

# CHANNEL 19

A Global Social Media Network



## NEWSLETTER



### Introducing Channel 19

At Video Volunteers, we have always believed that empowering the poor with a voice will bring out new solutions to fighting poverty at a global level, and will transform our media one day. In 2008, Video Volunteers received a wonderful recognition that showed that others believe community media is an idea whose time has come. In May, we won the Knight News Challenge, the world's most significant new media competition and were selected as one of 19 winners out of 3000 applicants. This funding will enable us to double the number of community producers working in India to 150 and reach tens of thousands more villagers with inspiring video screenings. In November, Jessica Mayberry, Founder of Video Volunteers, was recognized as one of 11 "architects of the future" by the Waldzell Institute of Austria.

America's  
Giving Challenge

YOUR \$10 WILL HELP US WIN \$50,000!  
DONATE by 31st Jan.

All money goes to Community Video Producers' salaries



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This newsletter is written and produced by Video Volunteers on behalf of the Social Media Network



### Impact of Community Video

When people living in Ahmedabad's slums spoke out about systemic corruption at the ration shops, the Samvad Community Video Unit (CVU), supported by Video Volunteers' partner Saath, took notice. The ration shops are supposed to give the poor 12 liters of subsidized kerosene for cooking each month, but instead, the shops were giving four. The Samvad Unit discovered this during their research, and made a video magazine on it. After the screening, the community sprung into action. Young people stood outside of the shops and ensured that each resident was given the correct amount. The Food Control Office conducted two raids to stamp out the corruption. And all throughout a huge Muslim slum called Juhapura, the shops began giving the correct amounts for the first time ever. The message is simple: when people have information, they can solve their problems on their own.



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### Producer Spotlight

Neeru is a Dalit girl, the youngest of 11 daughters, who turned to video as a way to bring

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income into her family. India's highly divisive caste system pits villagers against each other. Dalits, (formerly "Untouchables") are the "lowest" rung on the ladder. She was always upset by the position of Dalit women in society and resented the fact that people felt sorry for her family - as if they were cursed for having so many girls.

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## Bringing Community Media Into the Mainstream

This year the Community Video Units were on Current TV, Nickelodeon, the Pangea Day global broadcast, and they also shot videos for CNN IBN. The beginning steps towards our goal of a global community media network.

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## Videoshala, Community Video for Citizenship, Diversity and Education

2008 promises to be an even better year, in which we grow the Network of Community Video Producers and NGOs; distribute the content regionally and globally...

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Hind Swaraj Mandal

 Laya



Navsarjan

Saath

 Sahyog

## Stories in Full

### Our Biggest Recognition to Date!

In April, grant that Video Volunteers staff wrote for Drishti, the India-based organization with whom Video Volunteers started the community video unit program, secured Drishti nearly \$800,000 from the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust in India.

Winning the Knight News Challenge brings Video Volunteers into a great community of innovative thinkers concerned with news and journalism and social change, and VV is tapping into this network for ideas about how to bring our communities across the internet divide and how to incorporate cell phone activism into our work. The Knight Foundation awards these grants for innovations in community news because they "believe in media innovation through experimentation," says Alberto Ibarguen, Knight Foundation president and CEO. "Each winning project is an experiment with the potential to transform how we practice journalism in the digital age."



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In 2007 and 2006, VV had won a Tech Award, the Stern Business Plan competition, and Jessica was made a fellow of Echoing Green, an organization that identifies and promotes the world's leading new social entrepreneurs. As we are still a young organization, these awards give us great momentum, and new found confidence that we will, in time, create a 'media industry for the base of the pyramid.'

## Impact of Community Video

The Manjam Praya Video CVU, in rural Andhra Pradesh, tackled debt traps in their magazine called "Weeding Through the Money." In remote areas of Andhra Pradesh, there is barely any cash economy. "When we fall sick, we rarely have the money to go to a doctor," said one woman in the film. "Then we have no option but the money lender." Many villagers are forced to sell their crops to pay off the exorbitant fees and are left with nothing. Through the video magazine, people found out about a government loan scheme that promotes saving. The villagers are now taking advantage of the services, instead of visiting the money-lender. Vishwama, one of the producers at Manyam Praja Video which was started by VV's partner Laya, said that people are responding well to her films. "Most of the people don't have the information so they appreciate us. They give us places to sit, and give us chai (tea)," she said.

## Producer Spotlight

Neeru joined an all-Dalit CVU called Apnaa Malak Maa started by VV's partner Navsarjan. She is now a fearless community producer, who can confront any government official and has a firm grasp of the law and human rights. She conducts screenings on her own in feudal villages near her home, where upper castes sit up high on chairs, and lower castes sit on the ground. Neeru says that though she is the youngest in the family, everyone turns to her for advice and help. When Navsarjan started their CVU, they chose it to situate it in the most dangerous villages where they worked, villages where a Dalit had been a victim of caste violence at least once in the last year. However, every two months now, the images of young dalit youth speaking out for change are projected high on a screen for everyone to see. This is a sure sign that video can be a bridge across between two opposing sides in a conflict.

## Bringing Community Media into the Mainstream

We aired our first video, *Movies Moving Mountains*, on Current TV, the American cable station that was set up by Al Gore, and which features 'viewer created content.' We also shot three videos for the Indian CNN affiliate, CNN IBN, for their Citizen Journalist program. They had agreed to pay for the stories in what must be one of the first time producers from slums and villages are being paid by a mainstream news company.

Last year Apnaa Malak Ma CVU became the first CVU to receive international television coverage! Nickelodeon caught wind of the story and Neeru (profiled above) was featured on their news special, "The Untouchable Kids of India." Here

Nick News shares with American kids, "What's it like to be a Dalit kid?" and offers a first-hand look into the world of the Dalits, highlighting how many are now refusing to be victims. There is a special highlight on Neeru and her efforts to educate both Dalits and non-Dalits through her films, many which are designated "controversial" films and banned, though that does not stop her from continuing to make films. As quoted in the Nick News piece, Neeru says, "When I see the work which is being done, I am proud about it. Even I can do something. I am worth something."

The Community Video Units shot cell phone videos that were broadcast all over the world as part of the Pangea Day broadcast, a four hour global television for peace and inspiration. Pangea Day donated 40 Nokia cellphones to Video Volunteers, with which the producers made videos on different universal themes such as love, friendship and hope. Video Volunteers gave one cell phone to each CVU to keep, and we are using the phones now as the basis for a new strategy for cell phone video advocacy and video blogging by CVUs. Five Producers were invited to Los Angeles to watch the broadcast, but unfortunately they didn't get their visas in time. Instead, some CVUs gathered in Ahmedabad and watched the global broadcast live on TV, the internet and mobile phones in May 2008, cheering when their friends' videos came on TV!

You can watch these and more videos on Channel 19, the online platform for the Community Video Units. We do regular blogging and uploading of new videos to Channel 19 so check out the new site!

Videoshala, Community Video for Citizenship, Diversity and Education

This month Video Volunteers wraps up on an 18 month innovations period for a new program that used the power of community video to improve education for disadvantaged children. Around 20 videos were made by community producers on classroom subjects like plants, water and occupations. The videos are shown back to children in nearly 200 village and slum schools. The project - called Videoshala - is a joint project of three NGOs - Drishti, Udaan and Video Volunteers -- in which four 'education community video units' were established with leading education NGOs in Gujarat: Hind Swaraj Mandal, Navsarjan, Sahyog and Meghdanush. It is a modification of the Community Video Unit model developed by Stalin K. and Jessica Mayberry, and the project asked questions like, 'will children learn better if their educational materials reflect their own local environment? Can people without an education produce meaningful educational material?' The answer to those questions was a resounding yes. The first 18 months was funded by USAID and the Quest Alliance, and will continue in the future.

Udaan

Yuva

Yuvshakti

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