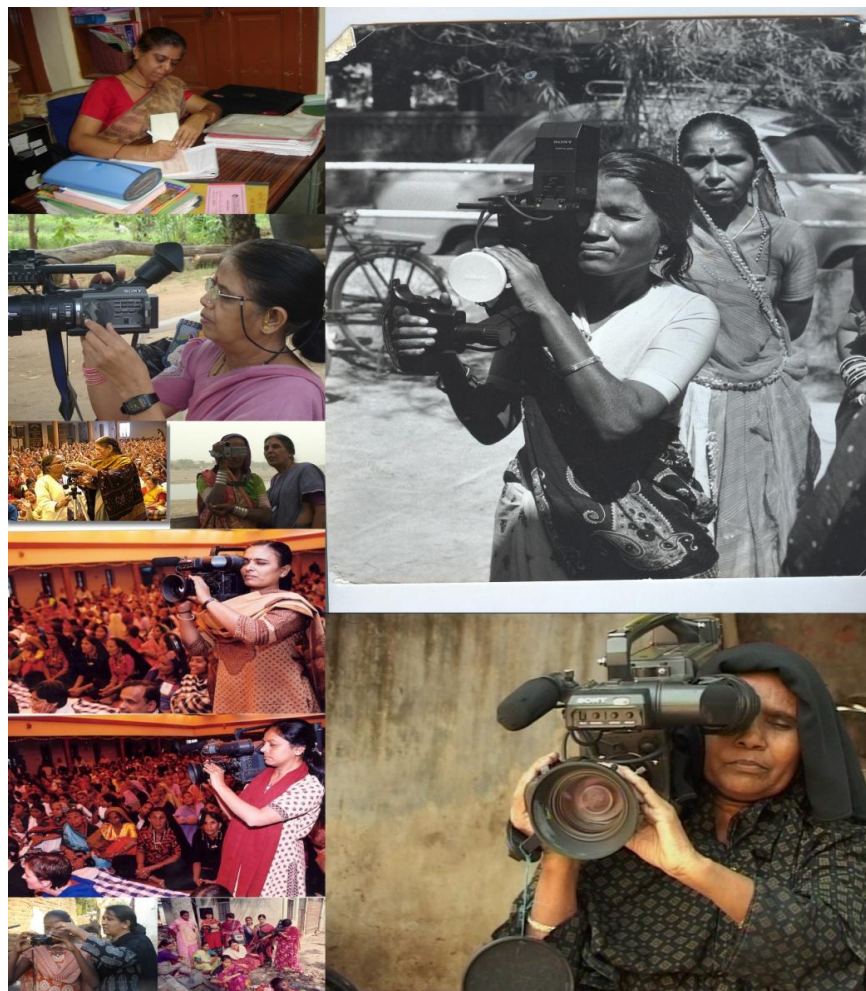


“VIDEO FOR PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION”

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY CONDUCTED WITH VIDEO SEWA COOPERATIVE IN AHMEDABAD

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Abstract

Communication is an important input in development. The role of communication is socio-economic and cultural development at national and international levels.

Development is considered an important component of 'progress. The progressive change is described as alterations in awareness, motivation and participation of the individuals. With the revolution in communication and the mandate to reach people in the whole development process as partners, Participatory communication assumed great significance. Participatory Communication begins with people who know most about their own livelihood systems. Participatory methods of communication involve bottom up approach, it involves the community, constructs tools for advocacy with the help of the members of the community with reference to the specific content, culture and language favorable for the community.

*The present study, **Video for Participatory Communication: An Exploratory Study with Video SEWA (Ahmedabad)** was conducted to find out the effectiveness of video as a tool for participatory communication. The study was conducted with the organization Video SEWA in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.*

The main objective of the study was to gauge the effectiveness of video as a tool for participatory communication and its impact on skill development, awareness and empowerment.

The timing of the study was four months. The process comprised of various stages, these were mainly focusing on aspects like:

- 1. Exploring the history and development of Video SEWA as an organization and a cooperative*
- 2. Analyzing the participatory videos created by the community members at Video SEWA, in terms of its content, audience involvement and awareness.*
- 3. Recording the Journey of Video SEWA members and analyzing their growth in terms of life skills*

“Using videos to record and demonstrate women’s work would raise the spirit, inspire confidence and solidarity and illustrate the power of collective action and Participation”

- Namrata Bali (Secretary, Self Employed Women’s Association)

The study has tried to understand the significance of video as a tool towards development, in today’s world. It is a time when everyone is talking about the potential of new information and communication technologies and still emphasizing participation. The processes of participation helps people achieve an identity, chart their life course, experience freedom and reach to human potentials with dignity and respect. This study conducted at Video SEWA is an attempt to analyze all these dimensions and understand Video as a Participatory Approaches towards Communication and Development.

Development Communication as an Approach

Communication is an important input in development. Communication experts, sociologists, psychologists, and economists agree that the proper use of communication can foster the pace and process of development. In general terms, communication means interactions between two individuals, within a group or a community or a nation. The role of communication is socio-economic and cultural development at national and international levels. (Uma Narula 2000)

Development is considered an important component of ‘progress. The progressive change is described as alterations in awareness, motivation and participation of the individuals. It is a process which enables one to gain power, authority and influence over other individuals, institutions or society. The role of communication in development began with UNESCO in 1950s (McAnany 1980). It emerged as a field of mass communication studies during post independence years. It was designed in order to meet the urgent needs of developing countries. The term Development Communication emerged in the 1970s. Rogers (1983) says, *“Development communication refers to the use to which communication is put in order to further development.”*

Development cannot be sustained unless people become agents of their own development. The role of communication here is to inform influence and create a dialogue. This process of development communication cannot take place in isolation. Therefore, for effective communication it is essential to promote participation. The dominant paradigm of development, which emphasized on increased productivity, urbanization, capital intensive technologies and economic growth as main indicators for development, soon made people realize that there are alternative pathways to development. Thus, the new paradigm of development emerged. The ‘New Paradigm’ promoted participatory approach to development communication. (Uma Narula 1994)

With the revolution in communication and the mandate to reach people in the whole development process as partners Participatory communication assumed great significance.

Participatory Communication

‘It will begin with people who know most about their own livelihood systems. It will have to value and develop their knowledge and skills, and put into their hands the means to achieve self-development. This will require reshaping of all practices and thinking associated with development assistance. It will require the adoption of a new paradigm’ (Pretty and Gujit 1992:23; Britha Mikkelsen 2005)

Participation is one of the most important concepts in development communication because it is potentially a vehicle for different stakeholders to influence development strategies and interventions. Participation as a process of empowerment is a favored approach. (Ascroft and Mesilela 1989)

Communication constitutes an indispensable part of Participatory Approach. If development is to have any relevance to the people who need it the most, it must start where the real needs and problems exist. These people must perceive their real needs and identify their real problems. To a large extent, these people have not been able to do so due to lack of genuine participation in development strategies ostensibly setup to ameliorate their problems. (Servaes, J. Jacobson, T. White, S. 1996)

The terminology **Participatory Communication** refers to the use of communication to facilitate community participation in a development initiative. Participatory Communication is a dynamic, interactional, and transformative process of dialogue between people, groups and institutions that enable people, both individuals and collectively, to realize their full potentials and be engaged in their own welfare. It is a long term process of sustainable change, which empowers the community to make their own decisions by participating in decision making. (Uma Narula 1994)

Participatory communication is a planned activity, based on the one hand on participatory processes, and on the other hand on media and interpersonal communication, which facilitates a dialogue among different stakeholders, around a common development problem or goal, with the objective of developing and implementing a set of activities to contribute to its solution, or its realization, and which supports and accompanies this initiative. (Melkote 2001)

Participatory methods of communication involve bottom up approach, it involves the community, constructs tools for advocacy with the help of the members of the community with reference to the specific content, culture and language favorable for the community.

The experiences of participatory communication for development are as diverse as the cultural and geographic settings in which they have been developing. The diversity of participatory communication experiences has always been a sign of its healthy status. (A.G. Dagrón 2001)
For the purpose of involving the community through participatory communication a number of tools are being used. Theatre, community radio, and videos are some approaches for initiating participation in the community so that people can relate and recognize their concerns and act towards their development.

Video as a Participatory Approach

Video, as a communication tool for development and social change, has always been the subject of comparisons and disputes among the film and the television industries. In order to gain its own identity, the video tool for development had to differentiate itself from the broadcasting system, which is mostly driven by commercial interests. (A. Bhatia 2005)

It has been perceived as a marginalized and low-quality desperate attempt to compete with the commercial networks. Because of the cost of running a television station, most independent projects that aim to promote culture or social issues through television are condemned to have a short life. Even in industrialized nations, the so-called “cultural networks” or “public broadcasting” has a hard life. (Keval J Kumar 2008)

As technology became more affordable and easier to manipulate, video grew as a separate communication tool, with its own comparative advantages over television. The uses of video in social development projects show a great deal of creativity and capacity to adapt to the changing cultural and social context. In third world countries video is now embraced in much the same manner as radio was by the previous generation, as a tool to support education, cultural identity, organization and political participation. The instant playback feature of video is one of its most empowering qualities; it enables continuous participation and immediate feedback. This dimension allows those who are the subject and those who operate the technology to collaborate as equals. Images used in videos are trustworthy visuals easily motivate people. (A. Bhatia 2005)

Participatory Video is a tool for individual, group and community development. It can serve as a powerful force for the people to see themselves in relation to the community and become sensitized towards personal and community needs. It brings about a critical awareness that forms the foundation for creativity and communication. Thus, it has the capability to bring about personal, social, political and cultural change. (S. White 2003)

Participatory Video is a set of techniques to involve a group or community in shaping and creating their own film. The idea behind this is that making a video is easy and accessible, and is a great way of bringing people together to explore issues, voice concerns or simply to be creative and tell stories. This process can be very empowering, enabling a group or community to take their own action to solve their own problems, and also to communicate their needs and ideas to decision-makers and/or other groups and communities.

Many innovative participatory video experiences have developed all over the world. These experiences show the diversity and the flexibility of this tool. This tool can also be used by a layman with some amount of training. Video SEWA in India, Kayapo Indians in Brazil, FAWO in South Africa, TV for Development in Uganda, etc are amongst the various initiatives being carried out. (Gumucio Dagron Alfonso 2001)

Video SEWA: Women in Action

"Video is an authentic, powerful and honest mass communication media which should be in the hands of common people in a country like ours".

Smt. Ela Bhatt, Founder, SEWA

Video SEWA was established in 1984 as a means to provide training to the members of SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) and to motivate, mobilize and strengthen the existing membership of SEWA through the use of video recordings and tapes. It all started in 1984 when the late Martha Stuart, an international video communications consultant and founder of Martha Stuart Communications, traveled to India and conducted a video training workshop in Gujarat for twenty women, mostly illiterate, from the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA).

The seed that was planted in the right place at the right moment has become an important tool within SEWA's social and organizational work. Among the important outcomes of this experience is the fact that women with almost no formal education were capable of assimilating the video tool and their role in society immediately changed as a result.

Since 1984, Video SEWA has produced countless tapes and more than a hundred programmes of organizing, training and advocacy. These tapes reached villagers and slum dwellers in Gujarat as well as policy makers in Delhi and Washington. Gradually, video has become an integral part of SEWA's activities and also for all the ongoing work. For women workers and the members of SEWA, SEWA tapes are a source of information as well as inspiration. The videos are developed in Video SEWA are by the people and for the people.

The Video SEWA team includes members coming from the informal sector like head loaders, vegetable vendors, home-based workers etc. but after joining Video SEWA undertook technical training of the equipments and today are producers of various educational and informative programs. Through video, SEWA members - many of whom are non-literate - have gained valuable information on how to use SEWA's savings and credit services, how to build a smokeless stove, and how to prepare oral rehydration solution. Perhaps most importantly, they have learned how strength through solidarity can help them advocate for better conditions for themselves and their families.

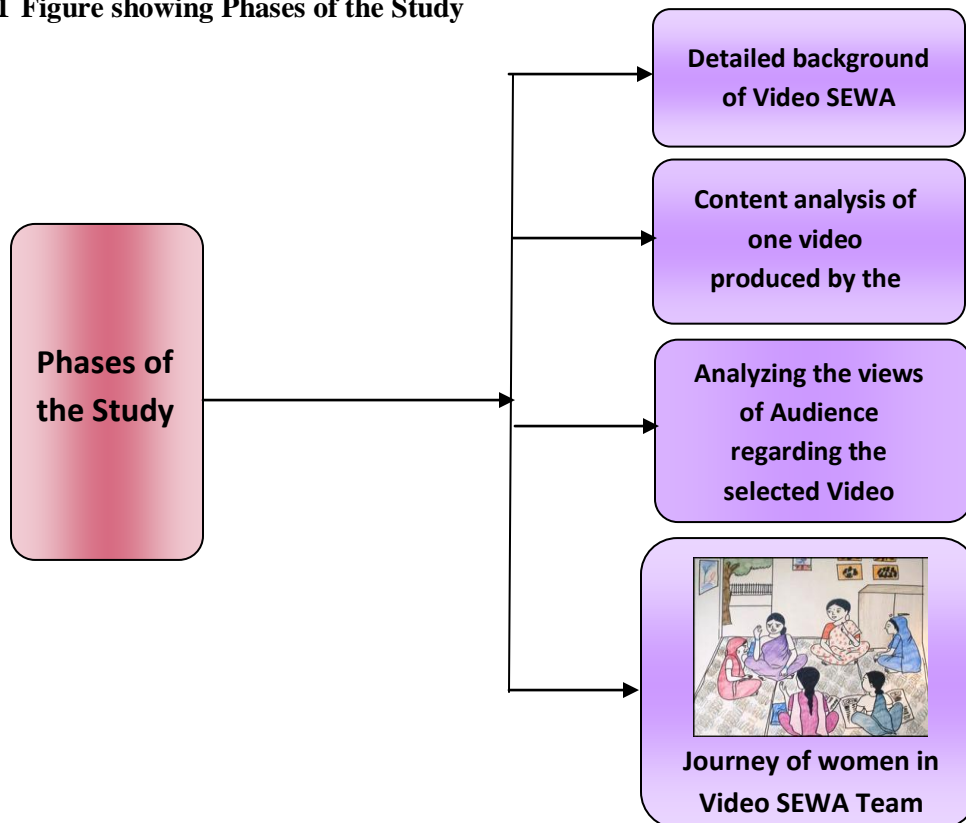
Development communication emphasizes increasingly on self development, self reliance, improved quality of life and self management. Therefore, it becomes important for people to get involved and participate in the activities affecting their political, economic and social lives. It has been recognized that, there can be no sustainable development until people become the agents of their own development. And there is increasing recognition that participatory communication approaches are powerful tools to foster positive change and to empower people to forge their own destiny.

Participatory communication channels are used to create a dialogue, to help people understand each other and identify their collective problems. The various media can act as effective channels. Video is one particularly powerful tool for participatory communication.

Thus realizing the value of video as a tool for empowerment, knowledge development and skill enhancement, as well as keeping the above three perspectives in mind the present study was an attempt to explore the role of Videos for Participatory Communication.

Phases of the Study: To understand and achieve the objectives, the study was carried out in four phases:

1.1 Figure showing Phases of the Study



Phase I – Detailed Background of Video SEWA

The first phase of the study focused on the detailed historical background of Video SEWA. The main aim was to understand the reasons for establishment, sustainability, and transformation of Video SEWA into a cooperative. To fulfill the first phase of the study 6 professionals from the organization SEWA were selected and interviewed. The professionals included Video SEWA team members and members from the executive board of Video SEWA cooperative, these are, Namrata Bali, Mirai Chatterji and Neelam Dave. The selection of professionals depended on their availability.

Phase II – Content Analysis of a Video

The second phase focused on the in- depth analysis of a video developed by Video SEWA. The process of development of the video, the content and the messages given were analyzed. The

video was selected on the basis of its visibility in the community and the issue, which could be generalized.

A number of films were seen and then finalized the video 'Invisible Hands'. This video focused on the invisibility of women's work in the Indian economy. They contribute hugely and work approximately 18 hours a day. Still they earn less than men in the same field and who work lesser than women. Women do household as well as outside work but their contribution in the household is not counted. In order to understand the video holistically and focus on each and every aspect, content analysis was considered as one of the most appropriate tool for understanding and analyzing the video. The content analysis was done on the parameters like genre, duration, language, plot / theme, objective, synopsis, technical analysis, issue analysis

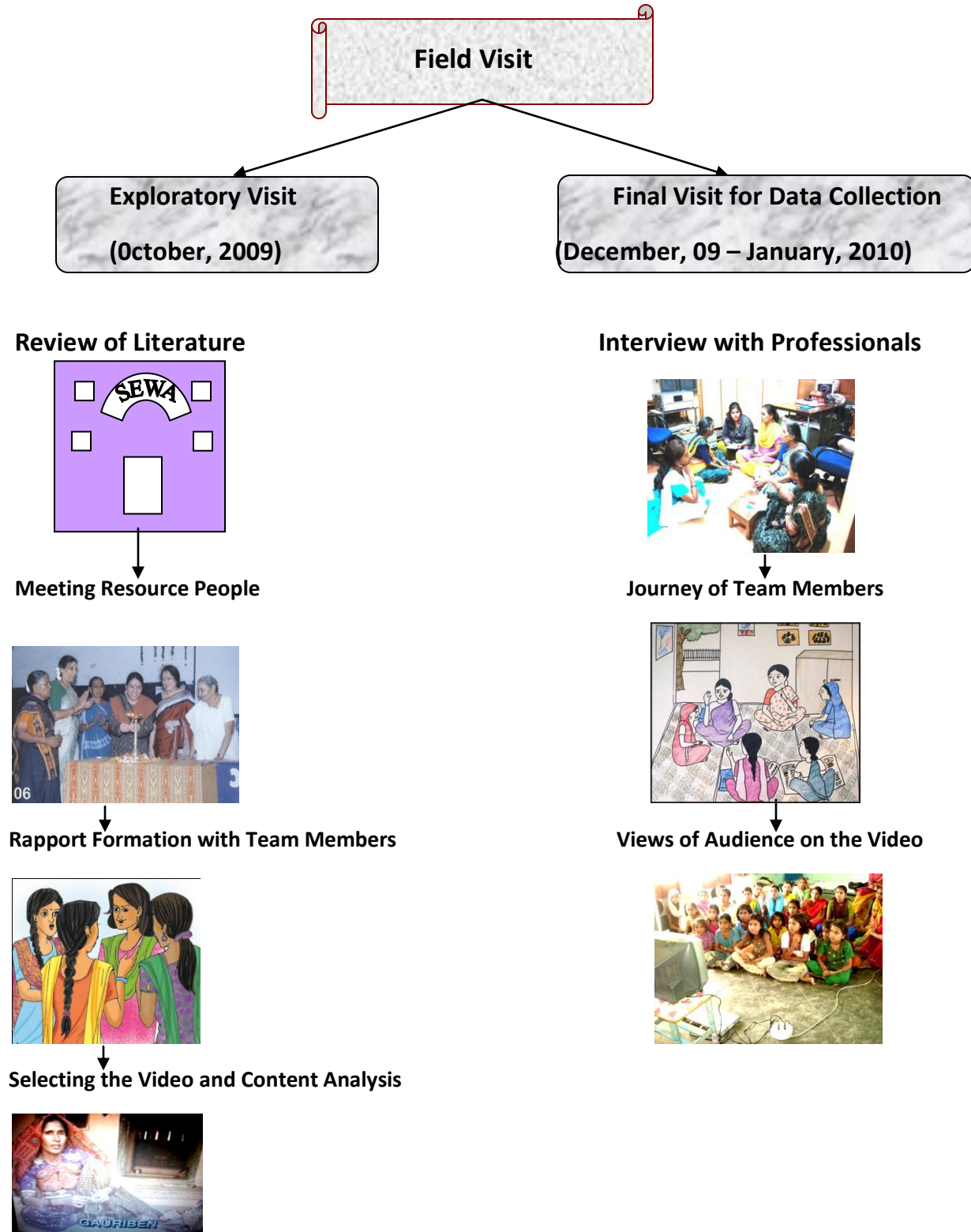
Phase III- Analyzing the views of Audience regarding the video

The effectiveness of a video or a documentary is best judged by its audience. They are the ones who are most impacted by these tools. The third phase of the study focused on gaining the views of the audience for the selected video. The audience comprised the local women. These women were selected from five slum areas of Ahmedabad and were gathered at Kaushaliya Kendras working under SEWA. These Kaushaliya kendras are working towards providing literacy and training to make women self reliant. Trainings like beauty culture, sewing, computer classes, photography etc are carried out in these kendras. A lot of trainings are given through these videos. Trainings of SEWA movement and leadership are also provided in the kendras. The sample was selected on the basis of readiness of women to respond to the researcher. These women were informal sector workers, constituting mainly of household workers, bidi makers, cracker makers, paper pickers, utensil sellers etc.

Phase IV- Journey of Video SEWA members

This phase aimed at studying the journey of Video SEWA team members, their barriers and their empowerment on the basis of skills and socio- economic development. These women were the team members of Video SEWA. They script, research, and direct films according to needs and demands of the community, in the community. These women were from low socio- economic backgrounds and were illiterates or neo literate.

Figure 2.2 Time Line of the Study



Review and Discussions on Video as an effective tool of Participatory Communication

To accumulate the study and comprehend the role of videos as a tool for Participatory communication a number of qualitative and quantitative tools were used. These tools were formulated keeping in mind the objectives and the phases of the study. A sample comprising of 100 women as audience of a participatory video and 7 women who are involved in the making of these videos was chosen. Tools like, questionnaires, in- depth interview, shadow technique, observations and case study were used to reach the discussions and analysis.

Detailed Background of Video SEWA

6 professionals were interviewed from within the organization. These professionals are executive members of Video SEWA and three of them are the team members who have played an important role in the inception of Video SEWA.

- Video SEWA is a result of a meeting attended by Ela Bhatt in Bamako, Mali, West Africa in the year 1982. She saw rural people making participatory videos, and understood the effectiveness of the tool, so she decided to bring it to SEWA. In 1984, Martha Stuart of Martha Stuart Communications came to SEWA to give these skills to women through a three weeks workshop. These women are illiterate and semi literate women.
- The community is involved at every level of video production and till now it is being involved. This is done by doing replays of the videos according to needs of the community. Making a new video according to what the community feels should be highlighted is the main objective. The team members of Video SEWA are themselves from the community. Therefore, Video SEWA is a grassroots organization.
- Recently in 2002 Video SEWA formed a cooperative. Though it was not an easy task as it is the first of its kind. Till now Video SEWA was being funded from SEWA but the expenses of the equipments and the cost of production was so high that to sustain this activity, it became necessary to form a cooperative.

“We took this decision of forming a cooperative so that members can become the owners”

Neelam R. Dave

- To make the cooperative sustainable it became necessary to outsource and market. Therefore, Video SEWA started taking contracts from different organizations and they fixed up rate for making videos for other organizations. But in this process they did not discontinue to make videos for the community. The general principals of the organization have not changed. The cooperative still works for self reliance and self employment. The change can be seen in the structure and the work patterns of the organization.

Content Analysis of the video ‘Invisible Hands’

Producer: Video SEWA

Director: Namrata Bali

Starring: Gauriben

Genre: Documentary

Duration: 9 minutes, 20 seconds.

Language: English and Gujrati

- The primary message of the video is invisibility of women’s contribution to work and the effects of it. The issue has been captured through the life of Gauriben, the main protagonist of the video. A day in the life of Gauriben has been shot and portrayed where she talks about her daily routine and explains her life in context of the issues like education, nutrition, income disparities between men and women, the kind of work women do, inheritance of property, becoming self reliant and forming a union.
- The movie starts with the shot of hands, which are doing work, these hands act as a metaphor and give meaning to the video and create an idea that it talks about work done by women. The video is based on women’s work; therefore, the emphasis is created through the close up shots of the hands that are working. The video has been naturally shot in extreme rural settings; no experimental grounds have been created.
- Various underlying issues are linked together and portrayed through the main issue. Invisibility of women’s work becomes the main reason for the rise of several other problems like illiteracy, malnutrition, gender bias etc. Gauriben’s character has been of a strong woman, who faced all the problems and has learnt to fight against all odds.
- The video reinforces the issue again and again in the narrative; it talks about the disparities faced.
- The concept of forming a union has not come out that clearly. Neither does the video talk about any other policies or programmes that can help make a difference.
- The issue has been very well highlighted in the video documentary; a little more detail about the steps to overcome these

Effect of the Video on the Community

- ***Audience liking for the Video:*** A majority of women found the video very good. Gauriben’s interview was the most appreciated and the best aspect of the video as stated by the audience. Her character was the most liked, as she emitted great enthusiasm and strength. The video showed a day in the life of a rural woman, this was an exhilarating part of the video. They could feel themselves as a part of the video, because they saw themselves in it.
- ***Audience connectivity to the Video:*** The video- invisible hands included mixed issues. It was interesting to note that the respondents noted most of them and gave multiple choice answers. They did not consider Invisibility of women’s work as the primary issue, instead

doing household work was considered the primary issue. They connected with the activities shown and the issues highlighted. They could also easily relate to the problems faced by Gauriben, whether related to child's health, education as well as saving money. Maximum women felt that the video shows the story of every women, whether rural or urban, and has a national approach. It was interesting to note the kind of issues women deal with their everyday life. The most common being the burden of household work and the issues of lack of money.. Most of the women keep quiet on facing such issues or discrimination. They do not ask for their right very often and if they do it is related to child care and education most of the times.

- ***Video acted as a Cue towards Participation and Social Change:*** The respondents felt that a woman can become self reliant if they are educated or if they form a union or by saving money. They adopted the idea of forming a union or a cooperative amongst themselves from the video, where Gauriben formed a union of women which dealt in traditional handicrafts. Today her handicrafts are even exported. When talked about video as a tool, the audience responded in a positive manner. They said that video is a great tool towards awareness and can lead to lot of motivation. Video can even point out to the smallest of the hidden issues and present it in a way that people are moved. They said that it's an effective tool for disseminating social messages and participation.

Journey of Video SEWA Team Members

- ***Detailed Profile of the Subjects:*** All the 7 members of Video SEWA team belong to Ahmedabad. Their ages range between 40 – 60 years and most of them have studied till the secondary level of schooling. Only one, that is, Leelaben was illiterate. Neelamben and Leelaben joined Video SEWA during its inception, Darshana ben joined in the year 1987, while Aruna ben, Daxa ben, and Manjula ben joined in the year 1993. Jayshree ben joined in 2002. While Neelam ben and Darshana ben were housewife's before joining Video SEWA, and Jayshree ben was an accountant. The rest three that is, Aruna ben, Manjula ben and Daxa ben were all from self employed background, they used to do screen printing, head loading and fall beading respectively.
- ***Barriers Faced:*** The women faced barriers from their family, society as well as from themselves. Personal barriers included, apprehensions in handling the camera, never having seen a camera from this close, and not understanding the buttons, hesitation in traveling alone to work for the first time, and reaching home late in the evening. The societal barriers included, coming late from a shoot, people used to mouth words like '*where does she go*' '*what kind of work is it*' etc. the odd timings of work were a big question to the society as well as the family. People said that you have kids why don't you take care of them, what is the need to work outside.
- ***Skill Development:*** The team became proficient in technical skills like handling the camera, editing, photography, and sound. Most of them like doing camera work and editing, they think that it is the most significant aspect of video making. They feel that their knowledge about issues and their communication skills have also improved. They say that now they think more deeply for an issue and interact more with the community to

dig up details. Negotiation is one aspect that is very important and has enabled them to overcome their barriers. To overcome these barriers the members negotiated with the family by introducing them to the kind of work they do. They also did extra work at home so that no one at home could question that the household is being neglected. Three of the members used to carry plastic shopping bags so that if they are late they would put their purse in the bag and people wouldn't eye them. Then one day an interview was showcased on Doordarshan. This interview told the world about the work they do, and this helped them a lot to prove to the society the importance of their work.

- **Social Empowerment:** To see if the women are socially empowered the case studies were analyzed on the basis of decision making power, social mobility and recognition. It came out clearly that the women had got all three of them. They said that no decisions in the house are taken without their consent; they can now move out and stay till late in on work. They have also gone overseas like Singapore and Italy. They feel proud when they go into the community and people call them press reporters and appreciate them for their work. Their neighbors have started saying that please teach this work and employ our daughters and daughter-in laws, so this makes them feel much empowered.

'After doing this work and making videos I understood that I am becoming a source of change for many people and this boosted my confidence in my self, I felt proud, it made me feel like a powerful source' – Aruna Parmar

'Now I feel more self reliant, in my house no one imposes decisions, we all sit together and take decisions together. Even when I go out I feel good to hear people saying, look at her the video sister' – Darshana Parmar

'I have finally manage to get back what I had lost and that is the dignity and standing in the society, international exposure and meeting people's concerns has taught me a lot and made me a new person, now I can walk alone'- Daxa Mehta

- **Economic Empowerment:** The team members all had a personal bank account on their own name. They noted that the levels of their savings have increased and now they do not have to look up to anyone before spending money. They have assets too in their own name, like a new house, camera, shares, policies etc. they keep taking loans on their income.

They say that joining Video SEWA and making videos has changed them and transformed their lives completely. They have now become more welcoming and accepting to changes. They feel self dependent and reliant. They are empowered.

Applying Video for Participatory Communication and Social Change

The videos made at Video SEWA have attracted the attention of many development officials and policy makers. The most successful example of this is, Video SEWA's initial video made on Manek Chowk of Ahmedabad. This video was made on the conditions of the vegetable vendors at Manek Chowk. The video highlighted their struggles, day to day issues with police, legislation etc. The video focused on their conditions and the need for licensing these vegetable vendors, in order to help them sustain a living. Leelaben, the oldest member of the video team, was a vegetable vendor at Manek Chowk. The video was so inspiring and effective that it helped the women fight a court case for licenses and win it too.

Not only the people but also the members of the team have experienced change. Their case studies highlight immense improvement in their socio- economic life, status in the society and skills. Some excerpts from their case studies are as below:

Case Study 1



Name of the Subject: Leelaben Dantani

Leelaben (61yr) is one of the senior most members of Video SEWA. She joined SEWA in the year 1972 when it started. She was the part of the first movement of SEWA where they fought for licenses of vegetable vendors. Leelaben was a vegetable vendor before joining Video SEWA and she is illiterate.

'It was a four months training and during this training we were taught shooting, replaying, photography, sound but not editing in detail. The first time I saw the TV I was excited as we do not have TV at my home. They taught us the meaning of each switch and its function and I learnt them through their symbols'

'I made my first film on the vegetable vendors in Manek Chowk, which was then used as a tool for further advocacy and made people participate in the process of awareness and policy change even at the supreme court level. It made me feel proud to see my film do such wonders and bring so many people together'

These skills made Leelaben confident and helped her step out of her shell. She was ready to face the society whether it is national or international. She overcame her biggest barrier that was illiteracy through the training and continuing her attitude to learn new things.

'A few years later my team told me that I have to go to Germany to shoot a film, I was hesitant as I had heard a lot about the white and dark men discrimination and then I was illiterate. But then I gathered courage as this was my work, so I went to Germany. This international exposure

made me even stronger as people appreciated me. They were shocked to see me shooting as a professional'

'A lot of people used to come and do shooting on my life, it made me feel proud and more confident'

'People sometimes doubt my capability, by seeing my attire no one believes that I am a video producer, so I have to prove to them that I am the one and I can handle all types of camera formats very easily'

Case Study 2



Name of the Subject: Neelam R. Dave

Neelam R. Dave (67yr) is the coordinator of Video SEWA cooperative. She lives in Ahmedabad with her in-laws and husband. She has two sons and one daughter. Before joining Video SEWA Neelamben was a housewife. Her daily work comprised of cooking, cleaning up the house, taking care of the children and her in-laws. Neelamben's husband is a professional photographer and photo journalist of a local magazine. He used to have a lot of burden of work and due to this he was unable to concentrate in the house. Neelamben saw all this and started interfering in his work so that she could learn it and help him. Soon she picked up the skills and took up her husband's assignments for photography. She started shooting for various functions and ceremonies. What made her feel proud was her husband's appreciation.

Her photography skills were soon appreciated and she gained popularity. She was then asked to join SEWA as a professional photographer. She joined SEWA in 1981 and used to come there often for delivering photographs. Impressed with her work Elaben asked her to take the video making training to be held in 1984. She took the whole video training and finally decided to join Video SEWA. But working in Video SEWA was not easy as she had to face a lot of oppositions. She was questioned now and again from the society and her family. These were her barriers.

'I used to go to work early in the morning and had to stay out late till the evening. My in- laws used to say that if you go for this wok how will you handle the household? So I started negotiating, I used to get up early in the morning and do all the work and then come to work. And even if I was late at any day I would finish up half of my work till late at night'

When I stepped out of the house people used to say and ask me, what type of work are you doing, you don't have fixed timings, they used to taunt who knows what is she doing outside the house till so late, but one day when I was interviewed and it was aired on doordarshan I told all my relatives and neighbors to see it. After seeing the interview everyone's mouths were sealed and they started appreciating me. Some even said that Neelam your work is really nice can you teach our daughter- in laws and daughters

Case Study 3



Name of the Subject: Darshana H. Parmar

'I had a feeling inside me that I am not meant to sit at home I want to work'

These were the first words said by the Darshana ben on being asked about her work at Video SEWA. Darshana ben (57yr) joined SEWA in the year 1980 as a child care functionary. Before working she was a housewife. Darshana ben comes from a very conservative family and in her family women were not allowed to work. She has studied till class 10th and after that she left her studies. After being married in her in- laws house she used to do small courses of cooking etc to keep herself busy. But then one day she decided that I want to work now and become more independent.

'I wanted to work and did not want to sit at home; I had a talk with my husband and mother-in-law about this. My husband said that there is no need to go out of the house why don't you handle my accounts? But this did not interest me, so I talked to my mother-in-law, she said you go ahead with whatever you want to do I will handle my son. So this was a very strong factor in my life.'

'With the help of my sister-in-law I joined SEWA as a child care functionary, I used to go to SEWA often for meetings, in 1987, my team members asked me to take part in the video training workshop being held, I was a bit hesitant but thought what is the harm in training'

She took the training in the year 1987 and became a member of Video SEWA.

'I learnt how o work in a group after joining Video SEWA, as here we follow a participatory approach so working together is very important, thus I learnt to cooperate'

'initially I was myself very scared to step out, as I had never gone out of the house alone, it was very challenging, but I had to face it all if I wished to work. I took energy from my surroundings and from my work; meeting people gave me a lot of strength.'

'Now I feel more self reliant, in my house no one imposes decisions, we all sit together and take decisions together. Even when I go out I feel good to hear people saying, look at her the video sister'

Case Study 4



Name of the Subject: Aruna Parmar

Aruna Parmar (37yr) is a crew member of Video SEWA. Aruna ben studied till class 12th and after that she started working as a screen printer. She had to leave her studies due to the financial problems in her family. Along with screen printing she also came to SEWA regularly with her mother for meetings. In these visits she noticed Neelamben, Darshana ben and Leelaben doing shooting and taking the camera to different places. By seeing them she used to think what if I also do this work if they can do it. Therefore in 1993, Arunaben joined Video SEWA

‘ During the initial years a lot of shooting was happening so I had no fixed time of going to work and coming back from work, to avoid the eyes of people I used to carry a plastic bag, in the evening if I am late than 8pm, then I put my purse into the polythene bag so that people stop talking and saying, look at her where is she coming from carrying a purse at this time’

‘After doing this work and making videos I understood that I am becoming a source of change for many people and this boosted my confidence in myself, I felt proud, it made me feel like a powerful source’

Today she is a proud and a strong woman, Arunaben is one of a kind. Absorbing each and everything around her she says

‘I feel like a module, a module which sees people, understands them, absorbs them, takes and combines their experiences and with these create something new’

Case Study 5



Name of the Subject: Daxa Mehta

Daxa Mehta (41yr) is member of Video SEWA team since almost 17 years. Her mother was a child care functionary at SEWA. She lives in Ahmedabad with her mother and brother. Daxa ben joined Video SEWA in the year 1993, and before joining she used to do fall beading in sarees to support her family

Daxaben got married at a very young age, her husband had habits that made it difficult for her to stay with him. Due to this she had a divorce. This had crushed her self confidence and her ability to face the society.

'After starting work at SEWA I felt that slowly I was getting my dignity back and my self confidence back, but the society never stops saying, whenever I used to be late the cab from Video SEWA used to drop me back, so people around used to stare that I was coming by different cars almost every day, so they used to ask questions. Finally with time and through my work I saw the condition of women in the society, I learnt that people speak because they have to and for them we cannot spoil our minds and work'

'I have my personal bank account, and I keep taking loans, recently I bought a home on my name through the loan. I feel proud to see that I have assets in my own name which majority of women does not have in this country'

With change in times she has developed socially, economically and personally too. She feels she has got back what she lost.

In the end she says, 'I have finally managed to get back what I had lost and that is the dignity and standing in the society, international exposure and meeting people's concerns has taught me a lot and made me a new person, now I can walk alone'

Case Study 6



Name of the Subject: Manjula Rawal

Manjula ben is a crew member of Video SEWA. She joined SEWA in the year 1985, when she opened a bank account at SEWA bank for the first time to buy a lorry for pulling loads. Manjula ben was a head loader before joining Video SEWA. She used to carry huge weights of matkas and packets on her head from one office to another. In the year 1995 she joined Video SEWA.

'I was taking head loader to a place, and I met a SEWA sister, she chatted to me for a few minutes and then asked me to come for the interview at Video SEWA. I used to see women shooting at various union meetings so it was interesting that's why I agreed to go for the interview'

Her life became difficult when she got married. Not agreeing to her father's wishes she married a Muslim boy, no one supported her but her savings and work at Video SEWA.

'I got married on my own as my family wasn't with me, but I stood strong thanks to the savings that I made due to my earnings at Video SEWA. I have bought my new house, I teach my girl child, I take her for dance classes and this was only possible due to all the monetary gains'

Being married in a Muslim family her husband wanted her to follow a lot of customs, it was interesting to see that she did not lose herself in those customs and created her own identity.

'In our family I am the only woman who is working, rest all practice pardah, they even asked me to stop working and practice pardah so I just said one thing that give Rs 5000 per month in my hand and I will stop working so after listening to this demand no one stopped me from going out'

'Video is a tool for awareness, for arguing for rights of women and policy change. I make videos so that I can explain certain conditions to people that we cannot verbally explain, like we made a video on gynae problems of women and through that video we were able to make women aware about the various diseases they can have. So this became easier as women do not talk about such issues.'

After this journey of 17 years she says that she feels: 'I feel very good to realize that once being a lorry puller I now handle the most sophisticated equipments and have my own office'

Case Study 7



Name of the Subject: Jayshree H. Kedia

Jayshree ben (45yr) came to SEWA in the year 1987 and joined Video SEWA in the year 2002. She used to work in the SEWA Federation in the accounts department. Jayshree ben is an M.Com, and used to work in the accounts department. She left SEWA in the year 1995 as she got married and had the responsibility to handle her family. But she did not want to sit at home so she joined back in the year 2002, and started handling Video SEWA accounts and cooperative work.

'I joined Video SEWA in the year 2002 and took the training, but I was very experienced in cooperative working so I started handling the accounts department and worked for the cooperative to stand as it was in the initial stage'

'It is interesting to see and good too that how people appreciate us when we carry a shooting camera. People think we are from press and our status in the society also shoots up'

She feels that video as a tool is a powerful medium or influencing people and acting towards change.

'Video is a very essential tool to train and to aware'

'Video is an audio visual tool one can see the problems of one issue and can relate it, they can hear it also so it has an impact'

She describes her whole journey as, *'A learning experience where I have realized the value of people's problems and the need to portray it'*

Lessons Learned and Conclusion

- The study clearly reveals that video is an effective tool for participatory communication. It helps in raising issues of common people, it helps them realize their needs and it can create a dialog in the community. Video acted as a very effective cue during the whole process of research. This can even lead to social change. Video promoted participation from all sections. During the research the audience came together towards realizing the problems and reaching a solution, this states that video can be an effective tool to promote participatory communication and social change.
- Video as a tool can be used for training. Trainings can lead to development of skills, in communication, employment generation activities, confidence etc. These trainings can also improve employment opportunities for people by training them on employment generation activities through videos. It can be of effective help in training people on ways to sustaining a livelihood.
- Since it is participatory in nature it can be used effectively by grassroots organizations for promoting skill development amongst the people and also creating awareness on important issues. Grassroot organizations can use videos to promote their organization in the community, to highlight the issues they are dealing with and showcase them to stakeholders and policy makers.
- The highly technical skill used in video production can easily be mastered by illiterate women as has been demonstrated by SEWA Video Team. The medium can be handled by people effectively. This technique is not limited to only the literate. People who understand social issues and their surroundings can easily learn this art and highlight their concerns. Video as a tool is very effective in filling the communication gap generated due to literacy status.
- Participatory Video is an important entertainment-edutainment tool to foster social change. It can serve as a source of entertainment and empowerment for the audience as well as the video makers. It gives the ability to people to connect themselves with real situations and talk in front of an audience. Video touches the nerves of people if made in an effective manner. The audience can enjoy and get entertained during a video show, in addition, they can also get educated about the issues facing their society.
- In participatory video, the work does not get completed only by making the video or by showing the video in a community, instead it is the first step towards awakening. It helps awaken the people to think and talk about the issues shown in the screenings, and how to act towards solving the issue in the near future.

This research study is just a small step towards exploring the arena of participatory communication through videos. Video is one of the most effective tools that we have to promote change and awareness in the societies. And hence, video is an effective tool for participatory communication.

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