and financial accountability, it does generally not tell us what effects the policy has on the lives of

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<sup>48</sup> Internal document - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

participating communities. However, a well designed impact assessment should report on the positive as well as negative impacts on the lives of people on the ground. Studies have shown that transparent reporting on negative effects of a program is perceived as a willingness to improve and learn whereas a rather defensive reporting tends to cause skepticism among donor agencies.

Furthermore, the potential to find unintended effects should not be underestimated.

Results from impact assessments have shown a clear statistically significant relationship between two factors that were not expected. If assessments are not carried out with the required awareness for people concerned, highly relevant information to shape future projects or policies will get lost.<sup>49</sup>

In contrast to the classical methods of measurement stands participatory evaluation or participatory impact assessment, a concept based on principles of ownership, empowerment and inclusion of beneficiaries of the program to be evaluated. Ownership refers to the participation of local expertise and knowledge in the data generation and data analysis. Empowerment ensures a framework within which local people can establish their own analytical evaluation process and thus evaluate development from their own perspective, thus participatory methods allow to measure change in qualitative terms i.e. dignity, status, well being. Inclusion refers to the sampling method, whereby participatory evaluation uses purposive sampling of social groups to ensure participation of all stakeholders, especially giving voice to people with little power or disadvantaged groups.<sup>50</sup>

### **5.1.1. Participatory Impact Assessments**

Participatory Impact Assessments answers three basic questions. Firstly, what changes have been observed after the start of the project, secondly, which of the changes are caused by the intervention, and thirdly, what effects does this have on people's lives. There are eight stages to be followed if a Participatory Impact Assessment is being conducted:

*Stage 1: Define the questions to be answered*

*Stage 2: Define the geographical and time limits of the project*

*Stage 3: Identify and prioritize locally- defined impact indicators*

*Stage 4: Decide which methods to use, test them*

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<sup>49</sup> Catley, Burns, Abebe, Suji (2008): 57.

<sup>50</sup> Holland (2011).

*Stage 5: Decide which sampling method and sample size to use*

*Stage 6: Assess project attribution*

*Stage 7: Triangulate*

*Stage 8: Feedback and verify the results with the community<sup>51</sup>*

Without going into details of each stage, we would like to highlight stage seven and eight which are of particular importance for project evaluation. Triangulation is the key to verify results of an assessment. Cross-checking of data can be done with the aid of secondary data or also data from previous studies, however, mostly it is done with information of the classic projects process monitoring reports (M+E). Another possibility is to use different participatory methods to measure the same indicator in order to be able to compare results. The last step of verifying the results with the community and getting their last feedback is also of crucial importance. Similarly to PV, it is important to show participants what the outcome of the evaluation has shown and whether they agree with the conclusions<sup>52</sup>.

<b>Data generation</b>	<b>Measure change qualitatively</b>	<b>Measuring perception of complex change</b>
Social mapping	Community Score Card	Participatory Poverty Assessments
Participatory Matrixes	Participatory Venn Diagrams	Consultative Impact Monitoring Policies
Transect Walks	Narratives of Change	Participatory Impact Assessment
Participatory Asset Appraisal	Power Analysis	Reality Checks
	Social Audits	

**Figure 6: Methods of participatory evaluation categorized according to their purpose as proposed by the SDC**

<sup>51</sup> Catley, Abebe (2008): 11.

<sup>52</sup> Catley, Abebe (2008): 57 - 58.

In the table above, different methods of participatory evaluation are listed according to their purpose as suggested by the SDC<sup>53</sup>. The first column describes participatory methods being used to generate relevant data i.e. the number of poor in a household or number of people without access to sanitary installations. Such numbers can be aggregated and scaled up through standardized questions or group discussions. However, standardization is a double edged sword. On the one hand, the more one tries to standardize and extract data, the less empowering the method is for the communities since local realities are not enough accounted for. On the other hand, evaluation outcomes are more difficult to analyze and to cause necessary change in project management if they are not generalized for a larger sample<sup>54</sup>.

The second column describes methods to measure change and in particular perception of change in relationships on the ground by beneficiaries. Development projects and programs often have objectives which relate to changes in relationships such as empowerment, governance, democratization which are difficult to measure. Participatory methods offer an alternative to measure perceptions of change by generating qualitative data (i.e. narratives of change or power analysis), but at the same time also a mean to quantify collective perceptions of change by using for example community score cards. Thus, this method is often referred to as “mixed method” due to its possibility to obtain qualitative as well as quantitative data. Results are expected to be more reliable if the method is used on a small sample and if it is repeated over a longer period of time. Of course, a smaller sample also means a certain loss of representativeness. To measure relationship of change in qualitative terms using new technologies, such as PV, can prove to be a significant asset. Digital technologies and media are a powerful tool to visualize or record narratives of change. By giving people a voice, potential problems or lessons can be obtained first hand. There is also the further possibility to link PV to social media which would generate a spillover effect by reaching a wider public. Such new technologies are generally well received by participants since it allows them to have a certain self control on what is being documented while gaining skills on how to use new technologies. The third column lists examples of “complex participatory evaluation approaches” whereby different tools are used jointly in order to create an evaluation system for a program, an organization, a policy or other intervention.

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<sup>53</sup> For a detailed description of all methods listed we refer to the internal paper on participatory evaluation by the SDC.

<sup>54</sup> Holland (2011).

The Participatory Poverty Assessment, for example, includes poor people's view on what poverty means to them instead of obtaining poverty by using standard indicators such as income levels. A self assessment has been conducted in China to present an index of how poverty manifest itself, what priority concerns people have and how each household ranks its degree of deprivation<sup>55</sup>.

Similarly, consultative impact monitoring of policies involves local stakeholders from the governmental and non-governmental sector in the process of evaluating effectiveness of development policies on the ground. This process shall ensure that evaluation results influence policy making directly. Since different participatory methods are used for one single evaluation, such assessments require serious preparations, time and resource-wise. By measuring contribution of different factors to change instead of identifying one relationship of change, this method accepts that change is complex and is most likely to produce reliable results. However, one needs to consider that the willingness to cooperate lies with the local stakeholders and that competing interests might influence reliable results. Experience from Ethiopia reveals that evidence derived from impact assessment was taken up by policy makers, and led the government to endorse policy guidelines on drought interventions in the livestock sector.<sup>56</sup>

### **5.1.2. Participatory Methods as a new tool for data generation**

To sum up, we can conclude that participatory evaluation methods differ in terms of design and implementation, but the overall approach is characterized by the fact that it “acknowledges that ‘local people are capable of identifying and measuring their own indicators of change’”.<sup>57</sup> This important shift from the external evaluation approach to the empowerment approach also has significant consequences on how we measure given indicators (such as development and empowerment) overall. The rational has moved from a pure numerical process to an assessment which tries to measure shifts in power structures and social change. However, this qualitative approach does not mean that participatory assessments cannot be presented quantitatively. Ranking and scoring can be used by comparing the effects of the project and other non project related factors that have contributed to any change on the

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<sup>55</sup> See Remenyi (2007).

<sup>56</sup> Abebe et al. (2009).

<sup>57</sup> Catley (1999).

ground. Robert Chambers' working paper "*Who counts? The quiet revolution of participation and Numbers*" challenges the common view that participatory methods are only relevant to generate qualitative data, and that statistics depend on questionnaires or other classic scientific measurement. Indeed, participatory methods include counting, calculating, estimating, ranking, scoring, scaling as for example used in social mapping, matrix ranking etc. The revolutionary aspect of this research is the evidence that such data tends to be even more accurate, realistically and thus more useful than other data. Or as Chambers puts it "participatory numbers are a way to get the best of both worlds, qualitative and quantitative."<sup>58</sup>

His study has opened a new field for innovation and exploration. It implies radical change for many organizations stuck with classical methods. He advocates that for special studies, data obtained with a participatory approach should be the first option considered since it has proved to be more effective and convenient in terms of costs and accuracy compared to questionnaires.

*"A reasonable rule of thumb is that conventional questionnaires should be used only if no participatory alternative can be devised, or should be used only in a light and quick manner for confirmation and triangulation with other methods. There is a reversal here of mental set and reflex. When numbers are needed, participatory approaches, methods, and behaviors replace questionnaires as the standard approach that first comes to mind."*

– Robert Chambers

He thus takes the potential of participatory methods even one step further and makes the argument that such data generation can also be used for long-term series since some attempts<sup>59</sup> in this direction have already proven to be a successful alternative to traditional National Sample Surveys.

### **5.1.3. The new role of the evaluator**

Participatory evaluation changes the role of the evaluator and its relationship with the beneficiaries of the development project significantly. It uses evaluation concepts and techniques to foster self-evaluation and self-reflection

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<sup>58</sup> Chambers (2007): 31.

<sup>59</sup> see Barahona and Ley (2007) or Kagugube et al. (2007)

which makes it a collaborative group activity rather than an individual task of assessment.

David Fetterman, being one of the pioneers in this area, thought about empowerment evaluation while writing this book on *Speaking the Language of Power; Communication, Collaboration, and Advocacy* in 1993. Empowerment evaluation has its roots in community psychology and action anthropology while it focuses on people, organizations and communities working to have control over their affairs. Self-determination and the capability to change one own course of life. Therefore, the external evaluator takes on the job of being an observer who supports program participants in conducting their own evaluation. His role becomes that of a counselor rather than an expert in the field. Evaluators work with participants instead of advocating for them which lifts participants to the same level of influence. Skills of professional evaluators are not imposed on the community but rather professionals become a resource for community. According to Fettermann (1995) the process consist of five stages; training, facilitation, advocacy, illumination, and liberation. Each step implies a developmental stage towards a higher level while the rationale is life-long learning and improvement<sup>60</sup>.

We will now turn to the tool of participatory video, which is a special form of a participatory approach.

## **5.2. Case example - How to measure qualitative change using PV**

We now want to have a detailed look into one case study where PV was used to measure qualitative change for Monitoring & Evaluation. The study has been conducted by the team at InsightShare which is the organization pioneering in using participatory video as a tool for empowerment. The community based project adaption in Africa (CBAA)<sup>61</sup> carries out climate change adaption pilot projects in different Sub Sahara African countries. The aim is to evaluate the impacts of climate change on community level in Kenya, Malawi and South Africa.

By involving local partners and national institutions such as the meteorological services, the project evaluates how people in affected regions have adapted to

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<sup>60</sup> Fetterman (1995): 3-15.

<sup>61</sup> It is led by the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) in Kenya, and funded by the IDRC/DFID Climate Change Adaptation in Africa (CCAA) programme.

climate change. The CBAA supports the communities by capacity building and by scaling up their existing knowledge. PV was used to give the target groups the opportunity to record the mitigation measures they had taken. In project design, special consideration was given to women who are very vulnerable to impacts of climate change. The impacts and lessons learnt from the projects are inspiring, although some challenges need to be overcome. First, PV enhances or broadens the voice of the community and reminded them of their goals and progress being made. It also helps to establish a common ground between all relevant stakeholders while bringing everyone to the same level of knowledge. PV has also contributed to forward local priorities to decision makers. The project has generated information on community based climate change adaptation, thus this information could be forwarded to other stakeholders, researchers, NGOs, national and international policymakers with the aim to have a direct political impact.<sup>62</sup> Videos from Kenya and Zimbabwe were screened in Copenhagen for COP15, the UN Climate Change Conference while on the local level, videos could be used to show the importance and give best practice guidelines to climate change adaptation.

To sum up, using PV for monitoring and evaluation is a potential mean to fix the broken feedback loop which exists between donors and recipients of development aid as described by the principal agent theory. As Chris Lunch, co-founder of Insight very rightly states the main goal of PV in accountability process: “If we cannot bring the decision makers to the field, then we can try our best to bring the field to the decision makers<sup>63</sup>.” A more direct communication with donor is possible through new technologies. It seems also reasonable to assume that the voice of directly concerned people finds more approval by decision-makers since personal messages are more powerful than statistical evaluations or data that finds their way into some evaluation report. We would like to reiterate what Fetterman argues, namely, that empowerment evaluation is a highly political tool since it incorporates an inherent goal of empowerment and a bias for the disenfranchised but it can be used to support people with a desire for self-determination<sup>64</sup>.

As reported by the project managers of InsightShare, they faced difficulties in explaining local people the benefits from knowledge gaining. It seems to be

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<sup>62</sup> InsightShare- Participatory Evaluation for Monitoring and Evaluation; Case Study- Community Based Adaption in Africa.

<sup>63</sup> Lunch (2007): p. 31

<sup>64</sup> Fetterman (1995).

often difficult for communities to see the value added in spending time and effort recording their daily lives since they are busy with ensuring their basic needs for food and water every day. Since improvement of project management takes time and the benefit of PV does not pay off immediately, the causal link between the two factors is not an obvious one to explain. Furthermore, they discovered that it was unreasonable to ask communities to film a strict set of indicators for a period of a year, so they had to allow for some broader range of indicators in the monitoring process which lead to some difficulties with standardization of results.

However, PV cannot only be used for the measurement of impact, but has also been found to be another method to generate, in the whole process, empowerment by itself. In the following section, we will enter into this topic and examine whether this is true, and which elements of empowerment are especially stimulated through PV.

## **6. PV and empowerment generation**

### **6.1. Empowerment-Functions of PV**

Besides being a useful evaluation tool, Participatory Video (PV) can bear crucial empowerment functions. Unfortunately, systematic scientific typologies on this subject are rather scarce. Nonetheless, there is some literature available and many project reports help understanding in what ways PV has been a catalyst allowing the empowerment of people and communities. This chapter provides a digest on these empowerment functions and shows how they have been observed in projects all over the world without making a claim to be complete. Please notice the table in the annex which sums them up.

The participatory video context helps creating a safe environment which is a crucial feature to encourage people to work collectively, take action and also risks. Only in such an environment can old stereotypes and traditional power concepts be challenged. Renuka Bery describes empowerment as a multidimensional process incorporating four key elements: “a psychological concept of the self that includes self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-confidence; a cognitive understanding of the power structures and one’s placement within the existing systems; economic independence that gives a person or community the freedom to think, explore, and take individual risks; and, political analysis

and the will to change the systems themselves.”<sup>65</sup> In the development context, the central elements of empowerment are the identification of a problem, the critical assessment of solutions, taking personal risks and involving others to allow for sustainable changes. Bery argues that participatory video is a tool that supports this process and no prescription for empowerment by itself.<sup>66</sup> At first, it helps “defining self”. That is, PV stories identify, clarify and validate people’s realities. Shirley White argues that this is the essence of video as an instrument for self-definition and empowerment and compares it to a mirror.<sup>67</sup> This self-reflection leads to awareness of one’s own situation and encourages learning which again is an important step towards becoming empowered. As soon as someone is able to take decisions and express himself, that person is no longer under the control of someone else or, at least, to a much lesser extent.<sup>68</sup> PV can be a fearful exercise at first but at a later stage it usually gives the “doer” a sense of pride and ownership leading to increased self-confidence.

Furthermore, the “consumer” of such a video enables people to think about their own situation differently and shows them ways of how to take control. Viewers can identify with stories and issues central to their lives and start thinking in new ways. Hence, both the producer and the viewer of a participatory video can profit from it.<sup>69</sup> According to White, “the very roots of participatory video are in community building.”<sup>70</sup> The Fogo Process, which is discussed below, showed this already in the 1970ies and ever since, researchers and development workers have reported on the successful use of PV in community building. Through the PV process, trust, cooperation and a sense of unity develops among the participants which create the nucleus of a new community – a community of shared interests.<sup>71</sup> In particular, participatory video helps non-experts from within a society to exercise their voice through an easily accessible technology and to some extent to circumvent the “gatekeepers” of the established media. This creates advocates of their own who can bring about change from within a community. These people are likely to serve as role models and inspire others in that they show how video is being used to expose misconduct, to construct alternative messages and to openly

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<sup>65</sup> Bery (2003): 103 f.

<sup>66</sup> Bery (2003): 105.

<sup>67</sup> White (2003): 66.

<sup>68</sup> Bery (2003): 108.

<sup>69</sup> Bery (2003): 109 f.

<sup>70</sup> White (2003): 67.

<sup>71</sup> White (2003): 68.

question the actions of those in power.<sup>72</sup> If that happens, PV can develop reinforcing dynamics. It thus has the potential to become self-propelling and continue to work even as respective aid funding is being withdrawn from the project. Participatory video has the potential to mobilize and empower a large group of people or whole communities.

In the following, concrete examples shall help the reader to get a grasp of how PV catalyzes empowerment in practice.

## 6.2. Examples of PV as empowerment catalyzer

### 6.2.1. Knowledge- Spillover

*Video mediated farmer to farmer learning for sustainable agriculture (2011)*<sup>73</sup>

In 2011, Agro-Insight carried out a scoping study for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Social Accountability International (SAI) and the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS), on the production, dissemination and use of farmer training videos in developing countries, with a focus on sustainable agriculture. In particular, the aim was to find out how participatory video and a web-based platform for video exchange can contribute to farmer-to-farmer learning among the rural poor across the globe, with a focus on sustainable agriculture. The study shows that video mediated farmer to farmer learning is a cheap and effective way to provide poor farmers with vital knowledge. The idea as such is simple; any farmer who finds an innovative solution to a problem or a way to improve working processes records a video which is then made available to other farmers who find themselves in similar situations. The study further elaborates on how to make the global availability and distribution of these videos work and shows possible options. Interestingly, it does not take very much and can be done in rather cost effective ways. Hence, this study shows that participatory video can facilitate “knowledge- spillover” which in turn leads to an empowerment of farmers as it enables them to improve their own situation in an affordable way.

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<sup>72</sup> Dudley (2003b): 155.

<sup>73</sup> Available online: <[http://www.mobileactive.org/files/file\\_uploads/Farmer-to-farmer-video-FINALREPORT-Van-Mele-2011.pdf](http://www.mobileactive.org/files/file_uploads/Farmer-to-farmer-video-FINALREPORT-Van-Mele-2011.pdf)> [Accessed in Mai 2012].

### 6.2.2. Building Social Capital and Political Leverage, linking cultures

*Transforming images: re-imagining women's work through participatory video (2005)*<sup>74</sup>

This PV- project has been conducted as part of an ethnographic doctoral research in 2005 with rural women in Fiji which has a fragmented and multicultural society. The participants were trained in video recording and in using the internet. The footage produced by the women highlighted their daily problems, their work and abilities, their potential as income producers as well as the social networks they are in. The study showed that by using PV the rural women in Fiji were empowered to make significantly better use of their social capital (social networks and relationships) in order to call attention to community needs and problems and consequently build up political leverage. Furthermore, PV served as a catalyst for these women to work collectively beyond ethnic borders. They realized that they all face the same challenges in daily life regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Hence, within the scope of this project PV enabled weak individuals in Fiji's community (rural women) to build political leverage and to act collectively.

### 6.2.3. Building self-confidence, counter-labeling, creating awareness of common problems

*The life that we don't want: Using Participatory video in researching violence.*<sup>75</sup>

In 2009 a project has been carried out in the highly violent Favelas of Rio de Janeiro and addressed the central question how people living there can build a bridge between violence and citizenship through participatory social action. Although PV was initially used in order to collect data it later turned out that its "main contribution was not in generating empirical findings but in challenging patterns of power and control".<sup>76</sup> The research process involved creating participatory discussion groups drawn from different segments of the community and integrating PV. The latter helped to jump start and catalyze a process of interaction where everyone was allowed to bring in his or her own

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<sup>74</sup> Available online: <<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09614520902866405>> [Accessed in Mai 2012].

<sup>75</sup> Available online: <<http://www.ids.ac.uk/go>> [Accessed in April 2012].

<sup>76</sup> Wheeler (2009): 10.

view which created a sense for common problems, understanding and solidarity. The fact that the participants were in control of the camera made them feel at ease, increased their self-confidence and made them talk about (sensitive) issues that would not have been addressed in another setting like for example an interview in a studio. Furthermore, as these videos were later shown to politicians and made public, they helped to improve the image of the favela-dwellers and to fight the bad reputation of these people as it is cultivated by the established media. Hence, PV had sort of a counter-labeling function as well.

*Voice, Visibility and Transparency: Participatory Video as an Empowerment Tool for Columbian Domestic Workers*<sup>77</sup>

Domestic services are the main source of income for many Columbian women but their work is often miserably remunerated and sexual abuse by their employers is a problem. Despite successful efforts to strengthen the legal position of these women in the 1980ies they hardly ever know about their rights and often feel ashamed to talk about their situations especially if they fall victim to violence at their workplace. To familiarize the domestic workers with their rights a well-intended group of lawyers carried out workshops and produced a documentary on the topic. The problem was that in this footage the women were displayed as weak and defenseless victims which further undermined their self-assertiveness. This annoyed a group of progressive domestic workers who wanted to fight the stereotype of the delicate women and consequently decided to start a PV project in order to portray these women out of a position of strength and to highlight the importance of their work to society. The project was a success in that it catalyzed a dialog on the topic and enhanced the self-confidence of the women involved and of those watching the videos. The process of PV challenged the stereotype upheld by the established media rendered and them aware of the fact that they are not alone with their problems and that they are strong enough to help and defend themselves.

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<sup>77</sup> Dudley (2003a).

#### 6.2.4. Empowering citizens in local governance, generating communication channels

##### *The Fogo Process*

Donald Snowden pioneered the use of participatory video in the so called “Fogo Process” and describes his experiences with this method as follows:<sup>78</sup>

*“Today few people on Fogo speak often about the filming, yet many believe their lives were changed enormously by it. This can never be accurately measured. But it is certain that the fishermen formed an island-wide producer's cooperative which handled and processed large catches, enabling them to keep the profits on their island. Unemployment of able-bodied men disappeared, and government directed their efforts to helping people stay... Films did not do these things: people did them. There is little doubt, however, that film created an awareness and self-confidence that was needed for people advocated development to occur.”* – Donald Snowden

Fogo was an attempt to assist communities via simple media tools to “coming to grips” with their problems, opportunities and visions. The people-centred Fogo Process began on Fogo Island in 1967 and enabled people to articulate their problems and needs on films which were later screened to community members. Through the process, people became aware that each village on the Island faced similar problems and the need for community organization was urgent. The films were subsequently showed to distant politicians, which led to changing government policies and actions. The Fogo Prozess triggered the use of PV in many other development projects and Snowden was asked in 1970 to experiment with it in various parts of North America (Arctic, Alaska) and in 1983 to do the same in Bangladesh. Snowden died in 1984 shortly after putting one of his few writings “*Eyes see; ears hear*“ to paper.

##### *Amplifying Women and Children's Voices in Climate Talks*<sup>79</sup>

Nepal 2008. IDS, ActionAid Nepal and Children in an Changing Climate participated in a joint research initiative. In this programme women and

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<sup>78</sup> Available online: <[www.fao.org/sd/CDdirect/CDre0038.htm](http://www.fao.org/sd/CDdirect/CDre0038.htm)> [Accessed in April 2012].

<sup>79</sup> Available Online: <<http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/news/amplifying-women-and-children-s-voices-in-climate-talks>> [Accessed in April 2012].

children were taught how to use PV to assess the impacts of climate change in their communities and to campaign for what would most help them to adapt. It was found that women's main priorities are for additional sources of income since as they wait for remittances from their husbands who are seasonally migrating to India or the Gulf states. The women attribute this growing migration to crop failure caused by increased flooding, drought and landslides. The children on the other hand made films to show their problems of accessing school during times of heavy rain. The river they have to cross to get there would turn into a dangerous torrent and hence not let them attending their classes. This project led to a much more tailored use of aid money by giving the people affected a channel to communicate their actual and most pressing needs.

All these previous examples of projects where participatory video has been used to create empowerment all basically rest upon the same "mechanism". It is crucial to see PV as the means in a process where all steps and not just the outcomes are important. It can be thought of as self-enforcing cycle which includes the following stages: (1) the identification of problems, their sources as well as obstacles to development, (2) increasing self-confidence of individuals and communities and building up volition to act, (3) identifying feasible solutions and implementing them, trying to influence decision makers and (4) becoming aware of one's own agency and feeling taken seriously leads to engagement in further actions.

## **7. Evaluating the potential of PV**

### **7.1. Potential of PV in impact evaluations**

There is a general trend in development cooperation, which has also been confirmed by representatives of the SDC, stating that the requirement to present tangible results and achievements has increased over the last years. This certainly increases pressure on project managers. Participatory evaluation including PV seems a good instrument to proof relevant progress in the field.

Evaluation results should provide reliable information for parliamentarians, the public or other local agencies working for the organization in charge of the program. This seems to be particularly important in areas where it is difficult to measure direct impacts of programs which have been implemented due to complex and rather abstract concepts (i.e. how to measure governance). Using PV in this context seems to be a promising approach. Considering the fact that parliamentarians are oftentimes overburdened with work, showing a short video excerpt is more likely to transmit the relevant information instead of a lengthy report which is not read by politicians anyways. In addition to communicate with principals, PV can also be used to effectively communicate with local NGOs by overcoming language barriers and by making complex causal relationships easy and accessible for a larger audience. Development agencies would have a new instrument to communicate to local stakeholders and decision makers via PV. It should also be mentioned that the more reliable and critical evaluations are being conducted, the higher will be credibility if a project is classified as successful. In this framework, PV can be seen as one important step towards more valid project evaluation.

### **7.2. Potential of PV in generating empowerment**

The advantages which participatory video offers are numerous. As shown, PV can empower people and communities in many different ways. It is a means to involve (socially) underprivileged actors into the political decision making process or to, at least, give them a voice. Furthermore, it can generate awareness of common problems which raises the self-assertiveness of people. The fact that they can communicate their needs in a familiar environment and exercise control over the outcomes can make the involved individuals feeling more comfortable and increase their willingness to participate in the process. At best, PV can strengthen community bonds, make people working collectively on their behalf and thereby help them to communicate their needs

with an increased (political) leverage. What is more, PV can help challenging preserving stereotypes as they are often conveyed by the established media and offer more lifelike grass root images of individuals and communities in need. Particular advantages to participator video are its ability to adapt to cultural settings, its easy accessibility which requires no education other than handling a camera and the possibility to transfer the produced footage over huge distances to make it available to the public as well as interested actors all around the world. Hence everyone disposing of a camera, literate or not, can articulate his ideas, problems and knowledge which makes PV an ideal low-cost tool to be used in development projects of all kinds. By using the medium video in a new frame, people become empowered and development projects can be conducted on in a more democratic and sustainable way. Finally, chances are that the use of PV develops a dynamic on its own and is being used by local communities long after the respective development project has been phased-out.

### **7.3. Criticism and challenges of using PV**

Risk and anonymity are key challenges which need to be considered when using media technology. Using PV assumes a very sensitive approach and responsibility by facilitators. Participants can be put at risk if they communicate freely within a confidential circle but their views are taken out of context while screening the video it to a wider public. Risks might also restrict what people are prepared to tell in a PV. Sometimes anonymity is a useful way to deal with risks, however, it is the facilitator's role to inform participants on the process, how and what for the PV is used. Since visual tools are very powerful, it is the facilitator's responsibility to protect participants from any negative consequences which might come along with it.

Also, a certain infrastructure seems to be required. That is, without at least rudimentary functioning state it could be difficult to achieve palpable results. Hence, its practicability within failed or terribly corrupt states can be questioned. Secondly, although technical obstacles are low there is still need for cameras, TVs and electrical power supply which might exclude very remote rural areas or at least make it challenging to work there. Thirdly, the manipulation of the PV process can be mitigated but not entirely avoided. The researcher faces the challenge to figure out whether cultural backgrounds or local opinion leaders do significantly bias the outcomes of the video material produced. Also, the (still few) views expressed may reduce complex problem

structures to a minimum which could lead to wrong conclusions about what should be done.

Even though the potential of empowerment strategies are at hand, there is the administrative and financial aspect of the participatory approach. Detailed planning of the sample needs to be conducted, local people have to be trained (i.e. in using video material), an expert needs to be present in the field to coordinate and monitor the process. Critics also question the objectivity of participatory evaluation since beneficiaries of development program do also face strong incentives to present positive results since they have an interest to ensure future aid flows.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, one could argue that beneficiaries, who are dependent on program outcomes, do have an incentive to report negative effects or lack of implementation since they have a strong interest in an effective improvement of their situation. Since the objectivity of any evaluation is questionable, such arguments should not be interpreted to deny self-evaluation. If local people are supported by external evaluators and if participatory evaluation is combined with statistically robust methods, it has the potential to generate qualitative and quantitative data which is more reliable and valid than the one obtained by classical measurement. Thus, it can be concluded that PV should not be seen as a substitute to existing evaluation methods, but rather as a complementary tool which strengthens credibility and reliability of evaluation reports but also identifies valid indicators which allow for a more accurate picture of qualitative impacts on the ground.

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<sup>80</sup> Scriven (1994), Stufflebeam (1994).

## **8. Conclusion**

We have seen that empowerment comprises several dimensions, such as the political, social and economical one. Empowerment can take place on the individual, the community or even the national level. Measuring empowerment with traditional methods poses several challenges in terms of objectivity and unbiased interpretation. New methods of measuring the impacts of development projects, such as the participatory impact assessments, and, more precisely, participatory video promises an attempt to mitigate the prevailing accountability challenges.

Although the idea of PV in particular is not new, the technological progress of the last decade has created a whole new playing field. Video has become more accessible both in terms of costs and ease of use.

Participatory methods of evaluation as a process of self-evaluation seems to be a promising tool to increase validity and reliability of evaluation results. They often generate more accurate data which reveals impact of programs on target population. Such information is indispensable if development agencies truly aim at improving interventions for the benefit of the people. Furthermore, critical evaluation reports are increasingly requested from donors, politicians, and the public in order to ensure accountability, transparency and in the end future aid flows. Applied with carefulness and awareness for potential risks, PV is most useful as a complementary tool - used alongside classical evaluation methods-to reduce the principal agent dilemma prevailing in development cooperation to some extent while giving disenfranchised people a voice.

However, one of the most promising functions of participatory video lies in its ability to empower people while contributing to democratization among communities. PV bears the potential to create a safe environment and encourage individuals to work collectively. Deeply rooted stereotypes and traditional power concepts can be challenged and underprivileged actors can be given a voice and participate in the political decision making process. This leads to more independence and agency of the involved people and strengthens their self-confidence. Also, the viewers of participatory videos might start thinking differently about their own situation and learn new ways of taking control which makes PV a tool both the producer(s) and the consumer(s) can profit from. Finally, chances are that the use of PV develops a dynamic on its own and is being used by local communities, also after the initial development project has been phased-out.

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# Annex

## Empowerment- Functions of Participatory Video Reporting (PV)

Year	Country	Institution(s)	Target Group/ Field of Application	Empowerment- Functions of PV
2011	Several developing countries	Study from AGRO insight for SDC, SAI Platform and GFRAS	Video mediated "Farmer-to-Farmer" learning for sustainable agriculture	<b>Knowledge- Spillover</b>
2005	Fiji	Macquarie University Sydney, Australia (Dissertation)	Women in Fiji collectively produced footage at their homes to highlight their (social) problems. This enabled them to make better use of their social capital and to engage in collective organisation (interest groups and communities) in order to communicate their needs more assertively (familiar environment) and with more leverage. Furthermore, corporate feeling was strengthened and visions were developed.	<b>Making use of social capital to build up (political) leverage</b>
2009	Brazil (Rio de Janeiro)	Institute of Development Studies (IDS)	Participatory video used as a research tool in a violent environment. PV was applied in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro with an aim to generate information on how violence can be overcome and how a bridge to normal citizenship can be built. In the end, the main contribution of PV was not in generating empirical findings but in challenging patterns of power and control and to catalyze the research process.	Increase the <b>self-assertiveness</b> of the participants by giving them control over the outputs. This motivates them to take part in the process and <b>grants them a voice</b> .
2008	Nepal	IDS, ActionAid Nepal and Children in a Changing Climate	Women and children produced short videos to learn more about the negative consequences of climate change in their communities with the aim to effectively communicate their needs to the (political) decision makers.	Offering a <b>communication channel</b> to people who could otherwise not participate in the political process.
2003	Colombia	local workers union (UTRAHOGAR)	Domestic work is a main source of income for women in Colombia but they often suffer from financial and sexual abuse by their employers. The victims are often ignorant of their rights and feel ashamed to speak out on these sensitive topics. To challenge the image of the defenceless cheap worker as it is spread by the established media, a group of women successfully carried out a PV project.	(1) Depersonalisation of experienced abuses and being aware of a collective reality leads to an <b>increased level of self-confidence</b> . (2) Control of the camera as a <b>catalyst</b> to speak out on sensitive topics.