

Dear Friends of Drishti and Video Volunteers

It seems like yesterday we were planning our activities for 2006, based on an exciting new program of creating Community Video Units across the developing world. As you may know, we have had an extraordinary year and the Community Video Units have made an enormous impact on the lives of many people in India. In November, Video Volunteers was honored as an Equality Laureate of the 2006 Tech Awards and short-listed for the 2006 Development Gateway Award. This speaks to the power of the Community Video Unit approach to accelerate positive social change.

If you would like to see some of these Video Magazine productions first hand, click the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/y4luam>.

If you are an NGO interested in launching a Community Video Unit, please email jessica@videovolunteers.org for more information on the program.

This work provides critical information and a voice to excluded and marginalized people in the developing world, and accelerates social change. The communities in which we work are able to develop faster and more effectively than those with little or no information.

In 2006, Video Volunteers and Drishti developed the “Community Video Unit” as an enabling tool for community development through media. Working with seven leading NGOs in India, we are creating a social media network to provide a voice beyond the village and slums to the national and international level. Our NGO partners, each promoting a Community Video Unit in their region of India, include Dappu, Saath, Navsarjan, Akshara, Laya, Yuvshakti, and Yuva.

Video Volunteers and Drishti train six to ten local community members to write, shoot and edit a monthly thirty-minute “Video Magazine” on various social issues decided by the community. These videos are screened every night in community centers across a number of villages and slum areas. These outdoor screenings reach up to 10,000 local people every month that would otherwise receive little information about healthcare, government programs, human rights, land rights and success stories of hope and possibility in their own local context.

This is all about local people finding local solutions to global problems through effective communications.

Some key achievements for 2006 include:

- Creating seven Community Video Units across India
- Training over 50 grassroots Community Producers, half of whom are women, from some of the most marginalized populations: Dalits, Tribals, a street child, a rickshaw driver, Muslim riot victims. This Network is now one of the largest production agencies in India using the new style of ‘video journalism’
- Producing 19 Video Magazines on water, disability, health, slum redevelopment, peace between Hindus and Muslims, unemployment, elections, roads, electricity, garbage and sanitation, malaria, right to food and the aspirations of youth in

Bombay's slums.

- Conducting 236 open air screenings in 140 village and slum areas seen by over 30,000 people and eleven screenings on local cable networks
- Mobilizing over 250 community volunteers and training over 230 people on basic video-camera operation
- Increasing participation in community-led social change initiatives such as water campaigns and slum redevelopment programs, and expanding the scale and reach for our NGO partners
- Expansion of the programmatic interventions of the NGOs, helping them go beyond their core area of work to address the wide range of social issues covered in the monthly Video Magazines
- Income generation via initial DVD sales and several commissions to make films for other NGOs
- Impacts as a result of film screenings:
 - Local government action—the resolution of a dangerous flourosis health crisis when the government was forced to re-open a closed water treatment plant; the repair of a flooded road and a commitment of 300,000 rupees for road-building; doctors now performing their duties at public health clinics
 - Local community action—villagers organizing ‘clean up days’ with school children and improving their village water situation through individual investment; calling a rally at a government office on Malaria treatment; mandatory yearly ‘village meetings’ being held for the first time in years; Dalit youth being allowed to enter the temple for the first time; youth assisting nearly 100 people to complete their ration card requests; numerous phone calls to government agencies demanding better services, three times the number of people participating in a major Bombay water rights campaign, and 140% increase in enrollment in an NGO’s education program
- Establishing a distribution system that will be able to reach over 100,000 people locally, and millions via mainstream media

We have equally ambitious plans for 2007. We will add new Community Video Units and double the number of local Community Producers to over one hundred in India. In addition, we will begin to create Community Video Units in another country. We will, in short, develop the world’s first global social media network for the poor.

If you would like to partner with us to start a Community Video Unit in your area, please email Jessica@videovolunteers.org and we will send you all the relevant information.

With best wishes to you and your families for the New Year ahead – we thank you for your support.

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Volunteers

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Founding Director, Video