

Older People Make a Video



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Older people on the first day of shooting.

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Front Cover Photo: Punchinona getting familiar with the camera on day two with guidance from Janaka.

All photos courtesy of Lynette McGowan/HAI/HASL


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Introduction

Context

Asia Pacific is the fastest ageing region in the world, yet the development implications of this demographic revolution have not yet emerged as a mainstream issue.

The International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 (MIPAA), adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid (April 2002); identifies 'Images of Ageing' as a key issue. The Plan states that the 'media are harbingers of change and can be guiding factors in fostering the role of older people in development strategies'.

Project

The Asia Training Centre on Ageing (ATCOA), as part of the HelpAge International (HAI) Regional Development Centre in Chiang Mai, Thailand is aware of the potential role of mass and alternative media on ageing issues.

There is an increasing interest in the region for more focussed learning and training on the role of media to increase awareness of ageing issues and to foster the growth of positive attitudes towards older people. With a clear view to build on this interest and past activities, a Regional Media Project was launched in 2002 on 'Utilising Mass and Alternative Media for Mainstreaming Ageing in Asia', involving older people and HAI members and partners in ten countries in the Asia/Pacific region.

An innovative component of this project was a training workshop with older people which took place in Gorokgoda, Sri Lanka in September 2002.

Aim

The aim of this training workshop was to enable older people to make a short video about their community by themselves. The purpose was to give older people a direct means of expression, empower them and increase their self-esteem. The key objectives were;

- To train older people and field workers in participatory video techniques and use of video camera,
- To provide a non-technical experiential learning opportunity within the community.

How to use this guide

The purpose of this publication is to capture, with both images and text, the process and learning involved with the older people who produced the video about themselves and their community. This guide is meant to be used by the HAI regional and global network as an example of a community video process with and by older people.

The step-by-step process can be a guide for older people, HAI partners, and other organisations who are interested in trying something similar in their communities. In the broader sense, a video production of good quality that is a direct expression of older people's contributions and concerns, may be a useful tool in advocacy and awareness-raising with a broader audience.

Those readers who would like more guidance on enhancing their production and use of video in development with older people, may contact the HelpAge International Asia-Pacific Regional Development Centre, for the 'Working with Video' publication (contact information on back cover).

Why participatory video?

The media have become tools in the hands of the powerful. The two areas of society which use media the most are politicians to amass power, and the commercial sector to influence consumer behaviour. Older people often remain excluded and marginalised in mainstream media and development.

Media community surveys conducted with older people and community members in nine countries (the first key activity of the regional media project), reported a very strong demand from older people to be involved in the production of media from consultation to creative work.

In this process of 'handing over the camera', older people are free to record what they regard as important in their own lives and the broader life of their community.

"Video opens up opportunities for people to have access to, and control over, the tools for communicating information. Video can be used in a variety of ways, and modern cameras are sufficiently simple to use for almost any participant... The fact that it is enjoyable to use, adds immeasurably to its potential... Participatory communications (and video) give people a voice." - 'Communications & Development: a practical guide' DFID Social Development Division, Adam Burke, March 1999

Why Gorokgoda?

The decision to hold the workshop with older people in the Gorokgoda village was an outcome of the media community survey conducted in three villages. Gorokgoda was one of the three communities selected for study and the level of participation of older persons from this village was higher than that of the other two communities.

During the community media survey, everyone became very interested in the video camera and how it worked.





Karuna concentrating on how to operate the camera with guidance from Sudath.

Creating a video is best accomplished with a small group of people, so thirteen older people, (seven women and six men) took part in this workshop. Since over 40 older people participated in the media community survey, it was decided that the best way to select the 'videomakers' was to use two criteria – 1) interest in making a video and 2) participants availability to stay for five days. If there were still too many people for the video training, then a lottery was suggested.

Acknowledgements

First we wish to thank the older members of the Gorokgoda community who shared their opinions so freely during the media community survey. Then we give our special gratitude to the older videomakers who enthusiastically opened themselves up to a previously unknown area of experience. Their quickness at grasping new skills and technology and their creative approaches was an inspiration. In addition, this activity could not have taken place without the support and organisation of Ms. Indira Haputhanthrige (Gorokgoda Community Organiser) and community volunteers too numerous to mention.

We acknowledge the collaborating partner, HelpAge Sri Lanka (HASL), and their staff who skillfully coordinated many aspects of the process and provided facilitation and production assistance.

Outstanding technical support and guidance was provided by Janaka Jayasekera with Sri Lanka Television Training Institute and Sudath Devapriya with the Video Team of TVT. We were also in the good hands of several competent camera and equipment persons. In addition, Dick Vigers provided technical support as well as overall media consultation within the project.

Annie Kurian skillfully facilitated the process and Lynette McGowan, with HAI/ATCOA, provided coordination and kept everyone on track.

The 'Mainstreaming Ageing in the Media' Project is supported by the United Kingdom Government Department for International Development through its Civil Society Challenge Fund and by Help the Aged.

The Process

Day 1: About Me

The process begins

To begin with, the participants learnt about the process involved in making a video and the planned schedule of the five-day workshop. In the first three days, the participants would develop the material that was required for the video, on the fourth day decisions would be made by participants regarding the material that should be used to tell their story, and on the fifth day, the video would be ready for viewing.

Building the schedule

A suggested guide or framework for the week was presented: "Talking about myself, then my family and community." The participants were asked to give their ideas on what they wanted to cover in each broad subject area. Their ideas were grouped together.



Older people wrote their ideas on cards to further develop the content of the video.

Day 1 – About Myself	Day 2 - About My Family and Friends	Day 3 – About My Community
My name and age Skills that I have recite poems give speeches somersault My hobbies Be with my grandchildren Go on pilgrimages Watch TV Listen to radio Sing	Time spent with family and children We live with our children & grandchildren How children started leaving home My siblings I live happily with my children How my wife and children spend their time How I spend my time with my friends How we go on pilgrimages Charity work I do I have no friends, books are my friends I have economic hardships, but I live happily with my family and friends I work as a farmer	Historical Perspective How the village started Services and Facilities Lack of basic facilities Income & Prosperity

The group was divided into three smaller groups. Each group gave themselves a name, they were; *Sigiriya* (name of a famous mountain), *Dutugemunu* (king), and *Nelum* (lotus). Each team also consisted of a facilitator/participant from HASL and a technical resource person.

'Introducing Myself' – pointing and shooting

Everyone took turns at being behind and in front of the camera. The table below summarises the learning and purpose of the exercise for both camera person/interviewer and the interviewee.

Camera Person/Interviewer	Interviewee
Recognise parts of the camera Touching and getting familiar in handling the camera Operating the on and off and listening to on/off sounds Filming a team member while speaking Signaling the team member after setting the camera in motion Guiding the team member to speak to the point while the camera is in motion	Relax and proper facial expression Talk to the point Make eye contact with the camera lens

It was noted that participants were more nervous in handling the camera than actually talking in front of the camera.

Janaka giving a short introduction on how the camera works including the major parts of the camera - the best way to learn is hands on work with the camera.



Reflections

- Most people stated they were extremely happy about the experience of being able to handle an expensive and sophisticated camera for the first time in their life.
- They only see films on television but did not know the process – now they know what it's like to be behind the camera.
- A few people had questions such as why their village was chosen and what the purpose of the video was and what benefits would the older people in the community get as a result of this production.
- Some older people felt that this technology is most suited for children and not them.



First time for Seelawathi to use the camera - operating the on/off function.

There was further discussion about the purpose of the video. It was pointed out that even when videos have been made about older people and their situation, usually they are made by others, and often older people are not fully part of the process.

Day 2: About My Lifestyle, Friends and Family

Viewing and Discussion

- 'My children laughed when they heard what we were doing; they wanted to know why we were doing this.' - female participant
- 'I'm surprised that older women can handle this camera. Sometimes they don't know how to even handle the television.' - male participant
- 'I like the way of talking first about myself, then others and my community. I've learned new things about my neighbours.' - female participant

Viewing recordings from the first day.



Deciding what to record about my lifestyle

The group discussed what the content of the video recording should be on day two, since a lot had already been spoken about their families. Under the 'Family and Friends' segment, the teams agreed to pay more attention to their lifestyles and how they spent their leisure time.

The ideas written by individuals while preparing the schedule were felt to be important material on which they could build their sharing. Each person



Seelawathi sang a lullaby to her grandchild and her team captured it on video.

reflected on what they should highlight in front of the camera and then shared this with their team members for discussion. The groups then decided what and where to shoot.

Visiting our homes – zooming and panning

The second part of this activity was to visit the homes of each participant and film what had been talked about and decided on.



Podihamine using a hand-held camera with Dick.

The small groups learnt to zoom in and out on objects and people and pan an area and/or room. The activity brought the participants into contact with many of their families and friends and helped to create a 'neighbourly' feeling as part of the experience.

Day 3: About My Community

Viewing and Discussion

All participants commented that they were proud to be able to do everything they did. Two women said they were so happy that they were not able to sleep. Yet another said that the visit to her older friend had made her very happy.

Although the facilitator tried to help the participants to focus on common issues of older people in the community such as neglect, loneliness, and the less well-off; the participants were not willing to address these issues out of fear of reprimand by the community.

Identifying our audiences

Using a brain storming approach, the participants were asked to identify the groups to whom the video could be shown. They identified the target groups for the video in the following order:

- Villagers
- People in neighbouring villages
- Other cities
- National television network
- International community



Jayawardana relaxing in his home with the newspaper.



Choosing key themes and deciding what to record

In a large group discussion, the older participants were asked what key themes they wanted the video to portray and what should be recorded in each area. For this exercise they regrouped themselves according to their area of interest. The results of their group discussion is given below.

Small group discussions took place regularly to reflect on the process, content and to make decisions.

History of the village	Resources of the village	Lifestyle in the community	Difficulties in the village	Productive role of older people in community
Folklore related to village Historical cave The original villager and 'crown' of the village ruler	Tea, rubber, coconut Efforts women make such as vegetable cultivation and cattle farming Herbs	Husband/wife relationship Family and children Skills of older people Leisure	Lack of basic services such as school, post office, transportation, Lack of job opportunities for older people Struggles to earn income	Their input in making new roads Future plans for extension to village graveyard Involvement in social service activities

Visiting our community – walking with camera

The groups went out into the community for their final video recording session. In several of the theme areas, there were shots that still needed to be taken, such as the sacred cave, closed school, road construction site and graveyard. Footage of these locations was especially important in order to express the older people's concerns about their community and their roles in community improvement projects.

Deciding the story sequence and video content

After the shooting was over, the participants met together to view once again their production as well as to decide on what should be included in the video.

It was explained that the video should only be a production of 15-20 minutes, therefore not everything that had been recorded would be used. The participants were requested to develop their major theme areas and the best video material for each. They selected the order and the content to be included (which follows in chart format).



Sumanasekara receiving pointers on how to shoot the inside of the sacred cave.



Sumanasekara filming in the sacred cave as part of the introduction to the village.

The Final Order and Content of the Video

Major Areas	Content
1. History of the village	Introduction to village Cave and monastery Crown of Judge Manthra book Rock on which the present temple is situated Graphite mine
2. Resources of the village	Tea, rubber & coconut Carpentry Employment opportunity Livestock Vegetable and herbal cultivation
3. Lifestyle	Wife bringing tea to husband in paddy field Children and grandchildren - singing a lullaby Livelihood
4. Problems	Income and problems related to livelihood Poor community facilities Alcoholism Lack of job opportunities for children
5. Future of the village	Improvement that is required in the village Role of older people in the village Older people's active contribution to family



Gunadasa practising a panning shot.

Day 4: Assembling and Editing

Putting it together

The most important activity of the day was editing by the 'production unit' – consisting of the computer editor/ technician, the creative director, and other interested individuals. The participants were invited to stop by the editing site/house, and several came by to observe the process. The editing was done with Adobe Premier which is a non-linear computer video-editing programme.

In the late afternoon, the participants were able to view about half of the video and to comment on what was viewed, as this was the first draft production.

Day 5: Making Changes and Showing

An important part of the process took place on day five as the group of 'videomakers' were able to view the entire piece and make changes. They were asked what they liked and disliked, as well as how it could be improved. This led to a very interesting and insightful discussion which included specific feedback on the video as well as what was happening in the community as a result of the video project process.

Suggesting changes

- Needed to more strongly reflect their Buddhist traditions and add that the workshop was held on the temple premises.
- A couple of older people had been filmed practising meditation, but this had not been included. They asked for this to be added.
- A question was raised that perhaps there was too much emphasis on playing cards and reading the newspaper (this was part of their at-home leisure activities). The participant raising this issue was concerned about the possibility of international viewing audiences and their impression of older people in Sri Lanka.
- Discussion on the credit lines, since they had not been added yet. They requested that this be added and gave their suggestions.

Editing on day four in one of the participant's homes.

- Story of Punchinona was exemplary as she has tried hard to triumph over her problems.
- The video provided a good understanding of the poor service facilities in the village.

Feedback on the process

- Some participants mentioned a rumour in the village that the video might have been part of a wider approach (by some NGOs) of trying to convert people to Christianity. This issue was discussed at length as well as the role of participants in dispelling such rumours. The role of HelpAge Sri Lanka in their development work with older people was clarified.
- An introduction was required regarding the organisation that produced the video. A few participants stated that they were only the actors. This raised a very interesting issue of perception and 'ownership' of the process and video piece. At this point in the discussion, the older people were asked: (1) Who was behind the camera? (2) Who decided on what would be filmed each day? (3) Who chose the themes and content? This facilitation was helpful in re-assessing the participatory process and how the older people in the village themselves own the production.
- Creating the video was a great achievement for such a small group of people. Hence, the larger the group of participants, the greater the projects can be accomplished in the future.
- There was a suggestion that older people may want to continue meeting together on a regular basis, at least once a month, to socialise, share religious practices and discuss their concerns.

Choosing a title

In order to choose a title, a simple ranking exercise was used. The steps in the ranking were:

1. Possible titles were given by participants.
2. Criteria to rank the titles were chosen.
(The chosen title should portray older people and the village, be beautiful, and relate to what is seen.)
3. Each title was then scored against the three criteria.

And the winner was... 'Dusk and Technology.'

The resource persons guided the process to ensure that the finished video piece was balanced in terms of representation of each participant.

Description of 'Dusk and Technology'

- 80% of finished video material shot by older people themselves. The approximate 20% that was added (shot by the technical resource people), was partly done to create a finished piece that would not disappoint the older 'videomakers', since they would have acquired certain expectations from their own exposure to television and other media sources.
- 17 minutes in length
- Captions (in Sinhala) added by the editor, as well as the music and drumming sequence

Punchinona talking about herself with Alpinona shooting.





During the closing ceremony, certificates were given with one participant handing the certificate to the next.

Community Viewing and Responses

Approximately 70 people came to view the video, about half of whom were children.

Ms. Karunawathie Ranawaka, one of the participants, acknowledged and appreciated the contributions of Ms. Indira, the village coordinator. She also gave a blessing to the closing ceremony through a song.

Mr. Kulatunge, one of the male participants, recapped the process of the community research, selection of the 13 participants, and the workshop. His points were:

- In terms of the future of older people in the village, he said that the community should have someone to provide care for older people when needed; to bring awareness between the younger and older generation; and to influence political parties to be more responsive towards older people's needs. He also requested HelpAge Sri Lanka to continue to support the village.
- Despite all the positive effects of the video project, he said that a problem had arisen for the 13 participants, because a larger number of older people who participated in the community survey were not selected for the video production.
- He requested the community to consider that the video production process, even with the participation of a very small number of older persons, is an achievement for all. The process of making the video had encouraged all older people in the village to become involved in their community.

The Village Headman, Mr. D.A.D. Hemasiri, said that he was very happy about the outcome of this two-month process (starting with the media survey) that set in motion the production of a video, which he believed showed the true story of the life of older people in the village.

For the closing ceremony, as is usual in community life, a Buddhist monk opened the ceremony with a short recitation of prayers. A couple of older people added an emotional dimension by singing 'Kavi' (poems) as well.

Reflections

This workshop was a new and unique experience for everyone involved. As such, it was felt that the points learned should be considered in order to be helpful for future video workshops.

At the end of the first day, questions were raised by the older people indicating that the overall purpose of the video training and making of a video was not entirely clear. In retrospect, more time should have been spent in the first morning session on clarifying the overall purpose and objectives. This would have been a good time to also facilitate discussion on:

- Why Gorokgoda?
- What is the purpose of the video?
- Who should it be for?
- Why make a video in the first place?
- How will it be done?

Most of these issues/questions were raised during the process, but more could have been done to set the context at the beginning of the video training.

Even though the process was supposed to be participatory, it was not entirely so. For example, the overall purpose and key objectives of the workshop activity had been set ahead of time in order to plan and organise the activity. In a more ideal process and with more time in the community before starting the training, the objectives could have been developed within the group. Also, the workshop organisers suggested the overall framework for the weekly schedule – "From myself, to family, and community." However, once this was presented, the older participants did build the rest of the daily schedule. And as stated before, they decided on the daily content, themes, sequence, and title. They also viewed the video on two occasions, in order to make changes.

A small group approach was chosen to facilitate participation and give everyone more opportunity for hands-on experience and learning. The small groups were livelier and more interactive than the larger group discussions. The older women spoke up more freely in the small groups. Even though the small groups seemed to interact and get along well together, more could have been done to initially build-up group cohesion. If more time had been taken to do this, the groups may have worked even better together as a team and with possibly better outcomes.

There are a number of challenging logistical and practical issues to deal with in doing this kind of activity in a rural community setting. Some of the practical issues were movement of computers from place to place, setting up TV monitors for viewing, maintenance of camera equipment, electricity failures, and ongoing management and protection of expensive equipment. In this case, two community homes were used – one for editing and the other to store equipment securely overnight.

It can be challenging to secure technical resource persons who have an understanding of the development process and the broader purpose related to this kind of experience with older people. In this case, both outside technical persons were good in their interactions with the older participants and willing to allow them to handle the cameras with some support and guidance.

Facilitator team meetings were very important and should have occurred at the end of each day as well as in between sessions. In retrospect, more could have been done to clarify everyone's roles and responsibilities ahead of time. There were a number of facilitator team discussions throughout the workshop to discuss issues regarding the process, video content and logistics.

It had been expected that the entire team would be staying in the village – which would have allowed for more time as a team to discuss the process, offer feedback and coordinate the various activities. However, for a number of reasons, the technical resource persons had to travel back to Colombo each night. For activities of this kind, it is best for the overall process if the entire team stays in the community.

The older people of Gorokgoda enjoy their traditional drumming; this drumming sequence was added to the end of their video.



Conclusions

The older 'videomakers' were extremely interested and engaged in the process. There was only one 'drop-out,' related to this older person's personal situation, not the workshop.

This small group of older people were able to quickly learn and become comfortable with technology that was unfamiliar to them. They grasped many new concepts within the five days, and repeatedly said that it was not difficult for them. Older people are adaptable and flexible.

The older people's confidence was boosted in a short time – they repeatedly expressed their happiness at gaining new skills and experience.

Older participants had the opportunity to show their finished video to the wider community on the last day of the workshop. The following week, they traveled to Colombo, to attend the Regional Video Workshop, hosted by HAI/ ATCOA and HelpAge Sri Lanka. This took place in order to give the videomakers the chance to share their experience with international participants, as well as to present a case study for the HAI members and partners. HAI participants viewed the video with the older people and discussed the process. When older people were asked who they would like to show their video to and why, one person remarked that it could be shown to local officials to communicate their contributions and concerns regarding their community.

Staff from HelpAge Sri Lanka were introduced for the first time to the practice of making a participatory video with older people in the community. They also gained new skills in video filming, recording and editing.

This experience has shown that a video can be filmed and produced in a rural community setting, using the temple pavilion for the venue and an older person's home for the editing suite. However, it is a challenging environment and issues and problems did arise. Be prepared.

For the most effective community-based and participatory video process to occur, it should evolve out of and be a result of a long and steady process of community organising and empowerment with older people. Older people and older people's groups that have analysed their own problems, identified solutions and acted on these, are the best equipped to use video, especially for the purpose of advocacy with a broader audience.

The process of producing a video which shows older people's contributions and concerns, is not sufficient by itself. Raising awareness is a process that should involve a number of activities that can be carried out over a period of time.

On the other hand, although the Gorokgoda group of older people had not gone through organising which could lead to collective action, the process of making a participatory video gave them an opportunity to analyse their own community. The process allowed them to assess together what challenges they faced and what needed to be changed. The questions they began to raise and the issues they talked about could only have come from actually going through the process itself. It wasn't until the third day that underlying issues came up. This was probably because by then, they were more comfortable with each other and with the outside resource persons. Additionally, even though these older people were neighbours and knew each other socially, they said that they had learnt new and interesting things about each other through the process.

In conclusion, the process of participatory video may have a more lasting impact when it comes as a result of older people taking collective action on their own, with minimal outside facilitation. However, with careful consideration of the lessons learnt from this 'case experience,' a video could be made by older people which makes valuable and lasting contributions to their own development and that of their community.

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*For those interested in obtaining a copy of the video 'Dusk and Technology,' please contact the HAI Asia Pacific Regional Development Centre.



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 Mr. M. D. Kulathunga
 Ms. H. Punchinona
 Mr. H. Podisingne

The older people of Gorokgoda, Sri Lanka, who filmed and directed the video, 'Dusk and Technology' with technical support and guidance. Bottom Row (left to right): Alpinona, Rosalin, Asilin, Seelawathi, Punchinona, Karuna, Podihamine, Top Row (left to right): Ranawaka, Sumanasekera, Kulathunga, Gunadasa, Jayawardana.

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Rosalin getting the feel of the camera with the help of Sudath.

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