

Can a Film Save Lives?

Participatory video in Cameroon

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Introduction

In Cameroon, it is estimated that 30% of women aged 20-24 have brought a child into the world before the age of 18. These early pregnancies are multifactorial and their repercussions are considerable, both in terms of health and education as well as with regard to the socio-economic potential of the young girls who in addition often suffer from mental disease as a result of the context of these pregnancies.

The National Network of Aunties' Associations (Yaoundé) had formed more than 240 local Aunties' associations, that serve communities through missions aiming at eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls in all areas of public, private and political life.

Objectives

The National Network of Aunties' Associations, in collaboration with the Geneva team have developed a project allowing young mothers to reinforce their role of educator by overcoming a part of the pain and difficulties they experienced, using a cinematographic approach, namely participatory video.

The secondary objective of the project was to foster communication horizontally - between the participants, and also between the participants and their communities - and vertically, by creating a film to raise awareness among the general public.

Method

- 10 young mothers and RENATA members, were selected to participate in the training workshop. Participants were between 20 and 30 years old and came from different regions of Cameroon.
- A training workshop, combining thematic and technical aspects, was organised over 12 days. It used playful learning and practice to promote listening, collaboration and consensus building.
- A participatory video comprises various stages and consists of training a community, often deprived of communication methods, to allow its members to create their own film, with social change in mind, often preceded by the beginnings of personal change.

Results

Encouraging speaking: establishment of an appropriate space for discussion and sharing.



Sharing personal history: each participant told her story in front of the whole group - facing the camera - as a young girl who was a victim of early pregnancy.

This first exercise of intuitive speaking allows these girls to work on and with their emotions to structure their thoughts by creating distance from their own history in favour of a collective history.



Building the content: the participants understood and analysed the theme - using their respective histories - referring to drawings, through individual and group exercises.



Understanding video technology: the participants were trained in the basic techniques of field work: sound, shooting, cinematographic rules as well as fundamental procedures.



Output

Armed with this experience, the participants gathered together about fifteen people in different villages and highlighted the many challenges of teenage pregnancy in the country. A 26-minute film was created by these ten participants. Post production of the film was made in Cameroon.



Conclusion

During the workshop the young mothers participated with the certainty of being welcomed and understood and had the opportunity to develop a **process of collective reflection**.

They learned how to relay their experience to serve a joint project that might heighten awareness among teenage girls and communities.

Participants had the opportunity, for the first time, to handle a camera and acquired the necessary skills to make movies that will help them in the future, to enhance the activities of their - RENATA - network and continue to combat the scourge of which they were the victims.

Acknowledgment

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