

POVERTY, PROSPERITY, PROGRESS
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by

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Title of Paper

Participatory video production and development

Category 12

Gender and Participation

Background

Inclusivity is observed as a central principal of building a just community and a more inclusive and democratic audio-visual landscape is a prerequisite for a media for development. The Africa Women Filmmakers Trust uses the participatory methodology in the production of educational videos. Traditional forms of communicating are encouraged and incorporated into the videos e.g. music and poetry. Communities determine how traditional media is used and what they are used to communicate.

By adopting the participatory approach, the aim is to decentralise control of media production and dissemination. It is also a humanistic process as it makes individual perspectives and voice equally valued thus making individuals protagonists of their own communication and development.

The process is not only participatory but also empowering, democratic, educational, and informative. It allows individuals and communities to reflect, which is crucial in the development process.

The Africa Women Filmmakers Trust believes that in developmental orientated videos using the participatory or people orientated approach not only is the message or content but also the process is (equally) important.

BENEFICIARIES

The beneficiaries of the project are: -

- women and disadvantages groups in the rural communities, who would have opportunities to use the facility to communicate hence the term, ‘a voice for the voiceless’,
- communal/rural people whose majority are women have the media more accessible to them through the use of generator powered video projectors,
- the resource centre would in the future benefit other women and development organisations as an audio visual resource centre,
- society in general benefit from an enhanced understanding of gender and development work using the media.

Status of women in Zimbabwe

Women in Zimbabwe constitute over 51% of the population and are grossly under-represented in media institutions, hold junior positions, very few of them are in decision making bodies and have the least training. Women in the Zimbabwean context are viewed as recipients of the media and:-

- 1. have limited access to communication channels that is both print or electronic media,**
- 2. lack adequate, quality and appropriate programmes which address areas of interest and issues of concern to them,**
- 3. have very limited human and material resources for feedback,**
- 4. media fails to recognise the real roles that women play in our society especially were the rural woman is concerned, who is engaged in the rural economy and doing many productive activities e.g. farming,**
- 5. media in Zimbabwe has failed to differentiate between categories of women and their differing needs,**
- 6. women are seen as objects of communication which is a dis-empowering process in itself.**

Due to the destructive impact of colonialism, there is very few traditional media that has survived in an indigenous form. The few that have survived like community gatherings such as at funerals or when there is a cultural function serve mainly to disseminate localised information and they have very little utility for the exchange of information and meaning with the outside world which is needed to catalyse, and promote rural development.

On the economic arena, women in Zimbabwe pursue endeavours in related farm and non-farm activities to supplement the little they receive from farming. During the colonial era agricultural policies kept production low, and benefits for women little. Women's low economic status led to their low social status. Trading and marketing were some of the key economic pursuits they engaged in to supplement income from agriculture.

During modernisation which was based on the work of Weber and Durkheim, development was believed to be only possible under the Western influence hence capitalism. Development would occur through prior change in values, attitudes and norms of the people

who were considered to be ‘empty vessels’ needing filling. The approach taken by Africa Women Filmmakers Trust acknowledges that communities have a wealth of information and their participation is of paramount importance for sustainable development. It believes that the general failure of earlier development initiatives were due to the failure to incorporate traditional means of communication and the top-down approach. It therefore encourages a multi-way approach and the incorporation of traditional communication were appropriate.

Operations

The ‘Trust’, initiates, encourages and promotes the participation of women and grassroots communities in the production of audio-visual materials on issues of interest and benefit to them. Using generator powered video projectors, the video films are made accessible to the rural communities thus opening up opportunities of communities accessing and controlling (to some extent) the means to communication. The communities play an important part in determining the content of the productions and during screening workshops, the time and venue for screenings. This means that the project fits in the day to day activities of the community. The videos are shown at a time when it is convenient to communities. The screening is followed by a discussion.

The participatory approach in production enables communities (with the assistance of fieldworkers) improve their communication skills, learn to listen to others and express their insights, helps communities to identify issues of concern to them, be responsible for their lives, community, environment, therefore masters of their own destiny.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The objectives of the Trust when it was founded were:-

SHORT-TERM

- **to build capacity and improve the quality of productions as an on going process,**
- **to initiate and facilitate production of films on development, education, encompassing the social, economic and cultural issues pertaining to the communities,**
- **empowerment of women through the use of the media, self definition, realisation and understanding through media education,**
- **to construct Inclusivity gender dimensions into media productions as a way of combating endocentric images and information,**
- **highlighting the important role women are playing in development, in the making and shaping of history among other issues, and giving women an opportunity to determine how they want to be seen and set the agenda for change,**
- **explore and expose the realities of women's lives,**
- **explore, seek and suggest possible alternatives which can be used to empower and protect women in the different situations they find themselves.**

LONG-TERM

- **enhance greater participation and involvement of women in this field, placing emphasis on production and consolidating skills training in the different specialities of the trade, (This is being achieved by conducting training workshops to respond to identified skill needs combining hands on practical training with theory targeted basically to women).**
- **provide a centre and environment in which personal contact promotes exchange of ideas and learning through the experience of others,**
- **for posterity purposes,**
- **encourage women to contribute to family income and national development as equal partners,**
- **to expand a people centred Research and Documentation Centre (RDC) of the Trust to complement the work being done in the field,**
- **to use the Research and Documentation Centre to disseminate information to needy people for education and gender sensitivity training and to make it an open forum for discourse on gender, women, media and development,**
- **to increase audience access to local video through screening workshops and mobile video festivals in the communal areas and also encourage discussions after screening thus providing a stimulating forum for the transfer of information. The mobile vans are equipped with battery or generator powered video projectors which are ideal for rural set ups since the majority are not electrified.**

- **production of audio-visual material on any medium, create a pool of talent, resources, equipment, in order to achieve the objects of the Trust and return this heritage to the people of Africa.**
- **Encourage and promote the exhibition and distribution of films, act as a Production/ Distribution Agency, provide a centre and environment in which personal contact promotes exchange of ideas and learning through the experiences of others, encourage holding of seminars, workshops conferences and any other programmes in furtherance of the above objectives.**

METHODOLOGY

The participatory approach is used. The benefits of adopting the participatory methodology are two fold. Through the process of production women could be empowered. This was seen as an opportunity whereby women could be in a position to determine how they wanted to be portrayed and seen as well as an opportunity they could air issues of concern to them.

Production was therefore seen as a process meant to give women and dis-advantaged groups a voice and create an environment whereby every individuals voice and perspective was valued and respected. The integration of women grassroots as full partners in the socio-economic and political life of a nation and global economy was seen as being determined by their integration in today's information society. Through the media, the subordination of women and the building of a more democratic society could be achieved. The process therefore embraces diversity.

The participatory methodology was hoped would increase participation of the grassroots in the governing process, create awareness, mobilise and build confidence among its participants.

The methodology is not only participatory but democratic and an empowering strategy. The process is believed to invite critical reflection from participants.

Through the technical contribution by women in the production process, the project challenges the myth that communication technologies are inaccessible, expensive, complex and that they require professional expertise and male gendered technology abilities.

ACCESS

The International Bill of Human Rights stipulates that it is the right of everyone to have access to information. But, how practical is this? Can it be achieved? The 'Trust' in an effort to widen the public sphere and bring greater access to media launched mobile vans equipped with generator powered video projectors which are used during the video screening workshops programmes on educational, informative, developmental and video's communities helped produce and those of interest and concern to them, as well as entertainment programmes to boost attendance were being screened. The screening workshops are therefore educational, informative and entertaining sessions.

The project has plans to train village community facilitators who will be tasked with the responsibilities of introducing programmes and facilitating discussions after screenings.

Conclusion

The project focuses on participation, dialogue, promotes peoples reflection about their own reality, offers them an opportunity to express themselves through the media and provides access to ownership of the means of communication. It recognises that the

public has a voice and makes them subjects and protagonists of their own communication.

Title of film:- Survival

Length of video film 30minutes

Survival is the first film which was produced by the Trust using the participatory approach. When the crew went to the villages in Zimbabwe, the local people were unaware of how their lives would be transformed. The crew went to make a film on the economic plight of rural women, and in so doing transformed the communities they worked with.

The film focused on four case studies. The 30minutes film is about how communities are surviving during these times of structural reforms (and economic hardships) which have met with some measure of success in some countries and has been disastrous in others.

In this film it is evident that women in Zimbabwe constitute a particularly vulnerable group both socially and economically. Women in this film refuse to be victims and have instead taken up active roles as masters of their own destiny. Although the plight of these women is evident in the film, it is what they are doing which is given prominence. This film was not scripted by professionals but by the communities themselves. The individuals who are featured were chosen not by the crew but by the communities to depict their lives.

The film has been shown in Zimbabwe and has been instrumental in changing the attitudes of communities, challenging them to take an active role in changing their own conditions. One community

member after watching the film remarked, 'I thought it was only us suffering. Now I know it is only through our own effort that we can change our condition and destiny'.

This film is a must to those who believe in the empowerment of women through participation and sustainable development.