

Communication Processes, Community Mobilization and Normative Shifts: Learnings from Video Volunteers' IndiaUnheard Program

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Introduction

Communication plays a fundamental role in helping people change the societies they live in. Specifically, communication strategies inform and amplify voices of those with most at stake and address the structural impediments to realize developmental goals (UNDP, 2006). Dagron (2009) notes that communication brings about social change only when people take ownership of communication processes; this enables establishment of horizontal dialogues in which their voices are heard, decisions on development issues that affect their lives and for the benefit of their community. This participatory approach to communication gives a voice to varying group of stakeholders within the community to negotiate complex problems, where no single party can have a solution that works for all. The Rockefeller Foundation reiterates that communication for social change and empowerment is an interactive process where communities dialogue and collectively work together to produce social change so as to improve their health and welfare (Figueroa, Kincaid, et al., 2002).

Waisbord (2008) identifies four key aspects that participatory communication posits. Firstly communities should be the main protagonists of processes of social change rather than 'passive beneficiaries' of decisions made by experts. In this sense, it questions the view of development as an externally driven process, planned and implemented by technical experts. Second, participatory communication proposes a 'communitarian' view that makes deliberation and participation in public affairs, rather than information-transmission (including message design and media technologies), the essential elements of communication. Third, participatory communication frames 'development' as a transformative process at both individual and social levels by the virtue of which communities become empowered. Fourth, participatory communication promotes local forms of knowledge and action as the springboard for social change. Further it is increasingly being recognized that changing inequities based on deep-rooted customs, normative beliefs, social expectations, and norms within communities requires an integrated use of interventions, greater interactivity within stakeholders, transparency in processes and sensitivity of contexts (Bicchieri, 2016; Kraidy, 2002). Free and open dialogue, consciousness of power relations, greater voice to the marginalized, collective decision making and commitment for action are the hallmarks of participatory communication (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009) and are key to achieving change in any society.

Servaes and Malikhao (2005) further note that knowledge, and not information, is a precursor for change, and emphasize the difference between them. Knowledge is the sense or meaning that people perceive of information. Meaning is not something that is delivered to people, but it is what people create/interpret themselves. If knowledge is to be effectively employed to help people, it needs to be interpreted and evaluated by those it is designed to help. Communication technologies hence cannot create transformations in society by themselves; but can do so only when they are designed and implemented by people within

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their social, economic, and technological contexts (Mansell & Wehn, 1998), for they then become vehicles for translating information to knowledge. Thus communication technologies need to be seen not as 'drivers' of change but 'technological tools' which may provide new potentials for combining the information embedded in the technological systems with creative potentials and knowledge embodied in people. Participatory communication hence necessitates innovative use of media that can be locally controlled. Consequently media-use needs to be alternatively perceived beyond informational purposes to a more people-centric approach in order to address local, sensitive issues in an objective manner, and brings about a strategized social change (Liu, 2009).

In recent years, community media has gained momentum worldwide for providing voice to the marginalized. Characterized by a high degree of horizontality, openness and possibilities for people's participation, people have access to community media when they want, and are the means of expressions of the community rather than for the community (Berrigan, 1979). It is seen as a tool for empowerment of people and is based on the principles of community development and community participation. Fairbairn (2009) notes 'participation is the defining feature of community media; it is what places community media outside of traditional media models in which audiences are passive receivers of messages. In the community media model, senders and receivers are together engaged in creating messages and meaning. Through participation, media are demystified and communities develop valuable communications skills and media literacy skills and understandings' (p. 10). Also perceived as 'alternative media', it questions the hegemony of social and political ideologies popularized by 'mainstream' media, as they differ in terms of small scale, autonomy, and absence of hierarchical structure (Fuchs, 2010). According to Rauch (2007) alternative content, alternative channels, alternative sources featured and alternative values are key distinguishing characteristics of alternative media. Facilitating community communications and amplifying the voice of the community about issues that concern their lives, community media is seen as an effective tool that can contribute to development of the communities that they serve (Moitra & Kumar, 2016). Finally, dynamic participatory media leverages positive influence on mainstream media, facilitates its convergence on community issues (Newman, 2011) and the emergence of a counter public sphere.

Community media, horizontal in its structure, enables change through a set of activities such as interpersonal communication, dialogic processes, and advocacy. It merges both media and societal approaches to cater to the issues prevailing in the community in need of urgent action for their upliftment. Around the world, a rich mosaic of community media organizations using traditional and mass media like radio, video, newspaper, theatre have emerged. Serving as a medium of expression of the community, rather than for them, these varied media forms promote the bottom-up participation of people, remaining independent of the state and market (Berrigan, 1979; Lewis, 1993). Moreover, community media aids in knowledge-sharing amongst, and capacity building of the people, especially those living in backward regions. This provides an equal opportunity to all, and makes them able to exert power and control over the environment that surrounds them, enabling them to discover what is best for them, thereby, assisting in the process of empowerment. Thus, through its processes, it enhances the experience and competence of the communities, their structure and capacity, removes socio-environmental barriers that prevail within them, and enhance environmental support and resource availabilities (Melkote & Steeves, 2015). By providing a platform that cuts across caste and class dynamics, gender differentials and other social inequities, community media instills greater confidence in people to challenge the local power structures whilst voicing their issues (Rodriguez, 2001). In a globalizing world of multiple complexities, community media serves as a forum of the people to share their cultural expressions and views, and their shared identities to the outside world. Termed as 'glocalization', the process increases marginalized groups visibility in media spaces by promoting awareness building and sensitization, grievance redressal and exposing corrupt practices (Moitra et al, 2016) it has contributed to local activism in backward regions (Palmer, 2007).

Methodology of Research

A qualitative study was undertaken essentially to evaluate the processes of Video Volunteers (VV) and its IndiaUnheard program.ⁱ At a more macro-level the study endeavored to understand the larger picture about the program and its achievements while at a more micro-level it sought to understand the microcosm of VVs program i.e. the Community Correspondents (CCs), and understand their work and perceptions about their activities and achievements with VV. The study endeavored to map the change at the grass roots brought about through VV processes, gain holistic insights about aspects contributing to change with a view to understanding VV process and their centrality to micro level achievements in the community. A sample of seventy impact videos produced in the last three years in Hindi or English were selected (ones which were uploaded on VV's website) and the content was analyzed. Sample for content analysis included impact videos as they document the process of change of which primary issue videos, along with other advocacy activities are a part. A comprehensive framework was developed to determine the treatment of videos as an advocacy tool, and identify the factors that lead to change. In-depth interviews were conducted with twenty-six CCs who had produced at least 2 impact videos. Event-based sampling was done for the selection of CCs. All CCs participating in a training program in Delhi were selected. This enabled sampling of variation within the group of CCs, hence a set of individuals from diverse geographic regions, and with varied backgrounds and experiences. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and telephonically. Key informants were also interviewed to supplement the data. Most Significant Change Technique (MSCT) was used and stories of change were collected from within the group of twenty-six CCs to gain a holistic understanding (Ichplani, 2017).

Video Volunteers

Video Volunteers (VV) was set up by a team of filmmakers in 2003, as a not-for-profit, human rights organization, working with Participatory Video as an alternative media tool for creating space for center staging issues of marginalized communities in the most backward and media-dark regions. It serves to create an alternate media landscape where people from marginalized communities are trained in producing high quality media content. It works to enable people at grass roots to express themselves freely and depict their concerns based on their own experiences and understandings. Thus VV creates structures for 'Hyper local Journalism' focusing on issues, which are usually not covered by mainstream media. Further by providing opportunities for people to participate in voicing their concerns, VV positions itself as a tool for empowering individuals and communities by building solidarity and challenging existing inequities and power structures. Consequently its motto of empowering community voices has remained core and reflective in all its programs and activities.

VV's locally-owned and managed media production teaches people to comprehend, articulate and share their perspectives on issues that matter to them – on a local and a global scale. Local individuals, called Community Correspondents (CCs), are identified from within the community, and are trained to produce video stories/magazines about issues in their communities. Through video stories, they strive to narrate and amplify, through various platforms, true stories rather than sensationalized, misinterpreted, biased version of the actual reality often illustrated by the mainstream media. Over the years, VV has experimented with different approaches and models in its endeavors to evolve a low cost, scalable community media model that addresses economic and livelihood challenges of marginalized people, as well as providing needful services in respective communities.

Based on its collective learnings from past experiences of 'media for development' projects, a new model was devised – *IndiaUnheard*, which is currently being used by VV. By providing a participatory, bottom-up platform it seeks to enable articulation of issues as perceived by people themselves. Involving non-professionals and building their capacities and bridging gaps between ordinary people and those in positions of power, is the salient feature of this model. It especially focuses on center staging and amplification of voices of marginalized populations, their issues heard by different stakeholders and their problems addressed. Through *IndiaUnheard*, Video Volunteers has enabled large numbers of marginalized community members to regularly publish/articulate their stories.

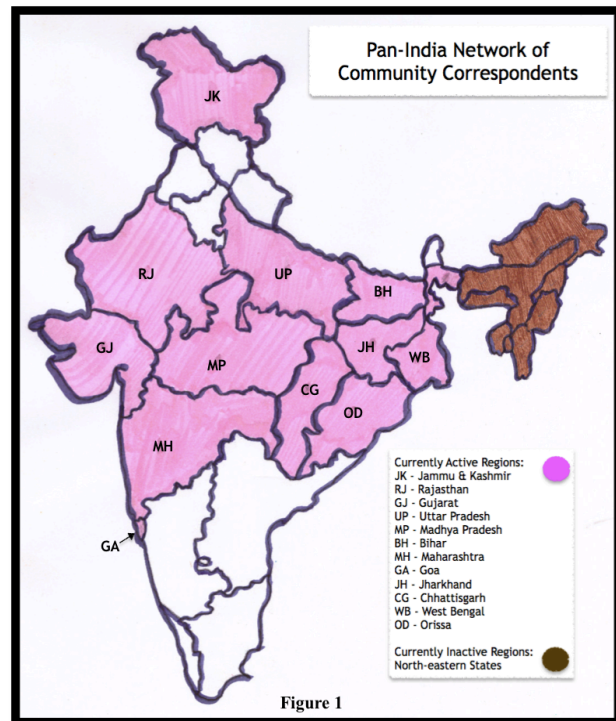


Figure 1: Video Volunteers Network

The produced videos are screened in communities, which coupled with other mobilization activities act as factors triggering change around the issue. Process of video production in itself, at times, acts as a catalyst for change and brings about the desired results. Successful cases are documented as impact videos where all aspects of CCs work and factors contributing to change are documented. All produced videos are also uploaded on VV website and on its YouTube channel, publicly accessible for everyone. Moreover, *IndiaUnheard* also produced 30-minutes programs to be aired on Doordarshan i.e. India's National Broadcaster in Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh where CCs produced video stories are shown. Until November 2016, 50 such episodes found space on the public media platform. More recently VV has forged partnership with the private channel NDTV, which is currently its main paid broadcast partner.

The *IndiaUnheard* model focuses on giving stake to the most disadvantaged sections of community, represented by one individual trained as a community correspondent (CC). Belonging to different socio-cultural contexts, the CCs operate in difficult terrain, conflict areas and adverse socio cultural milieu, within fragile safety nets provided by peer CCs and community supporters. VV has evolved a three-tier structure for providing freedom and operational support to the CCs to undertake their various activities. The CCs from each state form the grassroots rung and remains core to VVs activities. The CCs report to their field mentors and senior CCs, who further seek guidance from state-level coordinators (SCs), all together forming the middle rung. Appointed state coordinators act as nodal persons with whom the CCs

coordinate for their activities. The CCs remain in constant touch with the SCs who advise and logistically support them in planning and organizing their activities. The state coordinators are well-educated, local individuals who have professional experience in tackling social issues, and are skilled in reporting about prevalent issues in their assigned states. SCs organize monthly meetings of correspondents at state offices for troubleshooting and continuous capacity building of CCs. These meetings enable CCs to keep their coordinators up to date with their progress, seek advice and assistance in carrying out tasks, and arrange public meetings and large-scale screenings of the issue video produced.

The SCs are directly answerable to the central team in Goa that forms the apex rung of the structure. Comprising of a small six-person core programming team including the Founders, the central team steer the program and provide mentorship and guidance. Technical and editorial support is provided to CCs; it helps them negotiate and balance personal and other challenges they face while doing their work. VVs core team's decisions about programs, funding, and approaches endeavor to provide financial and physical security to CCs. Moreover, issues of resource mobilization; networking; national and international advocacy and assurance of quality of the edited video products within the larger vision and ethos of the organization remain the larger backdrop of the core team's work.

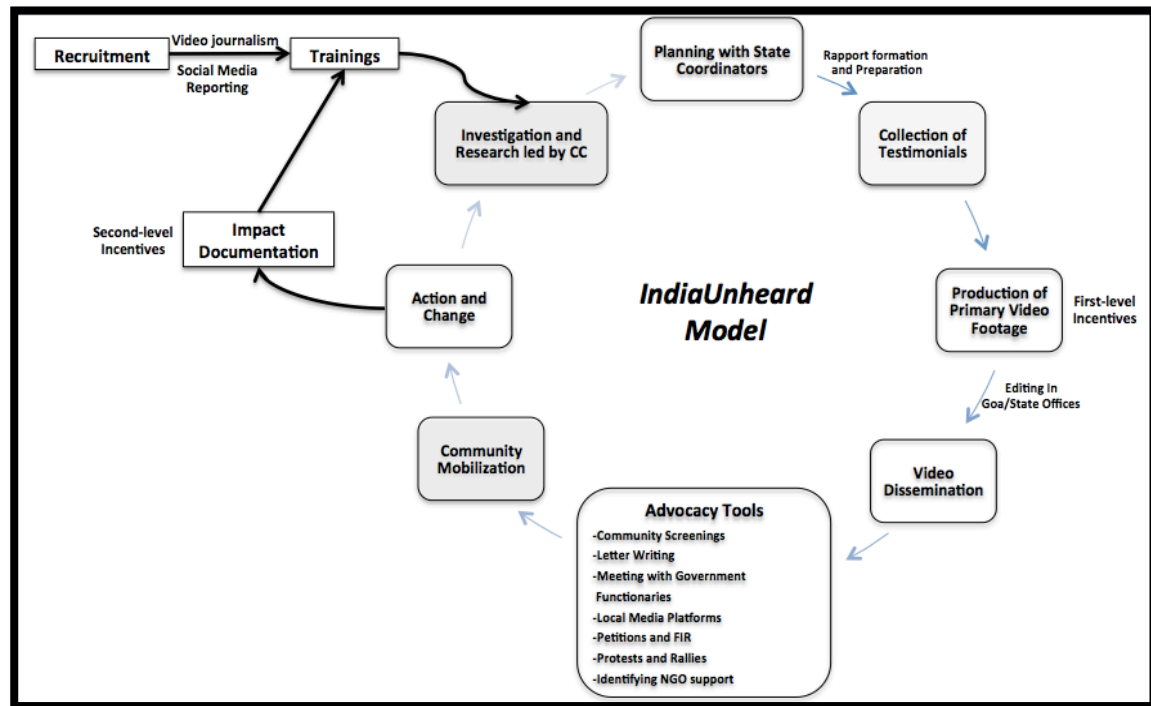


Figure 2: IndiaUnheard Model

The model (shown in Figure 2) is built around financial incentives, for sustaining the motivation and enthusiasm of CCs. VV has adopted a two-step incentive model. Incentives are given at first level when the organization receives raw footage and the primary video report from the CCs. The second level of incentives is provided upon the accomplishment of impact and production of its video. Providing incentives has enabled different sections of the community, especially the poor, to participate in the program. Under IndiaUnheard program, role of CCs has been envisaged as both a videographer and a community mobilizer, hence the program in its various components strengthens both these roles.

Recruitment: For selection of CCs, VV collaborates with local social organizations in various districts, which nominate individuals, from villages/slums where they work in, who possess potential to work as a correspondent, are self-motivated to serve their community and have experience of working with different community groups. Recruitment of CCs is guided by a person's commitment to effect change as well as their creativity and confidence and not literacy or education level.

Over the last decade, VV has recruited over 300 Community Correspondents from 201 districts in states like Jammu & Kashmir, West Bengal, Orissa, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, among others. Presently, VV has a network of 213 CCs and has encouraged a diverse range of minority groups to volunteer. Around 56% of CCs are women, 31% are Dalits, 30% are Tribals and 18% belong to other backward classes. In addition, religious minorities (Muslims, Christians), persons belonging to conflict zones of the nation also constitute a significant number of CCs (Video Volunteers, 2016).

Table 1
State-wise Disaggregation of Community Correspondents (December 2016)

<i>State</i>	<i>Number of CCs</i>
Uttar Pradesh	21
Jharkhand	42
West Bengal	10
Jammu & Kashmir	14
Madhya Pradesh	16
Chhattisgarh	14
Orissa	16
Bihar	21
Maharashtra	16
Rest of India (RJ, GJ, GA)	14
TOTAL	184

*Data extracted from Video Volunteers Database
(<https://vvdatabase.herokuapp.com>)*

Training and Capacity Building: CCs are the fulcrum of IndiaUnheard program. Belonging to different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, they are usually characterized by possessing a deep sense of perseverance. Being locals, CCs have in-roads to their communities; this richly contributes to their comprehension of issues requiring redressal, therefore enabling innovation of approaches to interact and negotiate with different stakeholders. Communication skills too remain crucial to their work. Meeting new people, networking, mobilization, persuasion and cutting across power hierarchies and gender differentials, requires proficiency in communicating effectively.

Capacity building of CCs is a continuous and incremental process. Recruited individuals are exposed to an initial set of trainings that focus on basics of video production, journalism and community mobilization. These trainings familiarize the correspondents about their various roles and about the concept of community media and video for social change. Capacities of CCs are built to identify deep-rooted issues, collect facts and evidences about them as well as negotiate and network with a range of people. CCs also learn about collaborations, especially with external media and social organizations for effective action. Skills, required for various stages of video production are also imparted. Use of social media, for carrying out their multiple tasks, is one of the major components of training program. Technological proficiency of correspondents is central to the CCs work as they use various technologies like mobile phones/internet and their features for performing a range of tasks like shooting video clips, uploading photos and videos, sharing videos, messaging, creating WhatsApp groups, etc. Increasingly Social media has become a key medium of dissemination and awareness, used by CCs, for mobilization of stakeholders. VV trainings keep them up-to-date with the changing technological environment, enabling the CCs to work efficiently, quickly network with people and devote time and resources.

Research & Video Production: The process of video production begins when CCs observe community issues and begin an in-depth research about them, especially if they perceive them to be a problem. Rapport formation with stakeholders, identification of afflicted group of people, strategizing the production process

with State Coordinators constitutes the range of pre-production processes CCs have to engage in. Production values of framing, sequencing in video, pieces to camera i.e. sign in and sign off from CC, 'Call to Action' are adhered to, as per trainings and field guides given to Correspondents. Call to Action clearly specifies what individuals can do and contribute to alleviating the problem. Clarity in Call to Action remains a crucial element in video reports, which encourages and mobilizes viewers to desired action.

The video footages and interviews shot of different stakeholders are compiled in a DVD and couriered to VV headquarters or state offices, where all pieces are put together and edited to form a video story. Final edited video is sent back to the correspondent for screening purpose and subsequent action, and later, also uploaded on web. Two major types of videos are produced under the program. Primary issue videos i.e. videos that are made when a correspondent perceives a problem and reports it in video for its resolution. The other are impact videos i.e. videos that are produced to document efforts of CCs and aspects/processes contributing to bringing about change in the community. Impact videos help monitor video campaigns led by CCs, and also act as visual proofs in demonstrating the success of the organization and marketing it.

Community Screenings and Community mobilization: Issue videos produced are screened in communities to trigger a discussion and debate. The video provides visual evidence of problem prevailing in the community. These screenings are followed by discussions with community spectators, mobilizing them to be 'spect-actors' i.e. actively partaking in activities to spearhead the change process (Boal, 1985). Screenings are held at a common place where community gathers for various activities. Venues commonly include community halls, religious institutions, schools, during the Panchayat meetings. Mobiles, tablets, laptops and projectors (for large-scale screenings) are common screening devices used by CCs. Screenings form an important post-production step, when correspondents take up the role of activists and change makers, mobilizing people, and pushing authorities and other stakeholders to desired action. Video screenings, due to their strong visual imagery act as a potent instrument for influencing people and mobilizing them for collective action.

To build pressure on stakeholders, CCs encourage community people to write applications to concerned functionaries demanding the needful action. These are usually written by the CCs, but the testimonials about existing problem remain from the community itself. Video report acts as a visual evidence of the problem and the application serves as a formal document of complaint. The two in combination put pressure on officials and more often than not, gets them to acknowledge and discuss the issue and get redressed by the concerned officials. Correspondents frequently use multiple reinforcements, for large-scale mobilization of people and support for the issue. These include local media, social media, online petitions like *change.org*, protests or rallies, and so on. Social media remains a valuable supporting approach as the networks formed through them reduce time-space barriers and form new mechanisms of creating linkages for leveraging support from different stakeholders.

The Goa team centrally manages the editing process for most videos. The CCs send their raw footage to the Goa team who edit and produce the final clip. Editing is not focused upon in the training of CCs or as a program task they are required to perform. Putting raw videos together and producing quality videos requires high-level skills, experience as well as special equipment. Being time-consuming and resource intensive led to VV evolving a quasi-decentralized model with the CCs focusing on researching issues and collecting quality content and centralized editing for production of quality video products. However, several CCs have become well versed with editing processes and do so under specific circumstances. Centralized editing enables the core programming team to ensure effective functioning of CCs at the grass roots by constant exchange of experiences relating to sensitive issues in specific regions, therefore putting together a comprehensive video report for screening purposes. Thus the quasi decentralization of video production enables the CCs to prioritize their time and efforts and focus on community level

responsibilities; enable the monitoring of censorship issues by the core team as well as use centralized expertise in producing powerful video products in a short time and with limited resources.

Content Analysis of Impact Videos

Content analysis of the impact videos provided a broad understanding about the CCs work and emerging commonalities amongst their varied efforts. VV, in its program, has maintained a gender affirmative approach, encouraging women to come forward and take up the role of CCs. Correspondingly 70% of the impact videos sampled were produced by women CCs, while the rest 30% were made by male correspondents.

Issues in impact videos: Issues of several interconnected themes were observed. Videos were analyzed for the central issue they addressed. It was seen that socio-political issues (40%) related to poor physical infrastructure, corruption in government schemes, education and PDS system were the most prominent in the videos. Issues of health and ecology (32.8%) around diseases, malnutrition, toxicity due to pollution, hazards of environmental degradation and economic issues (21.4%) related to poverty, unemployment and wage inequalities were also covered in the videos. Interestingly, very few videos directly focused on socio-cultural issues (5.7%) like gender violence, caste, religious groups and other social inequities, however they were cross cutting in most others.

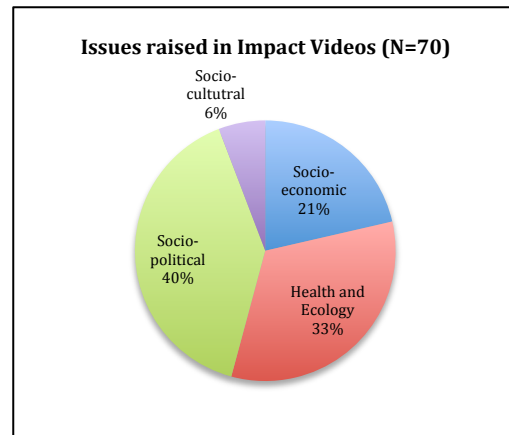


Figure 3: Issues raised

Apart from the theme of issue raised, the videos were seen to vary in the magnitude of the issue and the number of people affected by the problem. Videos were observed to be largely focusing on problems/issues of a specific group (as shown in Figure 3) of people within a community (43%) or those that were affecting a specific geographical community or a village (39%). Few videos focused upon problems affecting a specific individual (14%) or those that were widespread and affected several communities in a geographical region or a block (4%) i.e. a problem is affecting people inhabiting more than one village. Another emerging aspect related to the issues raised in the videos was their focus upon legal dimensions. Government laws or schemes; norms and regulations and their violations, Human Rights perspectives were inbuilt into the issues raised by the CCs in their videos.

Functions performed by people in videos: 257 people appear in the 70 videos that were analyzed. Thus on an average, 3 to 4 people appear in each video. More than half (53%) of the people that appear in the video are males, and (47%) females. People in the videos were seen to perform a variety of functions. 41% of the people appearing in impact videos provided popular opinion i.e. testimonials of the problem and the effects of the CCs video campaign. Over one-third (38%) of the people shared personal experiences, and were those directly affected by the problem. Few other people (14%) were spokespersons of government officials and village council members. 5% of people were experts like medical professionals who provide additional information on the issues addressed in videos, due to their credibility.

Catalysts for Change: Figure 4 shows the catalysts, as perceived by CCs, that facilitated the processes of change in the communities. Interestingly, in many cases, the specific persons or groups, who were earlier a deterrent, or a negative factor later recorded a turnaround due to the efforts of the CC, and became positive influencers. Support of two groups - government officials and community members - was seen to be most crucial to the accomplishment of CCs' goal and a vital turning point in catalyzing change processes. Orienting government officials and obtaining their support and cooperation was an essential trigger in 84.2% cases while 20% impact videos showed their negative perspectives and activities deterring change, which were altered by the CCs efforts in some cases.

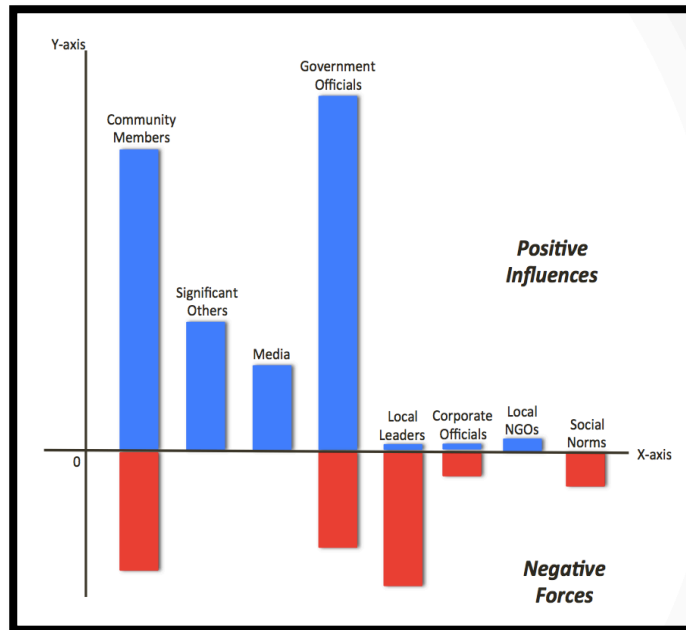


Figure 4: Catalysts for Change

Similarly, community members' support, of people from both lower and higher caste groups was vital for change processes in 74.2% cases while the community was a prominent negative factor in 27% impact videos and the CCs had to actively orient them to the desired direction for sustained mobilization. Local leaders not from the government, such as religious leaders, frontline community workers, among other individual opinion makers from within the community were seen to be negative influencers (28.5%) who were difficult to convince and rarely supported the CCs (1.2%) in their endeavors. Other positive influencers emerging in the videos were local and mainstream media support (17.2%) and the support by significant persons and/or groups (27.2%), which had a positive effect, reinforcing the CC work to catalyze change processes in the communities.

Activities conducted by CCs: The impact videos documented the activities of Community Correspondents, which were essentially advocacy efforts, mainly focusing on two levels: the community, and the policy makers and government departments. Efforts at both levels were synergistic in mobilizing different stakeholders and triggering change in the community.

Amongst the community level advocacy activities, most commonly organized by the CCs were community meetings (68.5%) conducted to discuss the prevailing problems amongst the community at-large and bringing consensus to a desired plan of action and also screenings of primary videos (37.2%). Other activities like publishing of the story on local, mainstream media platform (18.6%), organizing protests and rallies for mass mobilization (5.7%) were activities some of the CCs used. Activities adopted for advocacy with Policy makers/government department mostly involved having meetings with government officials (87.2%) and writing formal letters (24%) to concerned persons. Petitions, filing FIRs to the police were also documented as reinforcing activities in 8.6% videos, while others (4.3%) included short film screenings for better sensitization for issue of concern amongst people. The community level effort helped the CCs center stage the issues and mobilize the community around them while advocacy efforts with people from government and other organizations help build pressure on them especially with increased community level awareness and support to the CCs.

Video Volunteers as a tool for Normative Change and Empowerment

Changing social norms is a challenging process, which most development practitioners continue to struggle with. The question how community media organizations can contribute to processes of social change and shifting social norms finds delineation in the works of Bicchieri (2016) who suggests four major tools for norm change i.e. Legal means, Economic Incentives, Media Campaigns and Deliberation, of which the latter two have immense relevance for VV and community media units. Bicchieri (2016) further argues that media campaigns that use cultural schemata people can recognize and identify with; evolves strong emotional engagement and enables people to not just listen and watch but also discuss and deliberate are the media structures for normative change. She further reiterates the centrality of both the facilitator and the processes used in deliberations. Deliberative practices enable individuals to better comprehend implicit values, inconsistencies prevailing within their perceived notions and rationale to change their beliefs and behaviors, and are key to bring about normative shifts in communities.

Breaking a 400-year old custom that denied women's entry in temple

"The constitution provides equal rights to all, but rural regions still lack gender equality. In Mascoba temple of Pune district's Veer village, the tradition of banning women from entering had been prevailing for as long as 400 years, as women are considered 'inferior' and 'insignificant'. Understanding the urgency of this issue and being a woman herself going through the same discrimination, Rohini Pawar conducted meetings with several women from different villages. She made a video report addressing the problem, issued press releases in the form of newspaper, and filed petition to the temple authorities with the help of some local NGOs. She, along with numerous women by her side, met with temple authorities to persuade them to break the illogical tradition. During the process, some village elderlies also ridiculed her but that did not hamper her determination. The temple management then consulted village councils and unanimously decided women must be allowed to enter the temple premises without any restrictions. The decision to break a tradition that was accepted by women of all ages was welcomed by all as Rohini made them see the right and wrong, with her constant discussions. And on April 13th, 2016, many women came together to enter the temple. The efforts led by the CC struck a victorious blow on Patriarchal norms prevailing in the village."

The dual processes of IndiaUnheard model of VV i.e. production and screenings of the videos spearheaded by the CCs coupled with the pre- and post-screening deliberations form the kernel of VVs community video initiative. The reciprocal and complementary functioning of the CCs in their roles as a community mobilizer and videographer and their efforts to achieve a balance between positive and negative factors, through their multifarious activities provided the key ingredient for achieving success in communities'. Screening of powerful video images depicting people voicing their opinions and providing testimonials enables presentation of varied perspectives at one level. These multifold perspectives are built through stakeholder discussions, and bring to the fore the centrality of issues and connect with people beyond those directly influenced by it. Screenings, when succeeded with participatory dialogue and discussions, meetings with officials, provide a critical impetus to

Changing Perceptions and Attitudes: Excerpts from story of Abid Salaam War from Baramullah, Jammu & Kashmir

"I belong to a conservative Muslim family but mostly I face problems because of the community as most of them are only concerned about Kashmir as a conflict zone. They feel that any other problems are negligible compared to that. They forget that the people do have their own identity.... In fact, earlier, my thinking was different too, I did not let my sister drive a scooter, and used to influence and take her decisions as her 'big brother'. Actually my responsibilities towards family increased when my father passed away in 2014. However, due to my association with VV and constant exposure to numerous trainings focusing on gender issues, I was forced to reflect upon my past behaviors. Today, I am her biggest supporter and have sent her away to pursue higher studies.... Video Volunteers has given another platform to the CCs in Kashmir by making our own website for KashmirUnHeard so that the videos can be uploaded and are easily available despite the busy servers all over the nation."

the CCs goals as together, they contribute to persuading, building consensus and mobilizing stakeholders.

The centrality of CCs and their skills, efforts and motivations, hugely influence the possibility and scope of change and consequently normative shifts emerging in communities. Empowerment of CCs and building their capacities remains a crucial first step that VV has recognized and invested in. Most CCs themselves have orthodox traditional ideas to begin with, few opportunities and exposure to new ideas and notions needed to negotiate their own selves first. Trainings conducted by VV not only expose them to new knowledge and ideas but also provide them opportunities to discuss, contest and clarify notions, influencing them deeply. Repeated trainings and exposures encourage them to adopt new behaviors as they increasingly became aware and sensitized about inequities, inconsistencies, discrimination and marginalization of various hues prevailing within communities. Each CCs' conciliation and alterations of their perceptions, ideas and attitudes lay the foundation for their future work and achievements.

At the next level, capacity to conduct meetings and communicate effectively with different stakeholders was crucial to roles CCs are required to play and significant aspect influencing their achievements. Mikkelsen (2000) observes that participation and community engagement can be of various levels ranging from tokenism to proactive engagement. For the CCs to be able to have truly participatory discussions that enabled diverse view and opinions to be voiced, heard and discussed required them to negotiate several aspects and evolve effective strategies. Polarization and radicalization of view-points; domination of discussions by people from higher caste or status groups; inhibitions of marginalized groups to voice their opinions; prevailing power dynamics in communities; social taboos and restrictions, etc., posed serious threats to community participation, deliberations and dialogue about issues. CCs efforts to have separate discussions with women's groups, selecting appropriate venues and timings, providing equal opportunity to all attendees to share their perspectives, enabling stakeholders to engage in open, transparent discussions about problems and social taboos usually not openly voiced in public spheres needed to be continuously evolved based on situations and contexts.

Bringing social taboos into public sphere:

Sanjay Kumar shares the plight of two sisters in UP

"There was a 14-year old girl who was HIV positive and was being badly treated by the community due to the taboo, as they still treated HIV-AIDS patients with stigma. They forgot that the little girl suffering from fatal disease had no wrongdoing, hence they avoided talking to her, or letting their children play with her, and so on. They did not even come forward to support her living after both her parents died of AIDS. When I researched, I found out that she had been born that way. Her mother was a homemaker and her father was a truck driver. He used to travel for many days, and he had sexual relations with another woman. He came back, and Sita was conceived. Both parents died around the age of 40, leaving Sita and her younger sister (healthy) alone. They were taken to their Mamaji's (Uncle) house. I made a video on this issue demanding a source of livelihood for the girls, and proper care and vaccination for Sita. When I screened it and held a meeting for my fellow community members, it gave me a chance to not only listen to their feelings about the situation but also share the correct information about HIV. Gradually, the community was able to come together to help her in any way they could. The whole process took 1.5 years and I could achieve a three-level impact including provision of a sort of livelihood for two little girls, breaking of taboo of HIV in the village, and the whole community raised its voice for justice for two girls. This is significant because of the fact that it touches upon a very sensitive issue, but now they understand it better with the AIDS day celebrated in the village annually."

Thus, CCs as they raise social issues and articulate them through the perspectives and sensitivities of the community; the dialogue with community stakeholders for seeking solutions center stage VVs focus on change process instead of the media product, and on community involvement and awareness. These processes establish horizontal communications mechanisms, which consequently result in greater control and ownership of issues by the community.

Empowerment is defined as a process that enables individuals to have an increased control over their lives (WHO, 2017). Empowerment can be documented at two levels: Self and Community. Involving local correspondents and their capacity building and providing opportunities for their development in multifarious ways, serves as the first-level empowerment for these individuals. At a community level, the mobilization of stakeholders by the CCs, greater ownership and control over problems and their resolution by community groups is the emergent empowerment. Further, the concept of Empowerment is directly related to the concept of power, which is meaningful in social relations. Rowlands (1997) gives 4 types of relational power, which are also applicable to Video Volunteers, and can be framed accordingly: (a) *Power to* or the capacity building of CCs for spearheading change; (b) *Power over* through responsible, bottom up journalism that leads to community ownership and control over issues raised through the video; (c) *Power within*, due to greater confidence and intrinsic motivations of CCs and their communities to be able to change situations; and (d) *Power with* through greater awareness of Community members and CCs about their rights and the strength of community collectivity in negotiating with others.

Moreover, Video Volunteers has made concerted efforts to provide an enabling environment for correspondents to work effectively. It strives to make use of multiple forms of assistance to enhance the functioning of its correspondents ranging from their skill enhancement to their security. However, the threats and pressures CCs continuously face, the severe conditions they work in and the frail safety net they operate within, poses real challenges for the CCs and their scope of work.

Conclusion

Effectiveness of community media initiatives has been explored through various lenses. UNESCO (2017) focuses on transparent management and freedom of expression and community accountability. Valuable in structuring and functioning of community media organizations, aspects of *sustainability*, as suggested by Dagron and Dlamini (2005), provide few insights about processes of change mediated through their activities. Gladwell's Tipping Point Theory (2006) offers a framework for understanding aspects of community media initiatives influencing processes of change through their activities. Using the theory we seek to delineate critical aspects influencing the success achieved through VVs IndiaUnheard program. Tipping Point theory highlights three interrelated components: Law of the Few and connectors, the Stickiness factor and the Power of the context.

The Law of the Few states that success of any social phenomena depends on involvement of a handful of persons with special qualities. Acting as 'Connectors' they become points of contact, through *whom* the desired message gets spread. Highly knowledgeable about community structures and dynamics, these individuals are highly enthusiastic and persuasive, and are able to link and connect people together. Community Correspondents being Gladwell's connectors, their careful selection and capacity building are critical components. CCs not only need to be persons who have the 'know how' of community, but also possess a curiosity or desire to learn; their sociability and ability to stay connected with people in their community, as well as their self-confidence in themselves and others to seek solutions to prevailing problems.

Stickiness Factor, according to the theory refers to the presentation and packaging of a message that compels people to pay close attention to an idea and make it memorable. Video screening with their powerful imagery juxtaposed with discussions and other activities were critical influencers. Enabling community stakeholders to become active participants, with freedom of expression and not passive onlookers led to ideas seeded by the video and the CCs taking varied directions and their consequent 'stickiness'. Clearly, strength of the two processes is embed in their complementarity and not in

exclusiveness and the ability of CCs in creating dialogue and the emergence of a web of stickiness factors i.e. ideas, which are critical for persuading people to act, hence their mobilization.

The third important component is power of context, which focuses upon the environment in which a message spreads and the importance of aspects, like timing, physical conditions, psychological state and readiness of people. Changes in context can influence receptivity of messages and its consequent impact. With shifts in macro environments and micro-level advocacy efforts by various organizations, discourse about certain social issues has permeated different levels of society. Issues of corruption, poor implementation of government schemes, quality of infrastructure, Right to Education campaign etc. have possibly led to greater readiness and receptivity amongst the communities and different stakeholder to support initiatives. Moreover, in areas where CCs have not found direct success, their efforts are not in vain. Having raised latent issues usually considered obscure and insignificant, in small measures they have created shifts in the environment, thus creating the foundations for future accomplishments.

Thus Video Volunteers focuses on pre and post-production activities and multilevel advocacy campaign, which remain key to its production of quality videos reflective of community realities, and consequently the mobilization of communities for achieving micro-level impacts. Further VVs strategy of bifurcating video production and editing and focusing on the former has helped balance the onerous challenge of maintain video quality and community mobilization. Hence, mapping the kernels of Video Volunteers' IndiaUnheard Program as community-owned media model provides insights for structuring of community media organizations beyond the tripod of sustainability. Also, as organizations build and balance social and institutional sustainability challenges, these need to be interspersed with micro and macro contexts; media landscapes; challenges of empowerment of stakeholders; people's mobilization and collective action, by evolving a transformational system of media practice and the emergence of a robust counter public sphere.

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