

# CPWF Innovation Funds Project Completion Report

Project Title: Participatory video: a novel mechanism for sharing community perceptions with decision makers.

Project Leader: Alan Duncan / Beth Cullen

Lead Institute: International Livestock Research Institute

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## Introduction

A key issue in fostering change in rural systems is the power imbalance between farming communities and decision makers. Particularly in Ethiopia where local public institutions are dominant, rainwater management interventions have historically been implemented in top-down fashion without sufficient attention to the needs, aspirations, constraints and livelihood realities faced by local farming communities. Participatory video through which local communities plan and shoot their own video accounts of the issues as they see them could help to bring local perspectives to the attention of decision makers. PV has been successfully used in a range of contexts to empower communities to share their views on local livelihood constraints. We used PV in the context of the local innovation platforms that operate in NBDC study sites. We experimented with the use of PV to bring community views to innovation platform members to redress some of the power imbalances at play in the innovation platforms.

The goal of the project was to test the effectiveness of PV as a tool to foster community-led decision making in local innovation processes around rainwater management.

### 1. Achievements, Project Implications/Impacts

*How far did you get in achieving your goal? Describe your achievements relating them back to your goal and anticipated project target. If you did not reach your goal (yet) or found that you needed to change your target in the course of implementation due to new insights, please describe this. Are there any other achievements you did not plan for? If so please describe.*

The goal of the project was achieved. Local community members in Fogera were trained in the use of video equipment. They devised a story focusing on three main issues related to rainwater management in their locality: unrestricted grazing, water stress and government-led soil and water conservation work. They went on to produce footage which was subsequently edited into a 30 minute film which they vetted for further screening. The film was then shown to innovation platform members. Reaction to the film was extremely positive although there was a sense that innovation platform members were so impressed with the technical ability of local farmers to produce a credible film that they may have missed the messages contained in the film itself. The project team detected an inherent resistance on the part of IP members to the types of messages contained in the film. These focused on the livelihood constraints surrounding rainwater management practices which have limited uptake of interventions initiated by local government line departments. A single screening of the film may not have been sufficient to break down this resistance and bring about changed attitudes. Further screenings to IP members followed by facilitated discussions to tease out the issues and bring about attitudinal change may be the next step. The PV exercise was relatively time-consuming and the research team is now considering other, less resource-demanding methods to bring community views to the attention of local decision makers. Development of photo stories is a promising option.

Further use of the film and documentation of its impact are planned. In particular we plan to use the film as a catalyst for discussion at national level. NBDC has established a National Land and Water Platform to bring together high level stakeholders to discuss and act on higher level issues. The film will be used to connect local issues to these national level actors and the impact of this will be documented through further “talking head” film clips.

## 2. Activities Completed

*How did you reach the above described achievements? What activities did you implement and complete? Did you have to change any of the initially planned activities? If so please describe and explain the reasoning for this.*

The main activities proposed at the outset were achieved. These were as follows:

### **10 day in-depth PV training facilitated by InsightShare for NBDC participants plus selected partners.**

The workshop took place at the local government offices and campus in the town of Fogera, in a small learning and resource centre. Gareth Benest (Insightshare) took primary responsibility for the delivery of the processes and exercises specific to participatory video; Beth Cullen (ILRI) led the PLA processes that centered around the primary land and water management issues; and Abera Adie (ILRI) was the sole translator throughout the entire project and also led several discussion sessions to explore the pros, cons and recommendations relating to the various interventions being implemented in the region relating to land and water management. For five days (13th and 17th February) participants and facilitators worked together in the workshop to learn, share, discuss, make decisions and plan a collaboratively authored video. The facilitators undertook a range of participatory games and exercises through which the participants were able to begin learning rudimentary camera operation skills before progressing through to learning the basics of video production, interviewing, presentation, sequence shooting and all other aspects of simple video production as a tool for exploring issues.

None of the participants had ever touched a camera before the first workshop and several shared their fears and prior perceptions about cameras and what might happen to them if they did touch them. Nevertheless the supportive and nurturing environment created by the approach and the facilitators ensured that everyone quickly became confident and eager to learn more about the cameras and other equipment, dispelling any fear or misperception. Each day began with a group reflection on the previous day's activities, with all participants and facilitators invited to share one thing they had enjoyed and one thing they were unhappy about and would like to improve. This gave the facilitators opportunities to monitor the participants reactions to the project progression and enabled responses to be made accordingly. A range of PLA exercises were facilitated with the group to help identify key issues relating to land and water management issues in all three kebeles, which represented three distinct geographical profiles: Kokit (lowland), Diba (mid-land) and Alem Ber (highland). Exercises undertaken included 'dress the farmer' (participants identified their primary resources and dependencies), 'problem tree' (focussing on soil erosion) and VIPP (visualisation in participatory practises) approaches to issue identification, mapping and prioritisation. The three primary issues identified by the participants, in relation to land and water management within the three kebeles, were soil erosion (Alem Bir), gully formation (Diba) and water stress / logging (Kokit). Further discussions were held around the priority focus of the Innovation Platforms on the issues surrounding unrestricted grazing, and how the group might communicate their own perspectives on this issue. In addition, a series of lengthy discussions and collective decision-making exercises was facilitated by Abera Adie around the on-going efforts by the Ethiopian government to tackle some of the pressing environmental issues through various land and water management approaches. The participants collectively listed the pros and cons of these initiatives, from their perspectives, before making recommendations as to how they could be improved and strengthened. Once all the necessary collective decisions (focus, message, audience) for the video had been reached, the participants began using the storyboard technique to decide what they would record, where, when and how. Working in two groups of six participants, they developed detailed storyboard plans of their videos and assigned roles to each element to ensure the production roles (and the power

inherent within them) were shared equally across everyone involved. The subsequent three days (18th - 20th) were spent filming the participant's storyboards in the field. Each day was spent in a different kebele with both groups filming their separate sequences that were contributing to the same overall video. With only one exception, the participants only recorded themselves speaking directly to camera or in interview with one another. The one interview that was recorded with a local woman from outside the group was not included in the final film, for reasons explained below. The facilitator team then took all the footage from the previous days with them to the regional capital Bahir Dar, where they spent the following two days (21st & 22nd) intensively reviewing, translating and editing the footage into one finished film of 30 minutes. The resulting film (titled 'A Rope To Tie A Lion' - an Amharic phrase used in the video) covers a range of subjects relating to land and water management, the issues the farmers experience, and their recommendations to government, farmers like themselves and the wider community. The film is divided into the following three chapters: Part One Explores the subject of unrestricted grazing and includes participants discussing why some believe it should be restricted, how they have learned about those reasons, their fears for if/when their grazing patterns are restricted - insufficient fodder, lack of dung for fuel, landlessness amongst many farmers, and lack of breeding opportunities for cattle - and what needs to be done to ensure it is positive for the community at large. Part Two Looks at issues relating to water stress. In this section, participants documented the destruction of crops through flooding in the rainy season, drought in the dry season, water logging reducing fodder harvests, over cultivation, low-productivity of staple and cash crops. They also explore the competition between kebeles for the dwindling supplies of water during times of drought and the need for community-based regulation of extraction. Part Three delves into the soil erosion experienced by many in the region and explores the government organised soil conservation responses. Participants discuss some of the challenges and difficulties these initiatives have caused for them directly, including the impact of communal activities organised during harvest time and the subsequent loss of income and food, lack of childcare available to families working on the projects, inconsistency of punishments for those not attending, lack of community consultation, lack of proper tools and saplings for planting on soil bunds etc.

### **Reflection day with core group of NBDC participants (including community representatives) to develop ideas about how PV can be used to build links between innovation platforms and farming communities**

A reflection day was held at the ILRI campus in Addis Ababa immediately after the PV training (24<sup>th</sup> February). This session was attended by staff from ILRI and IWMI who are involved in the wider NBDC project, Michael Victor from CPWF and members of the ILRI communications team.

The original idea was to include members of the innovation platform as well as community representatives in the reflection day, but after some consideration the decision was made to restrict the day to research staff, partly due to the sensitivity of some of the issues raised by the PV process.

Beth Cullen and Gareth Benest began the reflection process by explaining the PV process, the work that had been carried out in Fogera and the outcomes, including lessons learned. The film was then shown, and used as the basis for subsequent discussion about issues raised. The main points of the discussion were the following:-

- There was some discussion about the messages raised in the film coming exclusively from the point of view of community members. Some of the NBDC scientists believed that the film should be intercut with expert opinions, partly due to concerns about the validity of community views and knowledge. Although some useful points were made by the scientists their concerns also highlight the hierarchy of knowledge that often exists between 'experts'

and community members, which leads to the under-representation of community members in research and development processes. Participatory video centers on enabling community members to voice their views, intercutting the film would therefore undermine the process. The best option would be to invite a video response from 'experts' and in this way use the video process to initiate a two-way conversation between community members and experts and maintain the integrity of the approach.

- Some of the issues that were raised in the film were political in nature and highlighted a gap between community perspectives and those of government administrators. It was interesting to note that there is some overlap in the issues raised by community members and the natural resource management agenda of the government, but there are problems when it comes to planning and implementation. The video process could therefore be a useful way of initiating dialogue between government officials and community members to reach a common understanding.
- There were some concerns about a lack of balance between the different issues focused on in the video: some were longer and more detailed than others. This is not necessarily a problem and can serve as an indicator about which issues are priorities for community members. However, ways can be found in the future to ensure that each issue is captured in sufficient detail and that a diversity of views are reflected.
- The length of the film was also deemed to be too long (30 mins) but participatory editing processes could be used to capture the essential messages in a way that is easily accessible to an external audience, This would, however, require more time.
- There were concerns about the representativeness of the participants and their views. This was considered during the participant selection process and participants were consciously chosen to reflect diversity in age, gender and socio-economic status. Although we worked with a fairly diverse group the numbers were small, a larger group would have been difficult without more equipment and facilitators. Despite this a range of perspectives were captured and validated through community screenings, after the screenings other community members were given the opportunity to record and add their views.
- The issue of consent was raised, particularly due to the potential sensitivity of some of the issues. There are multiple points of consent throughout the process e.g. group discussions, issue identification and prioritization, storyboarding, screening etc. It is important to go through these processes with participants to ensure that they are fully aware of the process and the potential implications so they can make informed decisions about what they want to say and how.
- The film raised the issue of conflicting views between participants e.g. some of the participants were working for the kebele and their statements were not always in line with the rest of the group because they wanted to ensure that they reflected the government line. There was also an incident in which one of the interviewers tried to influence the person he was interviewing. In this case the PV facilitators were very familiar with the Ethiopian context so were aware of these dynamics but it is something to bear in mind for future processes.
- PV can be used to effectively raise community issues which can be fed into the innovation platform work but this has to be well facilitated, and particular attention needs to be given to power dynamics.

- It would have been useful to have worked with the PV participants on community ideas for 'solutions' to the issues they raised. These suggestions could have been used as a starting point for dialogue and action, but this was not possible in the time we had. Facilitators had to prioritise skill development and discussion/issue prioritization.
- It is important to bear in mind that the use of Participatory Video is as much about the process as the end product. Some of those involved in the reflection day discussions struggled with this idea. The approach aims to assist participants to reflect on their current situation, to identify key issues and to communicate their views about these issues in an effective way to a specific audience. This process often has an empowering effect on those involved that last beyond the training itself, this is often more valuable than the final film.
- There were questions about whether the PV work should be replicated in the other NBDC sites. Although this would be useful, PV is time and resource intensive and therefore it should be used to tackle specific issues where it can make a specific contribution. In Fogera there are significant differences in perspective between community members and higher level decision makers around the issue of 'free grazing'. The PV process served to illustrate these differences with the aim of initiating dialogue, but issues around communication may not be so pressing in the other sites. Although community participation and engagement is important for NBDC research this does not necessarily have to be done using PV. We have been using different participatory methods in different sites and it will be useful to document what works best in different contexts.

#### **Follow up reflection meeting in Sept 2012 to document progress made so far.**

We did not arrange a formal meeting as there has been considerable reflection on the PV process, its usefulness in strengthening community voice in innovation processes and ways forward to redress power imbalances. These reflections have been through informal discussions and through development of blog posts.

#### **Community screenings**

After the reflection meeting Beth Cullen and Aberra Adie returned to Fogera (5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> March) to screen the film to wider community members. The film was shown in the three kebeles that were focused on in the PV process- Kokit, Diba Sifatre and Alem Ber. The aim of the screenings was to validate the messages in the film and to seek other points of view. The film received an overwhelmingly positive response from community members, who were also offered the chance to record and include their views. Some community members had additional points which they wanted to record; although these have been documented they have not been included in the final film. The community members who attended the screening and the PV participants gave their consent for the film to be screened to members of the Fogera Innovation Platform.

#### **Targeted screenings at local innovation platforms and potentially national platform to build capacity of higher level stakeholders to listen to community voices**

A targeted screening of the film was carried out at Fogera on 15<sup>th</sup> March to members of the Innovation Platform, facilitated by Aberra Adie. PV participants attended the meeting so they could participate in the discussions and ensure that their views were communicated to decision makers.

The film generated strong positive reactions although it seems that the messages contained in the film were overshadowed by admiration for the technical achievement of community members in

putting together the film. The extent to which IP members really listened to the content is uncertain; this will need to be assessed over time by tracking the extent to which community concerns are incorporated into the design of the IP pilot interventions. The responses of the Innovation Platform members were recorded on video by ILRI communications staff using a set of interview questions designed by Beth Cullen. Their feedback will be used to monitor changes in attitude of platform members regarding community participation in planning and implementation processes.

In this particular situation, continuous engagement is required to build on the PV work and achieve more meaningful change. The next steps will aim to bridge gaps between IP members and community members through practical engagement, this will include providing training and capacity-building to platform members to further foster participatory approaches and encourage reflection on both the process and outcomes so far in order to consolidate learning. The video will also be screened to community members in the selected IP intervention sites to try and build trust and understanding of the innovation platform process. In this respect PV has been a useful first step towards increasing community voice within the platform.

### 3. Lessons Learned

*What did you learn along the course of implementation? What recommendations can you give for future action if asked “if you did this all again?” “What now?” and “What next?”*

We learned a number of lessons through this participatory video project:

- **Building social capital and countering research fatigue.** The study site has been the subject of extensive research in recent years and communities are increasingly reluctant to devote time to interacting with researchers when they see limited gains from their expenditure of time. The use of tools such as PV which are fun to use and which foster self-expression and self-esteem can help to counter research fatigue and build positive relationships with local communities.
- **PV can be demanding of time and resources.** Production of the film required the full time engagement of a professional consultant for 10 days plus additional time from NBDC staff. Such deep engagement of professionals makes scaling of PV approaches difficult due to resource constraints. As we move forward we are planning further screenings of the film at a higher level but we are not yet in a position to judge whether the effort was justified. This will need to wait until we can assess the longer term impact of the effort, particularly following the screenings with higher level stakeholders.
- **Messages can be lost in technical admiration.** Films produced by local communities are extremely engaging. We found that local innovation platform members were astonished at the competencies of local farmers in producing the film and at their ability to articulate complex issues with clarity. There is a danger that the core messages may be overwhelmed by short term admiration for this technical skill. Further screenings along with facilitated discussions may be needed to allow the core issues to come to the fore.
- **Capturing community views on sensitive issues in a political context where free expression is constrained can be challenging and raises ethical questions.** Ethiopia is a challenging environment in which to use film to deal with sensitive land and water management issues. There is a certain reluctance on the part of community members to express views which could be taken as critical of the regime. Facilitators wrestled with the ethics of recording and disseminating footage of community members although steps were taken to ensure that there was full consent to the content being screened to higher level stakeholders.

**Next steps.** We plan further screenings of the film at national level and will document the impact of the film and its usefulness in catalyzing change in approaches to rainwater management among

higher level stakeholders. We are also experimenting with the use of less resource demanding methods of bringing community voice into innovation platforms including the use of photo stories.

Attachments Research publications and communication outputs *List (in the table below) all outputs produced within the scope of the innovation funds project. Please provide a copy of the output or the web link, including links to pre-prints of journal articles. Possible output types are: Books and Book Chapters<sup>1</sup> Journal articles (include articles that have been submitted<sup>2</sup> Research Reports (working paper, consultant's report, discussion paper, project reports, etc) Student theses Conference and Seminar Papers Posters Policy briefs, briefing papers Reference materials (booklets and training manuals for extension agents, etc.) Articles for media or news (radio, newspapers, newsletters, etc. Social media outputs, including web sites, blogs, wikis Videos Data and information outputs, including datasets and databases PowerPoint presentations ( except the internal project presentations) Other (specify)*

Output Type (see above)	Reference (Author, year, title/ output name, etc.)	Target audience	How disseminated / promoted / used	Any feedback on its use, or how monitored/ evaluated
Consultant's report	Gareth Benest, 2012, Participatory Video Initiative in Fogera – Facilitator's report	NBDC Research team	Not disseminated due to sensitive content. A more formal piece for public view may be developed by Gareth Benest and Beth Cullen	
Participatory Video	ILRI, 2012, A Rope to Tie a Lion	Land and water development agencies, researchers, policy makers	Posted online on <a href="#">YouTube</a>	Not yet although we will be able to monitor views at the very least.
Blog 1	<a href="#">Beth Cullen, 2012, 'A Rope to Tie a Lion': Community voices on livestock, water and soil management expressed through participatory video</a>	Researchers, policy makers, general public	NBDC website CPWF website	
Blog 2	<a href="#">Beth Cullen, 2012, Participatory video for 'vertical communication' between farmers and policy makers</a>	Researchers, policy makers, general public	NBDC website	

<sup>1</sup> Please indicate if these are peer-reviewed or not.

<sup>2</sup> Please indicate if these are peer-reviewed or not.

Capacity building of people engaged in the project *Please list any people engaged in the project whose capacity has been strengthened (students, trainees, fellows, project staff, key beneficiaries, etc.) built through your Innovation Funds Project.*

FAMILY NAME, Given Name (if available)	Gender	Nationality	In case of students level (e.g., MSc, PhD), affiliated University/ type of training otherwise staff category (e.g. researcher, farmer, extension worker, government official)	Research / thesis subject	Outputs (if any)
Chekol Tariku	M	Ethiopian	Farmer		
Asefa Kasa	M	Ethiopian	Farmer		
Almaz Tarekegn	F	Ethiopian	Farmer		
Asnakech Kasaw	F	Ethiopian	Farmer		
Alemnew Delelegn	M	Ethiopian	Farmer		
Muche Mekonen	M	Ethiopian	Farmer		
Abiba Ayele	F	Ethiopian	Farmer		
Wubanchi Kasa	F	Ethiopian	Farmer		
Desalegn Adugna	M	Ethiopian	Farmer		
Atalo Zegeye	M	Ethiopian	Farmer		
Debitu Worku	F	Ethiopian	Farmer		
Abebayitu Beza	F	Ethiopian	Farmer		
Aberra Adie	M	Ethiopian	Researcher		
Beth Cullen	F	British	Researcher		

Outreach to targeted actors or actor groups *Please list any outreach activities carried out during your Innovation Funds Project.*

Type of outreach activities (e.g. informal/formal meeting, stakeholder consultation, seminar, training, forum)	What type of participants (e.g. farmer, researcher, extension worker, NGO, Priv. sector)? How many participants (gender/diversity distribution)?	Dates, venue (location, country)	Any feedback or how monitored/evaluated? Any evidence that your outreach activities led to some positive change?
Film screening	Innovation platform members (a range of participants especially from local government line departments)	15 March 2012, Fogera, Ethiopia	Reactions to participatory video captured on film.