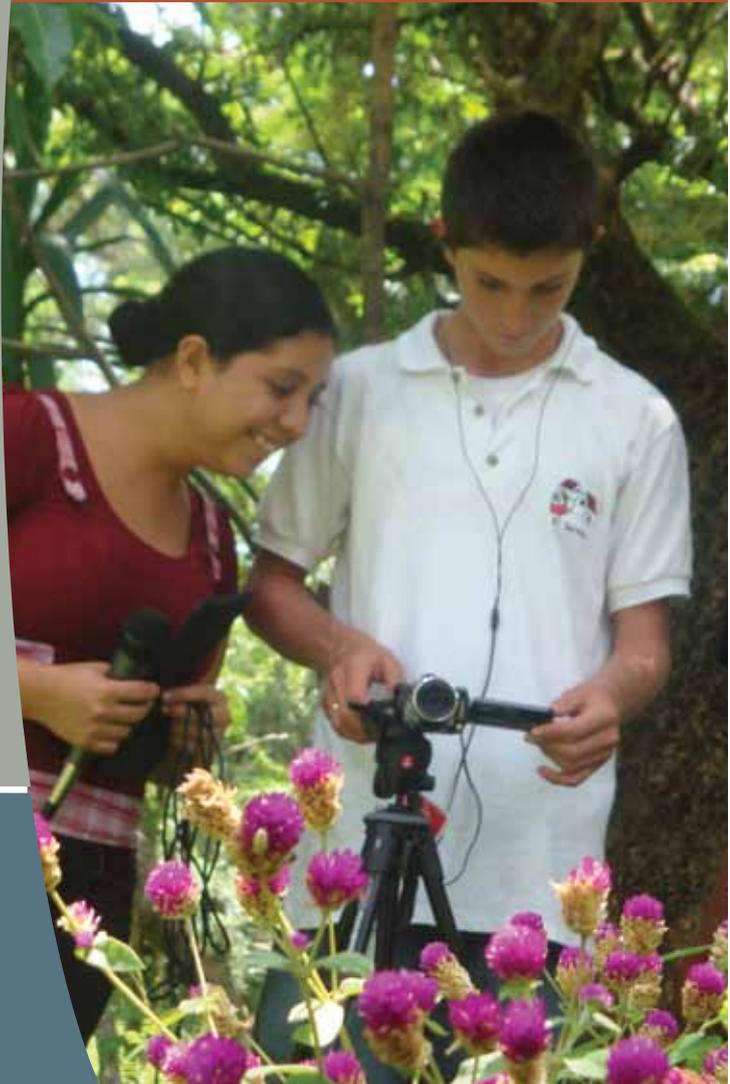




# Look Through My Lens

Video as a Tool for  
Community Managed  
Disaster Risk Reduction



# Look Through My Lens

## Video as a Tool for Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction

Author: Anna Helszajn, Humanitarian Productions  
Mexico City, August 2011

Design and layout: Diseño Empresarial Aplicado.

Special thanks: The author would like to give special thanks to the following people for their input into this publication: Arnulfo Ayala, Jean Slick, Juan Sáenz, Claudia Zaldaña, Eberto Domínguez.

## Table of Contents

### Introduction

1. Video and Disaster Risk Reduction
2. An Introduction to Community Video
  - 2.1 Actors in video production
  - 2.2 What is Community Video?
  - 2.3 Origins of Community Video
  - 2.4 Why use Community Video?
  - 2.5 Process vs. product
3. Benefits of Community Video as a Tool for Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction
  - 3.1 Changing perceptions of disaster risk
  - 3.2 Promoting community dialogue and search for solutions
  - 3.3 Giving voice
  - 3.4 Video as a tool for empowerment and self-transformation
4. Community Video in Practice
  - 4.1 Overview of implementation steps
  - 4.2 Role of the facilitator
  - 4.3 Additional considerations

### 5. Using Community Video Throughout the CMDRR Cycle

- 5.1 Participatory community disaster risk assessment and analysis
- 5.2 Disaster risk reduction measures
- 5.3 Organization of risk reduction group
- 5.4 Participatory planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning
- 5.5 Sustaining CMDRR
- 5.6 Advocacy

### 6. Building Capacity in Community Video for CMDRR

- 6.1 Establishment of multidisciplinary teams
- 6.2 Training facilitators in CV for CMDRR
- 6.3 Selecting equipment

### 7. NGO and Professional Video Production

- 7.1 NGO video production
- 7.2 Professional Video Production

### ANNEX: Mira Mi Lente: Participating Organizations

Asprode  
Cordaid  
Humanitarian Productions  
Local Partner Organizations

### Bibliography



## Introduction

*"Look through my Lens: See what I see.  
My community more secure; my people better prepared".*

Mira Mi Lente (MML), which translates into English as "Look through my Lens", was a three-year pilot project carried out in Central America which sought innovative ways to use video as a risk reduction tool. It was implemented by Humanitarian Productions as part of the Central American Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) Programme coordinated by ASPRODE and financed by Cordaid.

Working with four local partner organizations: ACUA, UNES and Caritas Chalatenango in El Salvador, and Caritas Santa Rosa de Copán in Honduras, between 2008 and 2011 the project explored the different ways that video could be used (a) as a risk reduction tool, both for local communities and partner organizations; and (b) as an alternative and effective way to document and systematize the processes and impact of the CMDRR programme. Given the emerging nature of the use of video in disaster risk reduction (DRR) work, the project was conceived of as a pilot experience. One of its objectives was to generate replicable and scalable models which could be used both within Central America and by interested organizations from other regions of the world.

While there is no precise "recipe" for using video to support disaster risk reduction work, given the need to adapt any tool to the specific geographical, institutional and cultural context in which it is to be applied, there are some general suggestions and lessons learned during the MML experience that are presented here as guidance to those interested in embarking on a similar journey.

The approaches, tips and stories presented here are the result of reflections on "what worked well?", "what didn't work so well?" and "what would we do differently next time?". They are based on direct and video interviews with key figures involved in the MML project, mainly at the organizational level but also drawing on video from the participating communities, as well as other emerging experiences on the use of video for DRR worldwide, and the wider literature on participatory video and disaster risk reduction.

It is hoped that the experience of MML will inspire others to incorporate video technology in their efforts to strengthen the work of local civil society organizations and build the resilience of vulnerable communities. We are convinced that the potential of video to enable people to view their reality in a new light, share it with others, and catalyze positive change for the benefit of their communities has only just begun to be explored.



## 1. Video and Disaster Risk Reduction

Disasters resulting from natural hazards, such as floods, landslides, volcanoes and droughts, are becoming more frequent and intense, as a result of the growing threat of climate change and the increased vulnerability of many marginalized communities in the world's poorest regions. While hazards are often unavoidable, the occurrence or impact of disasters can in many cases be reduced through strengthening communities' coping capacities, reducing socio-economic vulnerabilities, and dealing with environmental and other hazards that trigger them. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing the risks of disaster.

In the past few years, information and communication technology (ICT) initiatives have proliferated in disaster risk reduction, as revolutionary new technology, such as computers, the internet and mobile phones, have become essential tools in disaster preparedness, mitigation, prevention and response.

Video is a tool whose potential is only beginning to be explored in terms of its contribution to DRR. The increasing accessibility of today's video technology, both in terms of availability, cost and ease of use, has expanded the ways in which it can be used, putting it within the reach of development and humanitarian organizations, local civil society organizations and poor communities as never before.

Video is now being used around the world in a myriad of forms: to share stories and experiences, to reach decision makers, to empower marginalized groups, to expose abuses, to change attitudes, and to help communities to achieve consensus and find common ground for collective action.

However many practitioners working in disaster risk reduction have yet to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to leverage opportunities provided by video and integrate the use of video into their daily work.

Pilot projects around the world have started to explore how community video can be used specifically in the context of disaster risk reduction programmes. These initiatives include Mira Mi Lente in Central America, as well as activities carried out by the International Red Cross Climate Centre in Malawi, the Bahamas, Argentina and Indonesia, by Plan in Asia, and by InsightShare in Africa, amongst others.

*"Video is a vital force for change and transformation of individuals and communities. It has unlimited potential"*

*- Shirley White, "Participatory Video", (2003)*

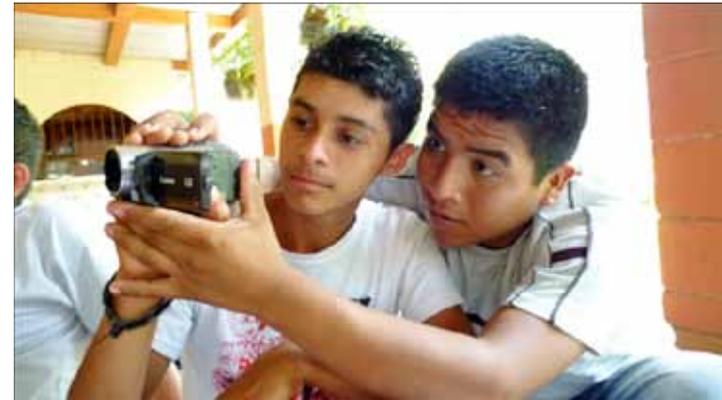
## 2. An Introduction to Community Video

*"The power of communication, the power of video, is not in the hands of those where it always has been, but is transferred to the hands of the community for the benefit of the community, from their perspective, from their limitations, but based on their aspirations, capacities, dreams and goals."*

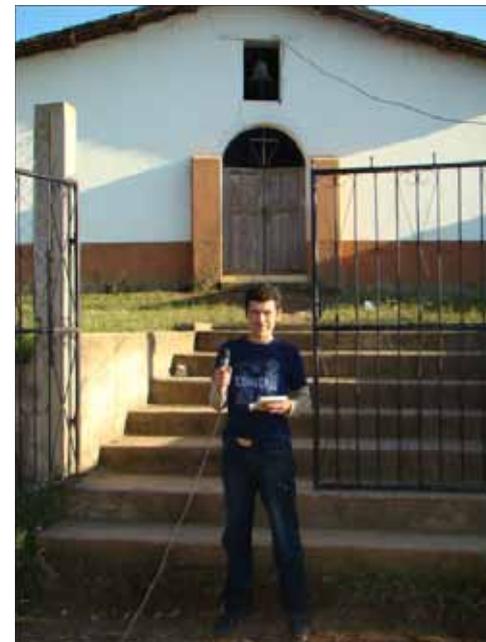
*- Arnulfo Ayala, Director of Asprode, El Salvador*

### 2.1 Actors in video production

Traditionally, video was in the hands of professional film makers or videographers, however with the advent of cheap, user-friendly equipment, NGOs and communities themselves can now become the protagonists, producing their own videos, telling their own stories which reflect their own points of view and priorities. This entails a shift in power from outsiders – the media, film makers – to communities.



Boys experiment with a video camera, Ishuatán, El Salvador, 2010



Preparing to conduct an interview, Cementera, Honduras, 2010.

### Comparison between professional, NGO and community video production

Who?	How?	Audience	Technical quality of final product	Level of community participation & ownership
Documentary film makers / professional videographers	Visit communities normally for a short period of time to collect stories which they present according to their own vision	National or international external audiences (e.g. international donors, policy makers, general public)	High	Low
NGO staff trained in video production	Document stories, processes and impacts in the communities where they work for learning, accountability, public relations, fundraising and advocacy purposes	NGO management, national & international donors, general public, policy makers	Medium	Medium
Community video production teams	Communities produce their own videos, reflecting their own perspectives and priorities	The community, local authorities, neighbouring communities etc.	Low	High

## 2.2 What is Community Video?

Community Video (CV), also known as Participatory Video (PV), is a specific approach to using video that is being increasingly adopted in the context of development processes. Community video involves communities producing and sharing their own short videos, as part of a process to identify and solve community problems.

It is a tool that emphasizes empowering individuals and communities, promoting their participation in all aspects of the process. Unlike traditional documentary video where external, professional film makers gather footage and produce a film or video based on their own perspective, CV involves communities producing their own videos for their own purposes. Community members are involved in all aspects of producing a video from developing the storyboard, to interviewing people and operating the camera.

## 2.3 Origins of Community Video

*"I don't know whose idea it was to combine audiovisual work with community work, but whoever it was, they had a great idea!"*

*- César Erazo, Project Officer, Acua, El Salvador*

Community or participatory video has its origins in 1960s Canada, where isolated communities were given video equipment in order to produce a collective image of their reality to share with other communities and distant decision makers. The Fogo Process, as it was named, after Fogo Island where it was first piloted, was then further developed and tested around the world.

## 2.4 Why use Community Video?

*"There can be no sustainable development unless people become the agents of their own development – not just beneficiaries – participating fully at every stage of the development process"*

*– Silvia Balit, "Participatory Video", 2002*

Over the past decade there has been a surge of interest in the benefits and applications of Community Video for the following reasons:

- Increasing availability, affordability and accessibility of audiovisual technologies in developing countries.
- Increasing recognition of the power of images in documenting realities, sharing these realities, and bringing about significant changes.
- Increasing recognition that participatory approaches empower people to forge their own destiny.
- Democratization of the communications tradition, with 'authority driven' top-down processes being replaced by horizontal 'people-to-people' processes (Balit, 2002).
- CV respects local knowledge and ways of knowing (Slick, 2009).
- CV develops skills and knowledge of communities.
- CV is a powerful tool for illiterate communities, or members of communities, as it does not require its users to be able to read or write.

## 2.5 Process vs. product

In community video, the process is as or more important than the product. The process is designed to support learning and knowledge creation, as an opportunity to promote reflection, change attitudes, facilitate decision-making and empower individuals and communities to further their own development. In this way, community video involves a "shift in emphasis in learning with media, rather than from media." (Slick, 2009).

However the product is also important: "The product created offers additional affordances... as the product creates an opportunity for engagement with the broader community. Those traditionally without voice are able to reach policy makers and politicians and to engage in policy dialogue". (Slick, 2009).



A youth video production team in Chalatenango, El Salvador, 2009.



### 3. Benefits of Community Video as a Tool for Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction

*"We are convinced that community video, video made by the communities themselves, is a valuable tool in Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction"*

*– Arnulfo Ayala, Director of Asprode, El Salvador*

Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) relies on community participation which allows communities to make decisions and manage DRR programmes according to their local contexts. In this way, CMDRR enables communities and individuals to prepare themselves for hazards in a way that reflects their own priorities (IIRR, Cordaid (2007)).

There are number of similarities between CMDRR and CV approaches which make them particularly compatible. Both CMDRR and Community Video place an emphasis on community participation and the facilitation of learning and positive change within communities. In both cases, the community implements the project while the external facilitator provides guidance.

The experience of Mira Mi Lente in Central America, and other pilot experiences in other regions of the world, indicate that the use of Community Video can add value to CMDRR processes in multiple ways. In addition to being a tool for personal empowerment and transformation, used within the context of a

CMDRR programme, Community Video can help communities to change their perceptions of disaster risk, promote community dialogue, give voice to marginalized groups within communities, strengthen advocacy efforts with external decision makers, and promote learning.



### 3.1 Changing perceptions of disaster risk

CV has been shown to be a valuable tool in assisting individuals and communities to reassess their reality. Seeing and being seen using video, looking at images of yourself and your reality through the lens or on the screen, and being viewed by others, has a powerful psychological impact. The process of filming, reviewing and editing material, viewing, sharing and discussing with others a representation of your reality as presented from your own perspective heightens people's awareness and enables them to see themselves and their context in a new light.

In this way, within the context of disaster risk reduction, community video can be used to enable people to view their reality from a different perspective, or lens, and to become more aware of the disaster risks in which they live, as well as the capacities they have as a community.

This renegotiation of the relationship between the individual or community and disaster risk can play an important contribution in community managed disaster risk reduction.



Community member films her environment, Ishuatán, El Salvador, 2009

In the words of different individuals involved in the MML project:

*"Filming provides you with an opportunity to heighten your awareness"*

*– Juan Saenz, Director, Humanitarian Productions, Mexico*

*"Video can make evident situations which maybe for the community are so much part of their daily life that they don't pay any attention to them"*

*– Eberto Dominguez, General Coordinator, Caritas Chalatenango, El Salvador*

*"People perceive risk in different ways and a person's perception of the risk influences what action they will take... Video is a tool that helps people to perceive risk in different ways"*

*- Jean Slick, Programme Head & Associate Professor, MA Disaster & Emergency Management Program, Royal Roads University, Canada*

*"When community members starts seeing the images they have filmed, they think "this is my community!" They see their reality in a different, more impactful way, and start getting ideas of how to make positive changes to improve their situation"*

*- Claudia Zaldaña, Central American Representative, Humanitarian Productions*

### **Case History: Deforestation in Santa Isabel de Ishuatán**

In the municipality of Santa Isabel Ishuatán, the use of video contributed to enabling community members working with Salvadorian NGO Acua as part of the Mira Mi Lente project to see the connection between deforestation and increased flooding in their communities. According to former Communications Coordinator Allan Martell, "Even though they see these things every day, using video helped people see the relationship between their actions, in this case cutting trees and increased flooding. Video enabled people to see their problems in an integrated way and to view their risks, vulnerability and capacities with new eyes".

In addition to raising awareness within the community, the video has also served as an advocacy tool with external stakeholders. It was shown as part of MML's Third Community Video Festival, attended by neighbouring communities and representatives of the mayor's office, local police force and cultural institutions. The community also plans to use the video in the future to seek support for environmental and reforestation projects.

This case example highlights the unique affordances of CV as a DRR tool, and the relationship between process and product. In the first instance, the community members used the video as part of the process of exploring hazards in their community. Later, the film was used as part of another related process, which enabled local ways of experiencing risk to be shared with a broader community.

"Deforestation and its Consequences"

<http://vimeo.com/24212675>

### **3.2 Promoting community dialogue and search for solutions**

*"Video as a development tool allows people to become involved in the process of decision making and change in their community, which is an empowering experience"*

*- Shirley White, "Participatory Video: Images that Transform and Empower" (2003)*

While changing attitudes is an essential component of CMDRR, the next step is for communities to collectively discuss their situation, make decisions, and undertake actions to solve their problems. The creating and screening of community DRR videos provides an opportunity to open dialogue within communities, and facilitate processes of analysis and reflection leading to community decision making and collective action. In this way, CV can both motivate communities and act as a catalyst for change.



Community screening, Ishuatán, El Salvador, 2009

### 3.3 Giving voice

Community video is about giving voice. As opposed to traditional video where someone else is telling the story, with community video, community members decide what story they want to tell, and how they want to tell it. In this way, video can be a way of giving voice to people who traditionally may not have had a voice, and enabling them to share it with those they feel need to listen. This may be within the same community, for example giving a voice to groups which are often excluded from discussion and decision-making forums, such as women, young people and children, or outside of the community with external stakeholders such as local or national authorities. In this way, video can supplement or replace traditional ways people have of advocating for themselves, for example via the spoken or written word. This is especially powerful in communities with low levels of literacy, as making or watching videos doesn't require formal literacy skills.

#### Case History: Women use video to get their voice heard

In the community of San José Chilín in El Salvador, a group of women working with the NGO Caritas Chalatenango produced a short film about the need to protect a local spring which had been neglected by the community since the introduction of a drinking water system. However during floods, the spring is the only reliable source of water for

the community. The women showed the film in the community and to the local authorities, and as a result the all-male community water committee was mobilized to protect the water source.

“Birth of Water”

<http://vimeo.com/25144012>

### 3.3.1 Inside the community: involving marginalized groups in CMDRR

Community video has the potential to increase the participation of traditionally marginalized groups within the community such as women, young people and children, within CMDRR processes.

Young people are often particularly enthusiastic about community video, and are quick at learning how to use the video technology. Young people often do not participate in traditional CMDRR forums which are usually dominated by adults. However as a member of a community video production team they can engage with DRR issues in a motivating way, making videos about issues that affect their lives and communities. In addition to opening a space where young people can contribute to the CMDRR process, forming part of a community video production team also enables young people to learn new skills, build their self-confidence, and learn to work with other young people from their own and neighbouring communities.

### Case History: Children of El Tamarindo in defence of the mangrove swamps

In the coastal community of El Tamarindo in El Salvador, the NGO UNES worked with a group of children on environmental awareness, using video as a tool. Working with the facilitation team, the children made a video about the importance of protecting the mangrove swamps which surround their community, and also produced drawings which were turned into posters as part of the campaign. The children visited local officials in the mayor’s office to present their concerns about the protection of the mangrove swamp and filmed the meeting as a record. The final product was screened both in the community and to local officials, who committed to implementing municipal policies to protect the biodiversity of the marine coastal reserve.

“Lights! Camera! Action! Children in Defence of the Mangrove Swamps”

<http://vimeo.com/24951721>

### 3.3.2 Outside the community: Video as a tool for communication with external stakeholders

*"People in the community realize that using video they can show municipal authorities that their problems are real. Or that through video they can request support from different organizations/donors".*

*- Allan Martell, Former Communications Coordinator, Acua, El Salvador*

*"Its not the same to read things as to see and hear them. So if we are going to present a project to the ministry in a folder, its not the same as presenting a video where they see our reality".*

*- Ceci, teenager from the community of Santa Rita, El Salvador*

#### Advocacy

In the context of CMDRR programmes, there are many measures people can take themselves to reduce the risks in their lives, however there are often things that are outside their control and need to be achieved through engagement with others (Slick, 2010). Visual media such as video are powerful advocacy tools, enabling communities to show their realities in a more immediate way and communicate their needs and demands more effectively to government and other decision makers, as part of a broader advocacy strategy.

#### Case History: Pollution in Pañanalapa

In the community of Pañanalapa in Chalatenango, El Salvador, a girls' community video production team working with Caritas, created a video on the problem of a stream near their village that was being polluted by a local fish farm. The video was shown to the local mayor's office, who took up the case with the owner of the fish farm. This intervention was successful in preventing any further pollution of the stream.

"Pollution"

<http://www.vimeo.com/25480047>

#### Resource mobilization

Enabling communities at risk to have access to potential sources of resources is an important objective for disaster risk reduction (Cordaid, IIRR (2007)). Video demonstrating their needs, proposals and achievements can be a useful tool to enable communities to request support from different organizations/donors.

## Recording and reporting on DRR events

Previously people relied on mainstream media or government authorities for information, but the widespread availability of video technology together with the rise in online social media tools have encouraged an increase in 'citizen journalism'. Especially in post-disaster situations, the local community are those present during the initial stages of a disaster, and ordinary people are increasingly using video cameras and mobile phone video technology to record disaster events and community responses and to share these directly with local stakeholders or via the internet. Video can also be used to enable the community to register important events in their DRR programme, such as meetings with local authorities, or particular landmark events such as the completion of DRR infrastructure or other mitigation activities.

### Case History: Flooding in the community of El Encanto

NGO Acua began working with the community of El Encanto in the municipality of Santa Isabel Ishuatán in El Salvador on the use of video as a disaster risk reduction tool as part of the CMDRR programme in 2009. In June 2010, the community began to flood in the early hours of the morning as a result of rains from Tropical Storm Alex. A member of the youth community video production team took the camera at 3am and filmed both the rising waters and the response of the community. When both the authorities and Acua arrived at the community, the youth video

team were able to show them the footage, as evidence both of the magnitude of the disaster and the way in which the community had responded to the initial stages of the floods, including the mobilization of the community disaster brigades. In this case, video enabled the community to "show to the local authorities who may not have believed the words alone but now are able to see for themselves what the existing conditions or impact is" (Slick, video interview, 2011)

## Learning

*"Community adaptation is essentially about change in human behaviour, and such change is more likely to happen when people find both intellectual and emotional reasons to think and act differently. Audiovisual tools can help to communicate scientifically complex issues in simple ways, with reliable accuracy, and using aesthetic approaches that can inspire and motivate, sometimes in surprising ways."*

- Suarez et al. (2008)

*"Development workers must actively involve stakeholders in the whole process of knowledge creation and knowledge sharing"*

- IIRR, Cordaid (2007)

*"A video from one community can now be taken to another community to explain the process generally of what they have gone through with disaster risk reduction and to invite that community to start participating in a similar process"*

- Jean Slick (2011)

Promoting continuous learning around disaster risk reduction in vulnerable communities is a central element of CMDRR. The process of making a video enables communities to learn about disaster risks and climate change, from the process of selecting a story to writing the script to shooting and editing.

The product created can also be used as a learning tool, as a way of sharing realities, experiences and stories with other communities and external actors. A short film showing the experiences of one community can be shown in another community to stimulate discussion, analyse lessons learned, provide inspiration, and act as motivation for change. For example, “Videos showing how a variety of strategies can address relevant threats can be an effective means of transferring good practices and lessons learned”. (Suarez et al 2008)

### 3.4 Video as a tool for empowerment and self-transformation

*“Video is a permanent opportunity for transformation”*

*- Eberto Dominguez, Caritas Chalatenango, El Salvador*

In addition to being a tool for promoting change at the community level, community video also has a powerful effect at the individual level, empowering those involved. From the simple fact of being trusted to use the camera, to the psychological impact of seeing yourself speaking on a big screen watched by others from your community, being involved in community video is often a transformative experience.

*“I feel very good. Because you have trusted me – for me to have this camera right here!”*

*- María Margarita Miranda, Villager, San José Quelacasque, El Salvador*

*“CV is about facilitating processes which permit people to realise who they are, what they have, what they do, what they are looking for, what they want. And from this, to generate for themselves different conditions for their own development”*

*- Eberto Dominguez, Caritas Chalatenango, El Salvador*

*“Working with video gives young people a sense of security and confidence. Participating in group activities helped young people from different communities and backgrounds to integrate and relate to each other in a new way”*

*- Alfredo Carias, Unes, El Salvador*

*“Being immersed in this tool, both using it as well as being exposed to the lens, helped them to develop a sense of self confidence”*

*- Allan Martell, ACUA, El Salvador*



## 4. Community Video in Practice

### 4.1 Overview of implementation steps

*"At the start, I thought that I was going to produce my own videos. It took me a while to understand that CV means giving the tool to the community"*

*- Allan Martell, Former Communications Coordinator & CV Facilitator, ACUA El Salvador*

While every process is different, and it is important to maintain a flexible approach to working with communities, there exist a number of common steps involved in using Community Video. The process is accompanied by a facilitator or facilitators who collectively have knowledge of the community itself, of CMDRR and of Community Video methodology. Where video is being used exclusively for internal purposes within the community, the first four steps comprise the essential building blocks. When the video is also intended to be used for external audiences, then steps 5 and/or 6 may also be relevant.

**Step 1: Community members learn the basics of how to use the video equipment**

Icebreakers are used to help people to feel comfortable in the group and with the equipment. Some people are initially nervous around the camera, either because they are afraid they might break it or because they feel threatened by how they might be portrayed. Many community mem-

bers will never have seen a video camera before. Establishing an atmosphere of trust is essential.

The organization Insight offers some good ideas for games and exercises which can be used to help introduce the equipment to the community in their manual "Insights into Participatory Video" which can be downloaded for free from [www.insightshare.org](http://www.insightshare.org).

**Step 2: Community members decide which DRR issue will be the subject of their film**

Using participatory techniques, the facilitators work with the community or community group to help them establish what DRR issue(s) will be the focus of the film.

**Step 3: Community members shoot and contribute to the editing of their material**

Community video production teams undertake, with the support of the facilitators, the creation of a short film or video message. They are responsible for all stages of the process from storyboarding, to operating the camera, to conducting interviews. If necessary, the group can work with the facilitator or an external editor to create the final product, or in some cases community members themselves learn basic editing skills. In either case, the community has control over the editing process and approves the final version of the video.

Step 4: Films are screened in the community, followed by discussion and dialogue

Screenings are organized in the community followed by discussion on the issues addressed in the video. This allows people to see the fruits of their work, and generates interest and awareness amongst the wider community regarding the message of the film. In this way, the video becomes an important tool for opening channels of communication within the community.

Step 5: Films are shown to decision makers such as local authorities

Where appropriate, targeted screenings can be organized for local decision makers, as part of a community's awareness-raising or advocacy strategy.

Step 6: Films are shared with other communities to identify common problems and learn from each others' experiences

Where relevant, final videos can also be screened in neighbouring communities, or in communities in different regions or countries which suffer from similar disaster hazards.

(Adapted from "Insights into Participatory Video", Lunch & Lunch (2006))

## 4.2 Role of the facilitator

*"The role of the facilitator is to facilitate processes which permit people to realise who they are, what they have, what they do, what they are looking for, what they want. And from this, to generate for themselves different conditions for their own development"*

*- Eberto Dominguez, Caritas Chalatenango, El Salvador*

*"I had to learn that with CV the protagonist is not me, but the community"*

*- Allan Martell, Acua, El Salvador*

The primary role of the Community Video facilitator is to facilitate learning processes in the community. For many video professionals, this requires undergoing a substantial change from technician to facilitator, which requires a personal commitment and readiness to undergo change.

Some key elements involved in successfully facilitating community video processes include:

- Understanding the dynamics of a community and letting yourself be touched by their reality.
- Investing time and energy in establishing relationships of trust with the community.
- Listening to people and learning to be silent.
- Ensuring the participation of diverse points of view: women, men, young people, children.
- Discovering capacities in oneself and others.
- Learning together with the community, rather than going to teach them.

- Being ready to make mistakes.
- Not underestimating the community. Let them surprise you!
- Being ready to hand over control to the community, including giving voice to the community rather than speaking on their behalf.
- Learning from each experience.
- Going to work with an open mind, happy and enthusiastic!

In the words of two different MML CV facilitators:

*"If I arrive in a community as the facilitator of a process, the first thing is that I need to let myself be touched by their reality in order to be able to realize what is happening there. Each community has its own dynamic"*

*"[You need to] view the members of the community as human beings who have conflicts, aspirations, dreams, desires, a complexity like any human being"*

*"For me, participatory video is an opportunity: for growth, for learning, for integration, for unity, for contact, and for personal development"*

*"Two years ago I thought that participatory video was going with a camera to the communities, capturing their reality, giving them voice through this camera, and presenting it. Today, I realize that it is a much more integral, complex and profound process, dealing above all with human relations"*

*- Eberto Dominguez, Caritas Chalatenango, El Salvador*

*"The most difficult thing of the change of paradigm for me, [from being a trainer to a facilitator], is giving myself and others the opportunity to be wrong, and to learn from our mistakes. This comes from my insecurity as a technician, not being used to working with people. I was used to working alone on my processes and my results"*

*"At the start of the project, I was treating people from the community like children, telling them the most obvious things... I had a need to explain absolutely everything to them... I didn't give people the chance to "run with it" themselves..."*

*"[Working with CV] has been liberating for me. It's been an internal revolution!"*

*- Allan Martell, ACUA, El Salvador*

### 4.3 Additional considerations

Additional elements to consider include:

#### Process vs. product

There can at times be a tension between community video as a process and as a product. In the former, the technical quality of the product is unimportant, as the objective of awareness raising, learning or empowerment is achieved through the creation of the video. Where the product is seen as important, usually because it is destined for an external audience, there can be quality issues such as sound, which impede its distribution via certain channels, and quality concerns can often interfere with the participatory nature of the process.

### Incorporating a gender perspective

Planning and implementation through all phases needs to be gender sensitive, taking into account the role of men, women, the elderly, young people and children within the community. Women's knowledge in particular needs to be valued and their voices heard.

### Conflict management

Participation in any social change activities can raise conflicts within communities. CV facilitators should be trained in conflict management, and methods found to engage different actors in a meaningful way while providing adequate protection and conflict management measures.

### Sustainability

One of the key, and to a large extent unresolved challenges in most ICT4D projects is the issue of sustainability, and a commitment to social, technical and financial sustainability is required from the start of any project. An important priority should be utilizing and building local capacities, including those of local organizations, as well as creating linkages to advisors, resource providers, government bodies and neighbouring communities. Public-private partnerships can help to share costs and ensure sustainability. Outside facilitators should withdraw from a direct role when the project is complete, while ensuring the availability of ongoing guidance to communities as needed.

### The iterative nature of change

It is important to take into account that as in any truly participative community development process, small steps are significant, and outside actors (donors etc.) should not expect to see dramatic changes in the short timeframe of most projects.



Filming in Cementera, Honduras, 2010



## 5. Using Community Video Throughout the CMDRR Cycle

Community Video is best used as part of a suite of other methods that have become standard parts of community managed disaster risk reduction (Suarez et al, 2008). The use of CV need to be aligned with specific activities in the CMDRR project, in the same way that other tools, such as community mapping, or community dialogue, are used in the CMDRR process. As when selecting and using any tool, the facilitation process is central to ensuring the benefits of the tool are reaped.

There are four interrelated, sequential steps involved in operationalizing the CMDRR approach :

1. Participatory community disaster risk assessment and analysis;
2. Disaster risk reduction measures (development and contingency plan);
3. Organization of risk reduction group;
4. Participatory planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning.

Some examples of practical exercises or applications of community video throughout the CMDRR cycle are included here:

### 5.1 Participatory community disaster risk assessment and analysis

Several of the participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and participatory learning and action (PLA)-type tools included in the first stage of the CMDRR methodology can be adapted to be used with community video. The purpose is to raise awareness and promote reflection amongst community members regarding disaster risk and facilitate the identification and implementation of disaster risk reduction actions.

Some examples include:

#### Village History

Members of the community video group conduct interviews with elders about the history of their community and how it has changed over time. Others operate the camera and film the interviews. Different members of the group should try out different roles. The group then either edits the material themselves or works with an editor (who can be a local specialist or NGO staff member trained in editing) to create the video. Screen to a wider group in the community and facilitate a discussion around the history of the community, attempting to reach a consensus around the major events and the year they happened. This exercise works particularly well with young people carrying out interviews with the elders of the community.

### Case History: The history of Cementera

During a community video day in Cementera, Honduras, a group of young people interviewed an elderly resident about the history of their community. He told them the story about the origin of the community's name, how during a cholera outbreak, there had been no cemetery in which to bury the dead, so the community had to bury people in a cave. For that reason, the community of Cementera (cemetery in Spanish) was called Cementera. The young people had not been aware of this aspect of the history of their community, and that night projected the video in the community, where many others learnt for the first time about different aspects of their community history.

### Transect Walk

When carrying out the transect walk exercise, request community members to take it in turns to use the camera and to film what they see as they walk through the community, narrating as they film. As in the above exercise, the community group can then either edit their material themselves or work with an editor to produce a common point of view, and then project the video at the end of the day for the group and wider community to view and discuss.

Other exercises designed to build a relationship with the community, such as *Do-it-yourself* and *Aspirations assessment* can also work well with video, and offer a good opportunity for community video groups to practice using the equipment and creating short videos. (See IIRR, Cordaid, 2007, for details).

### Hazard Assessment

Organize a community video day focusing on one specific hazard. The group decides how they want to present the hazard, what story and message they want to tell, go out and film in the community, and either edit the material themselves or work with an editor to create their video. Screen to a wider group in the community and facilitate a discussion around the hazard and how it affects the lives of different community members (men, women, children).

Similar short videos could be produced around community Vulnerabilities and Capacities.

### Disaster Risk Analysis

Using the same methodology as in the previous exercise, ask the group to make a short video which shows the three elements in the risk formula: hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities, in relation to their community. The video can form one component of the community's disaster risk analysis processes. Used together with other inputs, the creation, viewing and discussing of the video can contribute to the community drawing conclusions regarding their degree of disaster risk, and making suggestions for disaster risk reduction measures.

## Analysis of Community Participation

Film a CMDRR meeting in the community. The video acts as a mirror, showing who is present (men, women, young people, children), who speaks, who participates, how decision making works, whether the contributions of women are being valued etc. Watching back the footage with the community can stimulate a rich analysis of power relations in the community.

### 5.2 Disaster risk reduction measures

#### Video Contingency Plan

In this activity, the group makes a video version of the community's disaster contingency plan, to supplement the written plan produced. Research from the health sector suggest that videos improve recall of emergency procedures proving to have an impact that was absent in written disaster plans. This is especially useful for raising awareness of the contents of the plan amongst illiterate or semi-illiterate community members.

#### Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis

In the case of a disaster occurring in the community, a video camera kept in the community can be used to record both the course of the disaster, the type and extent of damages, and the community's initial response, as part of the community's damage assessment and needs analysis. The footage can be shared with local authorities, NGOs and other stakeholders in order to inform

them about the situation and mobilize appropriate external assistance if needed. Further down the line after the community has recovered from the disaster, the video will also be valuable to aid reflection and learning.

### 5.3 Organization of risk reduction group

Rather than there existing specific exercises or activities where CV could be used for this stage of CMDRR, in general CV serves to motivate and strengthen groups and brings different members of the community into the process.

### 5.4 Participatory planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning

#### Monitoring and Evaluation Videos

Community video can be used to complement the participatory M&E process through interviews, on-site visual monitoring and most significant change stories. The community groups select relevant individuals to interview in their communities and film relevant key events from the CMDRR programme as they happen. As footage is collected over the course of the project, screenings can be held to enable community members and other stakeholders to recollect, reflect on and discuss changes and progress in the community. The video can also be shared with donors and other groups, and where possible, their reactions can be filmed to share with the communities, enabling a valuable feedback loop. (InsightShare, 2011).

## Best Practice Videos

Communities can make films to share successful disaster risk reduction strategies to help other communities prepare for disasters. These can be screened in neighbouring villages or even in other regions where people experience similar hazards. These also serve to create knowledge that is valuable for DRR practitioners, academics and others; in this case the internet offers an effective distribution channel. The permission of the communities involved should always be obtained prior to sharing any video products with external audiences.

## Community Video Festivals

Either fixed or itinerant community video festivals are a form of motivating community video producers, celebrating their achievements, and enabling videos produced to be shared with different communities, government authorities and other stakeholders.

### Central American Community Video Festival “See What We See!”

In 2011, the 3rd Central American Community Video Festival was held as a space to promote dialogue and reflection between communities participating in the regional CMDRR programme and Mira Mi Lente, as well as with other guest communities. By screening videos produced and edited by groups of community video producers, the festival seeks to raise awareness surrounding the risks present in their communities and the search for alternative solutions.

The themes of the short videos shown in the festival were: drought, water scarcity, floods, landslides, deforestation and pollution. The festival was held in two different municipalities of El Salvador and one in Honduras, with a prize giving ceremony organized in a prestigious cinema in San Salvador.

## 5.5 Sustaining CMDRR

### Resource Mobilization Videos

Video is a powerful tool to enable communities to show their reality to potential donors. A resource mobilization video should demonstrate the problem to be addressed, outline what actions the community has already undertaken with their own resources, and what further interventions are proposed for which they require external support.

## 5.6 Advocacy

Videos can enable communities to present their problems, needs and demands to decision makers such as government authorities in a more powerful way, as part of a broader advocacy strategy. In this case, communities can create short videos to educate and mobilize external stakeholders around specific issues. Normally, a specific audience is identified for the video and a clear story or message is presented. The reaction of decision makers to the video can be filmed to show back to the community, ensuring a feedback loop is established.

### Safety and security

Producing advocacy videos can at times imply a range of potential risks to the filmmakers and those who are filmed. These risks may come before, during or even long after the film is made, and ways to anticipate or minimize those risks should be seriously taken into account.

See: WITNESS. 'Video for Change' for more information on this topic.



Filming an environmental advocacy film in El Salvador, 2009

## 6. Building Capacity in Community Video for CMDRR

This section explores the different capacities, skills and knowledge needed to integrate the use of community video in disaster risk reduction work. From establishing multidisciplinary teams, to training CV facilitators, to selecting equipment, the successful implementation of CV requires human, material and financial resources, together with an investment of time and energy from the different stakeholders involved.

### 6.1 Establishment of multidisciplinary teams

Community video entails developing collaboration between NGOs, filmmakers and local communities. Building partnerships between different organizations and institutions requires an investment in relationship building. Using tools such as stakeholder analysis, and establishing clear roles and responsibilities, can be useful at the onset of any intervention.

## MML Stakeholders Analysis



Finding qualified professionals or creating hybrid teams which incorporates skills in community video and CMDRR is not always easy. Most filmmakers and video professionals do not have experience in community video or in development processes, and acquiring these skills can at times involve a substantial learning curve. And the multidisciplinary nature of this process requires reconciling sometimes competing points of view, priorities and approaches of different individuals. Those with a more technical background need to be open to learning and committed to the philosophy behind participatory processes, while community workers need to be prepared to recognize the value of video technology and embrace its use.

## 6.2 Training facilitators in CV for CMDRR

Having well-trained facilitators is a prerequisite for success, and both the project's leadership and facilitation teams need to combine expertise in DRR, video and community facilitation. This often entails building the capacity of a cadre of people with expertise in these different areas.

Different options can include:

- Conducting field work jointly by film makers versed in community video and CMDRR practitioners;
- Training CMDRR facilitators in the use of video;
- Training communications staff in CV & CMDRR.

### Training of Community Video Facilitators in Central America

In MML, DRR, communications and field staff from four local NGOs were trained in CMDRR & Community Video. The training was based on a learning-by-doing approach, combining classroom-based theory with direct practice in communities. After the initial training, the local NGO staff then participated in periodic learning events to share experiences and deepen their knowledge of different conceptual or technical aspects of CV. They also received ongoing technical support from a local video professional.

A small group of these facilitators, who demonstrated a particular interest and aptitude for community video, formed the Central American Pool of Facilitators. The Pool was the focus for follow up external training and advisory support as well as serving as an important mechanism for peer-to-peer support and learning amongst its members. It was conceived of as a common resource that the participating organizations could call upon to facilitate different community processes. They are also taking a leading role in replicating the MML experience in other parts of Central America and are a key element in the sustainability of the initiative.

### 6.3 Selecting equipment

The type of equipment selected should be defined based on the cultural and economic realities of each community and what access they have to technology. However, in general, experience has shown that small, tapeless camcorders are most appropriate, not only from a cost point of view, but also as community members generally find them less intimidating to use. Basic accessories include a microphone, tripod, memory card and extra battery. For editing, a desktop or laptop PC is recommended, together with an easy-to-use editing software such as Adobe Premiere Elements. For screening in the communities, either the computer screen can be used, or for larger audiences, a projector.



Exploring the equipment, Cementera, Honduras, 2010.

A basic community video kit could include:

- Small camcorder
- Handheld microphone
- Tripod
- Memory card
- Extra battery
- Desktop or laptop PC for editing
- Editing software such as Adobe Premiere Elements
- External hard drive to store videos and footage
- Projector for screenings (optional)

Ideally, each community would have its own video camera, so it is available for use as needed by community video producers, including in disaster situations. Editing facilities can if needed be centrally located, so that several communities can share one computer, both for cost reasons and for reasons of security and maintenance.

The issue of community ownership of equipment provides an opportunity for community organization. Protocols need to be developed which set out: Who keeps the camera? Who can use it? And under what terms?

Video technology must be sustainable and regularly used. Local capacity to maintain and repair equipment is critical so that it is functional and ready when needed. Equipment needs to be stored in a clean, dry and secure environment to avoid the risk of damage or theft. The equipment can also be used for other development interventions, or for cost-recovery initiatives where appropriate.



Editing in the community, Cementera, Honduras, 2010.

### Case History: Maintaining the equipment

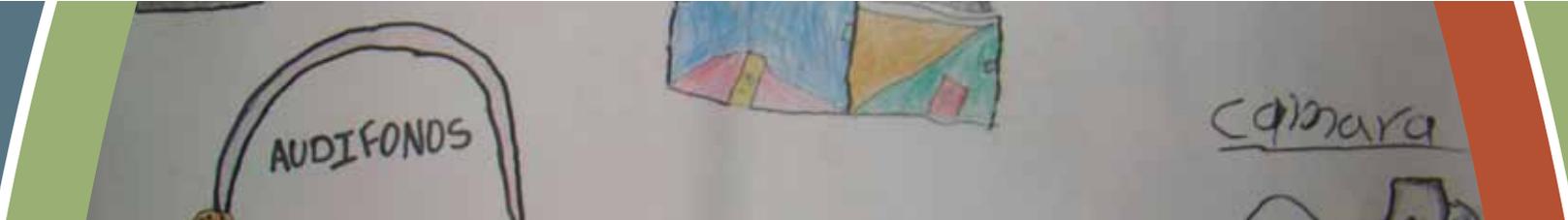
In Santa Rita in Chalatenango, El Salvador, the youth video production team made a video of the village's annual festival, and sold DVD copies to ex residents living in the United States. The proceeds were used to establish a fund to pay for any maintenance needed to the video equipment.

### Video-enabled Mobile Phones

*"Visual imagery has a unique power to move people to action. The camera of choice today is a video-enabled mobile phone."* WITNESS [www.witness.org](http://www.witness.org)

Citizen reporting for example of disasters and conflicts using mobile phones is rapidly increasing, with dramatic footage uploaded onto sites such as YouTube. The use of mobile phones in CV has huge potential that is waiting to be explored.

Half of the world's population are already mobile phone users, and mobile phones have already reached many poor communities. Growth rates are currently fastest in the world's poorest regions, and coverage is soon expected to reach 90% of the world's population (Heeks, 2009).



## 7. NGO and Professional Video Production

*"For me as a donor its interesting to see what's going on and to learn from that."*

*– Sasja Kamil, DRR Policy Adviser, Cordaid*

### 7.1 NGO video production

The video production skills developed by local NGO staff also serve to enable them to make their own videos. From institutional videos to video reports, for accountability, awareness raising and advocacy purposes, video can be a valuable tool for strengthening local organizations' communication with donors, the public and other external stakeholders. Specific benefits can include:

- Use of video for monitoring, evaluation and systematization of their projects, as well as for capturing lessons learnt and significant change stories.
- Video material can be used to share in an interesting and entertaining way, lessons and stories of impact within and outside of their organizations, demonstrating in a convincing way the impact of their initiatives.

- The artistic expression of the communities, materialized in digital video, can form a new channel of communication with the organizations, allowing for an honest and open dialogue during the "feedback loop" processes and joint editing of material.
- Video material expressing the view point of the communities, their concerns, vulnerabilities, capacities and proposals, can serve to complement advocacy and resource mobilization activities.

#### Case History: Video Advocacy for COP16

Participation in the MML project enhanced Salvadoran NGO Unes' capacity to use video to meet their organizational objectives. Together with young people from the communities, Unes produced a video on climate change which was used as part of the Mesoamerican Climate Justice Campaign in preparation for the UN Climate Change Conference that was held in Mexico in 2010. The video was screened in three public forums during the conference, as well as with NGOs, donors, municipalities, journalists and national TV stations in El Salvador.

"Climate Justice Campaign in El Salvador"  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S41S4XZmWg0>

## 7.2 Professional Video Production

Separate broadcast quality documentaries can be produced separately with expert interviews and professional camera handling. The documentary and community videos can also be brought together as a hybrid film, combining the local ‘rough and ready’ and the more ‘polished’ professional video style. (Suarez et al, 2008) Video can be used to systematize the processes and impacts of CMDRR programmes, highlighting significant events, documenting lessons learned from the viewpoint of local partners and communities and capturing significant change stories. In this way, video can complement a traditional written report by communicating realities through images and people’s direct voices in powerful way.



Humanitarian Productions crew filming in Cementera, Honduras, 2008

Such videos can be especially valuable for international donors, to enable them to share and showcase their work with governments, the public, international organizations, and local partners.

### Case History: Rosa’s Flowers

This video created by Humanitarian Productions in collaboration with local partner Caritas tells the story of Rosa and Javier who live in the community of Cementera, Honduras. Through participation in the village’s CMDRR project, this family realized that their house was located in an area of high risk of floods and landslides, and so took the decision to relocate and build a new house on safer ground. It documents their story over a two-year period, allowing others to see their situation and be inspired by their example.

“Rosa’s Flowers”

<http://vimeo.com/27781283>

### Case History: Mira Mi Lente Project Year 2

Humanitarian Productions documented the process and impacts of MML and the Central American CMDRR programme over a three-year period. The focus was on the following elements:

- The relationship between local partners and communities;
- Tangible results and impact over time;
- Technological innovations in the area of risk reduction;
- Support systems and partnerships;
- Technical processes of the CMDRR programme.

This video showcases the main activities, achievements and challenges encountered during the second year of the project in three communities in El Salvador and Honduras.

“I Learn Looking Through My Lens”

<http://www.vimeo.com/20390743>

## ANNEX: Mira Mi Lente: Participating Organizations

### Asprode

ASPRODE, is a Salvadorean NGO with more than 10 years experience, which implements projects and programmes, especially at the Central American level, as well as providing professional consulting and training services to international cooperation agencies, national institutions and regional public and private institutions, which work on development projects and programmes, in order to ensure the achievement of their institutional objectives and the integral development of their target populations. One of its key areas of work is the strengthening of the capacity of communities and local organizations for the promotion and implementation of Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction within Central America.

[www.asprode.org](http://www.asprode.org)



## Cordaid

Cordaid is an NGO based in the Netherlands which combines more than 90 years' experience and expertise in emergency aid and structural poverty eradication. They are one of the biggest development organizations with a network of almost a thousand partner organizations in 36 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Since 2004, Cordaid has been supporting the disaster risk reduction work of 100 southern partner organizations and the communities they work with in 10 countries (El Salvador; Honduras; Uganda; Kenya; Ethiopia; Malawi; Zambia; Indonesia; India; Bangladesh). Between those countries, the risks addressed differ: from landslides and volcanoes, and from droughts to floods. Partners are trained in DRR, and in turn they train communities and staff of other development organizations. Cordaid is currently developing further ideas for expanding and scaling-up CMDRR and giving more emphasis to longer-term approaches that increase the focus on climate change adaptation (CCA).

[www.cordaid.nl](http://www.cordaid.nl)



## Humanitarian Productions

Humanitarian Productions SC is an Anglo-Mexican values-driven company based in Mexico City with three main areas of work: Humanitarian Video & Films, Humanitarian Digital Media and Humanitarian Consulting. Catering exclusively to the humanitarian and development sectors, working with governmental, non-governmental and private entities, the focus of the company's work is documenting lessons and experiences, celebrating achievements and promoting the richness of learning and the importance of quality and accountability. Humanitarian Productions has brought together its expertise in both video and disaster risk reduction to work with NGOs and international organizations in Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa.

[www.humanitarianproductions.com](http://www.humanitarianproductions.com)



## Local Partner Organizations

- ACUA (Asociación Comunitaria Unida por el Agua y la Agricultura), El Salvador
- Caritas Chalatenango, El Salvador
- Caritas Santa Rosa de Copán, Honduras
- UNES (Unidad Ecológica Salvadoreña), El Salvador.

## Bibliography

Asia and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT). (2010). 'ICT for Disaster Risk Reduction. Case Study 2'.

Gregory, Sam ed. (2005). 'Video for Change: A Guide for Advocacy and Activism'. WITNESS.

Heeks, Richard. (2009). 'The ICT4D 2.0 Manifesto: Where Next for ICTs and International Development?'. Development Informatics Working Paper Series Paper no. 42.

IIRR, Cordaid. (2007). 'Building Resilient Communities: A Training Manual on Community-Managed Disaster Risk Reduction'.

InsightShare. (2011). 'Participatory Video for Monitoring and Evaluation'. <http://insightshare.org/engage/services/pv-monitoring>

Lunch, Nick & Lunch, Chris. (2006). 'Insights into Participatory Video'. Insight.

Slick, Jean. (2009). 'Participatory Video as a Tool for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Adaptation: Instructional Design Considerations'. Unpublished.

Suarez, Pablo et al. (2008). 'Video-Mediated Approaches for Community-Level Climate Adaptation'. IDS Bulletin Volume 39 Number 4 September 2008.

White, Shirley ed. (2003). 'Participatory Video: Images that Transform and Empower'. Sage Publications.

*Humanitarian*  
PRODUCTIONS