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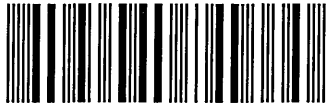
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**Participation, Agency and Gender: The Impacts of
Participatory Video Practices on Young Women in India**

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ABSTRACT

The use of Participatory Video (PV) in development projects with marginalised communities by Non-government organisations is increasing. Though PV practice has expanded, there has been limited academic discussion and debate on the subject. PV is often assumed to be a non-problematic process that enables less powerful groups to gain power and participate in social change processes. This research contributes to the emerging academic debates by critically investigating how participating in a long-term PV project can provide participants the opportunity to gain agency and to engage with local social change in a sustained manner. It studies projects by two NGOs in Hyderabad and Mumbai, which work with young women participants, using gender as a lens to examine the role of power relations within the projects.

This thesis draws on three key concepts: (i) participation, (ii) agency and (iii) gender norms. Using the conceptualisation of agency in the Capability Approach, it focuses on the various aspects of a long-term PV project that can either promote or restrict young women's agency. The methods of collecting data were interviews, group discussions, participatory observation and participatory video-making with the research participants. The analysis of the data was carried out using a framework which maps the relationships between the various phases of a long-term PV project and the participants' agency. Based on the findings of the analysis, this thesis argues that oppressive gender power relations within their household and the community, and hierarchy within a supposedly participatory project are critical influences on young women's ability to become agents of change. In particular, the thesis draws attention to: (i) participants' need to continuously negotiate power with the household and community members, (ii) inherent hierarchy and the nature of participation in a long-

term PV project, (iii) the relation between participants' need to access resources and hierarchy within a project, and (iv) the difference in needs, goals and impacts identified by donors/NGOs and the participants. The thesis proposes a conceptual model of participatory video as an agency-development process, which shows how these factors are crucial in developing and sustaining participants' agency.

This thesis builds new knowledge by providing an in-depth understanding of power relations in long-term PV projects and what impacts agency - areas which are often overlooked in the literature on PV.

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List of Acronyms

CENDIT	Centre for Development of Instructional Technology
CVU	Community Video Unit
DDS	Deccan Development Society
GAD	Gender and Development
GFC	Global Fund for Children
NFB	National Film Board
NGO	Non-government Organisation
PV	Participatory Video
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
SITE	Satellite Instructional Television Experiment
VV	Video Volunteers
WAD	Women and Development
WAVE	Women Aloud: Video blogging for Empowerment
WID	Women in Development

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

There has been an increasing interest across the world in the role of media for bringing social change. This has been coupled with a growing interest in how media can become more participatory, the various ways in which participatory media can be used, and how media can possibly affect the lives of people in a positive manner. Participatory Video (PV), in particular, has received much attention of both participatory development practitioners and scholars. This thesis responds to the emerging debates on Participatory Video, and offers a novel perspective on how participation in participatory video projects aimed at community development can impact people. It focuses particularly on people who join the project as the main participants and learn video-making as part of it.

The use of PV by Non-government organisations (NGOs) has been becoming increasingly popular across the world. Its application for social development in India, has seen several NGOs adopt it in various forms to address issues such as minority rights, human rights, gender-based violence, limited access to education, poor health facilities and so on. The growth and diversity of PV practice in India made the country an obvious choice to conduct this research, especially given the backdrop of its multi-layered social and cultural complexities.

This research investigates young women's participation in long-term PV projects implemented by NGOs in India. In India, these projects, often called community video projects, have been implemented in several states of the country. Often a few community members are selected by NGOs as project participants, who are trained in the entire process of video-making. Additional community members are usually also involved during production and dissemination of videos in villages and slums. The videos produced are meant to bring out community issues and act as a trigger for local social change. Community video projects aim to enable local people's participation in community development, and several of these projects in India have continued over years. This research examines such long-term PV projects and how they affect the ability of project participants to bring local social change.

This research centres on understanding the impact that a long-term PV project can have on young women participants, who are the video-makers in the project. In particular, it looks at the participants' agency, i.e. their ability to bring changes they value. The projects studied were ongoing at the time of this research. Therefore, the impact that this research looks at are not overall impacts, collected after the end of the projects. Instead, it tries to capture the changes brought into the participants' lives from the time they joined the projects until I finished my fieldwork with them. I study the impacts over the course of several years and phases of a long-term PV project.

Some other studies on PV with women have shown how by the end of the PV projects, women had gained more voice and confidence, and raised social issues (Bery and

Stuart 1996; Khamis, et al., 2009). Other studies have concluded that working with video helped women to alter traditional gender roles and challenge hierarchical gender power relations (Protz 1994; Protz 1998; Rodriguez 1994). Some researchers have sought to understand how producing participatory video drama enables women to explore power relations and express themselves (Brickell 2014; Waite and Conn 2011). In my research, I focus on understanding the impacts on young women participants' agency, and how their agency may develop during their participation. More specifically, the impacts are understood as both positive and negative changes that the participants felt have been happening to them and their lives, as a direct result of their participation in the projects.

This research brings together critiques of participatory approaches and discussions on agency, and adopts a gender lens to analyse the potential that long-term PV projects have in contributing towards the development of participants' agency. I studied two long-term PV projects implemented with young women (18-24 years old) in Mumbai and Hyderabad slum areas, seeking to understand the experiences of the young women participants in these projects, and in the backdrop of their local social contexts.

The original contribution of the research can be articulated as: (i) the development of an in-depth understanding of participation of less powerful groups in long-term PV projects; (ii) an analysis of how hierarchical power structures can impact PV participants' engagement with social change; (iii) deepening the understanding of what

impacts participants' agency; (iv) the development of a conceptual model of participatory video as an agency-development process.

In this introductory chapter, I begin by presenting my professional and academic motivations for research to explain the context of this PhD study. These motivations gave rise to the core research problem and the overall aim of this research, which I discuss next. The section following this explains how my personal experiences have been related to empirical gaps and presents the key theoretical concepts that underpin this research. Next, I provide some context about India to explain where this research was conducted and discuss the reasons for this choice. I end with outlining the structure of my thesis.

1.2 PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC MOTIVATION

I was drawn towards PV as a process that can contribute to community development when, as a young media undergraduate, I came across various reports acclaiming it. I eventually wrote my Master's dissertation (in social work) on one of the newest and biggest community video projects in India (Singh, 2007). The ideals of participation presented in my social work studies found an immediate expression in my work researching PV as an alternative to the globalising mass media. My dissertation brought out certain issues around the differing agendas of the various actors involved, ownership of community videos, ability to ensure effective community action and project sustainability. However, my analysis was limited because the projects studied were only a few months old. Though the actors involved in the projects (including the project participants) recognised all of the above issues, they were not considered of

great significance by any of them because of the potential for community development that they believed PV had.

My interest in PV led me to join *Videoshala*¹ (a long-term PV project in India), as a video trainer. A year later, I moved on to Video Volunteers (an NGO which trained communities in PV) as a researcher. It was during this extensive engagement that I began to look at the practice of PV more critically. In particular I noticed that the ideals of participation frequently failed in practice when the deliverables to be met were primarily to impress the donors who were funding the project. For example, community issues of immediate concern were turned down as topics for videos, when they did not fit with the donor agenda. Several levels of approvals (sometimes akin to a completely bureaucratic system) needed to be passed through before the video became a 'legitimate' product. The 'impressive' videos produced (as a result of a highly supervised process) were then showcased online to attract future donors. Such dynamics have a strong influence on the experiences of the participants. While on one hand they gained several skills that enhanced their confidence, on the other hand they were left feeling powerless during decision-making processes, which negatively impacted their confidence. This raised several questions about the PV practice of NGOs (shortened to PV practice in this thesis), which became a starting point for my research.

When I looked at the websites, toolkits, online channels, booklets of several PV projects, they seemed to focus solely on how PV can be a catalyst for social change (see Appendix 1 for some examples). They excluded other important issues, such as

¹ Literal translation from Hindi - Video School

how to ensure the project remains participatory or how to ensure participation of less powerful groups in a community. This extensive grey literature was highly uncritical and the limited academic literature available on PV had hardly developed a critique of it (Low et al., 2012; Milne, 2012), particularly when it came to the PV practice of NGOs. This omission suggested to me that an in-depth academic study was necessary – a study that would provide a critical investigation of PV being used by NGOs for participatory community development, and attempt to explore and explain the paradoxes and complexities that I experienced.

1.2.1 The Research Problem – a focus on participation

While studying a participatory process like PV, my immediate concern was investigating if long-term PV projects by NGOs were indeed participatory. I found that there is a burgeoning literature that critiques participation in community development projects. In Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.1), I discuss some of the literature on participation and its critiques. Several scholars have argued that community development projects are invariably framed and initiated with pre-determined agendas and strategies of governments, donors and NGOs and do not necessarily include the communities' needs (e.g., Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Narayanan, 2003; Parfitt, 2004; Puri, 2004). The participation of people may thus remain a means to meet the pre-set development agenda.

In this thesis, I draw from the critiques on participation and study PV projects within the larger framework of current participatory community development policies. The kind of long-term PV projects I investigated involved selecting a few community members as participants from a larger community and training them in video-making, to produce

videos on social issues that are deemed relevant to the community. These videos are used to initiate action at the local level or to advocate with policy-makers to bring about local social change. So through PV, the participant community members and the larger community may get the opportunity to engage with development issues with an aim to bring change.

However, even a long-term PV project, which is funded by an external donor agency and implemented by a NGO, may incorporate several paradoxes in the participatory approach it claims to adhere to. Several questions emerge, such as at what stage of the project should participation happen? Who participates? What form of participation (such as consulting or decision-making) is allowed in the project? What should this participation lead to (the outputs and outcomes) and for how long can the project and participation be funded? These are all aspects that may be determined by agenda-setters without the actual participants being involved (see for example, Milne, 2012). These are particular issues with participation that I focus on in this research, while investigating how they might influence the experience of young women participants and the development of their agency (referred to as agency-development here on).

1.3 FROM EXPERIENCES AT WORK TO CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

Based on my personal and academic motivation, which brought out the central research problem of lack of participation, the main purpose of the study was to analyse the nature of participation in long-term PV projects implemented by NGOs and understand participants' experiences. To do so, the study takes the central concept of participation and draws out its link with agency. Another key concept I used was

gender norms, which helped to elucidate how young women's participation and experiences are influenced by the local contexts in which they are situated.

My experiences at work generated several questions about long-term PV projects, which were broadly about the nature of participation, participants' ability to engage in development processes and opportunities for less powerful groups to participate. Below, I discuss how the concepts of participation, agency and gender norms emerged from concerns faced during my work experiences, and also the bodies of literature that I draw from for the conceptual framing of the thesis.

1.3.1 Participants and Participation

Being a video trainer and researcher prior to this research meant that I had direct and continuous engagement with participants, giving me the opportunity to observe their experiences very closely over a long period of time into a PV project. I noticed that participants' initial excitement about learning video-making withered when contradictions started emerging in the process. For instance, the videos were supposed to benefit them and lead to changes in their community. However, in many projects they felt that they were confined to being mere producers of a particular number of videos - as the means to meet a certain output. They also faced the pressure of meeting expectations by conducting a set number of screenings in the communities.

I am not suggesting that producing videos or screening them were undesirable expectations, or that the participants had an entirely negative experience. However, it was becoming increasingly necessary to question the nature of their participation, who

took decisions about the kind of outputs to be achieved, and how this affected the participants' experience, confidence and ability to fulfil their objectives. These were similar to questions and concerns that have been raised and investigated by scholars critiquing participation, which I mentioned in Section 1.2.1.

More generally, some scholars observe that a repositioning of participation has become necessary, since the current notion of participation in development has failed to help understand power relations in communities and between different actors in participatory projects, and therefore has not been transformative (see Parfitt, 2004; Williams, 2004; Cornwall and Gaventa, 2000; Gaventa, 2004; Hickey and Mohan, 2004). They have proposed a repositioning and reconstruction of participation, where people become actors, citizenship includes active engagement in governance and participation becomes an end in itself.

Gaventa (2004) argues that for participation to lead to transformation, it should be linked to a citizen's right to gain agency and engage in his/her social and political life. Conceptually, citizenship is built on the idea that citizens should be able to act in the public sphere and contribute to and shape discourses, which in part, structures the society they live in (Caragata, 1999). The extent to which people can participate as citizens and the arenas where they can do so are crucial. This is particularly true in the case of communities who hold lesser power than others, and therefore, sometimes cannot become citizens in a fuller sense (*ibid*). When such differing experiences of citizenship are taken into account, they become relevant in the context of promoting participation (Tandon, 2008). It includes people realizing their agency, extending control over important issues and getting involved in decision-making (Pellissery and

Bergh, 2007), i.e. participation as an end, which may lead to transformations in the existing power relations between communities and donors/governments (Parfitt, 2004).

The understanding of participation that emerges from these critiques suggested considering the issue of power as central to participation in this thesis. It focuses on people's ability to express their agency as citizens to bring the changes they want. It is these ideas that I made use of during my investigation to analyse participation in the long-term PV projects I studied. I found that the link between participation and people's agency, which has been strongly brought forth by scholars arguing for the repositioning of participation, matters significantly in practice, as I discuss later. Following this, I discuss the literature that guides the analysis of participants' agency and helps in developing a link between participation and agency.

1.3.2 Participants' Agency

Based on my experience with PV projects, I had questions about what the participants and communities were actually able to achieve, in terms of personal growth, local social change, livelihood opportunities and other goals they valued. While the outputs of the projects listed by the donors were achieved in terms of number of videos, number of screenings, documented visible impacts and so on, I felt that there was a need to examine if there was some meaningful and sustained change for the participants and/or communities. For instance, in many cases the videos produced by participants continued to have an online life, garnering praises and funding. However, the participants were left to fend for themselves after the project ended. Similarly many communities, whose stories of collective action were still being circulated through

booklets or news articles, felt that yet another NGO project, which claimed to change their lives, was over without delivering on its claims and promises.

Again, I am not suggesting that there were no personal changes in the participants or the impacts in the community through collective action or advocacy were meaningless. However, I felt it needed to be asked that, 'how could PV ensure building participants' capabilities?', so that their participation was not just limited to meeting a project's outputs, but became a way of enabling them to meet the goals they wanted to achieve. This concern included looking at whether participants remained bound by project objectives, or if they could truly become agents who have the ability to engage with change they wanted. This question found resonance with Dreze and Sen's (1995) suggestion that people should not be seen as means of production but as agents who have the capability to choose the life they want. In this research I therefore sought to investigate how the participants' agency, i.e. their ability to bring change, was affected through the course of their participation in the PV projects.

To investigate participants' agency, I turned to Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, which constructs agency as people's ability *to do* and *to be* what they value (Sen, 1999a). He suggests that a person should not be seen only as a passive recipient, but also as an active agent, who commands control over things s/he values. In his work, Sen (2000) sees development as freedom, where freedom includes having the capability to achieve the ends people want to pursue for their own well-being. This focus on people's participation in bringing changes in their situation (Frediani, 2010; Fukuda-Parr, 2003) makes the conceptualisation of agency within the capability approach extremely relevant to this research. Furthermore, the link between power and

agency as explored by scholars such as Frediani (2010), Iverson (2003) and Pellisery and Bergh (2007) added to its appropriateness (discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2).

Informed by Sen's capability approach, I analyse how a participant's agency can develop through various stages of a PV process so that they can continue to participate in their local development issues. There is burgeoning literature that builds on Sen's conceptualisation of agency, investigating aspects such as what is meant by agency, how agency operates, what affects its development and so on, which has been used in this research to explore how participation can influence people's agency.

1.3.3 Using Gender as a Lens on Participant Agency

During my work, both as a trainer and a researcher, I was involved with several groups of people in different capacities and levels of engagement. These groups were marginalised in various ways, and included Muslims who were marginalised on the basis of their religion, Dalits because of their caste, slum-dwellers because of their class and women because of their gender. Guijt and Shah (1998) have noted that the participation of the most marginalised groups in development processes is often limited by oppressive structures within communities. So, even where a participatory project is implemented in a community, more powerful groups may dominate the project or limit participation of the less powerful members. My concern was whether PV was truly able to support such groups to participate in their development and enable them to voice their issues. Further, the concern was to explore how oppressive structures within communities affect participants' agency-development, if they are able to participate in the project.

Gender, as a basis of marginalisation is of particular significance since it is present in almost all societies. As Syed notes (2010, p.284), "*The position of gender in societies is usually one of women's disempowerment and disadvantage to their male counterparts*". Therefore, given their position of less power in their community, women might face challenges while participating in a long-term PV project.

A focus on gender does not to exclude other forms of marginalisation. As Kabeer (1995, p.65) puts it, "*While 'gender is never absent', it is never present in pure form. It is always interwoven with other social inequalities...*" Gender power relations can also be representative of other inequalities such as religion, caste and class. Acknowledging that this might lead to a wider application of this research for studying the participation and agency of other less powerful groups in a PV process, I chose to look through a gender lens in this research and study long-term PV projects with young women participants.

This investigation was focused on two groups of young women as participants in long-term PV projects, who were previously mostly invisible during decision-making processes at both household and community levels. The focus on this group and the adopted gender lens helped to look at how participants' agency is transformed through a PV process in the presence of oppressive structures prevalent in a local social context.

1.3.4 The Conceptual Framework

Drawing on both the literature briefly reviewed above and my own professional experiences, I have so far discussed three key concepts that underpin my research:

participation, agency and gender norms. These three concepts are also intricately linked with each other. Exploring these linkages enabled the development of a conceptual framework with which to structure the analysis and interpretation of data in this thesis. In the following section I explore these links, which provide guidance in building a conceptual framework for this thesis.

In Section 1.3.1, I discussed that critiques of participation argue for the re-conceptualisation of participation in development processes, which involves understanding power structures more thoroughly and understanding if participatory development projects fulfil participants' or donors' agenda. Looking at PV projects in view of these critiques suggests considering the power structures within the project.

Other than power structures within the project, there have also been concerns about oppressive structures within local communities. Cornwall (2006) states that such concerns about power relations and issues of equity started arising in the 1990s, especially that of gender equity within a community. There were questions raised about the perceived homogeneity of community and it was argued that when participation is 'imposed' for development purposes through projects, it might remain tokenistic and support and benefit those who already hold more powerful positions within the community, such as men (Guijt and Shah, 1998; Agarwal, 1997). Therefore, I have included gender power relations to study how it affects the participation of young women.

Besides considering the power structures, scholars have also suggested that participation should be linked to the agency people have, and its transformatory potential can be seen when participants are able to exercise their agency as citizens.

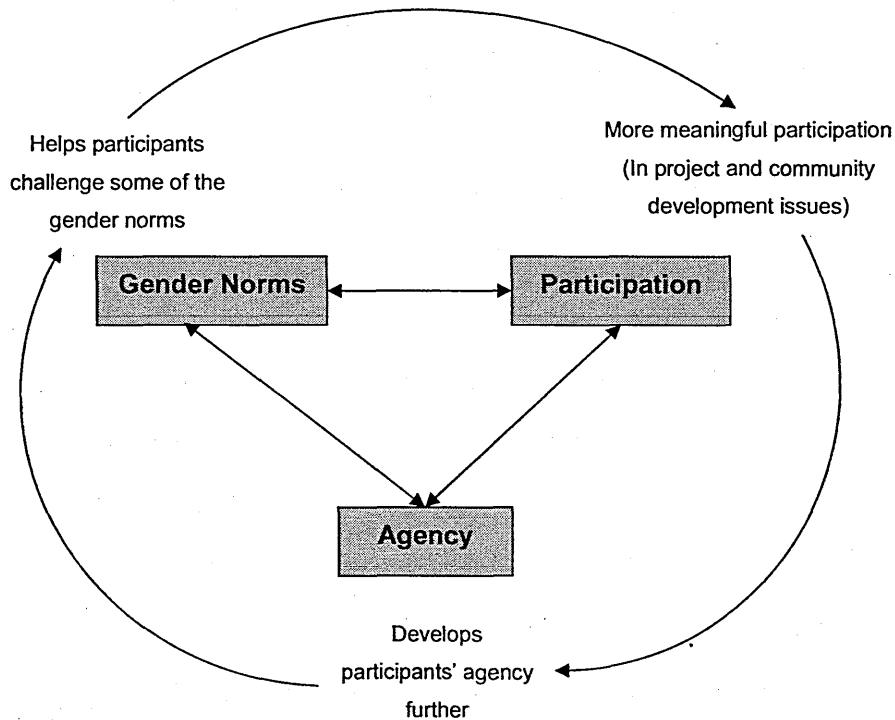
Hence, the conceptual framework has been developed to support studying the link between participation and agency in depth.

Scholars have also linked agency and gender explicitly. Sen's own work on agency has focused on gender power relations (Gasper and van Staveren, 2003; Qizilbash, 2005). According to Iversen (2003), the capabilities framework has invited attention to power imbalances at the level of the household and the opportunities a woman has for achieving her well-being within her household. At the same time, Wilson (2008) contends that gender norms themselves can be influenced by agency, as women's agency can be exercised to assert resistance and challenge power relations. However, this does not happen in the current development context because it has an inherent contradiction in the notions of empowerment and agency – in practice, the exercise of agency happens within the developmental interventions implemented by someone else, for women, who are implicitly regarded as weaker and therefore they act within the agenda of those framing development policies and interventions (such as the government or international aid agencies).

Wilson's contention ties back to the argument from earlier on that participation may remain tokenistic if it does not allow for participants' objectives/agenda to be included in a development project. Furthermore, if power relations within a community are not taken into account then the less powerful groups may not be able to participate in development issues. However, this discussion also suggests that if the true participation of women is supported in a project and their participation promotes their agency, such agency can then be used by women to start challenging some of the oppressive gender norms. They might subsequently participate more meaningfully and engage with development issues.

The above discussion on the linkages between the three concepts can be represented diagrammatically as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework: Link between participation, agency and gender norms



The triangle at the centre indicates that each concept influences the other in some form. The outer circle indicates a virtuous circle of influences whereby once there is meaningful participation in a project it can lead to increased agency for participants. This can then support them in challenging certain gender norms and in turn, women can begin to participate in a more meaningful way in local development issues. It also suggests that this can become a continuous cycle, allowing participants to engage with their development issues on a sustained basis. On the other hand, if participation is limited, there may be limited opportunities for development of participants' agency and

participants may be unable to challenge gender norms. If participants remain restricted because of existing gender norms, they may not be able to fully participate in development issues.

1.4 THE INDIAN CONTEXT

Embedded in the wider context of participatory development, this research is set in India. The country context of this research is important for three main reasons: Firstly, though gender power relations are present in almost all societies, they exhibit themselves differently in the form and extent of oppression and gender norms. Gender power relations in the Indian context offer a particularly complex scenario due to the caste, class and religious structures present in the society. This also indicates that PV projects in different communities might be faced with varied manifestations of gender power relations, dependent on other social contexts such as caste, class and religion. Secondly, although the particular nature of participatory development efforts differs in various countries depending upon the presence of international aid agencies and the makeup of its civil society, the presence of a vibrant NGO sector in India promoting participation of communities in decision-making (Mohanty, 2007), made finding appropriate projects to test the framework more likely. Thirdly, the gender agenda has a strong presence in the participatory development policies in India (discussed below). It emphasises the significance of adopting a gender lens within the country context.

Brett (1991) and Kabeer (1995) state that women's issues were not a significant factor within Indian development policies during the 1950s and the 1960s. A woman's position in development processes was simply that of a 'beneficiary' in the welfare approach towards development. It was only during the 1970s, that women were

consciously integrated into development processes. The agenda of women's empowerment started gaining prominence in several conferences and declarations around the world (North, 2010). There was a growing critique of apolitical and efficiency-based models, including Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD) (Wilson, 2008). The new discourses at the time, such as Freire's conscientisation approach (1972), led to the spread of women's empowerment more as a political idea for struggles that challenged structures of class, caste and religion along with patriarchy (Batiwala, 2007). These ideas and changes reflected in the growing women's movement in India too and empowerment, by the 1980s, had become an important part of the movement's lexicon (ibid). Eventually, it was framed in the context of gender-based subordination that mobilised the gender equality movement.

Batiwala (2007) recalls her own experience and says that in the 1990s several new spaces, such as grassroots women's collectives, were created for women to share their experiences and analyse the structural oppression they faced. These spaces facilitated the process of women recognising their own agency and beginning to address their unequal access to resources. As the government adopted the term of women's empowerment, there was a promotion of women's participation in various development interventions, such as in micro-credit programmes. New institutionalised spaces, for example, self-help groups, reserved places in *gram panchayat*² and local child and women healthcare centres, were created for women who were traditionally 'non-participants'. Women were 'invited' to get involved in these new institutional spaces (Mohanty, 2007).

² Village level governance body

Over time, the political agenda of women's empowerment was reduced to women forming self-help groups for micro-credit or having political representation promoted by reserving seats in governance systems. These did not, however, address the patriarchal and/or caste, class and religious structures that restricted women's representation in development (Batiwala, 2007). Menon (2009) too highlights that the term 'gender' was depoliticised, offering challenges to the women's movement in India since it relegated women to a powerless position. Superficial implementation of the proclaimed 'gender sensitive' policies may reproduce existing gender inequalities, when employed in a depoliticised manner (George, 2007). For instance, women's recruitment in local child and women healthcare centres reinforces women's role as nurturers, or the elected woman representative's husband/brother/son performing the role in the *gram panchayat* instead of herself. So, inclusion of the word gender in the development lexicon and policy eventually made gender a synonym for women - women as they already are, with less power, in the prevalent patriarchal society. This, Menon (2009) argues, does not address issues arising out of structural oppression such as sexual division of labour, access to economic resources, power relations and so on.

The inclusion of the gender agenda and women's empowerment in the developmental interventions in India failed to lead to actual participation of women, and often remained merely tokenistic (Mohanty, 2007; Narayanan, 2003; Singh, 2008). The governance agenda, which promotes women's empowerment, essentially 'empowers' women to act as agents within the overall development agenda of the state, but not necessarily as agents who have the power to choose and decide on the changes they want (Wilson, 2008).

In summary, a strong gender agenda in participatory development policies, the presence of a huge number of NGOs working within the participatory development framework, and the complex socio-cultural dimensions of gender power relations in different communities made India an interesting and compelling context for the research.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The overall aim of this research, placed in the wider context of participatory development, is:

To develop a critical understanding of young women participants' agency through long-term PV projects promoting participatory community development.

The following thesis structure demonstrates how this thesis attempts to achieve the research aim.

Chapter 2 critically reviews the existing literature on PV and identifies the gaps. It is suggested that first, very little literature exists which critiques PV practice of NGOs, and second, rarely has any research focused on the effects on participants' agency in the presence of oppressive power structures, making this research a useful contribution. The review brings about the research questions that need to be answered for filling those gaps. An analytical framework, based on the literature review, is presented,

which has been used for examining long-term PV projects, and therefore, for answering the questions.

Chapter 3 explains the methodological approach underpinning the collection and analysis of the evidence used to answer the questions. In this chapter it is reasoned that a qualitative methodology was appropriate. It is also explained that questions on validity and reliability of data within qualitative methodology have been dealt with by using a combination of methods to achieve rigour. It is further explained why a case study approach was chosen, and then presents the case study design. The different data collection methods used for this research and their appropriateness is discussed, followed by a description of the phases in which data was collected. The chapter ends with the method of data analysis and the ethical considerations while conducting this research.

Chapter 4 is the first of the three data analysis chapters. It starts with giving the background of the two organisations, which are the research case studies, and the other different actors involved in the process. It is shown that the background of the participants, especially the local gender context, affects the participation of young women in projects. It is proposed that participants start negotiating power within their household to participate in the project, with resources and support available, which indicates that they can begin exploring their agency.

Chapter 5 explores the phases of training and video-making. It also draws out various problems within a long-term PV project. It suggests that while the process has the potential to build participants' agency, in practice, there are several complexities and contradictions, which can also restrict participants' agency.

Chapter 6 starts by looking into how perspectives are communicated by the participants through the videos, screenings and dialogues. It emerges that while communicating their rejection and resistance of gender norms the participants felt they could express their agency, conflicts also emerge when video takes precedence as a product. Working with the community during dialogue and for community action and advocacy for 'impacts' enhances the sense of agency for the participants. However, it is argued that there are conflicts and complexities here too, which affects what participants feel about their ability to bring change.

Chapter 7 brings together the findings from previous data analysis chapters to present the original contribution of this research. I first revisit the gaps revealed during the critical literature review and then propose a conceptual model of participatory video as an agency-development process. I focus on the impacts that participating in a long-term PV project has on participants' agency. I present my arguments that gender power relations in the local contexts and hierarchy within a project lead to several factors which determine whether participants can become agents of change or not.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis summarising the answers found to the main research question and each sub-question. It then presents the contribution to literature that this thesis makes. It also lists out the recommendations that this thesis makes to PV practitioners for implementing PV projects with less powerful groups. This is followed by a discussion on the limitations of the study and future research possibilities.

2. A CRITICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON PV

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I first unpack the concepts of participation, agency and gender norms that are central to this research in Section 2.2. Following this, I critically review the literature on PV, taking into account the following aspects, in order to find the gaps and formulate my research questions. One, how did PV practice come to be associated with community development; Two, the structural phases that a long-term PV project may entail; Three, the impact of participation in a long-term PV project on participants' agency. I focus on the discussions in the current literature and identify the gaps in knowledge.

In Section 2.3, I review the genesis of PV, which can be located in different contexts. This review provides a historical and global perspective, which is useful in understanding the varied forms of PV that have developed. The different terms being used are also examined, and it is explained why the term PV was chosen for this research and why that choice is significant. Section 2.4 is a background review of the PV practice in India, which draws mainly on grey literature, as there is little academic writing available on PV in India.

I then move on to Section 2.5, where the different structural phases of long-term PV projects that are studied in this research are discussed. These include the conceptualisation, initiation, training, video-making, screenings and dialogues with the community, and community action and advocacy. Each of these phases is reviewed to build an understanding of how PV operates as a whole. I argue that several questions still remain unanswered with regards to the development of participants' agency, which

results in formulating the specific research questions. The research questions that emerge based on the gaps are set out in Section 2.6.

An analytical framework is presented in Section 2.7, based on the different phases, to be used for comprehending the PV process. This analytical framework will be applied to the case studies discussed in later chapters. Finally, in Section 2.8 I explain the relation between the conceptual (see Chapter 1, Figure 1) and analytical framework and how they will support the analysis of long-term PV projects being studied in my research.

2.2 THE KEY CONCEPTS

In this section, I discuss the key concepts and how they are useful for this research, and how they guided the literature review that I have undertaken in this chapter.

2.2.1 Participation and its transformatory potential

The term participation evokes positive feelings of engagement and inclusion of citizens, and has assumed this positive sense in much of the current development policies (Cornwall and Brock, 2005). This term can suggest that members of the public are involved in some way in meeting their development needs. It also indicates an inherent shift of power from the traditional decision-makers, such as governments, to members of the public (ibid).

Cornwall (2006) argues that though participation came to be popularised in the 1990s in development policies, it was not a novel concept and had formed a part of the

lexicon of even the colonial government. 'Popular participation' was already a part of debates for development of colonies, where the colonial rulers claimed that they wanted to involve the local population in self-governance. From the early 1900s, participation always remained a part of development policies (Cornwall, 2008). However, it has been an extremely malleable concept, and has come to include a diverse set of practices involving people in some way in their development issues (ibid).

In the post-colonial era, participation of communities was sought for 'community development projects' in the form of providing cash or labour, and not necessarily in deciding what they needed for their development (Narayanan, 2003; Nelson and Wright, 1997; Puri, 2004). These projects, started by governments and international organisations, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, were seen as impositions on local communities (Narayanan, 2003). This top-down approach in community development projects, where more powerful groups, such as the governments or large international aid organisations, make decisions for the communities they target, has been widely criticised by scholars (Nelson and Wright, 1997; Cornwall, 2006). Many scholars suggest that by the 1970s, these community development projects were seen to be failing and this led to the demand for more bottom-up and participatory processes, that focus on local realities and a shift of power from 'experts' to the local communities (Hickey and Mohan, 2005; Narayanan, 2003; Puri, 2004).

Further, also in the 1970s, the failure of the top-down approach led to the emergence of community development-led NGOs as a response (Craig and Mayo, 2004). The NGOs claimed that they were innovative and close to the local people and therefore

could implement the development projects better (Lane, 1997). These NGOs grew during the 1980s and 1990s, and their approach to development included self-reliance. They implemented initiatives aimed at providing cost-effective service delivery, by making people provide their own resources for meeting their development needs (Cornwall, 2006). This approach also faced criticism by scholars, but the neo-liberal policies, which aimed at reducing the spending of the state, gave legitimacy to these NGOs running almost parallel to the government in service delivery and promoting self-reliance (Craig and Mayo, 2004).

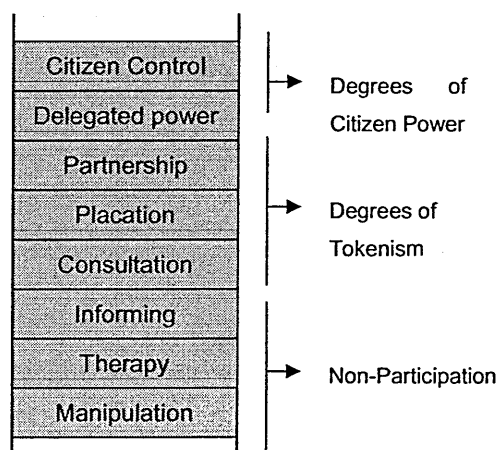
By the 1990s, the so-called bottom-up approach, which was becoming more popular, became almost essential in development policies and participatory development projects (Parfitt, 2004; Cornwall, 2006). Participation, which was now being promoted as bringing efficiency in service delivery, offered to 'empower' people where they 'owned', managed and provided their services (Cornwall, 2006). It is suggested that empowering the poor almost became a universal slogan in the 1990s (Thomas, 1992).

In the present context, different actors, such as the governments, donors and NGOs, strive to incorporate the target group's participation in the design of their projects. However, reality about people's participation in their development is much more complex than the term 'participation' itself tends to suggest. A common charge has been that participation of people in community development projects is mostly efficiency-based, where people and their participation are a means to an end (Puri, 2004). In practice, power might not actually shift towards communities. Instead, the existing patterns of power relations may be perpetuated in community development projects (Narayanan, 2003). This has been evident through different approaches to development employing various forms of participation over several decades – from

participation in the form of cash and labour in the post-colonial community development projects, to participation in the form of 'owning', managing and providing their own services, enabled by NGO initiatives.

Hickey and Mohan (2005) suggest that while participation has been central to a number of different approaches to development, each approach has had its own debates, critiques and experiences. These approaches have mainly centred on the degree of engagement, conception of citizenship, theoretical basis and objectives of participation. The various approaches lead scholars to form typologies of participation based on degrees of participation, nature of participation, basis of participation and so on (Reed, 2008). Arnstein (1969) developed a typology through her ladder of participation, where she describes a spectrum in which participation moves from people being manipulated by authorities to them gaining control. Figure 2 shows Arnstein's ladder of participation.

Figure 2: Arnstein's ladder of participation



Though such typologies may offer a distinct way of looking at the 'degree of participation', in practice, participation may be much more complex than in such well-defined forms. For instance, during consultation, people may be able to bring out their needs strongly and get them included in the government/international agency/NGO's agenda. They might feel that their participation in the form of consultation was meaningful for bringing change and not just tokenistic. Therefore, in my research I focus on the nature of participation, which is determined by the perception and experiences of participants. By this, I mean understanding participants' assessment of their participation and the different ways in which they think they are participating.

Farrington and Bebbington (1993) propose that a true participatory process would involve people in all stages of the activity that is being undertaken. Further, it has to be seen whether only a handful of people or a particular interest group is the one participating; that wouldn't be 'deep' participation. However, participation of everyone may not be practical in a project, especially if there are power relations between different groups in a community (see Guijt and Shah, 1998). Since the primary aim of participation is to enable those with less power to voice their issues and participate in their own development, my focus in this research is to explore how less powerful groups get the opportunity to do so.

Hickey and Mohan (2005) also identify certain key problems with participatory approaches, including insufficient understanding of how power operates between different actors, inadequate understanding of the role of agency in social change and a tendency of certain agents to treat participation as a technical method rather than as a method for empowerment. Such a critique asks for looking at power structures and

power relations between different actors in a project and linking participation to people's agency. Certain scholars, such as Cornwall and Gaventa (2000), Hickey and Mohan (2004), Parfitt (2004) and Williams (2004), suggest that reconceptualising participation in these terms can help uncover the transformatory potential of participation, where less powerful groups indeed have the power to define what they need and bring social change accordingly (see Section 1.3.1).

The ideas on participation discussed above guide my inquiry of long-term PV projects by NGOs. The areas of focus are:

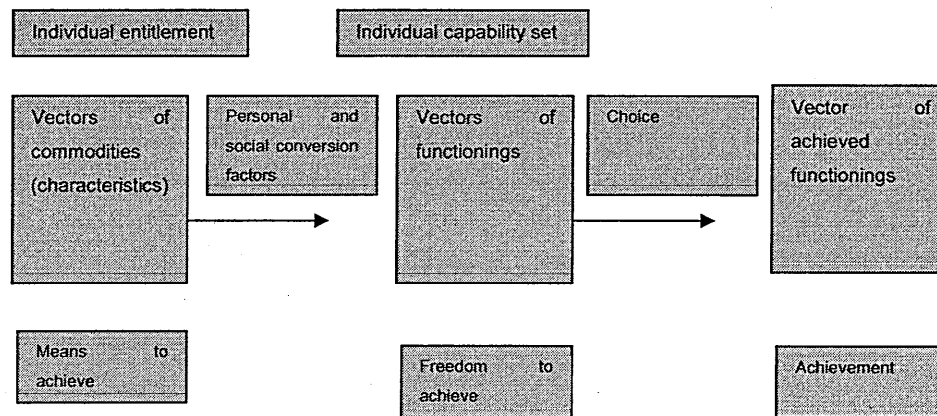
- Power relations within the community where the long-term PV projects have been implemented
- Power structures within long-term PV projects
- Nature of participation and participants' experiences through the different phases of a long-term PV project

2.2.2 Agency and its various dimensions

I had discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3.2) that I have drawn on Sen's conceptualisation of agency in his Capability Approach. Capability Approach is a plural approach and identifies several dimensions of a person's well-being. Well-being includes more elementary states of being, such as being healthy or being nourished and also the more complex capabilities, such as realizing and exercising agency in a social context (Sen 1999). He defines agency as "*the ability to pursue goals one values and has the reason to value*" (Sen, 1999, p.19), which is also the definition I use in this study. He offers a distinction between well-being and agency – that agency includes goals other than the advancement of a person's own well-being (Sen, 2010).

Sen (1999) also distinguishes between capabilities and functionings. He suggests that capabilities are unrealised potential functionings and functionings are what a person actually does. Kotan (2010) explains capability as a substantive freedom, that is, the ability to reach their state of well-being. Frediani (2010) argues that for a realistic evaluation of a person's well-being, the capabilities (the freedom people have) should be focused on more rather than their functionings (what they have been able to achieve). Having the opportunity to choose is seen as more helpful to evaluate well-being than what has been chosen. Whether opportunities promote well-being depends on how they are used (Gasper, 2007). Kabeer (1999) argues that the ability to exercise change comprises three inter-related dimensions: resources as the pre-conditions, agency as the process and achievements as the outcomes. The pre-conditions indicate that exercising agency is not simply an individual's choice, and that material, social and institutional factors have an influence on it (Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007; Frediani, 2010). Access to resources, both material, human and social, affect claims on power and agency (Kabeer, 1999). Robeyns (2000) represents the Capability Approach schematically, which is in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Schematic representation of Capability approach based on Robeyns (2000)



Another element of the Capability Approach is freedom. Expansion of freedom is seen as a central value in development, both as a primary end and as a principal means of development. (Gasper and van Staveren, 2003). There is also a clear distinction between well-being freedom and agency freedom (Qizilbash, 2005; Alkire, 2005). Well-being freedom is the opportunity to achieve one's own well-being and agency freedom is the opportunity to pursue the goals one values (Sen 2009). While well-being freedom is concerned with an individual's well-being, agency freedom also includes acts for other's well-being (Frediani 2010). Sen (2000) emphasises that an individual, as an agent, can act to promote not only their own well-being, but also that of their community. He suggests that *"when more capability includes more power in ways that can influence other people's lives, the other person may have good reason to use the enhanced capability – the larger agency freedom – to uplift the lives of others, especially if they are relatively worst off, rather than concentrating only on their own well-being"* (Sen, 2010, p.289). Agency achievement means the extent to which these goals have been achieved by a person (ibid).

Stewart (2005) also suggests that though the capability approach focuses more on individuals, it is important to include groups in the analysis of well-being, because they are often a direct source of well-being. Well-being of a person may be enhanced by being a part of a group or by how well their group is doing (ibid). He also argues that certain groups, like the poor, can achieve much more if they undertake collective action. Evans (2002) too contends that for the less privileged, attaining development as freedom requires collective action.

Sen (2002) also distinguishes between two aspects of freedom –positive freedom and negative freedom, which he states are closely related. Positive freedom encompasses a person's ability to do and to be different things and negative freedom refers to freedom from interference (Qizilbash 2005). Gasper and van Staveren (2003) further highlight that all freedoms are not good, and this should be considered while using this approach for analysis. The Capability Approach is concerned with positive freedom. However, Nussbaum (2003) contends that some freedoms limit other freedoms. She also argues that since Sen does not provide a specific list of capabilities, it is not clear which freedoms are, and are not, valuable. However, Sen (2004) defends himself and says that a fixed list of capabilities will restrict public discussion on capabilities, not respond to varying social realities that a particular society faces over time and limit applications possible outside of the sphere of poverty and deprivation analyses. Gasper (2007) contends that this approach adopted by Sen gives freedom to everyone in a project to say what is a valuable capability for them.

Kotan (2010) argues that the concept of agency informs the Capability Approach throughout. It is seen as one of the pillars for expansion of freedom (Frediani, 2010). Agency is also closely related to power, as it involves having the power to act for goals,

which have been established by the agent herself (Frediani, 2010; Kotan, 2010) and much like power, agency can be thought of as the ability to make choices. However, Hilsdon (2007) and Wilson (2008) argue that if agency is seen as a 'rational individual exercising free will', it marginalises the analyses of oppressive structures. For instance, conceptualisation of women's agency would become more significant if it is understood as contingent on specific power relations and local cultural contexts. Therefore, including power structures in the analyses of women's agency can promote conceptualising and recognising its different forms, such as negotiation, bargaining, manipulation or resistance (see Wilson, 2008; Hilsdon, 2007; Kabeer, 1999).

Based on this discussion on agency, the focus during the literature review and analysis is on the following areas:

- Young women participants' ability to achieve their well-being, including both elementary states of being and complex capabilities
- Pre-conditions, including material, social and institutional factors that can affect exercise of agency
- Young women participants' ability to exercise both their well-being and agency freedom

2.2.3 Gender norms and their manifestation

Gender differences have been conceptualised as the social-cultural construction of sex differences (Hearn and Husu, 2011). The assumed and perceived differences and social constructions resulted in gender norms being set in the society. Keleher and Franklin (2008) propose that gender norms are values and attitudes that influence gender-based social roles and behaviours. They foster identity development in men

and women, and also act as a guide on how to behave, act, think or feel (Mahalik et al., 2005), which also results in gender stereotypes.

Scholars observe that gender norms often produce outcomes that are inequitable and dominating on women (Keleher and Franklin, 2008; Mahalik et al., 2005). The gender norms which govern or constrain the behaviour of both men and women may even result in women accepting the subordination and domination without much resistance (Lipman-Blumen, 1995). West and Zimmerman (1987) contend that individuals 'do' gender, i.e. they reflect or express gender through their various ongoing activities and everyday interactions. While doing gender, both men and women reinforce the existing hierarchical arrangements. Doing gender pervades almost all aspects of everyday life, and also determines the roles, work and occupations that individuals can do (ibid).

The focus in this research is on young women undertaking video-making work, which is technological. Wajcman (2010) says that technology-related occupations are often seen as non-traditional for women, and there is a taken-for-granted association of technology with men. This results in gender power relations, where women are seen as technologically incompetent and men dominate technical work – including designing technology and using it. Kelan (2010) draws on the concept of doing gender and suggests that gender can be 'undone' through women's very presence in technology work. This happens because women working with technology show new ways of enacting gender and broaden the ideas by going beyond conventional parameters.

Scholars such as Asiedu (2012) and Buskens (2010) suggest that several ICT4D (Information, Communication and Technology for Development) projects have focussed on giving women the access to technology. However, such projects did not

ensure that the ICTs and their content were relevant and appropriate, or whether they were indeed meeting the women's needs. Focusing on gender would help to understand the structural issues, including the broader social and cultural issues, in the relation between women and technology (Asiedu 2012).

As much as gender norms can influence young women's relationships with video technology, they are also evident within their household, community and the larger society. Gender power relations that manifest at the level of household have been termed as intra-household inequality in the literature. It posits the view that family cannot be understood as an undifferentiated unit, where decisions are made to meet common preferences and needs (Agarwal, 1997). Lipman-Blumen (1995) argue that gender power relations are directly related to who controls the resources. There are social perceptions about what a person contributes and needs. Agarwal (1997) suggests that typically, a woman's contributions and needs in a household are undervalued and may therefore result in women having less bargaining power within their households. The gender norms, which might define who holds the resources, both material and non-material, mostly give the authority to the household head to take decisions on their allocation (Kabeer, 1999). This then influences the opportunities a woman has for achieving her well-being within her household (Iversen, 2003).

Agarwal (1997) brings a focus on women's own understanding of their well-being, as to, what they contribute and what they need. She notes that women in certain societies may seem to have a false perception about their individual interest when they accept the well-being of others as their own. However, the perception of women about inequitable gender norms is visible through overt acts of resistance and even certain covert acts, such as saving money or undertaking income generation activities without

the knowledge of her husband or other family members. She also argues that women's apparent acceptance of inequitable relations may be a result of lack of choice, rather than a false perception of their well-being.

Beyond the household, women's 'bargaining power' needs to be analysed to understand the freedom women may get and the values it brings (Gasper and van Staveren, 2003). Wilson (2008) contends that women's agency needs to be exercised for reasserting resistance and challenging power relations. She suggests that for this to happen, women's agency needs to be seen beyond how current development policies view them. Section 1.4 in Chapter 1 looked more deeply at the gender agenda in the development policies in India. Drawing from the understanding the discussion in Section 1.4 brought and the discussion in this section, the literature review in this chapter and the analyses in the data chapters focus on the following:

- Intra-household inequality in the households of young women participants
- Gender power relations within the community where the long-term PV project has been implemented
- Gender roles, norms and stereotypes in the local community where the long-term PV project has been implemented

In the following sections, I critically review the literature on PV, using the three concepts discussed here as the guides.

2.3 PV – GENESIS, CONTEXTS AND TERMS

PV has been used in many different fields, particularly in several disciplines of research and community development (Kindon, 2003). For instance, it has been used as a

research method in disciplines such as anthropology (Pink, 2007), public health (see Martin et al., 2005; Stewart et al., 2008), education (Pithouse et al., 2009) and agriculture (Gandhi et al., 2007). In the field of community development, PV has been adopted to help people document their knowledge (Lunch, 2004), find solutions to local issues (Suarez et al., 2008) and also advocate on causes with policy-makers (Plush, 2009a).

The different strands of use have emerged from different contexts, and it is essential to understand these strands for building a comprehensive understanding of how the current PV practices have developed, and are influenced by them. In this section, I discuss the genesis of PV that can be located in various contexts, the different terms that have come into use and the different understandings of PV that have eventually developed.

2.3.1 Genesis of PV

One of the most comprehensively documented early developments of PV is its use in Fogo Island in Newfoundland, Canada, in 1967 (Crocker, 2003). The Canadian National Film Board's (NFB) Challenge for Change project brought together Donald Snowden, Director of the Extension Department, Memorial University and NFB filmmaker Colin Low, to work with the islanders on making a film about the economic problems they faced as a community. It was meant to help communication amongst various factions in the community and facilitate cooperation to organise and effect change at a local level (Corneil, 2012). The form of participation in Fogo Island ranged from people giving suggestions and direction to the film, to using the equipment (Todd-Hénaut and Clark, 1976). The Fogo process refers both to this initial experience and

the resulting approach – an approach which has been credited by some as the genesis of PV (Okahashi, 2000; Crocker, 2003; Huber, 1998). The process was hugely influential, and since then it has been applied and extended over time in numerous international contexts for community development.

The growing use of PV happened in parallel to the growing thinking on community participation and development in the academia in the 1960s. There were questions being raised about who participates, what is the form of communities' participation (Verba, 1967) and what are the different levels of participation – from non-participation to citizen power (Arnstein, 1969). Participation was seen as something that should be available to the citizens to have control or influence decision-making (ibid). It was furthered by the social movements at the time, which were giving rise to substantial social changes (Cornwall, 2006). It was also around this time that Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) had a significant impact on the work with marginalized communities and initiated critical discussion on power, participation and communities globally.

Around the same time, feminist filmmaking also emerged, which focused on non-hierarchical methods of filmmaking and laid emphasis on participation (Cain, 2009), along with the growing women's movement in the 1970s. For instance, Michelle Citron, a feminist filmmaker, taught the 'subjects' of her film on how to use film equipment, and reviewed the footage with them. Feminist filmmaking was seen as an alternative to the patriarchal and individualistic mode of production (Citron et al., 1978, p.96). This kind of filmmaking focused less on the mastery of the medium and more on using the film as a collaborative process in an attempt to establish a non-hierarchical relationship between the filmmaker and the films' subjects, which are also values shared by PV.

Ethnographic films originally involved recording the lives of the 'others' but its reinvention happened in this critical period (Ginsburg, 1991). They were influenced by ideas on participation in development and with similar aims of destabilising the power relations between the filmmaker and subject as feminist filmmaking. Ethnographic filmmakers started adopting more dialogical approaches, involving indigenous communities in film production where communities could control their representation (ibid). Participatory techniques for filmmaking have since been used in anthropology (Pink, 2006). The use of PV as a method, in applied visual anthropological research is driven by an appreciation of participatory approaches, where people collaborate in sharing and producing knowledge with the researcher (Pink, 2007).

The late 1960s and 1970s were an important ground for development of PV because of the burgeoning thinking on participation of communities, unequal power relations and the eventual emergence of community development-led NGOs. As was mentioned in Section 2.2.1, the top-down community development projects were seen as failing, which resulted in NGO-implemented projects, since NGOs claimed to be 'closer' to the local community. PV is now being used extensively by NGOs for participatory development. At the same time, it grew as a participatory research method as well, and the independent development in different fields also means that it has grown into diverse forms and practices.

While using and analysing PV as a research method, several researchers have focused on hierarchical power relations both within communities and between communities and governments/ international agencies, and how those power relations can be destabilised through PV (e.g., Stewart et al., 2008; De Lange et al., 2008;

Harris, 2009; Kindon, 2003). However, there has been little critique on power relations within the PV practices of NGOs itself, despite the practices' beginning in the participatory development thinking. While participatory approaches have faced various critiques over the decades, this has not really been the case with PV, and this assumes critical importance in the analyses of PV practices, as I reflect in Section 2.4.

2.3.2 Different Terms for PV

The diversification of PV in forms, practice and uses has also led to different terms being used for it, which point towards the underlying differences. These terms are often used interchangeably in PV literature and in practice and create a certain ambiguity in understanding the underlying approach, which necessitates this discussion. Table 1 presents what these different terms are and how they represent the different forms of PV.

Table 1: Different terms for PV

Terms	Process Video	Community Video	Indigenous Media	Collaborative Filmmaking
What is the main purpose	Individual growth	Community Development	Self-Representation	Research
Who determines, produces and owns the content	Participants	Community	Community	Researcher and/or Participants

Some scholars, such as Kawaja (1994), argue that the term participatory has been used very loosely and is therefore, a meaningless reference. To avoid using what has become a catchphrase, she uses Process Video to place more importance on the

process than the product. It represents a systematic, step-by-step production process that has been used with communities, where the most important focus is on an individual participants' personal growth (see Guidi, 2003; Kawaja, 1994).

In Community Video too, a term often used interchangeably with PV (Moletsane et al., 2009), the focus is on ensuring the individual participants' growth. However, the term conveys that it is media 'owned' by the larger local community, and the whole community's participation is encouraged during the different parts of the process, such as scripting, video-making, screenings and so on, for community development purposes (Perkins, 2010). Additionally, community video is supposed to be free from interference from the state, market and multilateral agencies (Saeed, 2009).

Similarly, the practice termed as Indigenous Media is concerned with the central issue of communities controlling the production and distribution of images (Ginsburg, 1991). Its emergence in some places has been contributed to by ethnographic filmmaking, such as the Kayapo video in Brazil (Turner, 1992) or the Aboriginal communities in Australia (Ginsburg, 1991). The distinctive feature of Indigenous Media is that it is media produced by indigenous people themselves and is significantly different from that produced by anthropological filmmakers (Turner, 1992).

Researchers using applied visual anthropology have called it both collaborative and participatory, when they involve participants in video-making at different levels (see Moletsane et al., 2009; Buckingham, 2009; Banks, 2001). In collaborative projects, the researcher and participants work together on a video production, where the ways of collaborating may vary, such as participants can decide on the content, but may or may not participate in its technical production (Banks, 2001).

The above discussion reveals that PV has been an umbrella term for varied practices, which consider participation as central to them, but have both overlaps and distinctions. For instance, while Community Video and Indigenous Media place stress on engaging the larger local community, Process Video and Collaborative filmmaking are more concerned with the individual participants who are involved. In spite of the term Community Video being used in the cases studied, I have used Participatory Video because the focus of my study is not the community but the participants, i.e. the individual community members who form the video-making team. I did not see fit to use a term that might convey a different research emphasis. More importantly, I am looking at PV practice within the participatory development context and therefore, selected the term participatory video to guide attention towards the context and the central concept of participation.

2.4 PV PRACTICE IN INDIA

The first widely documented experiment in participatory development communication in India is the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) Program, Kheda (Gujarat). This program was implemented by the Indian government in selected rural areas over a year in 1975, and aimed at providing educational and instructional programming through TV broadcast to promote rural development (Choudhury, 2011). It had several participatory aspects to it, such as focusing on the issues of the local community, or using portable video recorders to record responses of the communities and officials for programming (Bannerjee, 1981). Furthermore, there was also a focus on enabling people to act for meeting their needs – there were local extension agents who held group discussions and meetings to ensure the community could act upon the

information given (UNESCO, 1983),

In the NGO sector, the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) established its own participatory video unit called Video SEWA, in 1984, with support from Communication for Change (US). Self-employed women in the informal sector were trained in making videos on their issues and using them to bring them to the attention of policy-makers (Singhal and Devi, 2003). It aimed to enable these women to participate in the political sphere by raising their voice on policy issues that impacted them. A lesser known initiative has been by the Centre for Development of Instructional Technology (CENDIT) around the same time (Booker, 2003). In 1998, the Deccan Development Society (DDS) started a participatory video project with rural women farmers to bring out their issues and advocate on pertinent policy matters (Satheesh, 1998).

Several Indian NGOs, like the ones discussed above, formed in the 70s and had their foundation in the idea of empowerment that was growing globally based on Friere's (1972) work. They were dissatisfied with the state-led, top-down development approach and aimed to work with the marginalised communities directly (Sen, 1999b). The Indian NGO sector has only grown since, given the steady increase in aid, both national and foreign (Jalali, 2008). The one-off PV projects by NGOs have also since multiplied into several such projects with communities across the country.

Further, Ebrahim (2001) suggests that NGOs are affected by the changes in global development discourses that are transmitted to them via several mechanisms, including funding conditions. Since most of the current PV-projects (by NGOs) in India are funded by large national and international donor agencies strongly promoting

participatory development, albeit often with their own agenda, they too are placed within the global participatory development framework, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Section 1.4.

These projects have taken various forms, such as being a NGO media unit (e.g., SEWA), a Community Video Unit (e.g., Video Volunteers), a Community TV (e.g., DDS, Byrraju Foundation), or an online network of citizen reporters (e.g., Women Aloud: Video-blogging for Empowerment). There have been both short-term and long-term projects with different purposes and expected outcomes. While many short-term projects have been week-long ones, some long-term ones have extended over several years. They have been implemented with both rural and urban communities and have included marginalised groups such as Dalits, Tribals, Muslims, slum dwellers and women. Some such projects focus on local community action and policy advocacy, whereas, others aim to bring news from remote areas, but all with the basic stated aim of encouraging the participation of communities in development.

In India, PV has mainly been used in the field of community development, both by the government and by NGOs. As I mentioned above, the projects by NGOs have had different forms. The focus in this thesis is on long-term PV projects that have been undertaken with local communities over several years. I gave a very brief description of such long-term projects in Section 1.1 in Chapter 1. In the section below, I discuss the various phases that a long-term PV project is likely to go through and provide a critical analysis of literature based on these phases.

2.5 PHASES OF LONG-TERM PV PROJECTS

PV has been called a *"video production process, directed by a group of grassroots people, moving forward in iterative cycles of shooting – reviewing, aiming at creating video narratives that communicate, what those who participate in the process really want to communicate, in a way, they think is appropriate"* (Johansson et al., 1999, p.36). Suarez, et al. (2008, p.97) say that it is a *"methodology, which aims at involving a group or community in shaping, creating and filming their own film, from storyboarding to interviewing and camera operation."* These definitions of PV point out that there are different phases through which PV traverses. What they do not specify is whether every PV process has the same phases and if these phases differ in different projects.

In this section, I review the literature on the different phases that a typical long-term PV project implemented by NGOs is likely to go through. I have identified six phases and organised them to present a coherent study, though I recognise that they may differ from project to project. These phases are: conceptualisation, initiation, training, video-making, video screenings and dialogues with communities, and community action and advocacy. The review brings out the gaps in existing literature, revealing the scope of contribution that can be made to the current scholarship.

2.5.1 Project Conceptualisation and various actors

As has been mentioned earlier in Section 2.3.1, a key figure in the development of participatory approaches is Paulo Freire (see Evans and Foster, 2009; Huber, 1998; Mohan and Stokke, 2000). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1972, p.32) describes a process, where the oppressed should first critically recognize its (situation

of oppression) causes, understand their world of oppression and through praxis (process of reflection and action), commit themselves to its transformation. The process involves identification of solutions, collective action and dialogue with those who have 'power'. He constantly emphasises people's fundamental role in the transformation process and a pedagogy that is forged with and not for the oppressed.

Scholars using PV affirm that the process embodies the concepts proposed by Freire, as it involves those concerned with the issues in making the transformation themselves or in advocacy with more powerful, such as the government (Johansson et al., 1999; Gutberlet, 2008; Harris, 2009). However, many such assertions do not address the concern that in practice there are several other actors who are deeply involved in a PV process, other than the participants and communities. These different actors may have different positions of power and even different agendas. They may have different thoughts about what needs transformation and what the participation of people should lead to, because of which conflicts may arise. The following table has been drawn up from the literature, listing the various actors in a PV project implemented by NGOs, revealing whom they can exercise their power over and the specific agendas that they may have when the project begins.

Table 2: Various actors, their objectives and power they can have over others

	Donor Agency	NGO	Trainer/ Facilitator	Community	Participants
Objective	Best utilisation of funds for meeting stated development needs and project objectives	Delivering on stated project objectives Visible Community development	Delivering on stated project objectives Participants' learning	Sustained Local Social Change	Personal Development Earning livelihood Local Social Change
Driven by	International Development agenda	Need to Meet Donor's Objectives	Need to show results to NGOs	Their own development needs	Their own and community's development needs
Can have power over	NGO	Trainer/ Facilitator	Participants	Other community members	Themselves

The critique of participatory development by several scholars has highlighted that often the real agendas of the communities are not included in the development agenda and their participation remains tokenistic (see Section 2.2.1). Kabeer (1999, p.438) notes that agency is the power within, i.e. the ability to define one's goal and act upon them. Having the 'power to' means people's ability to pursue what they value. Frediani (2010) suggests that power with, power over and power structures need to be included in the analysis along with power to, for understanding people's agency. This is because institutional obstacles (like in participation or accountability), social norms (which

determine who has the decision-making authority) and domination of certain groups can restrict people's agency (Frediani, 2010; Kabeer, 1999; Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007). Kabeer (1999) also suggests that some actors may have power over, that is the capacity to override the agency of others, which can also happen in the absence of explicit opposition due to certain rules or norms. For instance, rules governing social behaviour tend to ensure some groups can exercise their power over others without any question.

While concerns around power have been raised by scholars analysing gender power relations, critiquing participatory approaches and those exploring people's agency (see Section 2.2), the literature on PV practice often does not address such concerns. In particular, the issue that different actors involved in a long-term PV project might already hold different positions of power because of the institutional setup and norms, has not been delved in depth. Hierarchical power relations might exist between them and even be accepted. Hence, it becomes important to investigate how agendas and objectives are set at the beginning of the initiative where different actors have different agendas. In the next few paragraphs, I review the agendas that the various actors may have and how that can affect the participatory approach in a long-term PV project.

The major argument against the role of many NGOs is that they are creations of funding agencies, and hence, "*their entire existence, not merely dependency, is on donor money, almost always from above*" (Zaidi, 1999, p.263). There is, therefore, always a fear of NGOs being co-opted by international development and donor agencies (Tandon, 2000). Cain (2009) mentions that donor agencies are more concerned about quantifiable outcomes, and put more emphasis on the product and

less on the process. PV projects by NGOs are often funded by external sources such as donor agencies, and therefore, maybe influenced similarly.

So, even while NGOs have been using PV extensively to work with marginalized communities or marginalized groups within a community on their issues, such as climate change, gender inequality, education and health (e.g., Bery and Stuart, 1996; Ruiz, 1994; Rodriguez, 1994; Plush, 2009a), they might be driven more to fulfill donor objectives. Moreover, even the content of a video and what it communicates may actually be largely driven by the donor agency. As Shaw (2012) explains, organisations may face the dilemma of having to choose between what the donors want to see and what the participants want to say. If the topics of videos are pre-determined in such ways, it can remain a tokenistic process, as the video might be made and used for the purpose of the donors (ibid).

Although, during the 'handing over' of the equipment to the participants, there has been an emphasis on participants being in control of the entire process (Lunch and Lunch, 2006) and ensuring that structured learning is being facilitated (Shaw, 1997), participants might still work towards fulfilling the donors agenda. Facilitators, who work with participants to train them in a PV process, including technical skills (De Lange et al., 2008), may also be pressured to fulfil the donor objectives during the training process. Moreover, facilitators, who can be crucial in maintaining a participatory approach, being 'above' the participants in the hierarchy, might impose their own values on the process or the product (Harris, 2009).

When communities engage in advocacy or information dissemination, their agenda is to bring change in their situations according to their own needs and values

(Narayanan, 2003). However, when communities participate in invited spaces (see Cornwall, 2004) to create media, rather than in spaces created by them (Ginsburg, 1991; Turner, 1992), they might not be able to pursue their own values because of other actors. Moreover, since communities are often not homogenous, different community members may have different needs and the needs of the more powerful groups might be the only ones getting represented in a PV process. Furthermore, the community members, who become the participants getting trained through a long-term PV project, may also have objectives of their own, which they would want to fulfil through their participation.

This critique reveals that while there are different actors (where some hold power over others) with their different agendas, the literature on PV practice does not address how a participatory approach can be maintained in the process. During the project conceptualisation, only the donors and NGOs might be involved, thereby limiting the opportunity for participants and communities to participate in the setting of agenda and objectives. It reveals that there is a need to enquire, 'how are objectives set, how are decisions made and whose agenda does a long-term PV project really fulfil?' This thesis can contribute to understanding how participants can identify their own needs within a project with a possibility to address them, and therefore, have the opportunity to explore their agency, when other more powerful actors have different agendas.

2.5.2 Project Initiation in the Community

Following the conceptualisation of the project, a long-term PV project is initiated in the selected community. It was discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3.3) that there is a tendency to treat communities as homogenous and ignore power relations that exist

between different groups in a community, which suppresses the participation of the less powerful groups (Guijt and Shah, 1998). Nelson & Wright (1997) have observed that feminist scholarship has brought forward the importance of recognizing power relations and imbalances within a community, and of breaking down the perceived homogeneity. Such scholarship added to the 'view from below', and offered a new and different perspective of looking at power relations (Schrijvers, 1997). Several researchers have suggested that gender power relations are a deciding factor in whether women from the community get to participate in a true and meaningful manner (Mohanty, 2007; Puri, 2004; Narayanan, 2003). This can determine whose voice is getting heard in a participatory development project like PV, and who gets the opportunity to exercise their agency, i.e. the ability to affect desired changes in their situation (see Section 2.2.2).

Banks (2001) suggests that the facilitators of a PV process need to be careful and take the responsibility to include the less powerful groups in participatory processes, as the community itself might not suggest participation of groups such as women, in a media production process. However, not many scholars other than Banks address this concern and explain if power relations within the community are considered in a PV project to determine who participates.

More importantly, it is not addressed how participation of the less powerful groups could be ensured, if the more powerful in the community do not suggest their participation or if they oppose their participation. There are practitioners and scholars who have worked with groups who have lesser power such as Dalits, Tribals, women and religious minorities within particular geographic communities, but there is little critical analysis of how barriers to their participation can be overcome.

Seeing this as a major gap, this research focuses on enquiring, 'who gets to participate in a long-term PV project, the power relations and their negotiation within communities, and how participation of lesser powerful groups can be ensured to allow them to explore their agency.'

2.5.3 Training

Training participants in video-making is the next step in a long-term PV project. Bery and Stuart (1996, p.200) mention, "*With participatory media, people first learn to operate the equipment*". It is claimed that in PV there is often more emphasis on the participatory process than on the product (Chowdhury et al., 2010), and training can be a crucial part of it.

During the training, participants learn how to use video equipment using PV exercises and games. They then use this knowledge to make a video. Scholars often present training as a process where participants start to build confidence and develop their capabilities (e.g., Stewart et al., 2008). Shaw (1997) explains that it is essential to help participants express themselves and develop their self-esteem during the initial training. It is argued that the act of producing the message becomes empowering in itself, as participants develop a range of media competencies, such as technical and creative production skills, analytical skills in reading mass-media texts and a deeper understanding of their own communicative potential (Riano, 1994).

There are suggestions in literature that training can also help participants challenge social norms. For instance, Turner (1992) notes that in indigenous societies it is

considered very prestigious to be a media producer. The same can be true in other settings, especially where social status and power are controlled by these kinds of roles (see Bery and Stuart, 1996).

As mentioned in Section 2.2.3, the gender norms set in societies also control who can play which role. Rommes, et al. (2005) also note how women-only technology training often offers a safe and supportive environment to the participants. They argue that traditional associations between technology and masculinity are less likely to work in women-only trainings, enabling women to build their confidence. So, when women participants gain access to and ownership of media technology, it might hold specific importance for them, since their traditional role does not usually include production of media. It can offer them the opportunity to start challenging the popular gender constructs and changing their own perspectives on what they are capable of (Tuladhar, 1994).

However, there are only brief mentions of the importance of training beyond developing skills that can be used in a PV project. Most scholars, such as those mentioned above, present training as unproblematic and do not offer much in-depth understanding on how it can affect the participants' agency. The several handbooks developed by NGOs on the training process, which detail how to plan and conduct trainings with a participatory approach (e.g., Goodsmith and Acosta, 2011; Lunch and Lunch, 2006; Benest, 2010; Singh, 2010), are also uncritical in nature as they tend to present an entirely positive picture of the process (see Chapter 1, Section 1.2).

In both academic and grey literature there is an underlying assumption that it is okay to train participants in what is understood by the NGOs as necessary for meeting project

targets. The participants are trained in what is pre-decided as 'adequate' skills building. I see it as a gap that concerns are not raised about the opportunities the participants should have to gain skills they deem important for achieving their valued goals. To address that, this research needs to uncover 'how the training is designed, how learning is encouraged, and if the training responds to the needs of the participants and builds their agency.'

2.5.4 Video-Making

Video-making follows once the participants are trained. The intense process of making a video involves several steps, such as conceptualising, scripting, storyboarding, shooting, and editing. Each of these steps can support participants in building a different set of capabilities, from technical to creative to analytical. Individuals participating in video-making may gain experiences that promote confidence, leadership, active engagement with issues and a feeling of empowerment (Ruiz, 1994; Bery and Stuart; 1996; Underwood and Jabre, 2003).

One of the aspects of video-making is the ability to represent one's self. Rodriguez (2006, p.763) comments about PV, "*it implies having the opportunity to create one's own images, of self and environment; it implies being able to re-codify one's own identity, with the signs and codes that one chooses, thereby disrupting the traditional acceptance of those, imposed by outside sources; it implies becoming one's own storyteller, regaining one's own voice; it implies reconstructing the self-portrait of one's own community and one's own culture.*" Marginalised communities may be able to challenge the existing mainstream perception built about them by countering the negative images (Wheeler, 2009) or challenging the stereotypical ones (Harris, 2009).

It is argued that since PV can encourage less powerful and marginalised groups such as women to challenge hierarchical power relations, it can also affect the way they perceive and represent themselves (Protz, 1994). Khamis, et al. (2009) say that when women make video they are filled with self-confidence, are able to analyse the problems they are facing and see their own potential to bring change. I suggest that like in training (Section 2.4.4), women step out of their traditional role during video-making too. When they produce a story, they are the ones 'directing' rather than men, thus altering gender roles (Rodriguez, 1994). They undo gender by broadening ideas about what women can do (see Kelan 2010). They can present their opinions and perspectives, and recognize their own agency for development (Kawaja, 1994; Protz, 1998; Einsiedal, 1996).

Using drama as the form in the videos can also enable participants to explore intimate issues and express their opinions on them (Brickell 2014). Drama itself has had a history where women have been able to bring up 'private' issues, such as domestic violence, to more public spaces and bring up their demand for a change (see for e.g., Nagar 2000). Waite and Conn (2011) draw from their research with young women to suggest that using drama in PV allows for performative exploration of gender power relations, where young women role-play themselves, their parents, young men and men. It can create a space where young women can both express and represent themselves, and 'perform' the change that they want.

Cahill (2010) warns though that while representing in dramatised accounts, people may sometimes replicate the status quo, instead of enacting the desired change. Women, for instance, may perform gender the way it exists, reproducing hierarchical gender

norms (see West and Zimmerman 1987). Protz (1998) also cautions that representing reality is not always simple, since sometimes the community might not want to represent the way things are, to audiences outside from their own community. Further, as mentioned in Section 2.5.1, other actors having more power than the participants, such as facilitators, may have their own set of values that they might impose during representation. For instance, the participants may reinforce a certain image of their selves, while the facilitators may perceive it as a stereotype and may want to break that image. However, most literature on PV tends to ignore problematic aspects like these and does not offer much critical analysis.

During video-making, the other aspect is the ability to raise issues that are important for the communities. The kind of issues chosen for the video can provide an insight into what is important for the participants (Moletsane et al., 2009). The discussions with the participants, when done in a participatory manner, can generate topics that are of utmost concern to them (Plush, 2009b).

Some scholars claim that it might also become a medium to discuss highly sensitive issues that are rarely addressed or spoken out in the open otherwise (e.g., Molony et al., 2007; Goodsmith, 2007). At the same time, some scholars (Shaw, 1997; Shaw, 2012; High et al., 2012) caution that it is important to note the dynamics during decision-making to understand if participants are, in fact, able to decide their own issues for the video or the videos are driven by someone else's agenda, especially in NGO projects.

Yet again, there are indications in the literature about problematic aspects in communities'/participants' representation or raising of relevant issues due to the

influence of more powerful actors, but not sufficient critical analysis. There is also a possibility that a community's representation may be influenced by the values held by the more powerful actors or the issues raised might need to be approved by them. This may also influence participants' agency-development through the process, since it is related to their ability to represent and raise issues, which are essential for meeting their own agenda and objectives. To fill this gap, this research has to investigate, 'in what ways do more powerful actors influence community/participants' representation and how are the issues raised?'

2.5.5 Screenings and Dialogue with community

When a particular group from within the community makes a video, it is also shared with the rest of the community members through screenings in PV projects that are done with the purpose of community development. Lunch (2007, p.28) says that "*local viewing of the material, as the project progresses, lies at the heart of the PV process and achieves a number of outcomes at the same time.*" Different groups can use this opportunity to share their differing perspective on issues with others in the community (Wheeler, 2009).

Further, it is proposed that participants talk about issues and solutions in a way that is more appropriate to their context and situation. Bery (2003, p.111) says, "*PV focuses on who is communicating – people from inside the community, not outsiders who insert their own values and cultural constructs into the communication. PV producers are not communication experts, journalists, broadcasters, or academics knowledgeable in communication theory, but rather community participants who know and understand, their situation, tell their own stories, and share them within their own context in an*

attempt to bring positive change."

Some scholars suggest that discussions initiate a critical reflection process within communities, which might encourage change. Community members may even decide to work collectively and take action on local social issues (Plush, 2009a; Molony et al., 2007; Okahashi, 2000). It might also offer a space and opportunity for the less powerful groups to discuss sensitive issues directly and challenge oppressive power structures. For example, women might be able to start a dialogue within their community on gender issues, such as domestic violence (Bery and Stuart, 1996), work and opportunities (Underwood and Jabre, 2003) and sexual abuse (Moletsane et al., 2008; Molony et al., 2007).

There are two major gaps in the literature around dialogue. One, the influence that the presence and actions of other powerful actors has on the participants' ability to communicate their own perspective is not analysed in-depth. Two, it is not considered that communities, which are non-homogenous, may not be a 'collective', and therefore, holding a dialogue and the following collective reflection process may first require bringing the less and more powerful groups together, which might be a very difficult task. So to address these gaps, this research needs to direct its attention towards the power relations between different actors and within the community, and investigate, 'how do the more powerful actors influence the messages communicated through videos?'

2.5.6 Community Action and Advocacy

Research on PV suggests that there are communities who have taken action as a result of their involvement in PV, either collectively to bring changes at the local level or as individuals who have changed their personal behaviour (Bery and Stuart, 1996; Molony et al., 2007; Plush, 2009b; White, 2003). Community members may also undertake advocacy efforts with the government to bring change. Dialogue, in the form of advocacy, became a defining feature of PV from the Fogo Process onwards, because an unexpected and valued outcome from that initiative was the initiation of a dialogue between national policy-makers and members of the community (Okahashi, 2000).

Marginalized communities often have very little control over policies, including local policies that affect them (Gutberlet, 2008). It is argued that PV can help communities in reaching and influencing policymakers with whom they cannot usually communicate (Wheeler, 2009; Lunch and Lunch, 2006). For instance, Plush (2009b) explains how a video made by children on climate change and its effects was used successfully for policy change in Nepal. Many such videos have been aimed at informing policy and advocating with the government (Suarez et al., 2008; Lunch, 2007; Bery and Stuart, 1996; Cain, 2009). Bery (2003, p.117) proposes that, "*... inserting PV into the advocacy process empower the community and its producers to take charge, seek alternatives and to take responsibility for improving their lives...*"

However, similar claims of effectiveness of the PV process by practitioners and scholars do not detail how communities undertake action in an effective manner to bring change or reach the policymakers. Very few such as Abah, et al. (2009) and

High, et al. (2012) even raise the issue about what happens beyond the defined project, when participants and communities might need to undertake action on their own. I have discussed in Section 2.2.2, that the ability to bring change is not dependent on just an individual, but also the resources that they may have access to. Therefore, this research needs to examine, 'in what ways can the more powerful actors control resources?' It also needs to investigate the 'extent' of participants' agency to find, 'how can participants come to take charge and become agents of change?'

2.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The critical review in Section 2.5 exposed the gaps that exist in the current literature on PV. These gaps are:

- How are objectives set in long-term PV projects? How are decisions made and whose agenda does a long-term PV project really fulfil?
- Who gets to participate in a long-term PV project? What are the power relations in the community? How can they be negotiated? How can the participation of lesser powerful groups be ensured?
- How are the trainings designed? How is learning encouraged? How does the training respond to participants' needs?
- What is the possibility that the more powerful actors influence participants' representation and decide the issues to be raised?
- How do the more powerful actors influence the messages communicated through videos?
- How are collectives formed within a non-homogenous community to hold dialogues with them?

- In what ways can participants affect community action and advocacy?
- In what ways can the more powerful actors control resources?
- How can participants come to take charge and become agents of change?

These gaps in literature suggest a strong research agenda. I have formulated these gaps into a main research question and four sub-questions. Answering these questions will also help in achieving the overall aim of this research, which is 'to develop a critical understanding of young women participants' agency through long-term PV projects promoting participatory community development'

Main Research Question

How does participating in a long-term PV project impact the agency of young women and enable them to continuously engage with social change in their communities?

Subsidiary Research Questions

- What are the various ways in which participants' agency can be developed through a long-term PV project?
- How do the existing gender power relations within the local community affect participants' agency?
- How do the hierarchical relations between the different actors within a PV project influence participants' agency?
- How can a participants' agency be built to an extent for them to continually engage with social change in their communities?

2.7 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

To answer the above questions, I study the six phases that a long-term PV project by a NGO may go through. These are based on the review done in Section 2.5. An analytical framework (Figure 4) has been developed as a representation of the relation between the phases of a long-term PV project (indicated by lighter-coloured boxes) and the different stages of agency-development (indicated by the darker-coloured boxes). The text under each phase of a project shows the various aspects that become prominent in that particular phase, as revealed through the literature review.

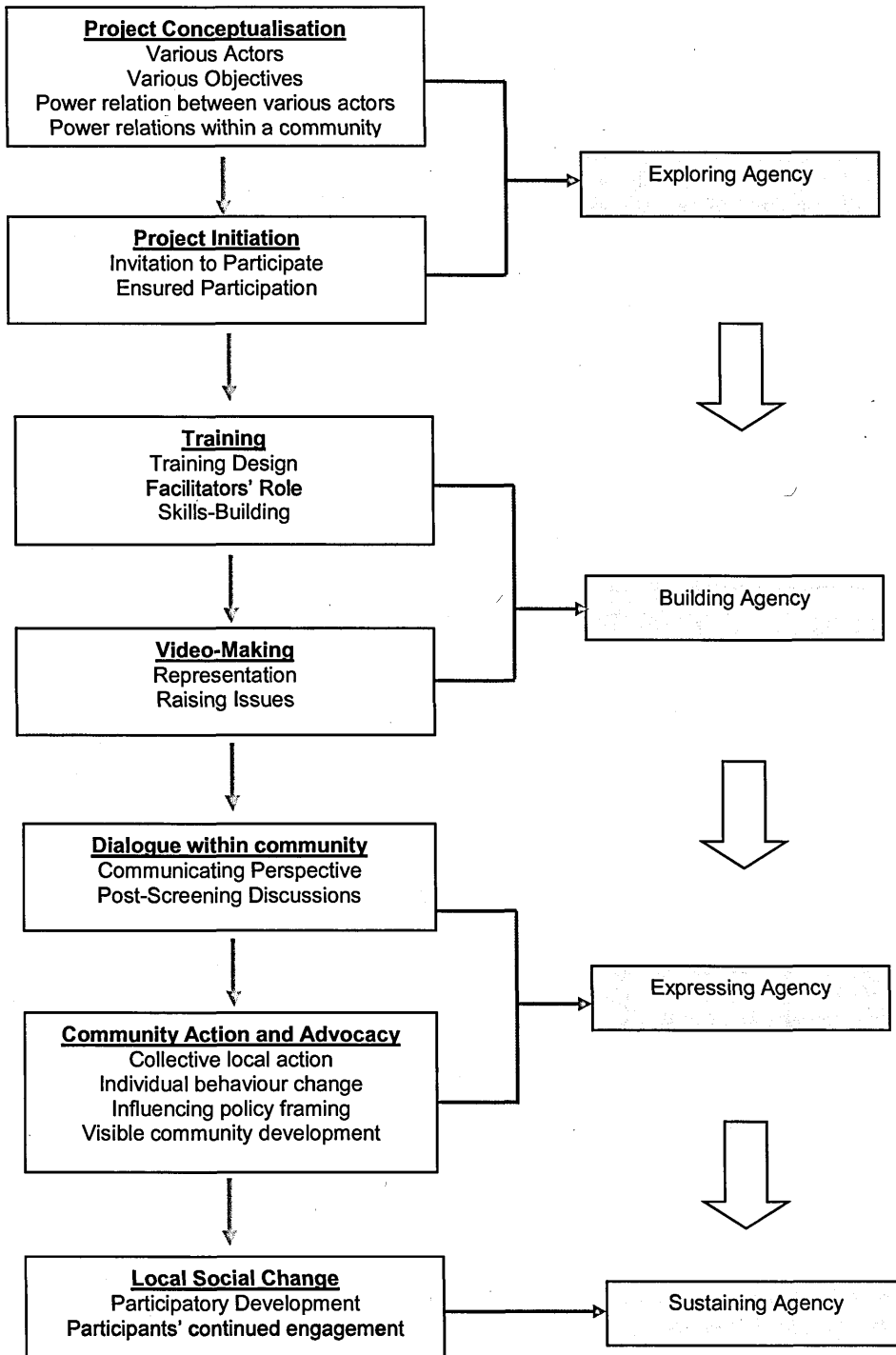
This analytical framework shows how phases may progress from one to another in a long-term PV project (the thinner grey arrows). Agency can also develop from participants' exploring their agency to building it, expressing it and finally, sustaining it (the thicker grey arrows). The framework represents that as the phases progress from one to another, participants' agency can also develop, and that there is a specific relation between the different phases and agency-development (blue arrows).

While the representation in this framework is linear, it needs to be acknowledged that a PV process is not necessarily so. For instance, while the various objectives of the actors appear at the very beginning, they might become a critical element to be considered much later in the process as well, when the participants start developing a stronger sense of what they expect out of their participation in a long-term PV project. The different phases may repeat one after another, or may not even be clearly separate and happen simultaneously in a long-term project. For example, training and video-making can go hand in hand if participants keep making videos during the training process. Also, while a short-term project might go through these phases only

once or even end before reaching the final phase, a long-term project may repeat through the middle phases several times, before it can reach the final phase. At the same time, it has to be pointed out that I have shown a linear progression since each successive phase can happen once the previous phase has started. For instance, training can follow after the project has been initiated, or participants initiate dialogue through screenings on the basis of videos they have already made.

This analytical framework helps provide a structured way of analysing a long-term PV project and participants' agency-development through its various phases. The data in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are based on the different phases represented here, and the analyses in these chapters explore the link between how agency may develop as participants go through the various phases of a long-term PV project, from project conceptualisation to local social change.

Figure 4: Analytical Framework



2.8 RELATING THE CONCEPTUAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS

Figure 1 (Chapter 1), the conceptual framework, showed the central concepts of this thesis and the linkages between them. Figure 4 (Chapter 2), the analytical framework, provided the basis of analysing a long-term PV project through representing the relation between its different phases and participants' agency-development. In this section, I look at the relation between the conceptual and analytical framework to explain how the guiding concepts (as discussed in Section 2.2), will help in analysing participants' agency-development. Figure 5 is a representation of the same.

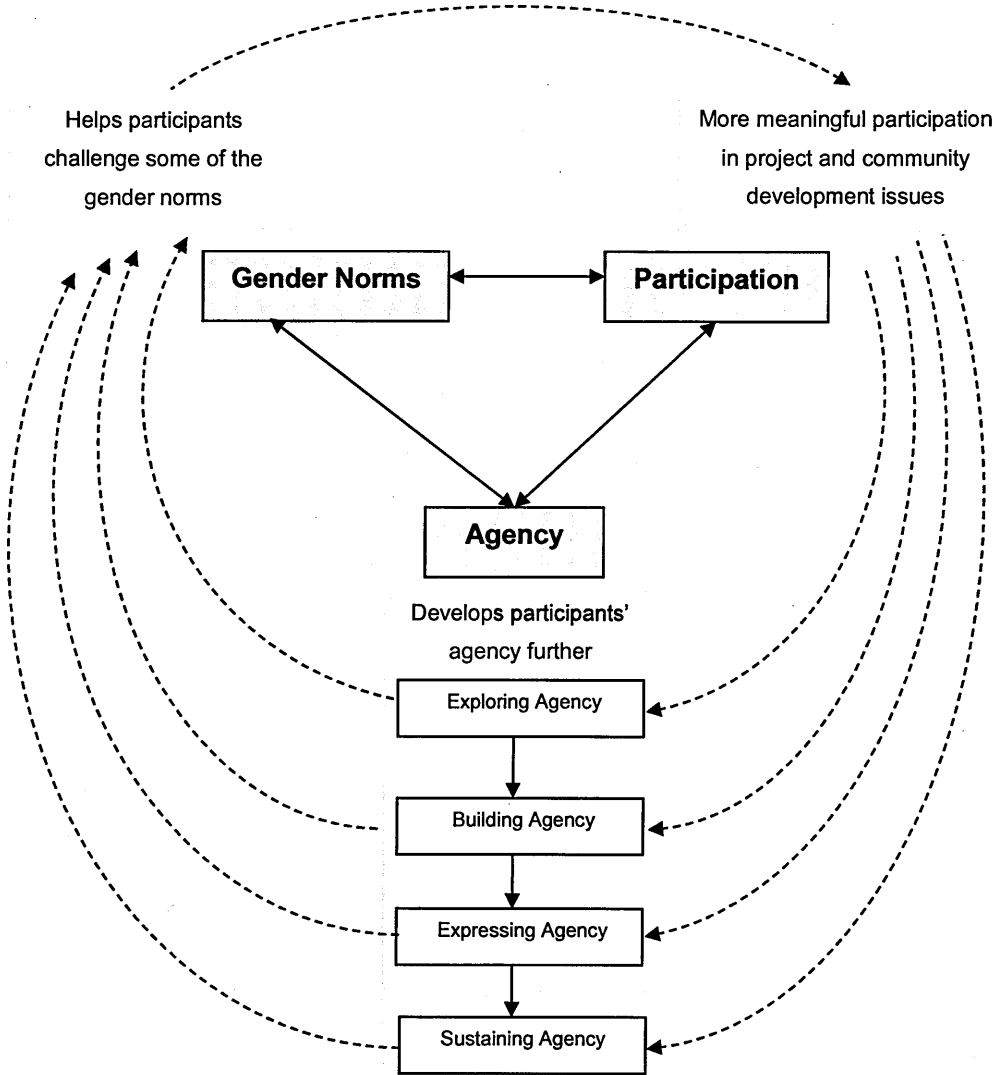
When using the key concepts (in blue boxes) for analysis, I stress that they are inter-linked (indicated by the arrows between the boxes). There is a particular relationship between the three concepts (explained in the grey boxes), which is essential for understanding how participants' agency may develop through a long-term PV project. Exploring the nature of young women's participation (see Section 2.2.1) becomes a pre-requisite to understand how their agency can develop for achieving both their elementary states of being and complex capabilities (see Section 2.2.2). Participants' agency-development may then be used to investigate how they might be able to challenge the gender norms present in their local context (see Section 2.2.3).

While the conceptual framework (Figure 3, Chapter 1) showed a virtuous circle, exploring the relationship between the conceptual and analytical framework in Figure 5 shows how participants' agency-development can be deconstructed (indicated through the white boxes and arrows linking them). It suggests the need for analysing how meaningful participation initially (during project conceptualisation and initiation, as suggested in Figure 4) can help participants to start exploring their agency, which they

can use to overcome some of the gender norms. Overcoming those gender norms can lead to more meaningful participation in the following phase, helping participants in building their agency. So, it indicates that initial meaningful participation might be essential for more meaningful participation to follow during the progression of a long-term PV process. Though, continuing participation is dependent on whether the participants' agency develops from them exploring it, to building it, expressing and being able to sustain it, and if they are able to use their agency for overcoming stricter gender norms.

The process may help develop participants' agency to a certain level, where they become agents of change and are not dependent on the PV project to participate in local development issues and bring social change at the community level. I would investigate whether participants' agency can keep increasing, in practice, and whether there are factors that may disrupt this virtuous cycle leading participants to become agents of change.

Figure 5: Relation between the conceptual and analytical frameworks



2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed the existing literature on PV. It first began with detailing the concepts of participation, agency and gender norms, and how they guide the literature review. I then reviewed how PV began in different contexts at around the same time, from the Fogo Process to ethnographic filmmaking and feminist filmmaking, which were largely driven by the same fundamentals of participants having control over the production process. However, its genesis in different contexts meant that it is now being used in various fields, such as community development and research. Based on the literature, I also suggested that this has given rise to a certain ambiguity, as different terms are being used for apparently similar sets of practices. In the end, I reasoned that Participatory Video is the most appropriate term for this research, since it is focused on the experiences of participants and not the larger community, and that this term helps keep the focus on participation, which is central to this research.

I followed by discussing how PV developed in India, with the government setting up the Kheda project to NGOs adopting PV for community development purposes. I also argued that most of the current PV practice in India is placed within the international participatory development framework, which is largely driven by external donors.

Based on the critical literature review, I presented the different possible phases of a long-term PV project. These phases were project conceptualisation, project initiation, training, video-making, screenings and dialogues with community, and community action and advocacy. It was during the detailed discussion of these phases that I identified the gaps in the current literature and found the areas where this research can contribute.

Following this, I presented all the gaps and the research questions that emerged from those gaps. The main research question formulated is 'How does participating in a long-term PV project impact the agency of young women and enable them to continuously engage with social change in their communities?'

I then suggested that to answer the main research question and the sub-questions, the analysis needs to be done considering the relation between different phases of a long-term PV project and agency-development. The analytical framework presented, thereafter, showed how agency may develop through the different phases and how the analysis in the data chapters would be structured. Following this, I demonstrated how the conceptual and analytical frameworks are linked and how this will guide the analysis.

Since the research gaps revealed during the critical literature review pertained to participants' needs, their agency-development and their experiences in a long-term PV project, my methodology focused on collecting data which provided a detailed understanding of participants' experiences in long-term PV projects. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology that I found appropriate and have adopted for this research.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I explain the methodology that I adopted in this research. The methodology was driven by the research questions that emerged in the previous chapter. Since the main research question, 'How does participating in a long-term PV project impact the agency of young women and enable them to continuously engage with social change in their communities?', is centred on participants' agency, I wanted to understand their experiences in a long-term PV project and their own perception about their agency-development. To do so, I adopted constructionism as my research approach. Adopting this approach enabled understanding various perspectives of different actors and therefore, helped in providing a multi-dimensional and holistic understanding of the PV process studied in this research. I discuss this in detail in Section 3.2.

I have adopted a qualitative methodology in this research and in Section 3.2.1 I discuss how a qualitative methodology supports investigating people's own interpretations and therefore, helped me in capturing the complexity of participants' experiences. I also discuss why this research is participatory and how it helped in uncovering critical issues about participants' agency and the PV process. I recognised young women participants as the key research participants and acknowledged their agency and ability to reflect on their experiences.

The research methodology is based on the case study approach and in Section 3.3 I show how the nature of the long-term PV projects was appropriate to be studied as

case studies. Following this, I introduce the research context and the selected case studies of PV projects in Akshara (Mumbai) and Mahita (Hyderabad).

The research studied the PV process in its entirety in two different settings. This required the selection of different data collection methods, which could generate enough data for an in-depth understanding of the process. I tested the data collection methods in the field through a pilot study, and then implemented them in the main study. These two different phases of the study are also presented in this chapter. Next, I have explained the methods of data collection and how I applied them in the field. This is followed by an explanation of my data analysis plan.

The chapter ends with a discussion on the ethical considerations that arose while conducting research with the young women participants in their respective field settings.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

As I discussed in Chapter 1, participatory development policies often fail to include the voices and perspectives of the marginalised communities, which echoes in the work of some of the leading scholars in the field. Adopting a gender lens highlighted that though there have been efforts to ensure participation of less powerful groups to promote their agency, oppressive power structures in the local contexts have often been ignored in development policies. The fundamental idea behind PV has been to bring out the perspectives of such less powerful groups/communities that have been ignored in the development agenda. However, as I argued in the earlier chapters,

ensuring participation of less powerful groups is quite complex and participants might be unable to meaningfully participate in meeting their development needs.

Accordingly, this research acknowledges that different groups have different perspectives on what their development needs are. It is based on the belief that there are multiple constructions of reality by people involved in a situation (see Burr, 1998). This research recognises the notion that there are pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended, and contextualized (for example, sensitive to place and situation) perspectives towards reality (Creswell and Miller, 2000). A constructionist orientation to research opens the possibility of recognizing and understanding multiple and alternative perspectives (Stainton-Rogers, 2006), and may support investigating the participants' own experience of gaining power and agency. Constructionism is useful to analyse ideas about people, their knowledge, or practices that involve interactions of people (Hacking, 1998). The research wants to build knowledge about a process where participants interact with each other. As Potter (1996) notes, in a constructionist approach, the subjectivity in achieving an understanding of the world and the role of power in making meanings is highlighted. Since this research aims to understand how PV participants' agency is built in the presence of oppressive power structures and also how young women participants understand their reality, present their own perspective and exercise their agency to engage with social change, constructionism is an appropriate approach. Moreover, the research intends to analyse gender power relations, which constructionism can support, as it also helps in revealing oppression by giving space to alternate perspectives (Willig, 1998).

However, as Burr (1998) cautions, while constructionism deconstructs categories and urges us to recognize diversity and localness of experience, it can deny the basis for

collectivity, if extended too much. So, for example, within a constructionist framework, I may place each participant as an individual unit with her own personal background and context, but it may become difficult for me as a researcher to talk about the participants as a group. Further, the deconstruction of categories and observation of diversity might make it problematic for a researcher to take their own particular position and justify it at the end of the research.

To overcome the unhelpful aspects of constructionism, I focused on maintaining a fine balance between exploring and understanding the individual experiences and shared experiences as a group. While participants' individual backgrounds were taken into account, they were considered as a part of a group of young women in a PV process. The methods chosen, which I discuss in Section 3.4, reflect the same. The data analysis too, considered the individual and shared elements in participants' experiences.

In line with this epistemological approach, I adopted a qualitative methodology, where the key philosophical assumption is that "*reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds*" (Merriam, 1998, p.6), which I look at next. Following this, I explain the participatory nature of this research, and how it befits constructionism.

3.2.1 Qualitative Methodology

The participants of the PV projects were central to this research in understanding the PV process. Hence, I needed to work closely with all the research participants to ensure flexibility and openness, integrate subjectivity, explore people's interpretations and understand the social processes, which a qualitative methodology supports (see

Bryman, 1999). This, as a result, provided a picture which is multi-dimensional, complex and holistic (see Creswell, 1998).

Stake (1995, p.108) mentions that while subscribing to a constructivist epistemology, *“we deal with many complex phenomena and issues for which no consensus can be found as to what really exists – yet we have an ethical obligation to minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding.”* In qualitative methodology, which aims to integrate subjectivity and people’s own interpretations, reliability and credibility can be some of the critical issues (Bryman, 1999; Perakyla, 2004; Franklin and Ballan, 2001). Therefore, it became essential to validate the data observed and collected.

Creswell (2000) explains that one validating procedure is for researchers to stay engaged with the research site for a prolonged period of time. Being in the field over an extended time substantiates the evidence collected there. Researchers can cross check data and their hunches, and compare the interview data with the observational data. There is no set of precise guidelines which the researchers can use while in field, but constructivist researchers recognize that the longer they stay in the field, the more pluralistic perspectives will be heard from participants, and so the better will be the understanding of the context of participant views. This was evident in my research, when participants started sharing more critical information with me over time. They started initiating informal discussions, where they often talked about issues that were not immediately visible. These informal discussions also started including certain ‘sensitive’ matters later. It gave me access to such data, which I might not have been able to collect in a shorter period of time.

3.2.2 Participatory Research

An effective collaboration between a researcher and the research participants can create a dynamic space, in which both can identify the participants' issues and their needs (Kindon et al., 2007). Kindon (2003) suggests that it is important to negotiate the needs and issues in a more equitable way, while being aware of unequal power relations that exist between a researcher and the participants and attempting to transform them.

I adopted certain common tenets of participatory research during the course of this research by providing opportunities for sharing needs. By doing so, I could create a space for the participants to reflect on their own practice. This reflection was aimed to support them in finding ways to improve their practice. Such collaboration also supported me in bringing credibility to data by building on the participants' view in the study (see Creswell and Miller, 2000).

A crucial aim of my research has been to create a space for "*collective self-reflective enquiry... in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social... practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out*" (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1998, p.6). This contributed towards several things, such as uncovering various dimensions of oppression, helping participants articulate their understanding, communicate their knowledge, assimilate information and refine their practice (see Johnson and Mayoux, 1998). As I observed, collective self-reflection enabled the participants of this research to critically think about their situation and work, and share ideas on how their practice could be improved strategically.

Since participatory research aims to bring in the local knowledge and experience (Gutberlet, 2008), it befits the constructionist approach. Adopting a participatory approach may also help overcome a limitation of the constructionist approach. Participatory research focuses on sharing needs and a researcher can enable participants to make their position explicit on what they think is important. I, as a researcher, needed to understand their position and collaborate with them. Though I had my own position as a researcher, I was careful to be open to the participants' perspective.

The participants in this research were also involved in reflecting on the research questions, giving their inputs during data collection, producing visual data, and even assisting during the data analysis phase to some extent, which I discuss in the later sections of this chapter.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

As has been mentioned in the earlier chapters, this research aims to study the PV practice of the NGOs and in particular, PV projects with young women participants. A case study approach was deemed suitable to study each such PV project because the projects were a bounded system and therefore, formed a case (see Stake, 1995).

In this section, I discuss the Case study approach, as to why it was chosen, and how the appropriate case studies were selected. I then present the selected research sites, the research participants and the fieldwork done before starting data collection.

3.3.1 Case Study

A case study approach is an exploration of a bounded system; one that is bound by time and place (Creswell, 1998). It is employed in qualitative research to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular situation and meaning for those involved (see Merriam, 1998, p.19). The strategy of employing a case study approach requires a consideration of the logic of design, data collection methods and approaches to data analysis (Yin, 2003).

Yin (2003) says that a case study is appropriate when the contextual conditions are relevant to the phenomenon under study. While answering the research questions posed in this research, contextual conditions such as the local gender power relations became quite central, and therefore, a case study approach was found suitable here. Further, a case study approach may be suitable for investigation when the objects of research are more complex (Scholz and Tietje, 2002). In this research too, several factors, such as the different actors and agendas, nature of participation, participants' experience and impact of the process, influenced the PV process and the development of participants' agency.

Another benefit of the case study approach is that it is flexible (Robson, 2002). It allows the researcher to concentrate on particular issues, and yet be ready for unanticipated happenings that reveal the nature of the case (Stake, 1995). As I experienced during the fieldwork, certain unexpected situations arose in one of the cases, bringing out the importance of ensuring the sustainability of the participants' agency. This flexibility provided me with the opportunity to adapt to the emerging situation, and even modify a particular research question (see Stake, 1995). Moreover, I could focus on issues that

came out as more significant as the fieldwork progressed, and redesign the research methods to include those.

The case study approach also enables the collection of data within bounded systems (cases); it supports gaining from people's experiences and ensures flexibility. However it also involves concerns about prejudice. Thomas (1998) cautions that case study methods present a problem with rigour, as it can easily be criticized for finding evidence to pre-conceived ideas through a selective choice of cases that fit. An inability to generalise is perceived as another weakness (Jupp, 2006). To overcome these issues, case studies require extensive data collection and typically combine several methods (Creswell, 1998; Eisenhardt, 1999). Data analysis also needs to be in-depth and rigorous (Jupp, 2006). In Section 3.4, I discuss the combination of methods used to achieve rigour in the investigation to be able to present the cases with their richness and complexity.

3.3.2 Selecting Case Studies

Stake (1995) suggests that it is more important to maintain balance and variety for learning through a case study approach. The composition of cases and the variations between them are important issues to be considered (Lewis, 2003) to produce a coherent study. To maintain balance in my research, I selected only long-term NGO projects. As the literature review suggested, PV projects are implemented by NGOs in various forms, which may vary largely from each other (Chapter 2, Section 2.4). So the case studies were not selected with the aim of representation of PV projects of different forms, but to produce a coherent study. The difference in the nature of the NGOs, Akshara as a gender resource centre and Mahita as a grassroots organisation,

provided substantial variety to the cases. The difference in the local contexts of the two projects, one in Mumbai slums and the other with the Muslim community in old Hyderabad, also added to the variety.

As the selection of cases, in accordance with the broad research question, is an important step for the purpose of maintaining balance and variety (ibid), I gave the selection of case studies significant attention. The two cases were selected for the study, taking into account that they were both long-term PV projects, yet were different from each other. There were also practical limitations of time and financial resources imposed by PhD research, due to which I limited the number of cases to two. Yin (2003) suggests that even two cases may provide significant analytical benefits. An in-depth exploration of two cases could also provide substantial information on similarities and differences and offer deep insights.

Eisenhardt (1999) and Thomas (1998) suggest that through the analysis of multiple cases, statements can be made, which apply to all the cases and lead to theories. Such statements should be developed, either by juxtaposing contradictory or paradoxical evidence (Thomas 1998).

The cases selected for this research aimed to provide different perspectives, which could help in theoretical generalisation (see Thomas, 1998). Creswell (1998) and Stake (1995) suggest that having different perspectives on the issue can also maximize learning. While there was coherence, the differences in the local contexts, the participants and organisational practices at the two research sites allowed me to explore different perspectives. Further, it could support contrasting and comparing the cases, with the evidence to support generalisation.

Further, Lewis (2003) states that a good qualitative research study design should have coherence between the research questions and the methods, and which generates data that is valid and reliable. It involves identifying those settings that can provide relevant, comprehensive and rich information, given their relationship with the research questions (ibid). Below, I present the selected research settings, which I argue were rich enough to provide such coherence.

3.3.3 The Research Sites

This research was based in two organisations in India, both of which implemented long-term PV projects. A third organisation was also initially selected for study to have variety, but was eventually dropped. The rationale for this is discussed further under the Section 3.5.1, Pilot Study.

The two organisations selected for this research were Akshara and Mahita, both of whom have a strong focus on gender in their work. As I discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3.3), gender norms is one of the key concepts in this research because it is one basis of marginalisation that is present in almost all societies. Therefore, it offers the possibility applying this research for studying and understanding the participation and agency of less powerful groups in a PV process. Moreover, the strong gender agenda in development policies and practice in India offers a complex and interesting context for the study (Chapter 1, Section 1.4). Gender is also closely related to the concepts of participation and agency, and hence supported the development of discussion on both (Chapter 1, Section 1.3.4). Along with the specific PV model,

gender was used as another boundary to define the case studies that I have selected, and also contributing to maintaining balance in the two case studies.

Akshara

Akshara is based in Mumbai, a city where over 50% of the population live in slums; a population that is increasing steadily due to rural to urban migration (Pacione, 2006). Slum dwellers in Mumbai typically face bad infrastructure in areas such as roads, sanitation facilities and access to water. Women are particularly vulnerable in such situations and several issues that they deal with, such as health and safety, are strongly gendered (Risbud, 2003).

Akshara emerged from the feminist movement in India in the 1980s and was established formally in 1995. The organisation is based in Mumbai and its work focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment. Akshara questions gender relations, masculinity and patriarchy through its work with young women and men, and aims to mainstream gender as an issue and bring it into social consciousness. Many of the communities it works with include people living in the urban slums of Mumbai, spread over many different geographical areas, though it is not strictly a grassroots organisation that works with particular slum communities. In an informal meeting, the Co-Director of the organisation mentioned that the community they work with consists of women. They did not want to be bound by notions of geographical communities or specific slum areas. Rather, they work as a Gender Resource Centre, with young men and women from colleges and slums on issues of gender inequality. It runs several programmes, such as counselling, scholarships, theatre workshops and film clubs.

The *Apna*³ TV - Community Video Unit (CVU), Akshara's PV project, is one of its programmes, which was initiated in July 2006 with youth from different geographical areas of Mumbai and who came from disadvantaged backgrounds. In April 2009, Akshara started the second phase of the project, where a team was created with only young women. I conducted my study with the four members of the all-women team working with the organisation during the time period of the study.

Mahita

Mahita was established in 1995 in Hyderabad by a group of social workers and mainly works with children on the issues of child rights and education. It promotes education amongst children, especially girl children, as an important way of bringing about social changes. It is involved in areas such as education research, livelihood building, campaign on child rights, and gender equality within education. Their particular focus has been on working with young women and their livelihood skills. Mahita endeavours to do rights-based work with empowerment strategies in the several programmes and campaigns it runs. It is necessarily a grassroots organisation and along with intervention in rural areas, mostly works directly with slum communities in the old city of Hyderabad, where majority of the people are Muslim. All the participants in the PV project are from a particular slum area in which Mahita runs several programmes.

Mahita started its PV project in January 2009 to address such issues with a funding from the Global Fund for Children, a US-based organisation. This funding aimed at providing media training to girls through participatory methods and enabling them to

³ Literal translation from Hindi – Our TV

speaking out about their own issues. The current team consists of 10 participants, with whom the research was conducted.

My earlier relationship with the organisations

I had engaged with both the organisations in different capacities during my earlier professional work. I became involved with the CVUs in their initial stages as a MA student, during my dissertation on Community Video. Eventually, I started working as a video trainer, and then, as a researcher with the CVUs. During this involvement, I also got the opportunity to observe and understand the structure of the CVUs and their functioning. Being a part of this setup for five years - first, as a student and later, as a professional, offered useful insights into the CVU model. It also allowed me to see the transformations in the model over the years.

In Mahita's case, I was involved in the project from the very beginning, being part of the initial brainstorming sessions on defining the project's goals. I also designed the training modules to be conducted with the participants. Though I did not conduct any training at Mahita, I collected data there for the Toolkit that I wrote, titled *Videoactive Girls: Projecting Girl Power* (Singh, 2010), which was one of the main outputs of the Mahita project. During this time, I was able to build some rapport with some of the staff in Mahita. I could also gain certain insights into the background of the project, since I worked on the project from its inception till the funded period finished.

Of the two organisations, I had less direct interaction with Akshara. In my professional role I conducted just a single training module on Digital Storytelling in 2009 and they did not feature in my dissertation research. Due to my earlier associations with both the

organisations, I could get in touch with the Co-Director of Akshara and the Programme Manager of Mahita. Both of them showed interest in being a part of it and permitted me to conduct the fieldwork with them.

3.3.4 The Research Participants

The key participants in this research were the young women participants of the long-term PV projects in the selected organisations. In accordance with the research question, the focus was on understanding their perspectives and drawing information from their experiences to generate knowledge. As the critical review of literature revealed, there has not been much in-depth understanding on how the process influences participants' agency. PV is assumed to be empowering for the participants. This research aimed to adopt a critical lens and question this assumption. To do so, it engaged with those directly involved - the young women participants, in this case. It used their own stories that they offered as data, to build an evidence-based study (see Sapsford and Jupp, 1996).

Other participants of this research were the Co-Director and Programme Manager of the organisations, the Coordinators of the PV projects and the Video Trainers. All of them are closely involved with the process, and their perspectives assisted in building an overall understanding and developing a story that accommodates different interpretations.

3.3.5 Preparing for Fieldwork

In line with the participatory ethos of this research, I wanted to ensure that the participants understood what the research was about and were well-informed before participating. After the initial contact with the organisation, the research details were explained to the young women participants. The case studies were finalised only after the participants expressed their interest in participating in the research.

Before starting the data collection, I sought to establish a trustworthy and ethical relationship with the research participants. I discussed the research focus with them, followed by the research questions. The participants were encouraged to share what they wanted from the research process, and questions that they would have liked to be answered. The needs that they shared were incorporated in the research questions. The research process also aimed to provide them an opportunity to reflect and find answers to their issues about their practice. The photograph in Appendix 2 shows the list of questions prepared by the participants in Akshara.

All the proposed research methods were discussed with the participants, and an agreement was reached, defining the time and personal commitment required for participating. Following this, data collection tools such as observation guide, interview questions, group discussion guide and PV design were refined (see Appendix 3 for an example of the guides). Data collection was initiated following this process. The collected data has been codified and the data identifiers are explained in Appendix 5.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

In this section, I discuss the various methods used in the field for the primary data collection – participatory observation, interviews, group discussions and participatory video. I also share my experiences of using these methods in the field. This is followed by a discussion on the secondary data collection.

Sapsford and Jupp (1996) say that every research reasons that the conclusions presented are based on the evidence. The arguments presented in the research have to be valid, and the data has to characterise what the authors claim and what can be concluded from it. Also, the design of the research determines what conclusions can be made (*ibid*), which includes the methods for collecting data.

For the data to be meaningful in addressing the research questions, I designed the data collection methods and tools before going into the field. However, I still maintained flexibility to allow for changes in the design based on emerging circumstances in the field. Here, I discuss the data collection methods used – participatory observation, interview, focus group discussion and participatory video, and how they were applied in the field. Using these multiple methods helped me maintain rigour and gather multiple perspectives.

3.4.1 Participant Observation

I chose participant observation as a method of investigation for this research because it is useful for studying processes and the context in which they happen (Jorgensen, 1989). It can be particularly useful in a case study approach, which requires intrinsically investigating a certain phenomenon (*ibid*). Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) explain that when

a researcher uses a case study approach, s/he has to take part in the daily activities, rituals and interactions of a group of people, in order to learn about them. Participant observation is also a method that offers immense flexibility and scope for continual re-visiting and reassessment of the research questions (ibid). That makes it appropriate for a research like this, where participant's perspectives have to be considered and reconsidered, and where the research has to respond to emerging and sometimes, unexpected real life situations.

As Grigsby (2001) points out, participant observation can lend itself to the study of processes that are best understood in their natural setting. However, there is the issue of access to such settings. There might be gatekeepers, who control the researcher's access to it, or their participation in any form. Since I had the advantage of having access to gatekeepers in both organisations (Co-Director in Akshara and Programme Manage in Mahita) due to my prior engagement with them as a PV practitioner, negotiating the access to the settings was not difficult.

Another major concern is the considerable time it can take to establish rapport and further relations in the field (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). As I mentioned earlier, I had interacted with the participants in both Akshara and Mahita while I was working as a PV trainer and researcher, and therefore, establishing a rapport with them did not pose a problem either. However, the downside of having an existing relationship with them was that I had to put in considerable amount of attention in re-positioning myself as a researcher. I needed to rebuild the relationship with them, mostly to overcome the imbalance of power relations that were previously built because of my earlier role as a trainer.

Application in the field

For participant observation, I decided to spend time with the participants throughout their work-days in their organisations. The observations were planned, conducted and recorded systematically (see Foster, 1996). An observation guide was designed in order to capture data relevant to the research. All the observations from the field were logged and written up in a daily diary. The observations were written under specific heads to ensure consistency in the observations and enable ease in comprehension during the later stages of data analysis (see Appendix 4 for an example of my daily diary).

I observed the PV process in each organisation as it took place on a daily basis. My observations provided an insight into their way of work – from how they discussed concepts for videos, undertook shooting, editing and screenings, to how they conducted their training programme in video-making with school children. I also accompanied them outside their office space, when they would go to their field, either for shootings or screenings.

I could also observe the participants themselves – their attitudes, their behaviours and interactions with each other. My presence led me into slowly becoming a 'part' of their daily work lives. For instance, they would discuss their on-going edit with me, or ask me to help them with carrying the equipment. My interactions with them became more comfortable and 'natural'. As Creswell (2000) suggests, with prolonged time spent in the field, participants start revealing their personal aspirations, expectations and frustrations. In my case, this provided me with a context to understand their view and place them firmly within the research premise.

Just 'hanging out' in their workspace turned out to be useful in strengthening trust and rapport (Bernard, 2011). I limited myself to just participant observation for the first two weeks of the data collection period at each research site. Due to the relationship that was built by then, I could ask several 'difficult' questions in the interviews and discussions, which required more 'active engagement' of the participants.

3.4.2 Interview

Interviews can offer the researcher the opportunity to investigate understandings and meanings in depth (Arksey and Knight, 1999). I selected interview as a data collection method for constructing detailed personal accounts. Furthermore, using this method offered me a range of perspectives from different participants. As Miller and Glassner (2004) suggest, interviews can help construct social worlds as the researcher explores the points of view of the research participants. This exploration encouraged different perspectives to emerge, such as perceptions on the agency-development potential of PV.

I used interviews with both the key and secondary participants. An interview guide was developed, which included certain key questions to be asked in each interview (see Appendix 3). There was time allowed to ensure reflection between every interview taken. I read the data the interviews had generated, and modified the interview guide to gather more relevant data with each upcoming interview. The interviews with the key participants were designed to be more open, though focused, and the ones with the secondary participants were semi-structured. I discuss the reasons for this below, while

explaining how I applied them in the field, and follow it up with some discussion on the informal conversations.

Application in the field: In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews can be used to explore the complexity of the research participants' thoughts, feelings, understanding and perception (Goodman, 2001). Although, I had prepared a guide, the aim through in-depth interviews was to allow the respondents to tell their own story and not force them in any one direction. I conducted them with the young women participants to gather information and learn about their subjective experiences of the PV process they have been a part of. Since the interviews were meant to be in-depth and open, almost two hours were dedicated to each. The interviews were also scheduled before hand to ensure they did not interfere with the interviewees' work schedule. All the interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants.

The interviews with the key participants aimed to capture their personal backgrounds and their journey from the beginning of the process. Gathering data about their personal accounts would have been difficult through other methods. It is supported by Patton's (1990) statement that interviews support in finding out things from participants, which cannot be directly observed.

The interviews are also used to engage the participants in reconstructing the details of their experiences (Seidman, 2006). Their personal narratives of experiences brought in their perspectives on agency-development, while also highlighting significant points in the PV process, which affected agency-development.

An interview can also be understood as an interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, and the responses differ based on who the interviewer is (Riessman, 1993). I experienced that the key participants were comfortable during the interviews, which could have been due to the rapport already established. Although, I did not expect them to reveal much personal information or talk about contentious issues of the process, most of the interviews led to uninhibited responses. For instance, in one such interview, a participant detailed her experience of the training process, and why she felt it restricted her agency rather than building it. The interviews were also followed with informal conversations whenever the participants wanted to share more. The open format of the interviews allowed for such information to be included as data.

The interviews with the young women participants proved essential in understanding several factors from their point of view. For instance, the participants in Mahita shared that they would not be allowed to work in the project after their marriage, which raised questions on the continuity of the long-term PV project. Such insights also supported in formulating the interview guide with the secondary participants, which I discuss below.

Application in the field: Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all the secondary participants after the interviews with the key participants. The interviews with these participants, though focused, were semi-structured, because I was able to identify the specific areas on which I needed information from the secondary participants. I had prepared an interview guide, where the general structure of the questions was the same, but I could include additional questions if the situation required. These included the Co-Director

and Programme Manager, the PV project Coordinators and the Video Trainers of both the organisations. The insights from the participatory observation and key participants' interviews were used in structuring the interview guide with them. It also helped to keep the focus of the interview, where relevant data had to be collected comparatively quickly. Most of these interviews were for about 45 minutes. Two interviews were conducted on Skype, as the interviewees were not in the same city (they were recorded with prior permission). The others were conducted face-to-face and audio recorded. I acknowledge that arranging a second round of meetings for interviews with them was difficult, and therefore, no follow-up questions could be asked (see Bernard, 2011).

These interviews provided perspectives from others involved in the projects directly. This was essential to get both a holistic view and to prevent bias that might have emerged from being informed about the PV process by just the key participants' point of view. This proved useful in building a complete picture of the process and its implementation.

3.4.3 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions are group discussions organized with people, in this case, the key participants, to explore their perspective and experiences on a particular set of issues (Kitzinger, 1999). The in-depth interviews revealed that there were many thoughts which participants shared with each other. So, I used focus group discussions to get more understanding about those shared issues. Wilkinson (2004) states that if facilitated properly, focus groups can lead to a very dynamic interaction among the several research participants and lead to rich data that comes from debates,

disagreements, concurring thoughts and discussions on issues relevant and important to them.

Three focus group discussions were conducted at Akshara and four at Mahita. One discussion each was on the research questions, the different actors and their agendas. In Mahita, the fourth discussion was aimed at capturing the participants' shared experiences through the PV process. Each such discussion was recorded on audio.

Application in the field

The focus group discussions were conducted after proper planning at both the research sites to ensure that all the participants could participate. Each discussion had its theme, and the participants expanded on it. I acted as a facilitator for the discussions, trying to ensure different people got the opportunity to express themselves and that issues of interest to the group were taken up.

In Mahita, the focus group discussion started with the participants' thoughts on the training and video-making process, and moved towards power negotiations at the household and community level. Participants' interest in this was pursued through the discussion and personal experiences of power negotiation soon surfaced as a collective issue. This enabled me to present power negotiation as a common experience for young women in the given local context. I could then theoretically generalise on the issue, thereby, maintaining the balance between individual and collective experiences within the constructionist framework (see Burr, 1998).

The focus groups discussions did not just bring further insight to issues identified earlier, but also aspects, which had not been anticipated, as also noted by Rubin and Babbie (2011). For instance, during the discussion on the actors' agenda in Akshara, the participants mapped out the relationship of the various actors within their CVU. This introduced me to an aspect, which was very relevant to understanding the different objectives, aims and agendas in a PV process.

3.4.4 Participatory Video

I used PV as a research method at both the research sites, making videos with my research participants towards the end of the data collection. The videos produced are referred to as 'Research Videos' in this thesis.

PV is regarded as an effective tool for participatory research, and can support destabilising the inherent hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the participant and participants gain control over the research process (Kindon, 2003). At the same time, Hume-Cook (2007) and Plush (2009a) bring attention to the point that researchers using PV, face several challenges, such as limited or no understanding of video production by the communities, issues around who edits and how, and use of the video, heightening power relations. However, since all the participants in this research had been involved with PV for a long time, I anticipated that this method would create a more 'equal' relation with the participants, where I would need to only facilitate the data gathering process and the participants could entirely control the video-making process.

During the production of these Research Videos, the most important consideration was to support the participants in creating the videos according to their own priorities about

what they wanted to communicate and how they wanted to represent themselves (Hume-Cook et al., 2007).

The decision to use PV as a method within a research on PV was quite complex, as I will discuss below. There was the possibility of studying PV as a research method, when the video was being made as part of the research. However, the aim of the research is to explore participants' perspectives and understand their experiences to gain insights on the PV practice of organisations. PV, as a research method, was chosen to fulfil the same aim. Therefore, I chose to not focus on analysing PV as a research method. In Section 3.6.1, I discuss how I analysed the data collected through videos made by using PV.

Application in the field

In Akshara, the participants decided that they would produce an unedited video, since they were finding it difficult to commit time, given their work schedule. The video was structured as a discussion amongst them, with two parts. In the first part, they talked about their experiences with PV and in the second, they discussed on what improvements could be made in their practice. It was shot in their office, with each part being an hour long.

The participants in Mahita decided to use this as an opportunity to showcase their experience and their work. A structure of the video was decided collectively and then the shooting was planned. The participants wrote the narrative of the video, and recorded it first. They then wrote their piece to camera, talking about their experiences with both technical skill-building and capability-building. The planning was done in a

way to ensure that each participant talked about the particular part of the process which interested her the most.

The participants decided to use some stock footage⁴ instead of shooting every shot afresh. For instance, when a participant talked about video screenings, the footage from screenings previously done was used. They shot their entire piece-to-camera and the other required shots, which also involved outdoor shoots, in different parts of the city. Editing of the video was done according to the structure. The new shots and the stock footage were put together, background music was added, and a three and a half minute final video was made.

Both videos offered useful information, which the participants had planned to share, along with their points of view. Both videos also became a space for reflection on their practice, and a presentation of their thoughts. The data generated through this method represents participants' understandings in the way they wanted to communicate it (see Haw and Hadfield, 2011).

While the videos became important data, the process of producing the videos in the two settings had its own challenges. An ethical challenge arose, when the participants in Akshara shared some of their disagreements with the NGO management. The participants had earlier agreed that the video they shoot should be shown to the management to enable changes in practice. However, considering the content, I faced a dilemma - whether the video should be shared, since it constituted conflict of

⁴ Footage which had been shot earlier for a general or specific purpose and is then to be used in other production to save on shooting fresh footage

interests. Eventually, I decided to not share the video. I further discuss the ethical considerations in Section 3.7.

Another challenge was that of maintaining my role as a researcher. Due to my earlier expertise as a PV trainer, I was requested by the coordinator in Mahita to also use the video production process as training for the participants. Adopting the role of a trainer would have altered my relationship with the participants (as mentioned earlier, I had to reposition my role as a researcher, vis-a-vis that of a trainer earlier), as it would have introduced hierarchy. On the other hand, it was difficult to refuse skills-building of the participants, which they recognised as a necessity. To maintain equilibrium, I encouraged them to be creative with their video format and introduced new experiences for them, such as outdoor shooting across the city, without engaging in intensive technical training.

Table 3 summarises all the primary data collection methods used and includes the purpose for which they were used and the issues that arose while implementing them in the field.

Table 3: Primary Data Collection Methods, Purpose, Implementation Issues and Timeline

Method	Stakeholders Involved	Purpose	Implementation Issues	Timeline
Participatory Observation	Young women participants NGO staff	To study the process in its natural setting	Establishing my role as a researcher	Continued all through the fieldwork
In-depth interviews	Young women participants	To gather participants' experiences of the PV process	Need to gather data from other sources to build a holistic picture	Conducted once with all the young women participants, after 1-2 weeks of starting fieldwork in each organisation
Semi-structured interviews	Akshara's Facilitator Mahita's Facilitator Akshara's Co-Director Mahita's Programme Manager Mahita's Programme Coordinator Akshara's Video Trainer Mahita's Video Trainer	To gather the stakeholders' perspective on issues raised by participants	Limited time availability with the stakeholders	Conducted once (after the in-depth interviews) with participants other than the young women
Focus Group Discussions	Young women participants	To explore common experiences and shared views on issues	Concentration on only certain themes	Conducted with all the young women participants in each organisation.

Method	Stakeholders Involved	Purpose	Implementation Issues	Timeline
Focus Group Discussions	Young women participants	To explore common experiences and shared views on issues	Concentration on only certain themes	FGDs on research questions, project actors and actors' agendas were conducted at the beginning of the main study FGD in Mahita on participants' experience was conducted after all the in-depth and semi-structured interviews
Participatory Video	Young women participants	To uncover participants' issues about PV practice	In Mahita, participants wanted to treat this as a training In Akshara, participants had limited time	One Research Video was made with all the young women participants in each organisation. It was made towards the end of the fieldwork. (Young women continued making other videos as part of their work while I conducted my fieldwork – I was only involved as a participatory observer during those video productions)

3.4.5 Secondary Data

O'Laughlin (1998) stresses that obtaining grey material can provide information, which might not be available through academic literature. Since there is little academic literature on the use of PV by NGOs, I needed to access secondary data that would help put the NGOs' PV practice in context. I accessed information through websites, training manuals, published material and videos.

Resources from the Internet were used to bring about an understanding of the local contexts, current issues and debates. The websites of the organisations were accessed for getting general information about them, their vision and mission statements and various initiatives and objectives. A published Training Manual, which includes learning from the funded-period training in Mahita, was used to know more about the training process there. Another unpublished training manual was used for training in Akshara helped with information about the training design implemented. Also, a published booklet on Impact stories was used for information about Akshara. Several other newspaper reports, interviews and blogs were analysed to understand PV practice in India more generally.

The videos that were produced by the participants as part of their long-term PV projects were also gathered as secondary data. Both the organisations had produced more than 10 videos each. As the analysis of so many videos was not possible within the scope of this research, the videos have been used mainly to identify the local issues that the participants chose, the perspective they presented in the videos, and to learn about how they expressed their agency.

Table 4: Secondary Data Collection Sources, Purpose and Implementation Issues

Sources	Purpose	Implementation Issues
Produced Videos	To gather information on issues chosen by participants and analyse their perspective on those issues	Large amount of data to be analysed
Websites	To gather organisations' background	Provided very sketchy information
Training Manuals	To learn about the training design	Gives information about the planned training design but not much insight into the actual implementation
Other Published material	To gather an overview of PV in local context	Limited material available

3.5 DATA COLLECTION PHASES

This research was first piloted in the selected sites, and then a full study was undertaken. An agreement and commitment from the organisations and the participants was taken in written form to participate in the research before beginning the fieldwork. The pilot study was designed to test the appropriateness of the research methods and tools, which were then refined for the main study.

3.5.1 Pilot Study

Both the pilot studies started with explaining the research to the participants and getting their consent. I spent three weeks in Akshara and one in Mahita conducting the pilot study. This phase included participant observation, informal discussions and one in-depth interview, in both the sites.

I also conducted two in-depth interviews with the participants of a third organisation WAVE. This organisation was eventually not chosen as a case study for several reasons. First, the participants had stopped producing videos, which meant that I could not observe the process in the organisation. Second, the participants worked through a network and were based in different states of India. This created a feasibility and logistical issue for collecting data from several different sites in India, considering the limited financial resources available to conduct this PhD research. Moreover, since the organisation worked as a network, it would have brought several other aspects into consideration, such as coordination between different participants and understanding how the participants' learning is ensured remotely, which could have compromised the coherence in the research. Though the experiences of the participants would have offered valuable data, it was dropped as a case study due to the practical considerations. The interviews done during the pilot study with WAVE participants have therefore not been included.

A basic analysis of the data generated from the pilot study at Akshara and Mahita was done, which helped identify the themes that were emerging (see Appendix 8 for excerpt from the analysis of the Pilot). This was subsequently used to refine the research questions and the research focus. The methods and the tools were reviewed, and plan on how to conduct the main research was finalised. The main study was done after some time, which allowed for reflection.

3.5.2 Main Study

For the main study, approximately two months were spent altogether in Akshara, and one and a half months in Mahita. There were time-gaps given during the data collection to ensure continuous reflection. I spent time with the research participants, as they went through their daily routine, and observed their activities. Interviews, focus groups and PV were conducted during this time.

The following tables show the data that was collected from each organisation.

Table 5: Data Collection at Akshara, Mumbai

Participatory Observation	Recorded Interviews	Recorded Informal Interviews	Focus Group Discussions	Participatory Video	Secondary Data
2 months, including the Pilot Study	3 in-depth interviews with key participants, the young women	2 with the male video trainer	1 discussion on research questions with 4 young women participants	1 unedited video of 2 hours	14 videos produced by Akshara (see Appendix 5 for details of the videos)
	1 semi-structured Skype interview with the female Co-Director of the organisation	1 with one young woman participant while in her field area	1 discussion on project actors with 4 young women participants		Akshara's official website: www.aksharacentre.org
	1 semi-structured interview with the male Trainer	1 with 2 young women participants	1 discussion on project actors' agendas with 4 young women participants		Akshara's workshop kit on '103 campaign' on violence against women
	1 short video interview with the female Co-Director on an impact story	1 with the only remaining young woman participant after change in organisational situation			Impact Booklet published by Video Volunteers: Power To Voice
					Trainer's Guide by VV

Table 6: Data Collection at Mahita, Hyderabad

Participatory Observation	Recorded Interviews	Recorded Informal Interviews	Focus Group Discussions	Participatory Video	Secondary Data
1 and a half months, including the Pilot Study	5 in-depth interviews with key participants, the young women	1 with the male Programme Director	1 discussion on research questions with 9 young women participants	1 edited video of 3 and a half minutes	15 videos produced by Mahita (see Appendix 5 for details of the videos)
	1 semi-structured interview with the male Programme Director of the organisation	1 with the male Programme Coordinator	1 discussion on project actors with 8 young women participants		Mahita's official website: www.mahita.org
	1 semi-structured interview with the male Programme Coordinator	1 with all the young women participants	1 discussion on project actors' agendas with 8 young women participants		Training Manual published by GFC: Videoactive Girls: Projecting Girl Power
	1 semi-structured Skype interview with the male Trainer		1 discussion on experiences of their participation with 8 young women participants		

3.6 Data Analysis

I used a thematic analysis in this research to identify themes within the data (see Ezzy, 2002). It has been described as a synthesising strategy, as a part of the meaning-making process in case study research (Wiebe et al., 2009). It is helpful for organising and summarising, and for focusing on the interpretation without losing the context (ibid). I have also used thematic analysis to generate categories from the data and respond to what it reveals. Data analysis software TAMS analyser was used, particularly because it supported multimedia data to be coded, which was essential for my research considering there were videos to be analysed. It also helped in creating complex hierarchical codes and analysing inter-relations between different codes and themes. While I found the software helpful in organising the data, coding and finding the relation between different codes, it also had its disadvantages. It was limiting in the sense that data could be seen only in terms of how it was coded, while the original context was lost. Therefore, I needed to go back to the original data several times to understand the context in which the statements were made in the interviews and FGDs.

Data analysis was done periodically to refine the research aims, rework research questions and review data collection (Walliman, 2006). Basic data analysis was done after the pilot study at each research site, and a summary report of each case study was prepared to capture and understand the meaning of the data (see Appendix 6 for an excerpt of Summary Reports). A more detailed analysis was prepared at the end of the pilot, emphasising themes and sub-themes emerging from both the case studies (see Appendix 7 for an excerpt of Pilot Study Analysis). During the main study, there

was a constant analysis process through the planned breaks between data collection, to keep improving the data collection process based on the already gathered evidence. Cognitive mapping was helpful in developing the initial themes, identifying the gaps in data and constantly revisiting the research questions (see Appendix 8 for an example).

The highlights of the on-going data analysis were shared with the participants in both the research sites periodically. This was helpful in knowing what the participants thought about what was being revealed through the research. This also led to some critical reflection amongst the participants, which generated more focused data.

At the end of the data analysis, the quotes to be used for the narration were shared with the particular participants. If excerpts from their interviews were used elsewhere, they were shared too, along with the context they were used in. This was done to ensure that the participants collaborated in meaning-making of the data provided by them.

3.6.1 Primary Data Analysis

The field notes from participatory observation, the interviews and focus group transcripts and the video content were constantly revisited. The process of translating and transcribing by itself gave me a solid overview of the data. I had to immerse myself in the data and the context to capture the right meaning in the translations. The translations, transcriptions and revisiting of notes proved helpful in generating codes. The initial codes generated were kept open, and were revised continuously as further readings of data were done. The revision included changing the names of codes, removing some altogether, merging others and also generating new ones.

Next, the correlation between different codes was developed and compared with the data. Cause and effect relationships were developed to bring out how the process and its different aspects may affect the agency of the participants. The coded data was then analysed for the patterns that emerged, and all the data that corresponded to that pattern were put together (see Stake, 1995). These patterns could then be combined into themes, and sub-themes, which brought different ideas and components together in a meaningful way (Aronson, 1994). Since I adopted a multiple case study strategy, I did a cross-case analysis to identify the patterns in the different cases. The commonalities and differences in the cases were expounded to build an explanation of the cases. The patterns and the relations between them were used to draw and verify the conclusions and generate a theory.

Till the very end, the process of analysing data remained an iterative one, where data was looked at again and again, and themes and codes revised to interpret their meaning. A reflective stance was taken on the emerging themes and relations between the different elements to tie the data together (see Miles and Huberman, 1994)

Video Analysis

The videos were a rich source of data conveying about the participants, their perspectives and their issues. It was this method which allowed them to express what they wanted and in the way they thought was best. Since I take a constructionist approach, the videos were analysed in their social contexts (see Banks, 2007). Video analysis has been given a separate section, because it remains largely unexplained (Dicks, 2005).

The analysis of videos was done in many different ways for different results, and therefore, an explanation of how I analysed it is necessary. These different forms may include conversation analysis, content analysis, analysis of actions and interactions, behaviours and the captured community settings (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011). In this case, since the prime importance was of the participants' perspectives and representation, a content analysis was done to understand the concerns and thoughts of the participants on their practice. Some attention was also given to observe how they represent themselves on video.

First, the videos produced by the participants were captured (referred to as Research Videos in this thesis). None of the videos was edited after it had been finalised by the participants and given to me. Only translation and transcription of the verbal content was done with the time log. The advantage of a video is that it can offer composite data, which might be difficult to gather through other methods. For instance, in the video made by Mahita participants, they used B-roll⁵ over the narration and their piece to cameras. Through this way of filmmaking, they added visual elements for the audience to understand their context, know their work and their representation. While talking about the shooting, the visuals of them shooting in their area were placed along with their narration. This was to provide more meaning and assertion to what they were saying. So, the verbal content was analysed in conjunction with such visual elements. All the visuals that were placed along with the narrations have been analysed in relation to their context, representation and perspectives.

⁵ The supplemental footage inter-cut with their piece-to cameras

The video made by the participants in Akshara did not contain such additional visual elements other than the settings, where they recorded their video. In this case, the dynamics amongst the participants were observed, for example, one participant smiling approvingly, while another talks about something 'controversial', without undertaking a full conversation analysis.

3.6.2 Secondary Data Analysis

Information from the secondary data was mostly helpful in analysing the background information. It was also helpful in certain cases for finding information that helped complete the picture. For instance, the video trainers talked about the training design and approach in their interviews, which could then be substantiated using the training manuals.

The participants often talked about the videos they had made and the produced videos, collected as secondary data, were useful in relating their interviews to the particular video and understanding the context. One participant in Akshara recounted her experiences, as she highlighted incidents from each of the videos that she had been a part of. The analysis of the videos helped in understanding the context of the incidents she described.

3.7 ETHICS

Issues of informed consent, right to privacy, confidentiality, conflict of interest and acknowledgment were very carefully considered in this research (see Reamer, 2001). The first thing to be shared with the participants before any data collection was the

information sheet (see Appendix 9). A meeting was held with the participants at both the sites, where the information sheet was distributed and discussed in a group. Every participant was informed that they could approach me individually as well, in case they needed any clarification. The participants were involved in the research process, only after they gave their consent (see Appendix 10 for the Consent Form). It was told to the participants that if they chose to withdraw their participation even after joining the research processes, they could do so.

Since it was a participatory research, the participants were involved in all the phases of the research once fieldwork began, including data analysis to some extent. They had the control to make the Research Video the way they found appropriate and the other research methods also gave them space to reflect upon and share the information they felt was important. This ensured that they were not restricted by my thoughts on what data would emerge and what the research results should be.

3.7.1 Ethics Clearance

I obtained the Ethics clearance from the OU Ethics Committee for conducting this research. The consent form and information sheet to be shared with the participants were approved by the Committee.

3.7.2 Consent

I decided to conduct this research only with girls above 16 years of age. This decision was made after a response from Ethics Committee that parental consent would be needed for participants below 16 years. This created a dilemma, since some

participants in Mahita had not informed their parents about their participation because they felt their parents would not allow them to participate in a video project. Rather than going against the advice of the Ethics Committee or arguing my case, I decided to conduct the research with participants aged over 16.

All the participants in Akshara were between 18-25 years. However, there was some concern about the age of a few participants in Mahita, as the Coordinator shared that some of them might be under 16 years. Their true age could not have been determined, as they did not have birth certificates, but only an approximation of how old they were. In the consent forms, all the participants mentioned that they were above 16 years, and I decided to regard the age they have mentioned as their true age.

3.7.3 Confidentiality

Though the choice of anonymity was offered to them, participants in both the research sites wanted to have their identity known in the thesis. They wanted to do so for the recognition of their work. Even when the participants made certain critical comments, they wanted their thoughts and opinions to be mentioned with their respective identities. This was reconfirmed when I shared parts of data analysis with them, which attributes the quotes to respective participants.

All the participants gave their consent to appear in the photographs and videos. Having appeared in newspapers, television news, organisation's websites and in the training manual, they were not apprehensive about being photographed or videographed.

Instead, they wanted everyone, who would get to know about their work through this research, to also know who they are.

3.7.4 Conflict of Interest

Information, which could place them at risk, if it was shared with others, was seen as conflict of interest. Throughout the research, I was aware of situations when the research participants mentioned something, which might have been predicted and inferred as a conflict of interest, either with the organisation or other research participants or their family members. In such cases, the information has been kept confidential.

However, in certain cases, taking the decision on whether or not to share the information was difficult. For instance, the videos made by participants in both the organisations were to be shared with the Director of the organisation. This was a mutual decision taken by the participants and myself, before the shoot of the video. The participants in Akshara wanted to bring appropriate changes in their practice by sharing their perspective. In this video, they took a critical stance towards the organisation, raising several questions about the management. After the video was shot, the participants told me that if this video was shown to the Co-Director, they could be in trouble but still wanted to show the video to highlight the problems. It became an ethical challenge for me to decide whether to share the video or not. Keeping in with the participatory nature, I wanted to share it, although in presence of the apparent risk. Within a few days of shooting the video, two participants left the organisation. In consideration of the unstable situation and increased risk for the remaining participants, I decided it would be inappropriate to share it.

3.8 CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, I explained the methodological approach taken in this research and discussed the research design that was adopted. I explained how a constructionist epistemology was appropriate for answering the research questions, which focused on gathering the participants' personal experiences. I also discussed how a qualitative methodology helped in producing an in-depth and holistic understanding and befitted here, since I wanted to study the entirety of a long-term PV project in relation to the participants' agency. I further discussed how the participatory approach presented the opportunity for the participants to share their perspectives and engage in critical reflection on their practice, an important aim during data collection.

The use of a Case Study approach provided me the flexibility to encompass the unexpected events in the research. It also gave me the opportunity to study the PV projects as bounded systems, with balance and variety in the two chosen case studies. It also opened up the possibility for theoretical generalisation, which could incorporate both contrasts and similarities.

Further, I had a discussion on the methods, providing an understanding of how participatory observation, interviews, focuses group discussions and participatory video supported gathering relevant and useful data for this research. I also discussed the appropriateness of these methods, and my experiences from the field highlighted the kind of data they generated and the challenges that I faced. I argued that using these different methods also supported multiple perspectives, thereby, creating a holistic picture.

Next, I presented the different phases of the research and how the pilot study helped refine the research methods. I then discussed that I had undertaken thematic analysis with the help of data analysis software. Finally I discussed the ethical considerations in this research and how certain critical situations were dealt with.

The themes that emerged following the data analysis were used to structure the data chapters, which now follow.

4. EXPLORING AGENCY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the first of the three data chapters. Here, I present the initial phase of the PV process as it unfolds in the model of PV used in the two cases – from the organisation deciding to start a PV project, which invites participation from the local community (see Cornwall, 2004, for further discussion on invited spaces for participation), to some community members becoming ‘participants’ in the project. In Section 4.2, I provide an overview of the two PV projects that were initiated at Akshara and Mahita. Next, I discuss about the other actors involved in the project, their objectives and the relations between them. I also present how the participatory approach in a project can get affected because of the influence of these various actors.

Section 4.3 explains the gender contexts in which the two PV projects are set, looking in depth at the household and community levels. I demonstrate how intra-household inequality can prevent young women from participating in PV. Further, I look at the gender power relations at the community level and how community gatekeepers might obstruct the participation of young women. I also present the data and discuss how organisations may need to intervene in such scenarios for ensuring participation.

I then move on to discuss the particular gender issues that were present in both Akshara and Mahita. This gives an understanding of the issues that the participants themselves dealt with and how the organisations supported the young women to develop their own perspective on these issues. Following this, I present the gender norms that were prevalent in the local context, such as those around women and work, and explicate how participating in the respective PV projects may have enabled the

young women participants in challenging those norms, and therefore, exploring their agency. Next, I discuss how the participation may have supported young women in negotiating power at their household level.

The chapter ends with Section 4.4, which discusses how the participants' agency was affected during this initial phase. While doing so, I look at the various factors that can support or restrict participants' agency exploration.

4.2 AN OVERVIEW

In this section, I give an overview of the PV projects, which will help understand how they were started, the initial purpose, their model/format and how they currently stand. This overview will bring an understanding on how the projects evolved over a period of time.

4.2.1 Overview of the PV projects in the different case studies

Akshara was approached by two partner video training organisations, Drishti and Video Volunteers (VV), to implement their Community Video Unit (CVU) model in its field area, as one of the many NGOs across India, where this project was initiated. The aim of the CVUs was to enable community members in bringing out their issues and mobilising communities to take action for change.

Mahita was one of the two Indian NGOs selected by the Global Fund of Children (GFC), to participate in its pilot projects in India and Nigeria, with the aim to empower adolescent girls with media production skills. GFC felt that media was an effective way

to create a space for self-expression, for voicing out issues and gaining skills to affect change. Below is an overview of the two PV projects.

Apna TV at Akshara

Without much prior experience in participatory video, but seeing the potential for social change, Akshara decided to be a part of the CVUs setup by Drishti and Video Volunteers, which was initiated in June 2006. A senior filmmaker was posted as the video trainer in Apna TV. This CVU was conceived as community-owned media, which addressed issues in Mumbai slums, something the mainstream mass media failed to do.

The CVU model, implemented in several different parts of India through NGOs, included six to eight community members being trained by professional filmmakers for almost a year. As a model, the CVUs had several pre-determined features. For example, the CVU staff had to work with 25 slum communities/villages and produce one video per month to be screened in all these communities. The community producers came from these areas and the videos were shot and screened in the same slums/villages.

The organisation advertised that a PV project was about to start and invited applications from the community members to join the project. A team of community producers was formed after a selection process. The CVU also had an editorial board, which consisted of members from the training organisation, the host organisation's staff, other community members and subject experts. The role of the editorial board was to review the issues selected and the script, and give feedback on the rough and

final cuts of the video. Videos, once finished, had to be screened in public spaces in 25 pre-selected sum areas.

Each video made by the CVU team was meant to have a 'call to action', which prompted what actions could be taken by the slum/village communities to address the featured issues. The screenings of these videos were held in a public place in the village/slum, followed by discussion on the concerned issues and mobilised the communities to participate in local action and advocacy. The organisation supported the CVU in the follow-up actions with the communities, for example, by providing grassroots workers for campaigning. Since Akshara had only done limited work directly with the slum communities and was not strongly rooted there, it had to network with other NGOs for follow-up action on the videos.

In 2009, Akshara changed the way the CVU worked, following external funding from another donor. A new team was formed, entirely of young women between 18 and 24 years, and it was decided that the focus of the videos would be specifically on gender issues. The Co-Director of the organisation, Nandita Shah, explained in an interview that they wanted to 'experiment' with the idea of a women-only team to see if women could bring specific gender perspectives from their personal experiences (O2, I5).

In addition to starting a women-only team, Akshara moved away from working with slum communities, since it was not strictly a grassroots organisation. It began a new strategy by distributing videos in colleges, other NGOs, workshops, trainings, public spaces, and so on. Akshara modified the CVU structure intending to better suit its capacity and generate impacts beyond the slum communities.

As a result of Akshara's new direction, the participants stopped working directly with the geographical communities. This made them feel that they were now making videos based only on what the organisation wanted. They felt that they were being given more 'office work' and had become more integrated with the organisation itself rather than with slum communities. Two participants out of the three left the organisation while I was conducting the final leg of my fieldwork because of their discontentment with their work (O1, D1). Effectively, only one participant remained in the CVU team by July 2011.

Community Media Unit at Mahita

Mahita got the invitation from GFC to participate in its initiative with the Nike Brain Trust, to train adolescent girls in video-making. It was a part of a pilot project called Videoactive Girls, being conducted with four NGOs, two each in India and Nigeria. It started in March 2009, with the idea of engaging young women in media production to help them cultivate greater self-confidence and self-empowerment (Singh, 2010). Mahita as an organisation had little or no exposure to community media, and therefore, was apprehensive before undertaking the project. It still decided to go ahead with the project with the aim of providing an opportunity to adolescent girls in its field area. It sought participation from adolescent girls from four slum areas in the old part of Hyderabad.

Thirty girls showed keen interest in joining, and a meeting was held to brief them. The training was conducted by Video Volunteers in the form of week-long modules. A video trainer taught one module per month, and each one was geared towards a 'video product' that the girls had to produce. In this funded period, the aim was to teach the

participants video-making skills through video production and support them in expressing themselves through it. For the participants, it was an opportunity to learn skills, which they did not think they could have had access to otherwise, because of financial constraints.

The project also received support from the various staff members of Mahita. Other than a video trainer, who conducted the modules, a Programme Manager assisted the participants on technical problems. Another senior staff member conducted workshops on various social issues and worked towards building their gender perspective. One of the staff members, a Community Organiser, eventually started working with the PV project, received the video-training and became the facilitator in the project.

The project received funding for one year. Once it got over in early 2010, Mahita continued running the project with its internal funds, as it wanted to have a continuing impact on the participants' lives. It decided to screen the films in the girls' own slum communities. Consequently, the participants started engaging with the communities through their videos. The community members would tell them about the various issues in their slums and the participants would make films about them. It should be noted that during the course of the project, several participants left due to various reasons, which are discussed in the following section. From the initial 30, there were eight participants remaining in December 2011.

4.2.2 Overview of the various actors, their objectives and relations

The literature review in Chapter 2 revealed that there are several actors in a typical PV process who have different objectives and there is a need to enquire about how the

objectives are set and whose agendas a PV process fulfils. Table 2 (Chapter 2) listed the different actors, the objectives they may have and the power relations between them. Here I investigate the different actors (the donors, the organisation, the community and the participants), their objectives and their relation to each other in the two cases studied. At the end of the section, I discuss how this affects the participatory approach during project conceptualisation and consequently, the participants' agency at this stage. These objectives and relations influence other stages of a PV project too, which I will analyse as I discuss the different stages.

In the case of Mahita, the funders were GFC and Nike Brain Trust. They aimed to build the capacity of the implementing organisations, and support the participants in developing media production skills. However, the primary result outlined for the project was the development of a toolkit to be distributed to other NGOs to start media projects with adolescent girls, based on what they had learned from this pilot project. The funding was one time only, with little support offered afterwards. The video-training organisation – VV, on the other hand, wanted to focus on producing one video as a product of each training module.

In the case of Akshara, there were certain outputs to be met, as proposed by Drishti and VV, such as producing one video every month and holding its screenings in 25 slum areas. Each video also needed to have a call to action, leading to tangible outputs, for example, running a campaign with the local community members to advocate with the government for better sanitation facilities.

My interview data shows that other than focusing on outputs to meet the donor objectives, the organisations were usually prepared to work only on pre-determined

social issues (O1, I1; O1, I2; O2, I12). So, even if participatory video could bring up diverse community issues such as health, infrastructure, electoral politics and so on, the organisation may not have anticipated working on these areas, and therefore may not even have the expertise or human resources to engage with such issues.

On the other hand, Akshara and Mahita often felt that PV could promote their work in the field, and wanted to use the videos for those purposes. For example, the interview with Akshara's Co-Director revealed that they could talk about gender issues to a larger group of people through public screenings than through community workers, who could conduct meetings only with a smaller group (O1, I5). Similarly, Mahita's Programme Director at Mahita said that the organisation wanted to use PV to further its advocacy work on the education of children:

"Through videography, we want to get further into advocacy - how best can we capture the violations of children in the slums?, which is the core objective of Mahita. Mahita is facilitating the education of children – so, how best can we capture the situation in the schools?" Ramesh Reddy, Programme Director, Mahita (O2, I14)

Anil Pathlavath, the video trainer at Mahita, identified another aspect in his interview. He said that a organisation could limit itself to issues it has expertise on if it has limited experience working with video technology. Since the staff has less exposure to the use of video, they want to work on issues they feel more comfortable with. The organisation can start working on other community issues only when it becomes confident, or when the media expert, the video trainer, is able to convince them (O2, I12). The role of the trainer becomes critical in maintaining a participatory approach in the project, which I explore further in the next chapter in section 5.2.1. Communities might just be the

'recipients' of the PV projects in its beginning since, as revealed above, they might not be the ones who initiate it and may not have a substantial say on which community issues should be addressed in the videos.

In this research, I use the term *community* to denote the people living in the slum areas the two PV projects were implemented in. Akshara and Mahita's description of community itself changed noticeably with the different stages of the PV projects in both cases. As mentioned, with Akshara, the communities the PV project was implemented with changed from the slum areas to women and youth; whereas with Mahita, the project expanded to include some slum communities, when it started the public screening of videos. The groups with whom videos were screened ranged from school students, adolescent girls and boys, older women and community leaders.

Initially, the organisations needed to build a rapport with the communities to clearly establish the intent and nature of the PV project. For instance, participants from both Akshara and Mahita have had people ask them if they were a TV news channel crew, and it required several meetings and video screenings to establish that the community's own members were to make videos on their problems. There have also been incidents, where because of lack of trust and no established rapport, the participants found themselves in threatening situations:

"It was a redeveloped basti⁶ and they were having some conflict with the builders. So when we went with the tripod they thought we were builder's people. Amol got threatened and he was taken in a corner with a knife.

⁶ Literal translation from Hindi – slum

But as we explained everything and when they saw our film, it was OK. They did not trust us fully initially.” Samata, Participant, Akshara (O1, I1)

Within the community itself, community leaders or parents/family members of the participants may sometimes take up the role of gatekeepers and restrict the organisation from running the project, or limit participation of the other community members (O2, I14). As discussed in Chapter 2, sometimes the community itself may not encourage the participation of less powerful groups (Banks, 2001). So, if an organisation wants the PV process to destabilise power relations within a community, it would need to invite the participation of those less powerful groups. However, evidence collected during my research also shows that once a relationship of trust is built with the community members, they accept the project and allow the participation of young women (O2, I6). They begin getting involved in the PV project to address community development matters themselves (O2, G8). I discuss this in detail in Chapter 6 (Section 6.3).

Since the focus of both organisations was gender power relations and gender issues, they sought to invite participation from young women, recognised by these organisations as members of a group which was least 'heard' but had the most potential to engage in change processes. Verma, et al. (2006, p.136) comment that in India, *"It has also been shown that gender role differentials widen during adolescence, as boys enjoy privileges reserved for men such as autonomy, mobility and opportunity while girls find their mobility and education restricted"*. Akshara sought the participation of young women between 18-24 years of age, whereas, Mahita's PV participants were 16-20 years old. As I noted, most of the participants in these projects had been asked to drop out before entering senior school or college by their parents and were restricted

within their household space (O1, D1; O2, D2). This substantiates the point that these participants had faced restrictions on their education and mobility, and did not have the power to take decisions about their own life. Both the organisations aimed to include these young women in the projects, so that they could gain agency, overcome restrictions and get involved in social change processes.

Most of the participants mentioned in their personal interviews that they did not know much about the project initially and signed up only because they assumed that it was a video production training. There is usually a 'mystique' surrounding the process of making videos, as people are mostly exposed to media only as consumers. Here they had the chance to be media producers themselves. Along with the interest in video production, participants had several objectives when they joined, such as skills-building, livelihood generation and community development (O1, I1; O1, I2; O2, I7; O2, I8; O2, I10).

In the case of Mahita, the mismatch between participants' expectations and the nature of the project caused significant conflict. The Programme Director said in his interview that several of the participants had thought of it as a videography course, which would teach them how to make videos for marriages and other functions and become paid videographers within family settings. When they learnt that this was community media and would require them to engage actively with community members, several of them left (O2, I14).

The participants' expectations did not match the project's nature in Akshara too. Coming from a city like Mumbai, the hub of the film and television industry in India, the

participants thought that the training would give them necessary skills to eventually join the mainstream media, and therefore, provide better career opportunities.

“Where I find it a problem is that the fact that somewhere Community Video pitches the whole thing at one level, gives an impression to the producers that believe that the (mainstream) market is available to them...but the reality is very different and I think that is the biggest challenge that the community producers face. The aspiration that we (the organisation) build...we are not able to match that...” Nandita Shah, Co-Director, Akshara (O1, I5)

The discrepancy between the participants' aims and project's objectives illustrates that there are difficulties in maintaining a participatory approach throughout the process, which I discuss further in the following section.

4.2.3 Participatory approach during project conceptualisation

The PV projects, as conceptualised by the donor and training organisations, aimed to adopt a participatory approach. Akshara's Apna TV aimed at establishing community-owned media, where it was planned that community members from the select 25 slum communities should participate in various ways by making videos or taking local social action.

During the funded period in Mahita's Videoactive Girls project, the focus was on teaching media production skills and building young women's confidence through participatory video-making. The participants made videos within the community, yet there was very little involvement of other community members and the videos were not screened with them.

There were clear pre-determined objectives set by the donor and training organisations in both of these projects, and the expectations or needs of the communities and the participants were not discussed with them. This was revealed through the interviews of both the organisation's heads (O1, I5; O2, I14) and that of the participants (O1, I1; O1, I2; O2, I7; O2, I10; O2, I11). In Sen's (2000) interpretation of agency, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.2), the ability to do what people value is central to them being agents, because that helps them achieve what they truly need and what promotes their well-being. However, as the data presented above demonstrates, participants were not involved during the project conceptualisation stage to reflect on their needs and their particular valued goals were not included in the project objectives. Hence, drawing from Sen's interpretation of agency, I argue that participants' agency was not promoted at this initial stage.

My data shows that the participants were exercising their agency in different ways before joining these PV projects. All of Mahita's participants were earlier undergoing skills training run by the organisation, such as computer training, tailoring and henna designing (O2, D2). In Akshara, most of them had a background in volunteering with NGOs. They were either building their capabilities by gaining skills for livelihood generation or engaged in activities to seek monetary resources for themselves (O1, D1).

I emphasise that in this research I do not presume that these participants did not have any agency before joining the project, just because they were not engaging directly with development processes (see Hilsdon, 2007). Neither is it presumed that participants only came to gain agency through their participation in the PV project.

Rather, seeking the participation of these young women could be seen as an acknowledgement of their situated agency, i.e. the agency which is already present, howsoever restricted it might be (see Peter, 2003). Participation in these PV projects could help the young women to further develop their existing agency, if they are provided resources and opportunities.

I argue that the situated agency of the young women participants was recognised, despite them being a less powerful group in their community. Hence, it was an indication of the participatory approach being adopted. However, the participants' agency was not promoted as much during project conceptualisation because the donor agencies, training organisations and the organisations exercised their hierarchical position in the institutional setup for determining project's objectives. Pettit (2001) argues that substantive or real freedom requires absence of domination. Therefore, when donor agencies, training organisations and NGOs exercise their domination in determining project objectives, the participants may not have real freedom to incorporate their goals, which may restrict the agency they already had.

4.3 IMPLEMENTING PV – THE GENDER CONTEXT

Hilsdon (2007) argues that though women can make decisions by themselves and exercise their will, their ability to do so still exists within social and cultural norms. In the above section, I examined how the situated agency of young women participants was recognised by the implementing organisations in the form of invitation to participate. My finding, presented previously in Section 4.2.3, showed that sometimes members of the community act as gatekeepers and may oppose the participation of less powerful groups, therefore, limiting their capabilities. As Desai and Andrist (2010) suggest, some

social institutions are also seen as a source of patriarchy and restrict women's agency. The community or even the family are examples of such sources of patriarchy.

In this section, I explore how the participation of young women was enabled in these PV projects, in the backdrop of the local contexts. In doing so, it responds to the gap revealed during the literature review, 'how can participation of the less powerful groups be ensured when more powerful try to oppose it?' I first look at the gender power relations at the household level and how they affected the participation of young women. Next, I discuss the gender issues that were prevalent in both Hyderabad and Mumbai, and highlight, how the organisations worked to build participants' perspective on such issues. Then, I explore the gender norms that restricted these women participants. I analyse if being part of the PV process helped the participants in recognising and negotiating gender norms, and therefore, start exploring their ability to bring changes in their personal life and also work on community development.

4.3.1 Intra-household Inequality

The Muslim community that Mahita works with was considered very conservative and traditional by the organisation. Annas (1993, p.280) says that, "*A society is traditional if the fact of having two norms for the lives of men and women produces a strongly enforced actual division of activities and ways of living.*" In this Hyderabad slum community, there were several problematic gender issues arising from such norms, such as the high dropout rate for girls, early marriage, limited or no livelihood options for women and highly restricted mobility. It was an extremely difficult decision for these young participants to be in a project that required them to work outside their homes, as the quote below suggests:

"I have been working with this Muslim community for 12 years now. This is a very conservative community, and for the girls to be able to do anything like this is a huge step." Nitin, Programme Manager, Mahita (O2, 113)

Some participants, who had joined initially, quit the project on their own accord, knowing that they would not be allowed to participate in something which required them to work outdoors. Parents of several participants forced them to withdraw after coming to know about the nature of the project. The NGO staff members had to go to the houses of the participants who had quit, convincing the parents and motivating the participants to stay on (O2, 113). On the other hand, some Mahita participants took their own decision to join the project without informing their families. This brings attention to two aspects – 1) power relations within the household and 2) how participants recognised their well-being and agency, which I discuss below.

I draw from the literature on intra-household inequality where Iversen (2003), for example, argues that households cannot be treated as if all its members have similar interests and act as a unit. She argues that intra-household inequality is often gendered, and the domestic power imbalances generate inequality and mediate opportunities to achieve well-being among the household members (ibid). I found during my data collection that the power imbalance did not exist merely between the participants and their parents. Many participants had stated that they could discuss their participation with their mothers but not their fathers. Several of them also mentioned that their brothers objected to their participation and controlled their mobility, even when both parents agreed to their participation, which also implies that gender

played an important role in determining who had more power within the household (O2, G8):

Shakeela: "Parents have changed, but my brother hasn't yet. He still says why are you doing this, but my parents are with me."

Reshma: "Yes, brothers say do not do this work."

In Peter's (2003) critique of Sen's (1990) *Gender and Cooperative Conflicts*, she says that Sen highlighted that women have restricted agency and often tie their personal well-being to the interests of the household, and sometimes devalue their own work and contribution to it. Peter argues that this almost presents women as 'victims' of their situation. Wilson (2008) states that portraying someone as victim is denying them agency, and can shift the emphasis from analysing oppressive structures. Further, the analysis of agency may fail to recognise that the oppressed themselves can engage in the struggle for structural change in societies.

Based on these arguments by Peter (2003), Wilson (2008) and Agarwal (1997), and on the data presented above, I suggest that while all the participants had prior situated agency, which was reflected in their interest in participating in the PV project, some could exercise it to be able to participate, whereas the others could not due to the existing oppressive patriarchal structure. Some of the young women chose not to inform their household members about their participation in the project, anticipating that they might be stopped from participating. This concurs with Agarwal's (1997) argument that women's overt compliance does not mean that they have accepted the inequality within their household as legitimate but it might be linked to their lack of options. Women may instead use covert ways as a form of resistance. The individual

differences between people in whether they recognise their agency or not, also need to be taken into account while discussing agency (see Iversen 2003 for a more detailed discussion on agency and individual variations).

I found that most of the participants, at both research sites, recognised the inequality in their household. For example, they resented that they had been asked to drop out of school, but not their brother. However, they were unable to openly question their family members on such inequality (O2, D2). The data collected during my research shows that Akshara and Mahita needed to identify that gender power relations existed within households. By doing so, they could intervene in the form of convincing parents to enable the participation of young women (O1, I3; O2, I13). Akshara's participants did not face as much severe inequality as those at Mahita because the communities they lived in were not as traditional and it was easier for them to participate in the project. Subsequently though, they too had to negotiate power at the household level to continue their participation, which I look at in Section 4.3.5. Hence, I argue that even though the nature of gender power relations may differ in different contexts, there is a possibility that some form of intra-household inequality will be present.

Next, I discuss the details of the gender issues and the gender norms in the local community context, to develop a deeper understanding of power negotiations by participants.

4.3.2 Participants' Gendered Environment

Gender power relations that were a challenge to the young women's participation arose not only at the household level but also at the local community level. So, in

addition to negotiating with the parents, Mahita staff members also had to negotiate with other community gatekeepers to sustain the participation of young women. For example, the Programme Director reported:

"Any organisation working at the grassroots level faces it (opposition) during the process, especially organisations working in the old city of Hyderabad... that kind of an environment. Mahita is working with Muslim girls, and we are not a Muslim organisation. Sometimes, some religious leaders have also questioned, why is Mahita doing all this? We spoke to them also and explained everything about the project." Ramesh Reddy, Programme Director, Mahita (O2, I14)

In Akshara's case, it had to take into account the gendered environment in the slums. For instance, it needed to recognise that it was mostly male members who were the leaders in the slum communities. Therefore, it had to work towards building the participants' confidence so that they could see themselves as leaders and speak in public or hold meetings with large groups of people.

Robeyns (2003) argues that people differ in their abilities to convert resources into capabilities due to personal, social and environmental factors, including traditions, social norms and customs. The organisations needed to be sensitive and responsive to such factors so that their PV projects could provide an environment that took into account the needs of young women, help participants understand gender-based oppression, provide them with resources for learning and therefore, support their capabilities.

The gendered environment was also related to the organisations choosing to have a women-only team working on gender issues. When I asked the participants from Mahita as to why a women-only team was helpful, they had various responses. I share them here:

"If Mahita wanted, they could have had boys in the project too, but girls always fall behind. Mahita thought, since girls are behind, why should we not take them out of their homes, give them training and opportunities?" Shakeria, Participant, Mahita (O2, I11)

"Most of the issues affect women more. For instance, if we talk about early marriage, the girls suffer more than boys. That's why the videos need to be on girls' issues and girls should shoot it." Sameena, Participant, Mahita (O2, I7)

"Boys can earn their own money through other means as well. Girls are not allowed to go outside as much, that's why such a project should be with girls." Reshma (O2, I10)

"First thing is that no one would have given boys any stories. Women are more open with women, and they wouldn't have spoken to boys...boys wouldn't have got information on issues like child marriage, sexual harassment. Also, boys wouldn't have even worked on issues like this." Yasmeen (O2, I8)

These responses demonstrate that these young women felt that they had lesser opportunities and therefore, a project especially for them was apt because it provided them the opportunity to better their lives. Further, they highlighted the barriers in bringing up gender issues and why women should be involved in bringing the issues to the fore.

The team consisting of only women was the most important factor in Mahita that determined the participation of young women. If it were a mixed team, they would not have been allowed to participate by both their families and community gatekeepers, especially because of the social taboos that limit the interaction between young men and women. The participants themselves said that they felt more comfortable being with girls (O2, G8).

In Akshara, the participants would not have faced restrictions on their participation if the team was a mixed one, but all of them asserted that it 'felt good' that they were all girls. The participants, felt more confident in a women-only team, as they could work on all the aspects of video production themselves (O1, V2). A participant who had been a part of the earlier mixed team of Apna TV, emphasised in her interview why this was necessary:

"I really liked doing camerawork, because girls usually do not do camerawork. But we had a camera'man' in our team, who would not let me touch it and then I had to let it be." Samata, Participant, Akshara (O1, I1)

The discussion in this section shows that both Mahita and Akshara built a gender sensitive environment, which took into account the needs of the young women by creating women-only teams and ensured that the participants could engage in the process and have the support to develop their capabilities. Based on this, I argue that it might be necessary for organisations implementing long-term PV projects to consider the specific needs of the lesser powerful groups they are working with, so that they are able to develop their capabilities.

Below, I look into the specific local gender issues that the participants faced in their environments. This will also deepen the understanding of the social and environmental factors, which might have had an effect on participants' agency.

4.3.3 Local Gender Issues and perspectives

"There were many emotional topics related to girls, such as sexual harassment and patriarchy. These cannot be seen like other issues, that you write an application to the government office and the problem is solved. It is not like that." Samata, Participant, Akshara (O1, I1)

The videos made at Akshara focused on problems such as women and toilets, open spaces for women's sports, sexual harassment and masculinity. These, and many such issues, feature in the NGO's local context. Some of these were also problems faced by the women participants themselves, as part of the slum communities they lived and worked in. In their videos, they presented stories and perspectives of women living in the slums on these issues.

The issues that the participants in Mahita dealt with in their lives were quite different. I had noted in my daily diary (O2, D2) that while attending a panel discussion organised by a television channel, where the participants from Mahita were invited along with other girls from 'reputed colleges and schools', the questions brought up by them, such as child marriage and education for girls, were not discussed by anyone else there. Others brought up matters such as marrying a partner of your choice and the ability to choose your own career. The issues that existed in Mahita's local context revolved more around basic human rights, since the girls and young women there were not able to access those basic rights such as right to education, to health, to work, or to live in

security. Table 7 shows the different gender issues that the videos captured, in Akshara and Mahita.

Table 7: Featured gender issues in Akshara and Mahita’s videos

Akshara	Mahita
Female Foeticide	Child Marriage
Masculinity and gender sensitisation	Female Foeticide
Street Sexual Harassment	Girl child’s access to food and nutrition
Women change-makers	Girl Child Education
Women and open spaces for sports	Higher education for young women
Women and sanitation issues	Proper sanitation in Girls’ Schools
Women and their aspirations	Women and opportunity to work
	Women and Vocational Training

Matters of concern for the Akshara and Mahita participants were not completely different though. Participants in both the places talked about facing sexual harassment in public, for instance. Still, where the participants from Akshara were trying to present the complexity of how gender plays a role in society, those at Mahita were trying to fight for their basic human rights as women. They lived in an environment that had much more serious restrictions on women and more severe inequality. Nussbaum (1993, p.1) writes, *“Depressingly, many traditions have portrayed women as less important than men, less deserving of basic life support, or of fundamental rights that are strongly correlated with quality of life, such as the right to work and the right to political participation”*.

Further, I found that the participants had their own perceptions of gender issues, sometimes seeming to accept what others see as oppression. During the data collection, many participants from Mahita mentioned that watching television is seen as a sin for Muslims, and initially, were hesitant to appear in front of the camera (O2, D2; O2, G8). However, they were ready to do 'behind-the-camera' work, such as scripting and editing. The video trainer at Mahita mentioned that initially the girls would insist on wearing the burqa in front of the camera, but after some time, they started coming in front of the camera without it and had fewer apprehensions (O2, I12). The participants themselves talked about this change, saying that they understood that this work was being done on social issues and there was nothing 'wrong' with it. Now, they wanted to pursue the opportunity to learn video-making and sought to be on camera:

*"Now, these girls are moving ahead by themselves. They want to be in front of the camera, and they fight amongst themselves to be there."
Masiya, Community Organiser, Mahita (O2, I6)*

As in the case of Mahita, the perspective of the participants from Akshara too changed after they joined the project. Akshara attempted to promote a gender perspective which included both men and women. They wanted to follow a framework, where gender was not just about women, as is the case in several development processes (see Menon 2009). *"A gender perspective does not simply focus on differences between women and men, but considers how this differentiation acts as the basis for the unequal distribution of power"* (Gillard et al., 2008, p.256). So, the challenge laid in placing forth a gender perspective on issues and not talking about only women's problems, as the Co-Director explained in her interview:

"Then we were talking about even toilets...toilet as an issue, but what about women's access to toilets? So, we constantly want to bring the aspect of how do we look at men and women differently in whatever film we do." Nandita Shah, Co-Director, Akshara (O1, I5)

To understand the concept of gender, it might be necessary to look at women not as individual entities, but in relation with men, and how that affects certain issues (Anand, 2009). The participants in Akshara treated the matters they dealt with from this perspective, with the aim of building an equitable society:

"I am not saying that we are thinking only about us (women), but you (men) too. That's why a gender perspective is needed. It is important to improve these things in this generation and the next. Then we will be able to make a right structure for a world for all." Yashodhara, Participant, Akshara (O1, I3)

The participants at both the research sites told me that their perspective differed now, as a result of the orientation and training they received from the organisation. They said that they saw gender issues in a new light, even those they had overlooked previously. It meant understanding about the restrictions on their own mobility, their relations with the opposite sex, ways of dealing with the concept of gender in spaces around them and questioning the prevalent gender norms in their personal lives – for example, questioning why they should not be allowed to travel alone (O1, I2; O2, I11).

In the following section, I discuss the norms that restricted the participation of young women in both cases, and I analyse how these participants were able to question those norms.

4.3.4 Gender Norms in the local contexts

Keleher and Franklin (2008) point out that gendered norms are embedded in social structures. In Chapter 1 (Section 1.3.3), I discussed how the differences between men and women lead to an imbalance of power and the establishment of social norms, which define roles and behaviours of the different genders. Such norms, which often subjugate women, exist at various levels such as the household, neighbourhood and larger community. They result in social injustice, subordination, exploitation and restrictions on physical mobility and education. The participants from Akshara and Mahita questioned such gender norms when they joined the PV project. During this research, I found that the gender norms that affected these young women participants the most centred on mobility, roles, work and image, thereby directly affecting their capabilities, which I explore here.

Restricted Mobility and Gendered Roles

Before joining the PV project, the participants mostly adhered to restrictions on mobility set by their families. For instance, one of the participants in Akshara was earlier allowed to only go to her school and nowhere else. However, certain aspects of the process required the participants to challenge those. For example, at Akshara, the participants had to go to other slum communities for work, which sometimes were very far from their homes; often, they would have to travel by themselves and complete these tasks individually. The nature of the work required that they stayed in their field areas for long hours. These defied the norms surrounding mobility that had been set for them by their families. In the Research Video, the participants spoke about how they often had to answer several questions from their family members about their work hours. They also shared that it was very difficult for them to challenge the restrictions

on their mobility and to make their family members accept them being out of the household space for such long hours:

"In the beginning there were questions that I am coming back home at 1am, leaving at 10 am... that there cannot be so much work, and that I should come back by 7, 8 or 9 pm. It was very difficult to explain to them that actually what work happens, what time it happens, how we deal with it, when I finish it and how I come back... Neighbours also starting talking that how does she come back that late at night, they would ask that which work goes on till 1 am? My parents did not know that our screenings start after 8-9pm. It was very difficult to make them understand." Samata, Participant, Akshara (O1, V1)

The Mahita participants had faced more severe restrictions earlier. Several of them were not allowed to go out of their houses at all. If they could go out at all, they had to wear a burqa and be accompanied by either a family member or a friend. They also needed to be back home by early evening (O2, G8). It was a huge challenge for them to participate in a project that required coming to the NGO office daily, working for five to six hours, going out in their community for research, and shooting with the camera that required taking off their veils in public. Due to such severe restrictions, many of the young women did not inform their parents about their participation or the nature of the project. Therefore, initially, they were apprehensive about being out in the field and preferred to shoot inside the office (O2, I6):

"I did not tell my family for very long that I am doing this. I used to say I am going to the computer centre. I would keep a watch on the time and when I knew my brother has left for work, only then would I step out for shooting. I myself feared going out with the camera." Reshma, Participant, Mahita (O2, I10)

The participants were constantly harassed by boys and often by the other community members too. Sometimes, even when family members wanted to allow the participants to work in the project, it was difficult for them to defy the prevalent norms. A participant talked about the same in her interview:

“He (my brother) said that even if he and the family give permission, then his friends would say that ‘your sister was there!’ A lot of street harassment happens here, and if something happens then what will he do? This was the problem.” Yasmeen, Participant, Mahita (O2, 18)

Their mobility was also restricted by specific gender roles set for women. For instance, several participants at both the sites mentioned in their interviews that they were supposed to do household work. It was a defined role for them, for which they had to put in their time. Conflicts arose in some of their homes, since the participants could not devote as much time to household chores (O1, 12; O2, 19). Such work is primarily seen as a woman’s responsibility, and becomes a source of conflict if women try to get out of it. If poor women take up employment, they do not have the choice of cutting down on their time or effort to be spent on household work (Gillard, et al. 2008). These participants were giving preference to work outside their homes and this challenged gender norms, which I turn to next.

Work and Image

Another norm that the participants had to challenge was around women handling cameras and computers. It had two facets – how women ‘should be seen’ in public spaces and what kind of work they should be engaged in. A participant from Akshara

said that she herself was apprehensive about working with computers or the camera at first. She felt that as a girl, she wouldn't be able to handle them (O1, D1). Sanders (2005) explains that often, because of the gender stereotypes perpetuated by several sources, such as parents, society and the media, girls associate less with computers and may be less confident about operating them. Both men and women conventionally hold the perception that women are not good with technology (Williams, 2006). It also establishes a norm in which women are not encouraged to take up technology-related work, which is seen as more masculine.

I found that when the participants started working with technology, they also started recognizing that they had the required skills, and were defying the stereotypes. They found themselves doing things that they had seen only those more powerful (because of their gender, class, education and so on) than them do. This aspect of technology increased their self-confidence, as the Co-Director of Akshara also contended:

"One thing I found was that just having technology in your hand is extremely empowering... The fact that they can access it, their expertise on it... the confidence level just changes, especially for women."
Nandita Shah, Co-Director, Akshara (O2, I5)

Besides doing work that is often seen as men's domain, the participants also represented themselves in public spaces differently. Desai and Andrist (2010) describe performance of gender, where the focus is on the symbolic nature of gender. Individuals adopt a gendered behaviour, which become visible displays of their gender.

The performances may include, for instance, women observing *purdah*⁷, wearing veils, or going to public spaces only accompanied by male members. These performances may indicate deference or dominance. In many observations, discussions and interviews, I noticed that for the participants from Akshara, the performance of gender held an important meaning. As part of their work, they did several jobs that were perceived as masculine.

"During screenings, there was another interesting thing...that we were taught technical things. So, to work with a screwdriver amongst so many people, connect wires, put the projector on, put the screen up...we used to do these 'boys' jobs'. We felt very proud that we can do this too!"
Samata, Participant, Akshara (O1, I1)

Her statement reveals that she did work that was considered a man's job. More importantly, performing the masculine role in public made her feel powerful. The participants believed that people's perception about them changed too, when they saw them doing such work. This was particularly the case when they were seen with a camera – community members did not expect a woman to 'roam' around the streets openly, interacting with them and shooting videos. When participants 'performed' the roles of the other more 'dominant' gender, they did not simply bend the norms but they affected gender power relations too.

"When girls go out in the community, they are seen as girls, but when they go with a camera, their role changes. She is respected a lot. Without a camera, she wouldn't be respected as much. She would be harassed. But if she has a camera in her hand then she wouldn't be

⁷ The practice which requires women to conceal their faces. The term is also used to denote sex segregation in physical space.

harassed. They would be scared of you. They know that she wouldn't be scared of you. If she can come with a camera, then she is very strong and they prepare themselves mentally. This is the case in the community that we are working with." Yashodhara, Participant, Akshara (O1, I3)

While the participants from Akshara had a very positive experience pushing the boundaries of gender norms, those in Mahita had to strongly defy them. Protz (1998) points out that video is commonly viewed as a powerful medium in many communities and though using it can have positive effects, it can also cause jealousy and conflict, and has major gender-related implications. As mentioned in the above sub-section, the Mahita participants were often harassed when they were seen with the camera and boys would threaten to break their equipment. In the focus group discussion, the participants reported that they were often told that it was not a woman's job to handle cameras. They believed that if men went out with cameras, they would not face such issues (O2, G8).

The burqa worn by these participants as a 'performance of their gender' also featured in many of my conversations at the research site. They often had to face 'comments' from community members that because they were wearing a burqa, they should not be shooting. It was seen as inappropriate for mainly two reasons. First, while 'appearing' to be women, they were still performing masculine roles in a public space. Second, while wearing a burqa and following Islam, they were still doing something (working with cameras) that was presumed to be 'un-Islamic'.

"In the Muslim culture, TV and camera is seen as sin. Sometimes people taunt us because of that too." Shakeera, Participant, Mahita, (O2, G8)

The participants themselves though felt proud that they could step out of their homes, shoot with cameras and interact openly with both men and women, something they were not allowed to earlier.

"Yes, the important thing is that being girls we can still do this. People would earlier say, 'How can these girls do this kind of work?' But we are now doing things that even boys don't do. We are bringing a lot of change." Shakeela, Participant, Mahita (O2, G8)

Based on the above discussion, I contend that participants could start navigating through these gender norms around their mobility, roles, image and work, due to certain aspects that were inherent in the PV model being adopted, such as shooting outside in the community and interviewing community members. While doing so, they started developing a sense of their agency and felt that they could gain more power to ultimately affect change.

The next section discusses the power negotiations by the participants, as they challenged these gender norms. I explore and discuss whether these power negotiations at their household level supported the participants in exploring their agency at the initial stage of the PV project.

4.3.5 Power negotiations at the household level

In Chapter 2, I discussed that Freire (1972, p.32) describes the process of conscientization, where the oppressed should first recognise their situation of oppression, understand the oppression they face, and commit themselves to bringing about change. The organisations started the process of conscientization with the participants by introducing discussions on the situations around them and provided them with support to participate by convincing parents and creating women-only teams. Participation in the PV process provided the young women with a way to start negotiating power within their own households.

One participant from Akshara mentioned that she could challenge restrictions laid by her family on her mobility because she started to support them with the stipend she received (O1, I1). The Community Organiser from Mahita had also mentioned that many girls were being allowed by the families to participate because of the stipends (O2, I6). The monetary resources that they brought in helped them negotiate gender power relations too. As Lipman-Blumen (1995, p.110) says, *"the basic characteristic of the power process is an on-going negotiation, in which resources figure significantly. Those players who can bring or withhold valued – better yet, scarce – resources critical to resolving important social tasks tend to tip the power relationship in their own favour."*

Supported by the financial resources, the participants could leverage their positions and participate in a process intended to initiate community development. Most of the participants shared the same experience that their families eventually started supporting their work. When parents understood that the purpose of their video-making

was community development, their support and appreciation grew. It also helped that various mainstream media in their own cities covered the PV projects. The participants asserted that their parents even started feeling proud, seeing that the work done by them was being recognised and appreciated by the larger society (O1, I1; O2, G8).

Beyond the support of financial resources and media coverage, it was mainly the participants' conscientization process, which enabled them to continue negotiating. They saw their work through PV as important and critical for initiating change in their communities. They positively affected their position within their families, and even started engaging in decision-making, as the discussion below shows (O2, G8).

Shakeera: "We have brought a lot of changes in ourselves."

Amreen: "We cannot even say what all, it's a lot".

Habeeba: "We can take our own decisions now."

Shakeela: "Yes. Earlier we will always ask someone, are we doing it right or not? We could never take a decision by ourselves."

Yasmeen: "Now we know what is right and wrong and we ask for what we want. We are now a part of decisions taken at home."

Similarly, Samata from Akshara said that now she could make her own decisions, even around critical things such as her marriage, and everyone in her family respected her decisions (O1, I1). Participating in decision-making is an important aspect of women's agency and autonomy (Qizilbash 2005). The participants reflected on the oppression they faced, and stayed on with the commitment to continue challenging norms and

negotiating power, to make their positions stronger in their attempt to initiate social change.

As I found, for many participants, it was extremely significant that they had started participating in decision-making in their household spaces, and could either take their own decisions or affect decisions regarding their lives. This is not to imply that the participants achieved 'total control' or complete autonomy, but I suggest that they started exploring the agency they had gained. As participants started negotiating power at the household level, it was reflected in lesser restrictions on their mobility and the confidence in undertaking more 'masculine' and powerful roles.

4.4 PARTICIPANTS' EXPLORATION OF THEIR AGENCY

This chapter looked at the first phase of a PV process - project conceptualisation and initiation and discussed whether participants had the opportunity to explore their agency. In this section, I present the conclusions from the data analysis.

4.4.1 Conclusions from the Analysis

The data and the analysis in this chapter helped develop an understanding of what happens during the initial stages of the project. Who is inviting the participation, and who is invited to participate, are both key areas of concern during this phase that is supposed to be participatory (Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Mohanty 2007). Consideration of the hierarchical relations within the community by the donors and organisations resulted in the less powerful group of young women being invited to participate and showed that their situated agency was being recognised.

This analysis of the different actors and their objectives revealed that their objectives can differ in PV projects. As it was seen, the hierarchical power relation between the different actors meant that the donor/training organisations determined the objective of the PV project. The participants were not involved in this decision-making and therefore, they were not given the opportunity to deliberate over what they valued more and what objectives they wanted to incorporate. Their situated agency, which had been recognised, was not necessarily promoted at this stage.

I found that for invited participation to turn into actual voluntary and informed participation requires support from the organisations, particularly, in more traditional cultures where gender norms are very strict, as even attempts to participate in such a project could create conflicts at the household and community levels. In the case of Mahita, it was seen that young women from traditional communities might not be ready to participate, or their families might restrict them, or the community gatekeepers might object. Intra-household inequality emerged as an important factor, which could limit the participants' agency. So, young women may not be able to convert the resources available to them into capabilities, i.e. changing their invitation into participation if support and resources are not available (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2).

Once young women became participants in the project, they were made critically aware of the gender issues by the implementing organisations. This orientation helped them build an understanding of the structural oppression they faced, and this became an initial step in the development of a sense of their agency. The building of their gender perspective led them to systematically reflect on and analyse their own situation and the gender issues around them.

It was revealed that the participation of young women in the two PV projects was ensured because of three reasons: 1) participants received organisational support and resources; 2) an appropriately gender sensitive environment was created for them to participate; 3) they gained an understanding of the oppression that helped the participants develop their perspectives on gender norms.

Some particular aspects of the PV process also provided the participants with experiences that supported them in challenging certain gender norms around women's mobility and work. Through the gender sensitive environment that was developed, the participants could do things they had only seen the more powerful people do, such as working with a camera or even staying out of household spaces on their own. The process required the participants to take up 'roles', often in public spaces, which by itself challenged the prevalent gender norms.

The analysis shows that it is only when participants start defying norms, they start exploring the agency they have within themselves. They realise that they have an ability to change those norms and negotiate power relations. Exploration of agency included – first, consciously realising that they have agency; second, understanding what they could achieve with that agency; third, using their agency as negotiation of power relations to gain a more powerful position within their household.

Table 8 shows the different perspectives of organisations and participants on agency-development. This table is based on the data discussed in this chapter.

Table 8: Exploring agency – From the Organisation and Participants' Perspective

Project Phase	Organisations' Perspective	Participants' Perspective
Project conceptualisation	Invitation to participate for the less powerful groups in the community	Opportunity to get involved in the project
Project conceptualisation	Including participants' needs and objectives in the project	Ability to reflect on their own needs and work towards achieving those through the project
Project initiation	Intervening to negotiate with household members for young women's participation	Ability to join the project
Project initiation	Intervening to negotiate with community gatekeepers for initiating the project	Ability to join the project
Project initiation	Creating a gender-sensitive environment in the project	Ability to join the project Increased opportunity to challenge gender stereotypes
Project initiation	Orienting participants towards gender issues to develop their perspective	Ability to reflect on their own situation
Project initiation	Providing opportunity to the participants to challenge gender stereotypes	Ability to challenge gender stereotypes Ability to question gender power relations
Project initiation	Providing participants monetary resources	Ability to negotiate gender power relations at the household level

In the next chapter, I look at the phase following project conceptualisation and initiation, i.e. the phase of training and video-making.

5. BUILDING AGENCY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter, I analysed the initial phase of the PV process, which was about the conceptualisation and initiation of the PV project in the community. I found that the participants start exploring their agency in the form of power negotiations, if the organisations understand the local gender context and are able to provide support and resources to them. In this chapter, I look at the next phase of the PV process – from the participants starting their training to making videos, to understand if they can move from exploring their agency to building it further.

Training is usually a critical part of a long-term PV process, since this is when the participants' technical and critical thinking skills are developed. These are skills that they can use to bring about desired changes in their personal lives and the society. In Section 5.2, I analyse the approach that was used in the training in Akshara and Mahita. I also look into the role of video trainers in keeping the training participatory. The training was aimed at building particular skills and capabilities, which is what I turn to in Section 5.2.2. Here, I also analyse whether the training continued to be gender-sensitive, keeping in mind that all the participants from both organisations were young women. I end with questioning the nature of participation in the training process, which I defined in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.1) as the participants' assessment of what participation means to them. This is done in an attempt to look beyond the trainings' proclaimed positive impacts on capability building.

Section 5.3 moves on to detail the aspects of the video-making process that affect the participants' agency building. I look at the opportunities that the participants have to represent themselves in the videos. Next, the act of raising issues, i.e. bringing up topics for videos, is explored. Lastly, I discuss how the focus on quality of videos makes agency-development a problematic affair.

Section 5.4 concludes this chapter by encapsulating the discussion in the above sections and summarising the analyses.

5.2 THE TRAINING

The training process was started after the young women became participants, having navigated through various gender norms and negotiating power relations. A whole field has developed in the NGO sector, where Participatory Video is conducted by 'specialist' training organisations. Such training organisations, with their expertise in conducting training with communities, support the NGOs in implementing their PV projects. Alongside what has developed are particular methods designed by different training organisations, including certain sets of exercises, games and activities to be used for training purposes (see Appendix 1 for training toolkits including such methods).

Reviewing these training toolkits reveals that participatory techniques are used to encourage people to learn while doing things for themselves (e.g., Singh 2010). It requires the trainers/facilitators to 'hand over' the equipment to the participants and seeks to build on the experiences of the participants themselves, such as in story-selection or conducting interviews. Activities such as sharing of experiences,

expressing viewpoints and reflecting on issues, are encouraged to make it more participant-centric (e.g., Lurch 2004).

Primary data that I collected revealed that the training at both organisations was designed by the training organisations (Drishti and VV) keeping in mind similar participatory approaches (O1, I4; O2, I12). The many training toolkits by the NGOs are guides on what could be done to make the process a confidence-building one for the participants. In academic literature too, it is suggested that as participants start holding the equipment, their self-confidence increases (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3).

However, beyond the positive experience of confidence-building, as demonstrated by scholars such as Stewart (2008) and Riano (1994), are questions that emerge around the participatory nature of the training. What really happens in the field in the long-term largely remains elusive. Hickey and Mohan (2005) point out that one argument against participation is that some practitioners treat it as a technical method, i.e. a series of steps to be followed, rather than a methodology for empowerment. Taking this critique into account, I argue that there is a possible threat that use of these toolkits may reduce PV to just a technique to achieve desired outputs, particularly if some organisations/facilitators assume that a participatory approach simply involves doing the given participatory exercises and activities. Therefore, in this section, I move beyond looking at training as only a positive skills and confidence-building process. I analyse whether the training process was indeed participatory to help build participants' agency or whether it was reduced to techniques that helped achieve the donor/NGO objectives. This attempts to fill the gap found during the critical literature review in Chapter 2, concerning whether participants have the opportunity to build skills seen by them as desirable, and if the training process responds to their needs.

5.2.1 Training Facilitation

In Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.2), I have already discussed that the organisations worked towards building the capabilities of young women participants by creating a gender sensitive environment, which meant that they formed a women-only team. Here, I first discuss if the training facilitation was similarly gender sensitive, before I move on to discuss the trainer's role.

Gender Sensitivity during facilitation

In the last chapter, I had discussed that the Mahita participants were able to participate because it was a women-only team. Moreover, for participants in both PV projects it meant more opportunities to perform typically male-dominated roles. The participants themselves noted that peer-to-peer learning was enhanced because they felt comfortable seeking help from each other, since all of them were young women:

“Earlier, I was always felt scared meeting new people, talking to them. When this training started, there were a lot of girls. It was a good experience to meet them, talk to them, and work with them. I also felt that I could ask anyone for help if I had any trouble in the training, since they were all like me.” Amreen, Participant, Mahita (O2, I9).

“It's like cherry on ice-cream (being an all women-team). I don't know why, but it feels very good that all of us girls are going to the bastis, managing things, handling technical things, helping each other.” Samata, Participant, Akshara (O1, V2)

In Mahita, Masiya (Community Organiser), who was associated with another project before, joined the training along with the young women, becoming a link between them

and the trainer. At Akshara too, one of the earlier team members, Yashodhara, started working as an assistant trainer/facilitator to support the trainer with the new all-women team. She was brought in to forge a strong relationship with the participants and ensure a gender sensitive environment for enhancing the participants' learning.

Both trainers reported in their interviews that training an all-women team was challenging for them as male trainers, since there were certain barriers that affected their training. The video trainer at Akshara explained how it affected the learning, and even hampered the discussions and reflection on critical gender issues:

"When I trained boys, I could maintain physical contact with them, like keep my hand on their back to explain them things and be like a friend to them. However, my being a male was a barrier to training girls. That is why Yashodhara was brought in like an assistant trainer...I had never thought about it and it was a big lesson for me. Once, I showed them a film called 'Boys Don't Cry' on gender identity, which was a part of their training. All the girls were watching it and slowly their expressions changed, some even started crying. I stopped the film and tried talking to them. Maybe they had not been exposed to films like these, and even if they had been, then they had not confronted such issues in presence of a man. That was the time when my being a man became an issue."
Anmol Dharmadhikari, Trainer, Akshara (O1, I4)

Through my interviews of trainers and facilitators in both organisations (O1, I3; O1, I4; O2, I6; O2, I12), I found that they engaged one of their women staff members to facilitate as part of creating a gender sensitive environment that enhanced the participants' learning, though this was not defined previously as part of the training design.

Video Trainer's role

The trainer at Mahita had a background in studying at a media school, and the one at Akshara, was involved in professional filmmaking. Though both trainers were proficient in video production techniques, they had to learn not just about imparting their skills to communities in a participatory manner, but also understand their local contexts and issues. Trainers also came from completely different backgrounds than the communities they were working in, which expounded this need. Before training the participants, the trainers themselves were oriented towards participatory video training approaches by the training organisations. Both trainers had undergone a 'Training of Trainers' (ToT) for a period of one month, orienting them to social issues and training them in participatory approaches. The video trainer at Akshara shared his experiences and thoughts in his interview:

"It (ToT) was my orientation to community media. The key issue was how to teach the producers. I already knew the whole production and post-production processes of making a film or video. The main objective was to have a participatory approach to it. I did not have that perspective to teach with a participatory approach, which I developed through the ToT." Anmol Dharmadhikari, Video Trainer, Akshara (O1, 14)

By the time both trainers started working on PV projects at Mahita and Akshara, they had gained extensive experience doing PV projects with several other communities. I gathered evidence that they drew on their experiences and played a key role in keeping the training approach participatory to enhance the learning of the participants. For instance, the trainer at Mahita stated that he modified the training modules to suit the participants' level of learning and encouraged them to reflect on their own lives to

make videos on girl-child education, livelihood opportunities for young women and so on (O2, I12):

"The participants were really driven to make films on gender issues. I think that their personal experiences in and around might have forced that kind of a thing. When you have that kind of experience... and they have seen lot of these incidents happen in their lives, in and around. Maybe they thought more about it. I encouraged them to make films on such issues." Anil Pathlavath, Video Trainer, Mahita (O2, I12)

The trainer at Akshara said that since the participants had shared with him that they wanted to learn better video-making skills, he introduced his own training modules to facilitate the same. At the beginning, the training at Akshara was guided by a Trainers' Guide developed by the training organisations (Drishti and VV) for the CVUs. At Mahita, the training modules were built specifically for the Videoactive Girls project by the training organisation (VV). Both training toolkits prescribed the way the training was to be conducted, the specific training exercises, skills to be learnt by the participants, the timeframe for conducting each exercise and the required outputs and outcomes from each skills training. The trainers had to follow these to achieve the outputs and faced pressure to do the same:

"There was one instance, when I thought that the modules were designed in a way that you had to finish this, this, and this. Their (the participants) level of understanding was not sufficient for them to finish off the modules in one week and produce videos, but we had to produce them." Anil Pathlavath, Video Trainer, Mahita (O2, I12)

The above discussion reveals that sometimes the trainers ended up focusing on video outputs, instead of the participants' learning. This echoes with what Hickey and Mohan (2005) note about participation becoming a technical method. The training modules that were created to ensure the participants' learning through a participatory approach became a step-by-step technical process to be followed, rather than a methodology which could truly build their capabilities. Based on the data that I have presented in this section, I argue that though video trainers can be a key in maintaining a participatory approach in the training, they might be pressured to deliver the pre-determined outputs that were expected from the process.

I also found that the training organisations might attempt to keep the participatory approach central and put their efforts in training the trainers, organisations might make efforts towards enhancing the participants' learning by creating an environment which is sensitive to their gendered needs, and the trainers may work towards ensuring that participants learn from their own experiences to build their skills. However, there might be a considerable pressure from both organisations and donor agencies to meet the outputs, which can limit the opportunities for the participants to develop their skills and capabilities. This discussion provides an insight into how in practice, it is difficult to maintain an approach during training that is truly participatory and encourages and facilitates the participants' capability building.

Next, I will explain the training design implemented by the two organisations. I present in detail how the design was aimed at building the skills and confidence of the participants involved in the process. This section looks at the different aspects of training, including technical video production, critical thinking and community work.

5.2.2 Training Design

Video-making was a completely new skill for the participants to learn, and the training was designed keeping this in mind. As the data presented in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.4) showed, while training young women there is another added dimension of 'fear of technology' due to gender stereotypes. Some participants initially felt scared of working with cameras and computers, thinking they will not be able to learn technical skills.

Having ownership of the equipment, i.e. knowing that they can decide on what purpose the equipment would be used for, is usually considered one of the most important elements in PV (e.g., Plush, 2009b, p.22). Based on the same premise, the training in video-making in the two long-term PV projects in Akshara and Mahita started with exercises which 'hand over the camera'. These exercises encouraged the participants to start using the camera from the very beginning and take decisions on what to shoot with it. Handling the equipment created the opportunity for them to not just build their skills but also their confidence to become media producers. In both projects, the participants were trained in the entire process of video-making – from researching and writing scripts, to shooting and editing them. The entire training period, at both organisations, included participants making videos on a regular basis. The training was designed to ensure that the participants' learn from their own experience about researching, shooting and editing. One of the participants from Mahita explained her journey through the training process:

“Earlier, whenever we took the camera, our hands would shake. Now, we can shoot even without a tripod. When we used to work on the editing system, we would get so confused. For example, when Sir taught us how to drag the footage on the timeline, we would keep asking each

other how to do it. We did not know. Now, even if you jumbled up the timeline on the editing system, we have the confidence that we can make it okay.” Shaker, Participant, Mahita (O2, I11)

The training process did not just include the technical aspects of making a video, but also built the participants' critical thinking towards development issues in their local community. It was mentioned in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.3) that Akshara and Mahita worked towards strengthening participants' perspectives. Several sessions were conducted by them on social issues for the participants' orientation. Mainstream and documentary films were also shown for the participants to understand how issues can be conveyed through video. Analyses of newspapers, visual media content, discussions and debates were also an integral part of the training. The impact on the participants could be seen when they remarked that they could now recognise the different problems in the community, which they did not bother with much earlier (O1, I2; O2, I10).

The training also included how to hold meetings with the community members, conducting screenings and learning public-speaking. During the training exercises, the participants were asked to go into the local slum communities, where they had to work and shoot videos, which resulted in two things. First, the participants stepped out in public and performed the dominant gender role, i.e. doing work that community members thought that only men are supposed to do (see Chapter 4, Section 4.3.3) and second, the participants started involving the community members actively in the project by asking them about issues that were important to them, such as proper sanitation, better roads, schools for children and equality for the girl child, and taking

their stories/interviews for the videos. This involvement became the beginning of building a relationship with the community.

The Programme Director at Mahita said that they had to get the participants out in the field during the training, in spite of apprehensions with regards to how the community members might react (O2, I14). Akshara was not a grassroots organisation, and therefore, it took intensive efforts to build a relationship of trust with the community members through constant visits and meetings (O1, I1; O1, I3). I had discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.3) that both Akshara and Mahita faced challenges in establishing the PV project while initiating the project in their respective communities. It was during the training phase that the relationship was built and strengthened:

"I had to go to the basti, talk to people, tell them what work I do, where I have come from and what I have come for. I talked to them about their issues. Slowly, they all started recognising me and would greet me whenever I went there. They were ready to help me with any work that I needed from them." Rohina, Participant, Akshara (O1, I2)

Thus, the training helped increase the interaction between the participants and the communities they worked with. This increased interaction also resulted in more community members knowing the purpose of the PV project, which in turn resulted in growing support for the project and the participants. Since some members, acting as the gatekeepers, had opposed the women's participation citing gender norms (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3), gaining support from other community members had a positive impact on their agency, which I will discuss in Chapter 6.

The data discussed here suggests that overall, the participants were gaining knowledge and critical thinking skills to reflect on the changes they wanted towards community development, such as changing parents' attitude towards their girl child, equal opportunities for women to work, safety for women in public spaces and better infrastructure in slums. Their technical skills to communicate those issues through video, and their skills for community organisation and mobilisation were also being built. Therefore, the multi-dimensional nature of the training, including the technical aspects, building of leadership skills and enhancement of critical thinking, started building the participants' ability to be able to bring changes in what they considered was important.

Though their learning was evident, the trainer at Akshara explained that the participants needed constant support even after the defined training period was over, in both technical and critical aspects of video production, to be able to produce 'good quality' work, i.e. videos that effectively captured community issues and were technically sound. I also observed the same situation at Mahita, where they received constant support from the coordinator and the other staff members to communicate their issues on video (O2, D2).

Thus, although the participants may gain video-making and critical thinking skills, it is possible that they may not be able to make videos of a certain quality independently, even after the defined training period is over. This also brings attention to the aspects of the participants' learning level and the expectation from them to make a good quality video. This can have a significant bearing on participant' experience, which I discuss in Section 5.3.4.

5.2.3 Training and Participants' needs

I demonstrated through the critical literature review in Chapter 2 that the several training handbooks developed by NGOs are technical guides for building participants' skills to a level as deemed appropriate for the project. However, as I found, the participants in both research sites wanted to enhance their skills further to pursue other opportunities beyond the PV project, and aspired to join the mainstream media, mostly television journalism. The quotes below illustrate that:

"We also want to get some professional training. There are new cameras, new editing systems... We want to learn all of that and do professional work. If we know professional filmmaking, then we can take this further." Amreen, Participant, Mahita (O2, I9)

"There is something beyond the 5 basic shots. We should learn that, they should teach that. We get so limited. We want to join mainstream media in future. So, if you compare the technical expertise, then aren't we behind? For us to go ahead, they should give us advanced training too." Sandhya, Participant, Akshara (O1, V2)

Training, as it was labelled by the training organisations, ran for a year or more and encouraged the participants' aspiration that they would be trained enough to pursue a mainstream TV career. However, I had discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.3) that this objective of the participants was not taken into account during project conceptualisation and initiation. This had a bearing in this phase of the process because as training progressed, most participants from economically disadvantaged backgrounds wanted to explore opportunities to further their career, using their newly acquired skills and wanted to earn more. Earning a stipend had allowed the young women participants to

negotiate their position in their families (Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5), and interviews with them showed they now wanted to gain more power within their households by increasing their income (O1, I1; O1, I2; O2, I6; O2, I8; O2, I9).

The data indicates that though most of the participants were committed to working in their communities with PV, they also wanted to improve their career and financial prospects and gain a more powerful position. Eventually, they either expected the organisation to increase their stipend, or they planned to look for other opportunities. These efforts by the participants can be viewed as complex capabilities (Sen 2000), which include achieving self-respect and taking decisions on issues about their own lives. Sen (2000) stresses that capabilities correspond to the freedom people have to live a life they have reason to value. In this case, the young women were making a conscious choice about what their needs and interests were, pursuing which can have a deep change in their lives. Kabeer (1999, p.437) refers to this as a process of empowerment where there is an *“expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.”*

However, the main objective of the PV process, as determined by the donors, was not to train the participants to become 'professional' video-makers who could join the mainstream media, but for them to make participatory videos on community issues. The difference between the pre-determined objectives and participants' expectations created such a conflict at Akshara that the participants questioned their further involvement in the project, while the organisation contemplated whether it should still continue with the project. The Co-Director reflected in her interview that the PV project built the aspirations of the participants but could not deliver (O1; I5). This points out that the lack of negotiation between participants' needs and project's objectives during

the project conceptualisation and initiation phase continued through the training stage too. She also added in the same interview that participants' skills were not 'good enough', which matched with the thoughts of the Programme Manager and the Director at Mahita about the skills of their participants:

"The professional documentary filmmakers will pay attention to technical aspects. But these girls, even with their limited knowledge, show the human angles and human stories. Technically they need to improve a lot. I have got the same feedback from various sources. I have seen the videos and I have told them this." Ramesh Reddy, Programme Director, Mahita (O2, I14)

While Akshara contemplated shutting down the project because of the emerging conflicts, Mahita had a different approach to the situation. As expressed by the various respondents, this was in the form of continuous attempts by the organisation to help its participants get career placements or support restarting their education (O2, I7; O2, I8; O2, I10). I argue that this consideration of the participants' objectives promoted their agency, and in some cases contributed to social change. For instance, when a participant from Mahita was supported to pursue a career in videography, she became one of the very few young Muslim women in her community to take up employment (O2, SV28), thereby impacting other women's position in her local community. In support is Sen's (2000) argument that different agency aspects, such as women's earning power, economic role, literacy and education and so on, positively contribute to women's voice and agency. These can impact not just women's well-being, entitlement and position within the family, but also in the society as a whole.

The fact that Akshara could not incorporate its participants' objectives on further skill-building also meant that participants held resentment against the organisation, which they expressed during the data collection. The following quote captures the frustration and disillusionment of a participant with the process. Here, it becomes questionable if their agency was in fact being built, or its growth was being hampered.

"The thing is that when we joined, everyone thought these people need to be empowered. We were from the 'community', as in people who are poor, who need opportunities, who badly need basic amenities. We were treated like that. We have moved from there, but people's thinking has not. They still feel we need to be empowered. We were community video producers, and we have remained that. Even after 5 years of working here, I am still just that." Samata, Participant, Akshara. (O1, I1)

Based on the data that has been discussed in Sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3, I suggest that conducting participatory training exercises develops a certain confidence in the participants as they learn new skills and start looking at choices they can make to improve their lives. They build aspirations to support themselves financially on the basis of their acquired skills, especially if they see it as an opportunity to bend societal norms such as those based on gender. Through working on such PV projects, young women can bring changes to their personal lives and in the larger society by making choices they may earlier not have had the opportunity to make, such as pursuing education or taking up employment. However, contradictions may emerge if the participants' interests are not acknowledged and promoted.

The two case studies here reveal that there can be entirely different ways in which organisations approach the conflict between the participants' needs and the project's

stated objectives. Hence, my research shows that skill-building through the training, although can often appear to be positive, may not necessarily be so. The PV process in long-term PV projects can restrict its participants' agency, if an organisation fails to recognise and address their personal needs, such as those of education and livelihood, which the participants feel are important to improve their lives.

5.2.4 Training and Expected Outputs

The earlier sections have talked about conflicts between the participants' needs and the expectations of donors, the training organisations and the NGOs. It has another facet, which respondents from Akshara noted. The training organisation wanted the participants to reach a particular skills level after a certain period of training, in order to produce videos of the desired quality. To evaluate the level of skills acquired, exercises were developed that were conducted by a representative of the training organisation. The evaluations were to be used to recognise the areas where further training was required. However, these assessments were instead used to communicate to certain participants that their performance was not good enough for them to continue working in the project (O1, I3; O1, V2).

An evaluation was done at Akshara a year after the women-only team started. The participants and the trainer stated that since the funds were falling short, the participants (who received a stipend from the organisation) were seen as a 'liability', and therefore, some of them were asked to leave based on that evaluation (O1, I3; O1, I4; O1, V2). I observed that the remaining participants deeply resented the organisation's decision to remove others on the basis of their skills. This kept figuring in conversations and interviews repeatedly. I quote two of the participants below:

"A producer who works in the CVU is suddenly told that she has to leave. No one thinks about them. One should also think about the future of that community producer. It should not be said that we don't have funding now, so leave." Sandhya, Participant, Akshara (O1, V2)

"I felt really bad. You did an evaluation of those girls, and (suddenly) their whole year becomes a question mark... I was very attached to those girls. They were very depressed. They felt that they put a year into this and now they cannot do anything. There was a negative impact on their lives..." Yashodhara, Participant, Akshara (O1, I3)

There were several repercussions on the participants' agency. One, as the statement above from Yashodhara shows, was that skill-building became the reason for those participants to lose confidence in their own abilities instead of increasing it. Second, the process which was supposed to provide resources to help participants gain agency, took away their time resource on the contrary, as the year they had invested became 'ineffectual'. They had not gained enough skills to 'justify' their PV participation. For many, their only source of income was also lost. Third, the resentment built against the organisation resulted in the participants slowly losing faith in the organisation and the process. While the organisation felt that the participants needed to 'perform' to stay in the project, the participants believed that it was the organisation's responsibility to ensure that they were trained better in video-making skills.

Turning to Mahita, the skills levels of the participants were never evaluated, since it was not a part of the project's objectives. Still, in several conversations, participants and other respondents kept mentioning that the participants' technical, critical thinking and creative skills needed to be improved, both to produce better videos and to pursue

another media career. Three participants also reported that they applied for anchoring jobs in a local TV news channel but were rejected, since they could not speak either Telugu⁸ or English. Hence, they wanted to get trained in those languages as well to expand their opportunities. The organisation felt responsible towards increasing participants' livelihood opportunities, and was therefore keen that participants gain in their language skills.

Mahita was also committed to keep improving their video-making skills. As a case in point, I was asked by the organisation to train them further during my research. The participants did not know sound editing and wanted to learn the software, which I trained them in for a day during my data collection. I was also asked to train them in a different form of video, as they lacked this knowledge. The participants used the Research Video (O2, V3) as an exercise towards that goal.

Like Akshara, Mahita also faced the issue of limited funds, but it drew on its internal resources to continue its support to the participants and took their needs into account, rather than choosing to reduce the number of participants. It chose to commit to participants' agency-development despite having few resources to do so. This was evidenced in Mahita's Programme Manager's interview when he said that Mahita negotiated with one of their local donors to provide stipend to the young women participants (O2, I14).

The above discussion reveals that in the two case studies, skills level was an important consideration for both the organisations and the participants. The process can become

⁸ Telugu is the regional language spoken in Hyderabad, but most Muslims living there speak 'Hyderabadi', which is a dialect of Urdu.

centred on skills development when young participants are involved in media production because they tend to focus more on gaining skills (also see Evans and Foster 2009). Based on the data presented, I argue that while gaining skills can build confidence in participants, imposition from the organisation on the levels to be achieved could have a counter-effect. The training process could be reduced to achieving only 'productivity' and not necessarily extend into building agency. Moreover, dependency on funds can create a situation where participants are allowed to participate only when they are deemed as productive and skilful enough to fit into the project.

Further, the critical difference revealed here is that Mahita worked towards ensuring skills-building of all the participants, not just for producing better quality videos for the project, but also for them to be able to meet their objective of pursuing a career independently. On the other hand, the situation at Akshara evoked some serious questions about the participatory nature of the project. This brings the insight that individual NGOs may see their responsibility towards the participants very differently. Those adopting a participatory approach may be committed towards fulfilling the participants' valued needs; the others may focus on the participants' performance contributing towards meeting project objectives. It also shows that certain organisations may perpetuate hierarchy even beyond the funded period.

5.3 THE VIDEO-MAKING

I now move on to explore the next phase of the two PV projects studied – when the participants start making videos. I analyse the process of participants' representation of their image and that of raising critical issues during video-making. As the critical

literature review in Chapter 2 suggested, these acts allow for participants to build their agency, as they can pursue their own objectives by choosing the image they want to represent. However, there was a gap in knowledge as to whether participants can truly represent themselves in the way they feel is an appropriate representation. The need for more in-depth exploration was also revealed to understand if participants get the opportunity to raise issues they deem are critical, particularly in the presence of other more powerful actors. Lastly, I discuss what emerged during data collection as critical to the participants' agency during this phase – focussing on the quality of videos in the process. I analyse how stress on 'good quality' impacts participants' agency

5.3.1 Image Representation by Participants in Videos

Evans and Foster (2009) note that video can have a powerful impact on how communities construct images of themselves and how people come to see the community via the representations created. In PV, the aim is to provide the opportunity for participants to be the producers of media and also represent themselves onscreen. Sen (2000) argues that an agent is one who has control over the things s/he values. As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.5.4), for many groups and communities, gaining control over their own image might be very important for them to challenge stereotypes, and the ability to do so through PV can empower them. It can be deduced that young women participants can challenge gender stereotypes through self-representation, if they gain control over their representation. The ability to do so can further build their agency. Here, I will discuss two aspects of representation: one, if the participants want to appear in front of the camera and two, if they can look and perform the way they feel is an appropriate representation of them.

For women, who are often the 'objects' of the camera's gaze (Moletsane, et al. 2009), video-making can provide the opportunity to challenge their stereotypical image. A review shows that initial videos from both Akshara and Mahita were based on the participants' personal stories, in which they turned the 'gaze' on gender issues around them (O1, SV4; O2, SV14; O2, SV 16; O2, SV17). I had discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3) that the participants went through the process of reflecting on their situation, questioning gender norms and negotiating power at the household level. The skills they gained through the training helped them represent their own life and express their perspectives through the videos. The videos made by the Akshara and Mahita participants on their life talked about issues such as their education (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/12yAOzD>), their need to gain livelihood skills and have their own financial earnings (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/15oXkwV>), gender inequality in their families, domestic violence (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/194LxcD>) and so on. This challenged the stereotypical image that young women mostly accept their situation unquestioningly.

Some of the participants at Mahita told me during their interviews that when they talked about their personal stories and turned them into videos, their own images made them see themselves and their lives from a different perspective:

"I had made a film on girls dropping out of school. Actually, it was my own story. My parents made me drop out of school and I never questioned that. However, I wanted to do something for myself and joined this project without telling them. When I saw this video after editing, I saw myself in the video and realised that I should have had the courage to tell my parents that I want to continue my education. I want other girls from my community to get inspired seeing my story. So, I

have re-joined school and now want to share my story with them.”
Reshma, Participant, Mahita (O2, D2)

Reshma's experience is in concurrence with how Rodriguez (1994) talks about the 'viewfinder as the mirror' when discussing how women in marginalised societies never see their own selves and their world in the mainstream media. Therefore, a shift in self-perception occurs when they look through the camera, as it creates an artificial distance. It makes them look at themselves and their world in detail. This distance created helps participants to perceive, reflect and express on their own lives (ibid).

On the other hand, making a video based on her personal story during a digital video-making session made one participant at Akshara feel uncomfortable. She said in her interview that she had not wanted to share her life on video, but felt pressured to do so:

“Personally, I did not like the Digital Storytelling module. Why should we make something for the NGO? I know who I am, then why should I recollect my memories? Why should I make my personal story? OK, you (NGO) made it, but then you told it to different people. I did not like that because if they have the right to tell us to make it, do we not have the right to say no? If I said that time that I do not want to make the film, then I might not have been in Akshara till now. They would have said that you do not have the skills or that you don't have it in you to do this job. This would have happened. They would have done my assessment and said that if she could not talk about herself then how would she talk about other people?” Rohina, Participant, Akshara (O1, I2)

The experience of this participant provides an insight that though PV may aim to shift the control of representation over to the participants, the process might instead become a technique that participants feel obliged to follow.

Based on the above evidence, the assumption that representing their reality is necessarily a positive experience for participants becomes questionable. It can be crucial for the participant to feel that she has the freedom to decide if she wants to appear in front of the camera and represent herself, for her to experience it as an agency-development process. However, the organisation may feel that the participants need to go through certain experiences and processes to build their agency.

The second aspect of representation to be discussed is participants having control over the kind of self-image to be built on video. I found that participants often wanted to present a different image of themselves on camera than how they were in real life. During my review of the videos produced by Akshara, I noticed how in one of them, a participant was dressed in a western suit, something she did not wear in her everyday life. She presented herself as a journalist, much like those featured on English-language news channels in India (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/12yB6qj>). The way she spoke was also reminiscent of mainstream journalists (O1, SV9). Showing her aspirational self can also be seen as an indication of 'breaking away' from the conventional and local gender constructs of image and therefore, challenging local gender stereotypes. This makes it important to recognise that the act of representation is a complex issue. Though PV is seen as a medium that can be used to portray the harsh 'reality' of marginalised communities, such as their poverty and living conditions, it might not necessarily be used by the participants in the same way.

At Mahita, I had observed the girls debating amongst themselves, as to what the 'proper' language spoken on camera should be (O2, D2). Their language was *Hyderabadi*, which is a dialect of Urdu, spoken mostly by Muslims, and is not represented on the national or local television channels. They struggled to write their narrations for the video with correct Hindi grammar, which they considered to be more 'proper' for the camera than their own mother tongue. They also had the desire to 'look good' on camera, as the video trainer had remarked:

"Maybe innocently, they wanted to look better in front on the camera and they got their make-up kits." Anil Pathlavath, Video Trainer, Mahita (O2, I12)

Protz's (1998) idea that the inclusion of their aspirations (what they want 'to be') is also helpful in understanding the kind of self-image participants want to represent. She says that participants might not be willing to show and reinforce only their grim realities and might also want to reflect their aspirations. This can happen when recording realities challenge their identity and self-esteem. Aspirations are an essential part of self-image and including them may enable participants to portray what they feel is an appropriate representation.

When I filmed the Research Video (O2, V3) with them, the participants in Mahita put on makeup for the camera. Some of the participants took their headscarves off for the camera, while some kept them (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/1dGTwdp>). The Programme Manager saw that footage and told them that the headscarves did not look good on camera. He asked them to shoot again without the headscarf – a core element of their identity. However, when I asked the participants if they wanted to shoot again, they said no. They were quite comfortable with their image on camera (which was also

a representation of their identity as Muslim women), even if it did not match the popular mainstream notions of women journalists on Indian news channels, and even if they knew that many perceive the burqa/headscarf as a form of oppression (O2, D2).

Looking at what Hilsdon (2007, p.135) states while examining women's agency, helps understand this complexity better. She notes that "*Multiple identities are performative in that women speak/act themselves into existence – both reiterating dominant gender norms and resisting them*". Based on Robeyns' (2003) arguments, I suggest this happens because women's abilities are based on social norms and customs, including other factors. So, influenced by their local contexts (which were discussed in detail in the last chapter), the young women in these projects were able to resist certain gender stereotypes, like when they appeared in western clothing or appeared on camera without the headscarf, but also showed their acceptance of other gender norms in their image on camera.

Burqa could be seen as a form of gendered oppression, but it also held critical identity meanings for the participants in Hyderabad. Western outfits might be seen as an influence of modernisation, but some participants saw it as liberation. Similarly, 'proper language' could be seen as a form of domination, but for some it indicated aspirations of social mobility. The data discussed above showed that the participants themselves dealt with such conflicting elements of identity. However, being able to construct their image on camera as they wished to be, either through attire or language, built their confidence. This ability to control their image on camera, which they found important, built their agency further.

The evidence in this study supports the insight that it was important for the young women participants to have control of their representation. Data discussed in this section revealed that recording their personal experiences enabled the participants to reflect on their lives. At the same time, it also demonstrated that the power to say no to recording their life stories was equally important because they wanted to have the choice of appearing on camera. Further, I found that participants wanted to present their aspirations on camera, such as by appearing in western clothes or talking in another language, which was as important a part of their self-identity as their reality.

The data also brings attention to how other actors, such as NGOs, trainers and facilitators may influence the on-camera representation. Participants may either feel obliged to fulfil what the NGO demands, and therefore, present themselves in a particular way on video, or feel pressured to show an image that conforms to the value system of these actors.

Based on the evidence presented here, I argue that building participants' agency can be supported through self-representation. However, there are other factors, namely control over appearing on camera, including both realities and aspirations in self-representation, local social and cultural context and possible domination of other actors which may affect the participants' agency-development.

Next, I move on to explore another part of video-making, which is drawing out critical community issues, to help affect social change. What requires changing in the community can be an important point of reflection for the participants. Drawing out the issues to be addressed can affect their understanding of themselves as agents of change.

5.3.2 Raising Issues in Videos

"I am a woman myself, and if I can make a film which another woman identifies with and feels supported, then there can be nothing better than that." Samata, Participant, Akshara (O1, V1)

The above statement reveals that this participant valued being able to work towards bringing change for others. For the participants in both Akshara and Mahita, being able to address critical issues in their videos was of extreme significance. Participants at both research sites said that they brought up several critical and sensitive matters in their videos, which they felt proud of. There was a realisation that they could increase their influence on social problems and attempt to bring some change (O1, D1; O2, D2). Hence, raising issues in the videos was important for building their agency. In this section, I aim to address the gap revealed in Chapter 2 about whether participants can bring up issues that meet their objective of community development or whether other, more powerful actors control the process.

For both projects, the topics for videos were selected in several ways: the participants researched with the community through a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to determine development issues; the participants came up with issues concerning them, such as livelihood opportunities for young women, or the organisation suggested the topics, such as school infrastructure (in the case of Mahita) or the impact of the organisation's projects (in the case of Akshara). In almost all cases the young women worked with the community to find stories on the issue selected that could be taken up, such as find women in their slums who have fought with the government for proper sanitation facilities (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/1aur8eG>), or young women who have fought to continue their education. Brainstorming sessions were conducted within the

team and then the topics were finalised. A participatory process was followed to include the different ideas, thoughts and viewpoints. The following is what the participants from the two research sites reflected on how they chose the issue to be covered:

"While deciding on issues, we always sit in a group and then brainstorm on news items, community issues and then discuss together. Then, in the group itself we decide which one to pick up." Sameena, Participant, Mahita (O2, G8)

"We, as producers, needed to know the issue. We did a lot of research, read a lot of books. We had discussions on issues with experts from Akshara. We shared our experiences and thoughts with the group, which often led to a debate. After completing the research, we had to share our stories with the group, make a presentation and then talk about what angle to take, and what kind of a story to pick up." Samata, Participant, Akshara (O1, I1)

The participants also raised many gender-based issues that were not talked about openly in the community, such as female foeticide, domestic violence and sexual harassment. This is in agreement with what some scholars suggest, that PV can create opportunities to talk about sensitive matters not discussed in public earlier (Goodsmith 2007; Molony, et al. 2007). During the data collection, the young women noted that they were able to bring up matters in which a woman's perspective was often ignored. For instance, the team from Akshara made a video on street sexual harassment (O2, SV10), something that happens widely and was a problem that also affected them but was hardly raised as an issue within their community or the larger society (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/1aTmxqf>). The girls at Mahita made several videos on sensitive topics, such as child marriage or girl-child education (Online Video link:

<http://bit.ly/18pMlcp>), which were prevalent but again not taken seriously by the local community members.

"We talk about very difficult issues with the community, like early marriage... It is so difficult to make people understand this, but it is important that we have started talking about it." Amreen, Participant, Mahita (O2, I9)

As this participant stated, they could gain the ability to bring gender-based issues to public consciousness and start questioning the gender inequality prevalent in their community. Being able to bring up matters they felt were critical was another step in questioning gender norms and asserting themselves. Qizilbash (2005) links agency very closely to a person's freedom to pursue values and goals. I found that while addressing critical issues in the video has the potential to build participants' agency, it was equally important for them to have the freedom to select the topics. The ability of participants to bring up issues they find important is questioned if they are 'asked' to make videos on particular topics only, instead of having the freedom to reflect and choose. It was evidenced in Akshara's participants' discussion where they stated that over time the organisation started 'selecting' the topics for videos and they did not have the freedom to choose (O1, V2). The video trainer at Akshara reiterated the same:

"It became 'NGO media'. The NGO said that we want to make a video on this topic, or we want to show a certain kind of case study... The CVU team could not take its own decisions anymore." Anmol Dharmadhikari, Video Trainer, Akshara (O1, I4)

The video trainer also stated that decision-making being dominated by the organisation affected the participatory nature and the young women's freedom within the

organisation. As one participant noted, the organisation wanted to incorporate their own views, which restricted the participants' freedom:

"If it (the CVU) is in a partnership with an NGO, then the views and ideology of the NGO becomes important and the NGO makes videos based on that. It (the CVU) is not given its own freedom. We have to adopt the same thoughts as those who are giving us the money. We have to work according to their ideology. This is the problem with participatory media." Rohina, Participant, Akshara (O1, I2)

However, the video trainer added that he understood the organisations' need to 'support and guide' the participants, since participants' thinking on gender issues might not be properly developed. He considered that the participants might not be able to think as critically about the various aspects of gender issues to be able to present a comprehensive picture on video. Conflicts appeared between what the organisation thought as appropriate views in the videos and what the participants wanted to communicate, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6 (Section 6.2.3).

The above evidence suggests that the Akshara participants viewed the support and guidance from the organisation as control. They felt that the editorial board (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2 for an explanation of 'editorial board') had arbitrary powers over their decision-making and therefore their freedom was being restricted. Though the topics suggested by the organisation were extremely critical on their own, and the participants appreciated the suggestions and feedback, they felt that the whole process was extremely overbearing for them and took away their freedom to decide on critical issues. They also felt that they were not able to reflect as to which issues were actually critical for them to work on and this made them feel powerless (O1, V2). The data

concur with Nussbaum's (2003) argument that someone's freedoms can restrict another person's freedom and not all freedoms may be necessarily as valuable or even good. Qizilbash (2003) also suggests that while freedom covers 'autonomy of choice' and 'non-interference', one freedom can limit other freedoms. Here, the organisation's freedom to suggest and guide participants' impinged upon participants' freedom to decide issues. While the organisation felt that its freedom to guide participants was important to make videos which could bring up important issues, participants felt their freedom was also important so that they could bring out issues critical to them.

At Mahita too, there was a threat of domination by the organisation's staff in the video-making process. However, as the Programme Manager said during his interview, he negotiated within the organisation so that the other staff members would not interfere in the process, to ensure the participants had the freedom to make videos on issues critical to them. For example, he mentioned that other staff members could make suggestions about the video topics, but there was no imposition (O2, I13). I also observed that the participants had the freedom to decide which issues they wanted to make a video on. The focus remained on building the participants' agency by giving them the opportunity to bring up community development matters they felt were important, and not necessarily on what the organisation felt should be covered (O2, D2).

The above discussion reveals the complexity in maintaining a participatory approach within the project while raising issues in the videos. The participants, who are still in the process of gaining skills and agency, can feel dominated by the more powerful organisation and feel that their freedom is being compromised, whereas the organisation may feel it necessary to have the freedom to guide the process for

impacting social change. Therefore, I argue that a long-term PV project, which is inherently hierarchical, leads to organisation's freedom limiting the participants' freedom. Since having control over what a person values is crucial to agency, participants' agency might get restricted when they feel that they do not have the ability to decide on the critical to them.

5.3.3 Quality of Videos

The analysis in the above two sections demonstrated that there are concerns around imposition of values by the trainers/facilitators and the NGO staff on the participants' representation and control by more powerful actors while bringing out topics for videos. There is another aspect concerning the overall video-making process, which is about producing 'good quality' videos, which I discuss here.

In the literature on PV there have been strong arguments that the focus should be on the process and not the end product. Several scholars have argued that even if the video is 'technically poor', it should not be the primary area of concern (e.g., Bery and Stuart, 1996; Menter et al., 2006) because the impact of the video on communities is not determined by that. Yet, as Protz (1998, p.168) points out, "*Many people now expect considerable technical sophistication of all video productions, even those which are the result of participatory video efforts.*" Shaw (2012) notes that the nature of video leads to unavoidable expectations about the product, even when the process is supposed to be primary. Sometimes, the videos might also be made for audiences other than the community, requiring high production value (Evans and Foster 2009). My research demonstrated the same, because as I found in the case of Akshara, the editorial board functioned as a feedback mechanism, providing suggestions and

critiques on the content and technical aspects of the videos. The training organisations and the NGO also emphasised making good quality videos. They wanted the message to be clear and impactful in the videos. Hence, the participants were asked to improve the aspects of the videos that were considered of poor quality, compared to mainstream television content, such as the ones with poorly-lit shots or audio with disturbance. This critical assessment of the quality put a lot of pressure on the participants. It was detrimental to their confidence and agency, as the discussion in my Research Video produced in Akshara (O1, V1) reveals:

Rohina: "If you look at 103⁹ (impact videos), technically it is not that good, but we know what the situation was in her house, how she got ready for the shoot, and how we prepared for the situation. It feels good that we did the research well; we talked to them and shot with them. If it is technically not good, it is not that bad either. We have been taught so much, but the emotions get overbearing. We paid attention to the emotional side and not the technical side as much. I feel that is where we fell short. When we would come here, all they would tell us is how badly we had shot."

Samata: "I don't feel this way... if it's technically good or not. Our main aim is to reach people, and if we are doing that then it does not matter if we are technically a bit better or worse."

Rohina: "But still, later I felt that we fell short there."

While talking about the same video in her interview, Rohina had said that she was very happy because she was able to form an emotional relationship with the women she

⁹ 103 is the police helpline number created as an impact of Akshara's video on street sexual harassment. Apna TV team made videos on how women have used the 103 helpline in cases of violence against them. Rohina is talking about one of the women, whose story they had covered.

was filming. The process had built her confidence and she felt that she had produced a strong message on a difficult issue like domestic violence, with appropriate treatment of the emotional aspect of the video (O1, I2). Yet, in the above conversation, she expressed her disappointment about the feedback given on the quality of her video. She also repeated that she fell short in her video-making skills, despite the other participant trying to convince her that quality was not primary in this case. This demonstrates that when the organisation gives technical finesse more importance than the process or the message, the participants may start getting affected by it, and lose their focus on making videos for community development and social change. As in the case of Rohina, such a situation may overshadow the participants' sense of being an agent of change.

At Mahita, the Director of the organisation was not insistent on producing quality videos. He also felt that the community members were the primary audience of the videos, and it was not necessary to have a technically good or extremely analytical video to mobilise communities and organise them for community action. He noted that seeing their issues and their own people on video is what motivates the community members (O2, I14). Other scholars such as Evans and Foster (2009) and Mistry and Berardi (2012) have reached similar findings as well, who found that making their own videos and representing their issues on video was more important than how the video looked.

However, evidence from the Mahita participants in an informal discussion suggested that they wanted to make more 'competitive' and better videos (O2, D2). I suggest that the notions of what is a good video can bind the participants too, even when the NGO does not impose technical quality. Masiya, the Community Organiser of Mahita,

mentioned in her interview that they participated in a film festival organised by UNICEF and the University of Hyderabad, where they won several awards (O2, I6). On one hand, the festival exposed them to different kinds of films, and on the other, it also led them to compare their work with others. Looking at another audience in the film festivals, she felt that they needed to make documentary-style and better technical quality videos to win more awards at such competitions.

Based on the data here I argue that both the organisation and the participants might look to produce videos of higher technical quality, even when the stated focus is the process and not the product. This can especially be the case when participants want to include audiences beyond their community. In these case studies, the technical quality directed the video-making process to some extent. Based on the evidence, it can be argued that participants too want to learn more technical skills (as discussed in Section 5.2.3) and have a desire to improve video quality to reach a wider audience and increase the impact of their work. However, when organisations, which hold more power than participants in the hierarchical set-up, want to impose quality because of their position it can become detrimental to the participants' agency.

5.4 PARTICIPANTS' BUILDING OF THEIR AGENCY

In this chapter, I looked at that phase of the PV process that includes training and video-making. The data was analysed to determine the effect of this phase on the participants' agency. Below, I present the conclusions.

5.4.1 Conclusions from the analysis

Through the analysis in this chapter, I found that there were both commonalities and some critical differences in the two case studies. Both NGOs adopted the participatory training proposed by the training organisations. To facilitate the training and enhancing the participants' learning, both organisations provided their own resources, such as female staff, to create a gender sensitive environment, where the gender difference between the participants and the video trainers was considered. Hence, there was an effort towards enhancing the participants' learning and capabilities.

I have also shown that the video trainers had an important role in ensuring a participatory approach and they negotiated with the training organisations and the NGOs to ensure effective participation. However, due to their less powerful position within the institutional setup, they were often pressured to produce outputs as pre-determined by the donor agencies, the training organisations and the organisations.

The analysis emphasised that the training design at both NGOs provided the young women with skills that built their confidence. However, the training design did not necessarily consider participants' need for skills-building, but mostly on conducting training modules that could help achieve the project outputs. It was revealed that the dependency of the organisations on external funds could create situations where the participants become the means to produce the video outputs. Young women's participation can also become dependent on the decisions taken by the organisation on their skilfulness. This was seen to have a visible negative effect on the participants and the process. However, I found that different organisations may see their responsibilities differently, and while some may commit to work towards fulfilling participants' needs,

others may maintain focus on participants' performance towards meeting project objectives.

While looking at the video-making phase, I found that though young women's representation of their image on camera can build their agency, it was not without complexities. While PV aims to bring out the reality of the participants' lives, the data discussed showed that representing their aspirations is equally important for the participants. Further, young women may resist and accept gender norms simultaneously due to the complex social and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, there is a threat that other actors might impose their values on what they deem as appropriate representation on camera.

Domination by other actors emerged as a concern, when participants wanted to raise their issues in the videos. Identifying community problems and raising gender issues, which were earlier not spoken about openly, could promote the young women participants' agency. However, if the organisations controlled this process, it could suppress the participants' freedom to bring up issues they feel are important to them. It was also found that what the organisation does to guide the participants, can be perceived by the participants as control, which adds to the complexity in maintaining the participatory nature of the project. This is because the participants' can see the guidance of the organisation as interference and control over their freedom.

Lastly, I found that the nature of video is such that often a good quality video product becomes the focus of the organisations in the overall process. If the donors, the training organisations and the organisations insist on producing good quality videos, it can suppress participants' understanding of themselves as agents of change because

they start focusing on the quality of video rather than the change that the video can create. However, sometimes the participants themselves may want to produce higher quality of videos, in order to reach out to a wider audience.

Throughout the chapter, I have highlighted the influence that the donors, training organisations and the NGOs' approach can have on the participants' agency-development. It demonstrates that though the process during this phase offers opportunities to participants to build their agency, it is each organisation's consideration of the participants' needs, its ability to override funding dependency and control over the participants or absence thereof, which can either promote or restrict agency. The hierarchical power relations within the project, therefore, can be seen as key in determining the effects on the participants' agency, as the participants try to challenge the gender norms in their community through skill-building, self-representation and addressing issues.

Table 9 is based on the data discussed in this chapter. It shows the difference in the perspectives of the organisation and the participants during the phase of training and video-making.

Table 9: Building agency – From the Organisation and Participants' perspective

Project Phase	Organisations' Perspective	Participants' perspective
Training	Creating a gender sensitive environment	Enhanced learning experience
Training	Including participants' learning needs	Gaining valued video-making and critical thinking skills for negotiating gender power relations Gaining valued skills which can help in gaining better livelihood
Training	Commitment to improve participants' skills-level	Increasing their skills-level to match more professional standards
Video-making	Ensuring participants' control over their representation	Ability to decide whether to appear on camera or not Ability to decide on representing their reality or aspirations or both
Video-making	Understanding complex social cultural context of the participants	Ability to represent the complexities of their identity on camera
Video-making	Ensuring freedom to choose issues to be raised in the videos	Ability to reflect on issues critical to them Ability to raise issues they feel are important
Video-making	Flexibility on quality of videos	Create more impactful videos than focus on quality Desire to make better quality videos to reach out to a wider audience

6. EXPRESSING AGENCY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The last chapter focused on the training and video-making phase of the two long-term PV projects, and its potential to build participants' agency. The data analysis showed that there are several complexities in trying to maintain a truly participatory approach during this phase, given the hierarchical set-up of the projects, which affects participants' agency-development. In this chapter, I move on to exploring the phase during which the participants may have the opportunity to express their agency – communicating their perspectives and initiating change.

In Section 6.2, I first explore how participants communicate their perspectives through the videos they produce. The videos can become a medium for the participants to talk about why they need change and what change they want in the situations around them. I look at the videos produced by them to understand how they present the issues in the community. In particular, I analyse how their resistance of gender norms is communicated through their videos. This section concludes with an analysis of the problematic aspects that surface when participants want to present their perspectives on social issues.

In the next section, I look at the effect that engaging with communities has on the participants' expression of agency. This engagement includes screenings and dialogues with community members. Through this investigation, I address the complexities that arise while establishing a relationship of trust with community

members. I also focus on how having a relationship of trust is related to the participants' expression of agency.

Participants' own understanding of their ability to initiate change can be crucial for them to feel like agents of change. Section 6.4 details the changes initiated through the process that donor agencies and organisations may see as more 'visible' and 'tangible'. I then present certain examples, in which the videos were used for advocacy with the local government to bring developmental changes. I also discuss how participants can be enabled to engage with social change in a continual manner.

In conclusion, I describe how this phase of the process can lead the participants to feel that they can express their agency through communicating their perspective, holding dialogues and creating impacts.

6.2 COMMUNICATING PERSPECTIVES THROUGH VIDEO

The PV process, followed in the two projects studied in this research, provided the participants the opportunity to share their views, both through screenings of the videos and post-screening discussions. It involved holding screenings with community members, usually in spaces such as common open space in the community, community centre, schools, organisation's office or even in the community members' home. These screenings were followed by discussion on the issue raised in the videos. This whole process was done to allow the participants to convey their perspectives on various issues and the kind of changes they wanted with regards to them. In this section, I focus the discussion particularly on the videos themselves and the messages that were communicated through them.

I had discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.2) that participants started thinking critically about their situation of oppression and built their knowledge on gender issues after they joined the project. In Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.1), the data demonstrated that when the participants' agency was promoted, they started asserting their identity as young women and showed that they wanted social change by raising critical gender and community issues (Section 5.3.2). In this section, I will discuss how the participants expressed their resistance by demonstrating why certain gender norms needed to be broken down and the kind of transformations they wanted to see in the gender relations between men and women. I base my analysis on Kabeer (1999) and Wilson's (2008) suggestion that agency can take the form of resistance to prevalent social/cultural norm – in this case, the gender norms.

The participants communicated two things through their videos: i) the oppression women are subjugated to and why such oppression is not acceptable, ii) powerful images of women who had broken certain gender stereotypes and therefore, destabilised the gender power relations around them to some extent.

Through this section, I also address the gap that there has not been much analysis of influence that other powerful actors exert on the participants' ability to communicate their own perspective (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.5).

6.2.1 Communicating Resistance

The relationship between power and resistance has been a central focus in social sciences for a long time. Foucault (1978) stated that where there is power, there is

resistance, and scholars such as Abu-Lughod (1990) and Agarwal (1997) suggest that there are various forms of resistance which women use against existing gender power relations. Abu-Lughod (1990, p.43) talks about "*minor defiances of restrictions enforced*" upon women, such as colluding to hide knowledge from men and secret trips to family, or another form, when they resist marrying, or singing folklores making fun of men and manhood. Agarwal (1997, p.24) explains 'everyday resistance' that are covert, such as women secretly trying to earn some cash which they can control. Wilson (2008) discusses about women participating in movements and marches, which are overt resistances and openly challenge practices which symbolise and reinforce gender.

Further, Abu-Lughod (1990) argues that resistance should be used as a diagnostic of power, which can help in studying its changing dynamics. Drawing from this, below I analyse the young women participants' resistance by discussing certain relevant videos and explore how they expressed their agency through those and impacted gender power relations.

*Jor Se Bol*¹⁰ is the title of the video made by Akshara's participants on street sexual harassment (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/1aTmxqf>). The title itself indicates an act of resistance, asking women to shout aloud against harassment. The video starts with several young women sharing their experiences of street sexual harassment. There are also interviews of young men who perpetrated such harassment, where they talk about why they harass women. The interviews exhibit that these young men feel that they have power over young women and that they can impose their moral authority on

¹⁰ Literal Translation from Hindi - Shout Aloud.

them. The video also shows how their own families blame women for harassment and restrict their mobility further. In interviews, young women condemn the power structures which allow men to harass them. Further, the women negate men's claims of moral authority, stating that men simply want to dominate them. The film ends with several men and women asking men to stop sexual harassment (O1, SV10).

The above discussed video became a medium to share the young women's perspectives on gender power relations and their manifestation in the form of sexual harassment. The issue of sexual harassment, which is often understood as harmless fun and 'teasing' by men, was openly confronted as a serious offence in the video. Through the video the participants could show their resistance, stressing that such harassment could not be tolerated, and exhibited that women wanted to change the nature of power the men were proclaiming for themselves. Yashodhara, a participant from Akshara, talked about how this video became a medium to communicate resistance:

"Girls say that they have been sexually harassed in public, but they cannot say that at home, or even go to a police station. Girls want to share a lot, but there is no space for it. They always think, 'whom should I talk to?' When I was researching and shooting for this video, and I would have discussion with girls then they would cry. They had kept this within themselves for a very long time. This video gave them the space to say their point of view, that sexual harassment is unacceptable."
Yashodhara, Participant, Akshara (O1, I3)

One of Apna TV's videos, *Soch Sahi Mard Wahi*¹¹, questioned the notions of masculinity (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/18mDZig>). It discusses the use of sexist swear words, understanding of household work responsibilities and the masculine body image as different aspects of masculinity. This video directly addresses how men act in a patriarchal society, and how being a man is often about subjugating women in various ways. The video became a medium to resist the manifestations of a patriarchal system in daily life, where women and their work are demeaned. It condemns those acts, resists popular understanding of manhood and questions if being a man should necessarily mean oppressing women (O1, SV6).

While the above videos mainly tackled power relations as exhibited in public spaces, the videos made at Mahita mostly addressed power relations in the household space. In Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.1), I discussed intra-household inequality and gender power imbalances within the household – often presumed as a unit where everyone has similar interests (Iversen 2003). Ways of resistance, including those against power imbalances within the household, have been recognised in the literature (Abu-Lughod 1990; Agarwal 1997). Here, I focus on how the videos made in Mahita were a way of demonstrating the same.

The video titled *Mera Bhi Sapna Hai*¹², questioned the distribution of resources within the household (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/13AiNA0>). As I mentioned earlier, access to resources is closely related to the well-being and agency that people may have. Kabeer (1999) discusses that often, the power structures determine who has access to resources and who determines their distribution. She argues that it is usually women

¹¹ Literal Translation from Hindi - Right Outlook Makes a Right Man.

¹² Literal translation from Hindi - I Have a Dream Too.

who have secondary claims to resources within their family. Similarly, this video exhibits how a girl gets less food than her male siblings, how her usage of her time is controlled by other family members and how she has limited or no access to education. It shows how limiting her resources are justified by family members as compliance to existing gender norms (O2, SV17).

While the above video ended with depicting the girl being allowed to complete her studies, and the household being maintained as a unit, another video, *My Dreams*, based on one of the participants' own life, showed her forgoing her household unit for her future (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/111Nf9z>). In her attempt to be independent, she negotiates with her parents and elder brother to allow her to pursue a full-time job. Her parents agree but her brother continues dissenting and despite his disagreement, she starts the job. At the end of the film, she is shown to be extremely happy with her decision (O2, SV28). A participant reflected on the situation around them, sharing her perspective:

"In most homes here, the boy studies more than the girl. She studies till the 10th standard and that's enough...and she is married off after that. They don't think that a girl has a life too, and can do something (a job) if she studies further. Is having a girl a problem? Is she a burden? We do have our own world and life." Yasmeen, Participant, Mahita (O2, 18)

This participant questions gender power relations, which deem girls as not being 'valuable' enough to be given access to further education. She also emphasises the resistance and puts forth young women as individuals, rather than just being a nominal part of the household unit.

Some of the participants at both research sites said that they felt 'strengthened' by their experience of making such videos (O1, D1; O2, D2). The data here showed that the videos in the two projects communicated the participants' resistance of gender power relations as exhibited in both public and household spaces. Using videos as a medium, which were screened with the community members, the participants could express that gender power relations needed to be changed in their local situations. Their resistance of the control men have over women could be seen as an expression of their agency because they wanted to gain more power and ultimately, control over their own lives.

Building on the arguments of Abu-Lughod (1990), Agarwal (1997), Kabeer (1999) and Wilson (2008), I suggest that long-term PV projects can offer the opportunity to women to express their agency in various forms of resistance through the videos they make. The various forms of resistance can be open condemnation (e.g., of sexual harassment), arguments (e.g., on what comprises manhood), complaints (e.g., against unequal distribution of resources in the household) and defiance (e.g., by pursuing a career),

Next, I discuss the kind of transformations in gender power relations that the participants demonstrated they needed.

6.2.2 Transforming Gender Relations

Other videos produced in the two PV projects featured examples of how some women had already destabilised the gender power relations to some extent in certain aspects of their life. Supporting the visible acts of these women having transformed certain gender norms also showed the kind of social change the participants wanted.

Many of Akshara's videos included real-life stories of women who defied gender stereotypes in different ways. One of the videos captured the story of a woman auto-rickshaw driver in Mumbai (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/18pPx86>). She works in a profession that is seen as a man's domain, and is therefore, a rarity. Moreover, she is shown 'hanging out' in public spaces dominated by men, wearing a man's uniform, and therefore, not performing her 'ascribed' gender role. The woman asserts that she is respected and that she has been able to build her monetary resources through this profession. She also says that she is proud of being a woman, which reinforces her gender identity (O1, SV7).

Another video, with the story of a women cricket player, similarly showed her breaking gender stereotypes regarding image and work (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/1bL94P4>). She plays the sport professionally, which is seen as unusual for women in the local community (O1, SV13).

"We were saying that girls should also come out and play in the grounds... If you go to Chunabhatti¹³, there is a big ground there. If you go on Sunday you will find it full with boys. But there is no ground where you will find both girls and boys playing; in a common ground. We are not there. We are not seen. So, we showed a girl cricketer's story in our video to say that girls can play and even undertake sports as a profession." Yashodhara, Participant, Akshara (O1, I3)

In another, the participants covered the story of a man who shares the household work with his wife equally, and rejects the popular masculine image (Online Video link:

¹³ An area in Mumbai

<http://bit.ly/1dGVsCM>). The video highlighted that people often tend to subscribe to notions about gender roles and norms, as they seek acceptance in their community and the larger society. However, these videos exhibited that there can be a 'better world', if the gender norms that establish the hierarchy between a man and a woman are broken down, and gender relations are transformed.

Similarly, at Mahita, some of the videos were stories of women who had challenged and transformed gender power relations. One video was on the issue of female foeticide (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/12yDvRS>). It was a fictionalised account, which showed a woman being pressured by her mother-in-law to abort her female child, who decided to inform the police to save her child. Given the traditional gender relations, the woman could not have resisted her mother-in-law's decision, which endorsed the gendered practice of selective abortion. However, in the end, she uses her agency and shows that she has the power to take the right decision. Further, the video also discarded the prevalent idea of a household as a unit, where family members have similar interests (O2, SV18).

"There was a case in our basti regarding foeticide. A woman had given birth to a girl. No one around knew it. The grandmother took the baby and threw it in the garbage bin. The committee members of Mahita got a whiff of this, saved the baby and also got hold of the grandmother. Because this has happened, we decided to make a film on this issue and show it in bastis. Through our film we wanted to tell women to stand up against such acts where family members pressurise them to abort the baby or kill the new-born." Masiya, Community Organiser, Mahita (O2, 16)

A few videos produced in Mahita were on stories of the young women participants themselves. Where the videos discussed above showed how other women had transformed gender power relations in their favour, these videos communicated how the participants changed power relations at the household level. One such video on a Mahita participant showcased how she got some vocational training and is now qualified to get a job through which she can support her family. She challenges the gender stereotypes around women and technology, with several shots of her working on the computer, emphasising that she can also generate her own monetary resources.

"There were financial troubles at my home, so I could not study further than 10th standard. I had thought I will just stay at home. Then I said, no. I thought I can learn something. I joined Computer training. I did MS Office and DTP. I then started giving trainings to girls and earning some money. Then I got to know about the video training. I thought that I have got so much from Mahita, let me learn some more. I am also supporting my family financially now." Shaker, Participant, Mahita (O2, I11)

In all the above-discussed videos, the message expressed was that women could change gender power relations, and gain more power to lead the kind of life they wanted to. The participants could express their own agency by supporting such examples of such women, and by narrating their own stories of change. The resistance to gender norms (as explored in the above section), was furthered in the participants' expressions of transformed gender power relations. Hence, I argue that the process of communicating their perspective through the videos enabled the participants to express their agency. However, during this process, there were also

certain conflicts which arose and could have limited the participants' expression. I move on to the next section to discuss this.

6.2.3 Conflicts while communicating perspective

The above discussion posited video as a medium to communicate participants' perspectives. However, organisations can also perceive a video as a 'product' that includes messages that can play an essential role in furthering their PV process, if the messages are designed to initiate community action and advocacy.

In the two projects studied here, disseminating messages through video screenings to the local community had been an integral part of the process. The organisations also planned on initiating local social action following the video screenings through campaigns, rallies and so on. A dichotomy emerges between the two forms of videos – one, a medium for expression; two, a product that disseminates messages. I had demonstrated in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.3) that video may take precedence as a product during its making, and that may decide which form of video takes precedence during this phase.

As noted in Chapter 2 (Section 2.5.5), some such as Bery (2003) assert that participants in a PV process talk about issues and solutions in ways that are more appropriate to their context and situation. However, I found that there might be differences between the various actors in what they considered appropriate. For instance, the video *Soch Sahi Mard Wahi*, made in Akshara, which had a part about men using sexist swear words, disseminated the message that swear words reflect a patriarchal society. It also showed the negative impact on the society by way of

children learning to use such words, which perpetuates the patriarchal mind-set. These words were used in the video by the interviewees and actors (Online Video link: <http://bit.ly/18mDZig>). The trainer said that the organisation felt that showing this in public and community screenings might instead encourage their use:

"We used to show the final edit to the whole NGO. When NGO staff would say, change this shot... like when I talked about the masculinity film, the NGO staff said that audience would focus on the swearing. They became judgemental. If they argue that people will retain the swear words, then they will also retain the message of the film somewhere. There is a danger, but that would always be there. If you pick up things like this, then there will be a problem in sending a message on any social issue." Anmol Dharmadhikari, Video Trainer, Akshara (O1, I4)

This demonstrates how the process of communicating perspectives through videos becomes complex, and what can be considered appropriate to local contexts may also become contestable. This became a limitation for the video as a product to be distributed. It was then shown only at private screenings and distributed through film clubs and NGOs, which effectively eliminated any positive impact it might have had on local communities.

Further, when the video as a product gains priority, then organisations who build community action plans or advocacy campaigns may want to control what is communicated and how. Sometimes it may not be simply domination by the organisation, but also a need to ensure a clear and strong message for powerful campaigns. As discussed in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.2), participants might not have developed their critical thinking to a level where they could independently put across strong and impactful messages through their videos, requiring the organisations to

'step in'. As the data demonstrated here, this conflict also emerges because of the dual purpose that video can fulfil, which do not always complement each other: i) it can be used for enabling participants to communicate their perspective and express their agency, ii) it can be used to trigger local social change in the community on particular issues.

I did not find any instance at Mahita in which there was a disagreement between the organisation and the participants on what is an appropriate message to communicate. This could have happened because of three reasons. First, as I detailed in Chapter 5, (Section 5.3.2; Section 5.3.3) the organisation was more focused on the participants' learning through video-making. Video as a product was not given much importance by the organisation and therefore, it did not affect this phase either. The Programme Manager at Mahita stated:

"I was in Delhi once and had screened one of our films in the Press Club. I asked for feedback and people said light is not good, camera is not good, this angle, that angle...I said the process is important. The girls understand issues very well and put all the elements in the story. That is important for me." Ramesh Reddy, Programme Manager, Mahita (O2, 114)

Second, the organisation had not planned and designed specific community action plans or advocacy campaigns based on the videos. Therefore, it never felt the need to have a stronger messaging and communication. Third, a situation like Akshara never arose in Mahita, where there could have been a disagreement between the organisation and the participants.

From the discussion here, I argue that the precedence of video as a product can have impacts in this phase too, especially, if the product was the particular focus of the organisation during the earlier phases of PV. Further, using videos to disseminate messages and planning further action based on it, can lead the organisations to determine what is communicated and how. Therefore, the participants' expressions of their agency may be suppressed in these cases, because of the organisation being the more powerful actor, who directs what purpose the video may be used for.

6.3 WORKING WITH COMMUNITY

The critical literature review in Chapter 2 (Section 2.5.5) demonstrated that screenings aim to initiate a process of reflection and action with local communities, supported by discussions that follow (Lunch 2006; Huber 1998). It has been noted by scholars that watching videos together can initiate a critical awareness (White 2003) and can be used to bring about change (Okahashi 2000). While the literature mainly focuses on what happens after videos are screened, I investigate how a collective is formed first with non-homogenous communities to initiate reflection and hold dialogues. This responds to the gap found in Chapter 2 (Section 2.5.5) that scholars present 'collective' reflection and action almost as obvious outcomes of dialogue. It is not acknowledged that a 'collective', where everyone has similar needs or perspectives, might not naturally exist in a community. This can especially be the case when it is recognised that communities are usually non-homogenous (Guijt and Kaul Shah 1998). In such a case, for the dialogue to be successful, it needs to build mutual trust first (Freire 1972).

6.3.1 Gaining Community Support

Both Akshara and Mahita had several meetings in the areas where they wanted to implement the PV project and talked about its purpose to gather support. Introductory videos (e.g., O1, SV5) were screened to help the community members understand what the participatory video was about. There was continuous engagement with the community during the search for issues, in the form of finding stories from the community, shooting videos and conducting screenings. Eventually, the participants started receiving tremendous support. At Mahita, where the participants had faced harassment from several community members earlier, increasingly got community support. There was a marked change in the participants' relationship with the community, as the quote below demonstrates:

"Now, when we go around they greet us and say, 'Hey, those Videowale¹⁴ have come.' Earlier they would say, 'These girls have no work and they move around with cameras wearing burqas, as if they've become big reporters'." Masiya, Community Organiser, Mahita (O2, I6)

The participants from both organisations felt that there was a substantial change in the attitude of community members towards them because of the video screenings. They felt the respect for them grew when the community members saw the issues that were being dealt with (O1, I1; O1, I3; O1, V2; O2, I6; O2, G8). The community members were eager to help them with the set-up, called more people to see the videos, prepared screening spaces and asked for more videos. One participant from Akshara said:

¹⁴ Literal Translation from Hindi - Video people.

"For us, it was a good response when people said, 'Madam, when will you come again for the screening?' People, who were more than my father's age, used to say, 'Madam, come. Madam, sit... Madam, what will you have? Madam, can you arrange for a screening here?'" Rohina, Participant, Akshara (O1, I2)

The screenings acted as a public sphere, allowing both men and women to discuss community issues with a gender perspective (O1, I1). Particularly, the participants felt that the screenings of videos and the ensuing discussions provided an opportunity for women to openly discuss their problems. Several participants said that during the screenings many women would speak up saying that they face similar things (O1, D1; O2, D2).

The engagement with the community helped the participants to assume leader-like positions, where they could support other women, and even men in understanding gender issues, and possibly motivating them to bring about change. In addition, the community saw value in what the participants were doing, and this recognition placed the participants in a more powerful position in the society. This reflects in the quotes below:

"People's point of view towards me has changed - they see me as a problem-solver now." Samata, Participant, Akshara (O1, I1)

"People are changing and their perspective towards us is changing. They know we can make videos and help them solve issues." Shakera, Participant, Mahita (O2, I11)

At Mahita, as the participants' relationship grew stronger with more screenings, they had community members coming up to them, asking for specific issues to be covered, such as poor sanitation facilities or lack of government school in the locality. They spoke about the problems happening in the community, and wanted videos to be made on those, as the statement below reveals:

"People would say, come with us, we will tell you about another issue. More and more people kept coming; not to say, 'leave', but to say, 'come with us'... people have understood that we are not doing anything wrong, but that we want to show what is going wrong." Amreen, Participant, Mahita (O2, 19)

The response of the community members and the forging of stronger relations with them enhanced the participants' understanding of their ability to mobilise communities on local issues. Frediani (2010, p.176) states that, *"Freedom is understood as a concept comprising components of both well-being and agency. Well-being freedom is concerned with objectives that a person values for his/her well-being. Agency is concerned with the individual's freedom to choose and bring about the things that he/she values"*. Agency freedom, therefore, includes acts which are not just about the agents' own well-being, but those of others (Sen 1993). Stewart (2005) also suggests that it is important to include groups in the analysis of well-being, because they are often a direct source of it. Well-being of a person may be enhanced by being a part of a group or by how well their group is doing (ibid). The Mahita participants' engagement with their community meant that their well-being and agency freedom was being furthered, as they worked with the community to trigger change on issues such as infrastructure in the slums and education of girls.

In her interpretation of agency, Kabeer (1999) states that agency encompasses meaning, motivation and purpose, which individuals bring to their activity. The Programme Director at Mahita stated that once the funded period ended and the screenings began, the participants from Mahita began building relationships with the community (O2, I14). The increasing support and response from the public gave them motivation to continue their work, which also started promoting their agency (O2, G8).

Akshara, on the other hand, stopped the PV projects in the slum communities, after 3 years of starting it. All the participants held the belief that the work with the slums should not have stopped. They lived in the same communities and said that several people still asked them, why the work had stopped. They felt that they had let down the same people who trusted them and their own 'image' suffered (O1, V2). Along with the feeling that they were not able to work for the communities, their sense of purpose and motivation was taken away from them, and so their agency freedom, i.e. acts for others' well-being (Frediani 2010), stood questioned.

What my data shows is that both Akshara and Mahita needed to build a relationship of trust with communities to start working with them on the PV projects. Engaging with the communities directly to know about their issues, shooting with them and holding discussions with them, was important for the participants to find support for their work. For the participants, it was crucial to not just gain technical skills for themselves or to make videos, but also to bring about changes in their communities. In the cases studied, the engagement with the communities, once initiated, became essential for promoting participants' agency further. This data confirms Stewart's (2005) argument that well-being of their group, i.e. their community, was important for the participants.

Furthermore, my research suggests that enhancing the well-being of their community can become a motivation and a means for the participants to express their agency.

6.3.2 Having a Dialogue

In Chapter 2 (Section 2.5.2), I had stated that Paulo Freire has been a key figure in furthering participatory approaches towards development, and those adopting PV acknowledge that the PV process embodies several concepts put forth by him. Dialogue is one of the central concepts in Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1972) that has been adopted in several PV processes. In his view, the oppressed have the potential to transform their world, or in other words, the agency to overcome oppression. He suggested that dialogue is a key in overcoming oppression, where the oppressed and the oppressor engage critically with the situation. He also defined what a true dialogue should have, such as openness, belief in change and critical thinking (ibid). He also states, "*Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking*" (1972, p.92).

Drawing from his work, having dialogue can be understood as key to the agency of the participants. Further, it has the potential to engage the community members in critical thinking on issues brought forward. Negotiation through dialogue is also considered a form of agency (Asherman and Asherman, 2001). The quote below shows an example of how participants held discussions with the community, attempting to initiate critical thinking:

"In colleges, when we had discussions after the screenings, we would ask, 'if a girl is wearing short clothes, does that (getting harassed)

become her fault? If you say, she was harassed because of that, then why are those in a burqa also harassed? What answer do you have?' We asked different questions on such notions and sought answers from the audience." Samata, Participant, Akshara (O1, I1)

In both projects, the participants themselves were involved in holding discussions with the community members. It started a process of negotiation, where the participants could explain their perspectives and get the views of the community. Participants from Mahita reported that during discussions, sometimes people also questioned their perspectives and presented counter-arguments. They contended that such dialogue was useful because they had engaged the community in thinking about the issue (O2, G8).

It was discussed earlier in Section 6.2.2 that participants at Mahita presented their own stories in the videos. They were establishing themselves as individuals, who had taken 'actions' as an expression of their agency. Mahita participants took a position of being agents of change during the discussions too, as the statement below demonstrates:

"After we screen films and hold discussions, people would sometimes say that it will be a problem if girls begin to work outside home, because they will get harassed. We sometimes talk about ourselves as examples. Why should we talk about someone else? We say that we are young, and we go outside our homes and work, something bad can happen to us too. Still, if we stay at home being fearful, it means we will always live in fear. This has to change." Amreen, Participant, Mahita (O2, I9)

The participants' understanding at both Akshara and Mahita was that dialogue has the potential to bring changes in the attitude of the community members, even though such

changes might not be immediately clear or visible. What the data reveals is in concurrence with Freire's belief in dialogue to bring about transformation. One participant remarked:

"We are doing work which makes people think about the issues and ask questions. And that is the beginning of change...that is change by itself."
Samata, Participant, Akshara (O2, I1)

In their interviews and group discussions, the participants claimed that dialogue encouraged people to look at things from a different perspective, understand the problems and look for ways to solve them. It started a process of reflection that holding a dialogue does, as many scholars have also argued (White, 2003; Braden, 1998). Based on my data, I argue that having a dialogue can become a way for young women participants to make their voice heard directly to the community members and, therefore, express their agency during this phase of the process. Furthermore, dialogue during the PV process that initiates critical reflection, becomes a step in establishing the participants as agents of social change.

6.3.3 Maintaining Trust

The data discussed in the earlier two sections revealed that the PV processes required establishing a relationship of trust with people, even when the participants belonged to the same community. In Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.3), I discussed how some gatekeepers at Mahita mistrusted the intentions of the organisation and opposed the PV project initially. There was even some hostility, like in the case of Akshara, where this distrust and hostility sometimes emerged from the urban slum communities' fear of eviction from their slums or harassment from the local authorities, if they spoke about

government apathy towards their issues. It was essential to build trust and collectivise the communities first, before there could be a dialogue on development issues and the need to work on them.

The Akshara participants felt that maintaining trust required a continued engagement (O1, V2). As discussed in Section 6.3.1, Akshara stopped its work with the slum communities, where some of the participants belonged to, which made the participants concerned about having broken the trusting relationships they had already established. They feared that their intentions of bringing local social change were now in question, since they did not 'keep their word'. Freire (1972, p.91) cautions against the same, when he says, "*Trust is contingent on the evidence which one party provides the others of his true, concrete intentions; it cannot exist if that party's words do not coincide with their actions.*"

The participants at Akshara repeatedly emphasised that there should have been a continued relationship with the community. Their sense of 'power within' to bring change suffered when they realised that they could not establish a successful dialogue with the community members anymore. The agency, which they had been able to express earlier, was now limited. At Mahita, on the other hand, the continued engagement with the communities and building a collective of community members who supported their work, increased the participants' sense of agency.

Based on the data presented here, I argue that a continuous engagement with the local community was essential for the organisations to build a relationship of trust, and collectivise the community. Such engagement and dialogue presented the potential to allow for the expression of agency. However, if both engagement and dialogue are

reduced or terminated, it might limit participants' expression of agency in the community they are motivated to work for.

In the next section, I turn towards analysing the changes that the participants were able to initiate. I investigate the 'community actions' taken after the community members were mobilised on a particular issue, and the advocacy work done at the level of the local government to bring changes. This will help in analysing the participants' expression of agency in the form of initiating local social change, and participating in matters that affect their communities.

6.4 INITIATING CHANGE

"The aim of our work is to make films, show them to people and create awareness through this medium. I feel that after we show the film to people, take up the issue, it should reach an end. Like we showed the toilet film...and in few places, there was an impact as well. The basti did not have a toilet, but after showing our film, they got one. This is the way in which there should be an impact of the (video) magazines." Sandhya, Participant, Akshara (O1, V2)

The above quote indicates that the participants placed emphasis on the need for the videos to be able to initiate change. They felt the need to create impacts through their videos, which highlights that their sense of agency was closely related to it. In this section, I explore the relationship between initiating change and the participants' agency. I focus on exploring how making impacts is linked to the resources that

organisations provide to address the other gap highlighted in Chapter 2 (Section 2.5.6), concerning whether the participants initiate community action and advocacy themselves, or if they need support from the organisation to be able to do so.

I noted that the participants at both organisations used the word 'impact' to define initiation of change (O1, D1; O2, D2), which I have incorporated in my writing. Participants' sense of agency was largely affected by what the donors and organisations considered as impact, which was often visible, tangible and measurable. It also highlights that in the current development context, it is visible action that is considered an indication of agency (see Hilsdon 2007). Though, as stated in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.3), this research does not limit itself to this view of agency and consequently, has explored agency in its various forms.

I observed that the participants had a sense of uncertainty when they talked about initiating change (O1, D1; O2, D2). The uncertainty was because of the ambiguity in what can be considered change. Many of them said that the changes that occurred in the local community, as a result of their work, were often intangible. Although such changes were very difficult to understand, assess and measure by the donor or the organisation, personally, the participants felt certain that some of those intangible changes were a result of their work. On the other hand, they shared those instances with me confidently when there was visible change in the form of action by the community members or the local government officials.

I discuss a few specific examples, where impacts could be seen at both the local community and the governance level, while also bringing the intangible ones to notice.

6.4.1 Community Action

There have been some examples of PV projects where the community members have decided to work collectively and take action on local social issues after the video screenings and discussions were held (e.g., Molony, et al. 2007; Plush 2009b). The experiences at both Akshara and Mahita confirmed that dialogue through the screenings could lead to community mobilisation and community action. In this research, I have used the term 'community action' as action taken by community members, both individually and collectively. Community members worked at both a personal level, by changing their own behaviour and at the community level, by engaging in action to effect local social change. This use of the term community action also helped to capture the more intangible forms of change, such as attitude and behaviour changes.

The participants at Akshara shared experiences of community action at the individual level, where they had felt the community members changed their attitude after the screening of their film *Jor Se Bol*. One participant said that boys in the audience would call her up after the screening of the video on street sexual harassment to say that they realised this was a serious issue, and vowed to stop harassing girls. She felt that such personal changes, which her work was able to bring about, could contribute towards a bigger change in the society (O1, I1). Similarly, at Mahita, all the respondents noted that they saw the attitudes of several parents change over time. They said that after the screening of their videos, which showed girls and young women pursuing their education or having a job, parents often got inspired and said that they also wanted their daughters to complete their education. They felt that such videos were triggering noticeable change, even if it was difficult to attribute it directly to the videos (O2, G8).

Data also revealed that in some cases the changes in attitude could be further encouraged by the organisation's grassroots work. At Mahita, the organisation's grassroots workers continuously engaged with parents on the issue of girls' education. The organisation started running classes for girls who had dropped out of school (O2, I13). After being triggered by the videos, the changed thinking and new perspectives of the community members were turned into action, when they enrolled their girls for the classes.

There are certain kinds of issues that ask for collective community action. Collective action has been understood as a core practice to effect social change (Sierra, 2007). Stewart (2005) proposes that certain groups, such as the poor, can achieve much more if they undertake collective action. Evans (2002) too contends that for the less privileged, attaining development as freedom requires collective action. The Akshara participants discussed how they needed collective community action to create impacts, following the screening of the video on public utilities in slums. They mobilised community members from a slum and organised them as a collective, to lobby with their MLA to build toilets there. This required extensive time-consuming work at the grassroots level on the part of the participants.

"We fought for everything, from arranging to meet the MLA to finding funds. Meeting the MLA took a week... then to collect signatures (on applications) from the community members took another week. After all of this, we had to mobilize the community to send application letters for

building a toilet to the BMC¹⁵. Finally, a toilet was built there.”
Yashodhara, Participant, Akshara (O1, I3)

As the above example demonstrates, the community members started to get mobilised around their own issues and impacts were made, but it required extensive work. The interests of the donors, organisations and participants in bringing a tangible change often translated into an emphasis on providing opportunities for individual and collective action through the PV process. I found that this required a strong organisational support to ensure that communities could participate and take action.

At both Akshara and Mahita, attempts to bring about tangible changes involved incorporating and communicating a well-defined action plan, i.e. what steps the community members could take to resolve an issue. I found through some interviews conducted, that most of the videos that had some impact were supported by strong grassroots work and an action plan (e.g., O1, I1; O1, I4; O2, I6, O2, I11). However, in some cases actions could not be taken because of less support due to the organisation's limitations. This was the case at Akshara, because it was not strictly a grassroots organisation and did not have the human resources to ensure community mobilization and action. Though Akshara networked with other local grassroots organisations for following-up on community action, a participant noted that it was not an effective network:

“The organisation could have done the follow-up of issues, but it was not happening simultaneously. The human resource was not there to follow up. Akshara did not do much work with the communities even earlier. So it networked with local organisations. But the local organisations did not

¹⁵ Municipal Corporation of the city of Mumbai

support much and did not follow-up for actions. Maybe they did not understand their role well. Maybe there was some other politics. It could have worked better.” Yashodhara, Participant, Akshara (O1, I3)

I found that although the participants did put emphasis on resulting action from the videos, they were not necessarily involved in those actions. Mahita participants said that they screened the videos and held discussions, but it was the community workers and other project teams who did the follow-up work (O2, I6). In the Research Video, the participants at Akshara said that follow-up has to be done with the community after screenings to create impact, but since it was not possible for them to work on community action alongside making videos constantly, they expected the organisation to provide support for the grassroots work through other community workers (O1, V2). The participants' expression of agency was just not limited to bringing change through their own acts, but in ensuring that action was taken by the community members through continued engagement.

My findings suggest that for the participants, the meaningfulness of the PV process lies not only in making videos, holding screening and discussions, but that it incorporates community mobilisation, organisation and community action. Their understanding of being agents of change lies in creating impacts such as changing the community members' behaviour or organising them to lobby with government officials. Therefore, they express their agency not just by taking action themselves, but also in the form of enabling others to act. Furthering what Sen (2000) says about agency, I argue that while agency freedom of a person includes acting for the well-being of others, being an agent also includes empowering others to improve their lives. Ensuring community action and impacts, however, requires support from the organisations and therefore,

whether participants can become agents might be dependent on the resources that the respective organisation can provide.

6.4.2 Advocacy with Government

Bery (2003) suggests that if communities engage in advocacy, it empowers them and the producers of participatory video to take charge, seek alternatives and to take the responsibility for improving their lives. Sharing the videos with policy-makers was a defining feature of the Fogo process (Okahashi 2000), which has become a key component in many PV projects. In my research too, I found that videos were being screened not just within the community, but in certain instances were shared with government officials too. I now discuss some specific videos that were used by the organisations for advocacy purposes, primarily by showing them to the local government officials, which led to visible impacts.

The video entitled *Jor Se Bol*, produced by the participants at Akshara, dealt with the issue of street sexual harassment and was shared with the police. This video did have an impact at an individual level as discussed in Section 6.4.1. However, after brainstorming on how to address the issue, the participants felt that it needed to be done systemically at the societal level:

“When we were working on Call to Action (of Jor Se Bol), an important part of our films, we thought what should we say to people...that take this action? Should we say slap them (the abuser), give them lecture, abuse them? For a long time we deliberated about slapping, making a noise and getting people together. But then we felt that increases violence. We considered about what can be the other thing to do in this

situation. Then we thought whose work is it to control it? And it is the police... then we decided to involve the police and the idea for 103 helpline came about." Samata, Participant, Akshara (O1, I1)

The CVU team felt that the onus to stop sexual harassment lay with the government as well and not just on individual's change of behaviour. They felt that the issue of street sexual harassment was taken very lightly, since there was hardly any punitive action against it. As Hickey and Mohan (2004, p.12) argue, "...the locus of transformation must go beyond the individual and local and involve multi-scaled strategies that encompass the institutional and structural."

Jor Se Bol was integrated with Akshara's campaign against sexual harassment. As part of the campaign, the video was shared through organised screenings with several members of the Mumbai police. Through their campaign, they asked for a police helpline to be launched, which could help provide women with a way to alert the police quickly and directly, when they faced harassment or violence. With continuing efforts, a helpline was eventually launched. The reconceptualisation of participation and citizenship, as suggested by Gaventa (2004), asks for citizens to be recast as agents, who do not just cast votes and become 'invited participants' of development projects, but their participation becomes an expression of their agency for achieving their rights – something Akshara's extensive efforts contributed to.

The video, now a part of a larger campaign, promoted this helpline and urged women to dial the number, if they are sexually harassed. More than 22,000 complaints were lodged during the first month alone. The video gave an impetus to the campaign against sexual harassment and promoted women's right to be safe. For the participants

involved in this process, it was a very visible impact of their work. One participant said that this was one of her best experiences throughout the process:

"We even got to work with the police during that time. It was never expected that the film would reach such a level and lead to the launch of 103 helpline. Before this, one thing that used to nag me was that I make films but there is no quick action, there are no tangible results. Not anymore." Samata, Participant, Akshara (O1, I1)

At Mahita, a video on land grabbing of a government schools' site was used for lobbying with the local officials, to recover the land. The site, which was earmarked for constructing a school, had been taken over by some residents because it had been lying vacant for several years. The participants recorded interviews with several community members in the area, which showed that several children, particularly girls, were not sent to school as it was very far away. They shared this video with the local community leader and raised the issue of right to education, and demanded that the government should get the land back to build a school for the local community:

"There was an empty land meant for government school in Kishanbag, but people had illegally occupied it. When we got to know, we made a film on it. The issue was not resolved with that. Then we made another film and asked the community people about the problems they faced because of a school not being there. We went with this video to the local leader, the corporator¹⁶ and finally got the MLA¹⁷ to get this problem solved." Shakera, Participant, Mahita (O2, I11)

¹⁶ local representative of the city corporation

¹⁷ Member of Legislative Assembly (Legislative assembly is the state assembly in India)

The community leader initially claimed ignorance, but interviewing him on video and creating sustained pressure, led him to promise support. The video was then shared with the local corporator and the MLA. The government eventually recovered the land and started the construction of the school immediately. The Mahita participants viewed this as a huge impact of their work.

Some scholars have argued that PV can help communities reach policy-makers, whom they usually cannot communicate with (e.g., Chowdhury, et al. 2010; Plush 2009a; Wheeler 2009). Cornwall (2004) suggests that 'transformative' participation requires a process that strengthens the possibilities of active citizen engagement, through which citizens can use and find their own voice to negotiate with the more powerful. These two instances confirmed that the young women participants could communicate and advocate on issues to the local officials through the use of PV, which also resulted in concrete actions being taken.

However, I found that advocacy with the government was not a 'guaranteed' outcome of the PV processes. There had to be a proper plan and expert support from the organisation, to help a video have maximum impact. For instance, *Jor se Bol* reached a high scale of distribution and impact, since Akshara used it as part of a city-wide campaign it was already running. Mahita's work focused on the right to education and school system in the slum communities, and it could therefore advocate building the school due to its expertise. Therefore, the expression of participants' agency can be dependent on factors such as organisational support, organisation's expertise and the donor/organisation's objectives. I explore this further in the following section.

6.4.3 Participants as agents of change

In the Capability Approach, Sen (2000) has said that resources are a means to enhance people's well-being, and the ability to convert the resources into capabilities depends on a variety of factors, including personal characteristics and social arrangements. Kabeer (1999) suggests that resources are not just material, but also include various social and human resources, which can enhance agency.

Extending the above suggestions to this research, I argue that organisations implementing long-term PV projects can offer resources to the participants that enhance their agency. In Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.2), it was seen that both the organisations addressed the issues emerging from the participants' gendered environment, and enabled them to participate in the project and build their capabilities. They provided resource in form of their staff, who negotiated with the community gatekeepers and household members to ensure the young women's participation. The stipend provided by the organisation was also such a resource that participants used to negotiate power relations at the household level, which enhanced their agency.

However, there were certain norms that were seen as extremely difficult to negotiate, even if an organisation provided support to the participants, for example those around marriage. Such norms threatened the young women participants' continuous engagement with social issues, and therefore, the ability to continue as agents of change. The Programme Manager at Mahita said that in the community the young women came from, working outside home after marriage was not acceptable, and all the current participants would have to leave the project once they got married (O2, I13). A respondent from Akshara suggested that young women have a time period of

three to four years as their resource, during which they can work outside their household space and 'prove themselves', or they have to accept the social norm of getting married and remaining within their household afterwards (O1, I3). Though participants break stereotypes, resist gender norms, trigger changes in their community through the PV process, continuing to be agents seemed a difficult proposition in the backdrop of such strict local gender norms.

Nevertheless, I gathered evidence that even if negotiating on norms around marriage was extremely difficult, the participants were willing to challenge those. Rohina from Akshara, shared her sentiment that she did not want to let her two years 'go waste', and wanted to achieve the change she desired (O1, I2). Samata, the participant from Akshara, reported that now she is not pressurised by her family to marry anytime soon (O1, I1). Amreen and Yasmeen from Mahita too shared that they have been able to convince their parents that they should marry at a later age (O2, I8; O2, I9). Yasmeen also hoped that after her marriage she would be able to convince her husband to let her continue working (O2, I9). Based on this data, I suggest that there is a possibility of circumventing stricter gender norms if the participants gain more access to resources and encouragement from the organisation, which might enable them to continue as agents of change.

However, the hierarchy within a long-term PV project may introduce complexities in whether participants can gain access to resources and whether they can convert those resources into actual capabilities. Discussions in Chapter 5 and 6 showed through the case of Akshara that the participants might feel that they are just the means to achieve the project's objectives. They might not be able to build their capabilities to the levels they want (Chapter 5, Section 5.2). Their motivation of working with communities, and

to have impacts at the local level might also suffer (Chapter 6, Section 6.3). In the hierarchical set-up, an organisation may control most of the resources. It has the power to restrict participants' access to it, including monetary resources (Chapter 5, Section 5.2.4), human resources, knowledge, expertise and networks (Chapter 6, Section 6.4.1 and 6.4.2).

While participants' agency-development has been found to be critically dependent on the resources that their organisation provides them, it is mainly the approach adopted by the organisation which influences whether it develops or restricts participants' agency. I also found that if participants feel the organisation is controlling them, they might consider any resource from the organisation, including monetary resources, as extraneous to their agency-development. The evidence is that two participants, out of the three remaining at Akshara, decided to quit the project following their discontentment with the organisation. Those two participants had the confidence to independently pursue their goal of improving their life (O1, D1). I argue that this decision might have been contingent on their understanding of their existing skills and the agency they had gained during their participation. This is supported by the finding that although towards the end, the participants at Akshara felt that they were no longer a part of decision-making processes, they contended that the training and skills-building, video-making and earlier engagement with communities had helped build their confidence to some extent (O1, I1; O1, I2; O1, D1).

I now return to Sen's (1993) argument that people differ in their capabilities to convert them into actual functionings, which is based on several factors including personal characteristics and environmental factors. In Akshara's case, the participants, who were extremely dependent on the resources from the organisation when they joined,

had gained enough confidence and skills personally, to consider pursuing their goals by accessing resources on their own, even if limited:

Samata: "Concept wise, it should be a group, which funds itself, which has that passion inside, so that it can manage to generate funds to be able to do that work... It should not be a NGO project... Instead, it should be my project, which I do for myself, not for the NGO."

Rohina: "Yes, this is a good idea, if few people with this passion come together..."

Sandhya: "It should be independent. I have my CVU and I work to make it successful."

However, in the same discussion as above (O1, PV2), the participants suggested that an organisation would always dominate the PV process and if participants have to pursue what they are motivated for, they need to gain more skills, be exposed to other networks which could support them, and have information on other training/learning opportunities that they could take up. They wanted that the PV process should be aimed at developing more personal attributes and providing a supportive environment to access more resources, using which they could eventually undertake initiatives independently and truly become agents of change.

While the two participants who had quit took up education and focused on their personal development (O1, D1), the opportunity to work for their communities was not immediately present. Their agency freedom, i.e. their ability to work towards the well-being of others was also limited in their current situation, and so was their agency achievement. This indicates that though the participants at Akshara had gained

confidence and their agency was built to a certain extent, further agency-development through the process stopped when their extent of participation and freedom was reduced substantially. It also shows that they still had the need to develop more capabilities to independently pursue social change, which they expressed, and offered ways for.

On the other hand, participants at Mahita, who perceived the organisation's approach as truly participatory, continued to work with the organisation. In this case, their agency-development continued along with the PV process and their confidence to do 'bigger' things in their community kept increasing. This was evident in the data collected during the focus group discussion that I held (O2, G8), where the participants emphasised that the entire team wanted to take their work ahead, tackle more complex issues and create further impact. Their agency-freedom was being furthered through the participatory approach adopted by the organisation, and their motivation through working with their communities was being promoted as well. Participants' belief in the process was exhibited, when they said in the same discussion that they wanted other young women from their community to be trained by the organisation, so that several groups doing PV were formed in the community to bring social change.

Based on the above discussion, I suggest that when young women's learning is not restricted to meeting the project outputs, and they are i) supported to challenge gender norms, ii) allowed to participate in decision-making, iii) given the freedom to choose and communicate their perspective, iv) allowed to pursue their motivation of working with communities and v) supported to create impacts, is when their agency achievement and the scope to continually engage with social change increases. Even if the approach does not remain participatory and these factors are not considered, the

level of skills and confidence that they gain might still allow them to pursue personal development. Nevertheless, in the absence of a participatory approach, the possibility of further agency-development through the process could diminish, and their scope to engage with social change may narrow down.

6.5 PARTICIPANTS' EXPRESSION OF THEIR AGENCY

In this chapter, I analysed the phase of the PV process during which participants communicate their perspectives through videos and dialogue, and work towards initiating change as an expression of their agency. There were several commonalities in the experience of the participants from the two organisations and there were a few dissimilarities as well. In the following section, I present the conclusions from the analysis.

6.5.1 Conclusions

This chapter started with exploring how participants communicate their perspectives in the videos they produced. Data suggests that the young women participants can resist gender norms using video as a medium. The videos produced by the participants of the two PV projects talked about power relations, as exhibited in both public and household spaces. For instance, acts such as sexual harassment in public spaces were displayed as attempts to subjugate women in a patriarchal society. Intra-household inequality was represented as an act of domination in denying women access to resources.

However, the discussion in Section 6.2.3 shows that other than being a medium to communicate perspectives, video could also acquire meaning as a product. Due to the emphasis by the organisation on using video as a product, there could be conflicts between what the participants want to communicate and what the organisation deems as appropriate for communication. In such a case, the organisation, being a more powerful actor, might want to determine what is being communicated, and if the video should be showed to communities at all. This may pose restrictions on participants' expression of agency.

While investigating the stage in which participants engage with communities, it was found that being able to engage with communities, having a dialogue, forming a relationship of trust and maintaining the relationship were of key significance to the participants. Conducting screenings in the local communities created support and motivation for the participants, and they felt that enabling reflection through dialogue, by itself, was a beginning of change.

I also found that engaging with community through screenings and dialogues are not unproblematic aspects. A collective might need to be built with the local communities, who might initially be wary or hostile towards the participants, to start a meaningful dialogue. Further, it was found that continuous engagement could be critical to ensure that the participants' sense of power within is promoted. Limiting engagement with the communities can limit the expression of their agency.

Following this, the analysis focused on the phase during which the participants initiate change through promoting community action and advocacy with the government. The data suggests that while the participants emphasise both tangible and intangible

changes, they may still be driven by what the donors/organisations understand as visible and measurable impacts. I included impacts on the community members' behaviour and attitudes at an individual level, which in some cases were turned into visible action. The other form of impact was collective action at the local level. It was found that producing impacts might need thorough planning and support from the respective organisations.

Further, it was seen at both research sites that the participants themselves were not necessarily involved directly with community action. It was often the NGO staff which undertook the follow-up action. However, for the participants, the meaningfulness of the PV process usually lied in ensuring community engagement and action.

The videos were also used for advocacy campaigns with the local governments. It involved participation in local governance matters to address development issues. Yet again, the data indicates that this might require planned action and organisational expertise to lead to meaningful work and impacts.

Towards the end, I discussed how participants can become agents, who continually engage with social change, given their dependency on resources from their organisations and the presence of strict gender norms and hierarchy in their projects. The next chapter looks at this concern while synthesising the data and knowledge.

Table 10 is based on the data discussed in this chapter. It shows the differences in perspective of the organisation and participants in the phases discussed here.

Table 10: Expressing agency – From the Organisation and Participants’ perspective

Project Phase	Organisations’ perspective	Participants’ perspective
Communicating Perspective	Focusing on video as a medium to communicate resistance	Ability to resist the prevalent gender norms
Communicating Perspective	Focusing on video as a medium to communicate defiance of gender stereotypes	Ability to challenge gender stereotypes Ability to pursue transformations in gender power relations
Post-screening discussions	Establishing a relationship with the local communities	Gaining meaning and motivation for work Taking up leader-like roles in the community
Post-screening discussions	Initiating dialogue with the local communities	Ability to put their perspective in front of community members Ability to initiate reflection in community members
Post-screening discussions	Maintaining the relationship built with the community	Continue to pursue their leader-like roles Viewing themselves as agents of change
Community Action and Advocacy	Having an inclusive definition of impact	Impressing on ‘intangible’ changes as impacts of their work alongside the tangible ones
Community Action and Advocacy	Providing human resources to help with grassroots follow-up actions	Influencing community members to change their personal attitude Undertaking actions along with the community Enabling community members to take collective action Viewing themselves as agents of change

Project Phase	Organisations' perspective	Participants' perspective
Community Action and Advocacy	Providing expertise and network for advocacy with government	<p>Opportunity to communicate with local government officials and policy-makers</p> <p>Opportunity to create impacts</p> <p>Viewing themselves as agents of change</p>
Community Action and Advocacy	Ensuring participants have access to resources independently to pursue social change	Ability to undertake social change initiatives independently

7. ANALYSING IMPACTS ON PARTICIPANTS' AGENCY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I bring together the findings from the data chapters to present the central arguments that this thesis seeks to make. I begin by revisiting the gaps revealed during the critical literature review of PV practice, which led to the main research question and the sub-questions. I then present an overview of the findings from Chapters 4, 5 and 6 in Table 11. The overview is presented as a comparison of the different perspectives of organisations and participants during the various phases of a long-term PV project - a critical understanding developed through this research.

Drawing on my findings, I present a conceptual model which shows how a participatory video process can impact participants' agency-development in a sustained way. I then explain the influences on participants' agency under two themes:

- 1) Gender power relations in local contexts
- 2) Hierarchy within a project

The discussion of these two themes presents an analysis of my findings, which address the gaps in literature.

In Section 7.3, I propose a new approach to understanding participants' agency-development through participatory video practice. This approach stresses on including existing power relations in the local contexts and hierarchy within a project, while analysing participants' agency and its sustenance. Further, it emphasises the

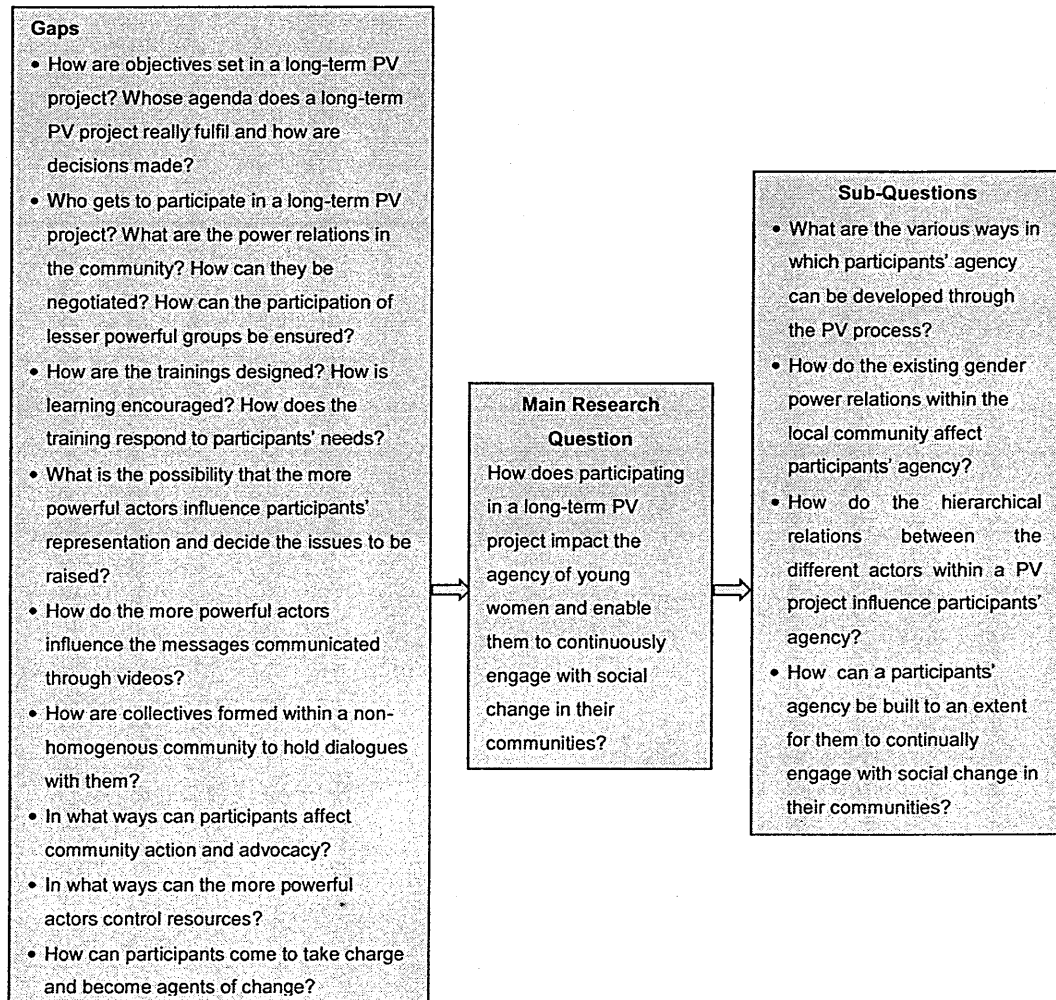
importance of including skills and resources for participants to achieve their valued goals.

I then reflect on how this research informs policy and practice, presented under the following three categories: 1) The impact of local power relations on participants; 2) The impact of hierarchy within a project on participants; 3) The role of long-term PV projects in building participants as agents of change.

7.2 CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF PARTICIPATORY VIDEO AS AN AGENCY-DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In this section, I revisit the gaps that I found during the critical literature review of PV practice in Chapter 2. I also present the main research question and the sub-questions that emerged from those gaps. Figure 6 represents the same:

Figure 6: Research gaps, the main research question and the sub-questions



The data analysis chapters 4, 5 and 6 addressed themselves to these gaps and therefore contribute to an increased understanding of long-term PV projects. The findings presented in those chapters revealed that as the participants go through a PV process, there are several factors that affect the development and sustenance of their agency. It also revealed that in certain cases there can be differences in how organisations managing PV programmes and individual participants view the process of a long-term PV project. These differences were pulled together in the tables at the end of each of these chapters. In Table 11, I present a consolidated overview of these perspectives in relation to the different phases.

Table 11: Overview of Project phases, and the organisation and the participants' perspectives

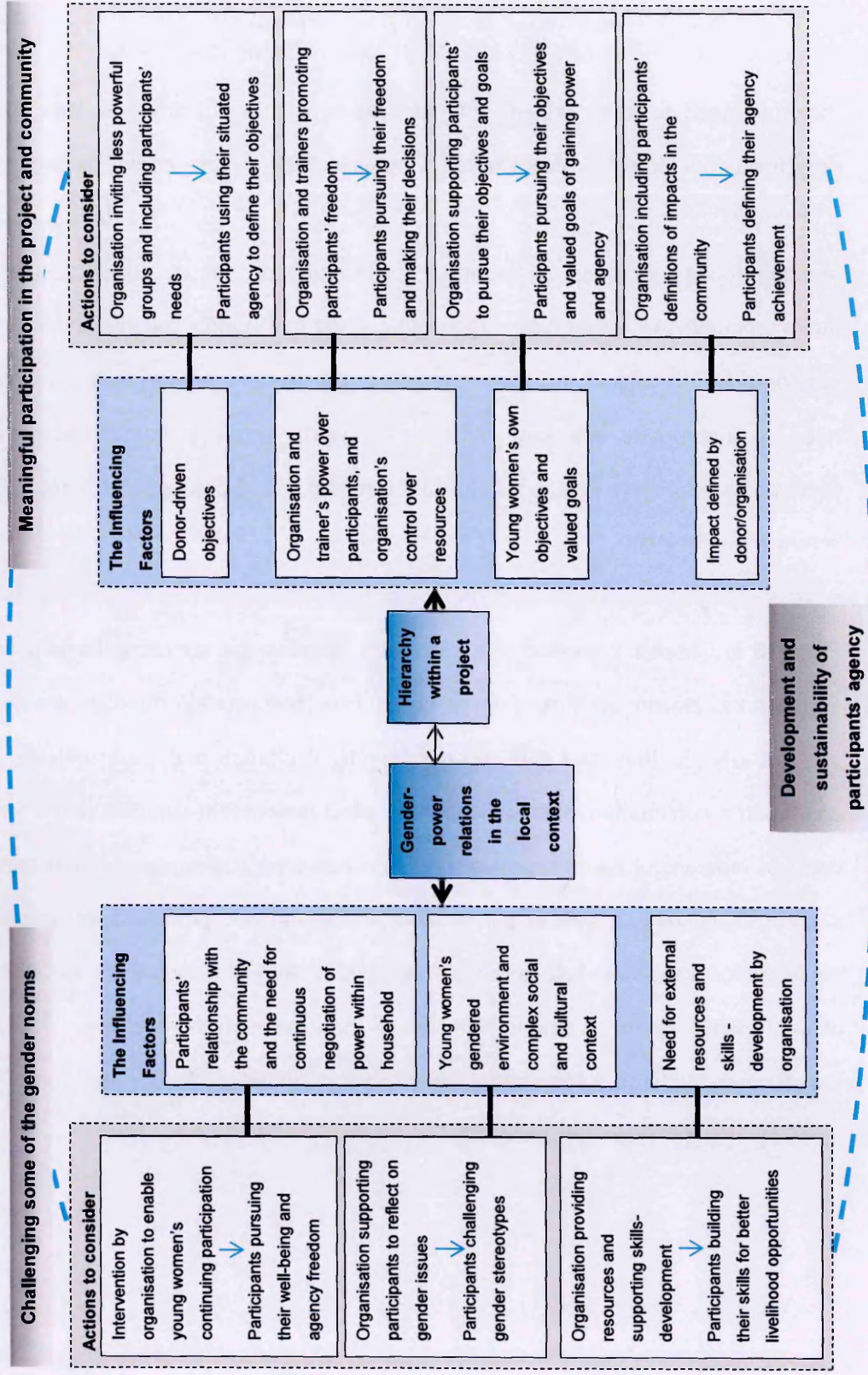
Phases	Organisations' Perspective	Participants' Perspective
Project Initiation and Conceptualisation (overview of Table 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of less powerful groups and including their needs and objectives in the project • Need for negotiation with gatekeepers and household members • Opportunities and resources for participants to reflect on gender issues, challenge gender stereotypes and negotiate gender power relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity and ability to join the project • Ability to reflect on their own needs and situations, to challenge gender stereotypes, and question and negotiate gender power relations
Training and Video-making (overview of Table 9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training in a gender-sensitive environment, to respond to participants' learning needs and improve their skills-level • Young women's continued participation • Participants' self-representation and raising issues relevant to their local contexts • Need for quality in videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaining valued skills for increased livelihood opportunities and the ability to negotiate further gender power relations • Opportunity to continue their participation • Ability to decide on their representation and issues they want to raise • Opportunity to focus on more impactful videos rather than better quality videos • Ability to make better quality videos for a wider audience
Screenings, Dialogues, Community Action and Advocacy (overview of Table 10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video as a medium for participants to communicate resistance of gender stereotypes and norms and as a product to communicate messages • Need for maintaining relationship with local communities • Creating impacts through community action and advocacy, • Need for providing support in the form of human resources, expertise and networking for creating impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to resist and challenge gender norms, and seek transformations in gender power relations • Ability to engage with communities, have a dialogue with them and adopt leader-like roles • Creating both tangible and intangible impacts, by taking actions themselves and mobilising communities to participate in local action and advocacy • Being agents of change and engaging with social change processes independently

This table shows that the perspectives of the organisations and the participants often differ from each other. Organisations are mostly dependent on donors and may

therefore need to focus on ensuring that the project is not driven to meet donors' objectives, but enables participants to achieve their valued goals. Young women participants, on the other hand, are usually restricted by the local gender power norms and their focus is often on gaining more power and becoming agents of change within their community. However, both organisations and participants are influenced by local gender power relations and hierarchy within the project. Where organisations may need to incorporate elements such as a gender-sensitive training environment, participants may have to struggle to gain freedom in the presence of more powerful actors in the project.

Figure 5 in Chapter 2 showed the correlation between the conceptual and analytical frameworks. Based on that, I investigated how participants' agency can develop continuously, so that they can become agents of change and work towards social change in a continual manner. I also investigated factors that can disrupt the virtuous cycle of meaningful participation leading to development of agency, which can then support challenging of stricter gender norms. The data chapters and the analysis in those revealed the various factors that influence the exploring, building and expressing of participants' agency. Drawing from the relation between the two frameworks, and based on my findings, I propose the following conceptual model of participatory video as an agency-development process.

Figure 7: Conceptual model of Participatory Video as an agency-development process



This conceptual model of participatory video as an agency-development process is based on two crucial aspects found in the participatory video projects studied in this research. These are: (i) the gender power relations in the local context and (ii) the hierarchy within a project (shaded blue boxes) which both impact participatory video practices. They determine the development of participants' agency during their participation in a long-term PV project (represented by thicker black arrows).

The model (Figure 7) shows the specific factors (in the two light blue boxes) which influence participants' agency-development. Power relations that exist in the local context often act as a barrier to the participation of lesser powerful groups. This research has found that gender power relations become evident through power held by the household and local community members over young women, young women's acceptance of certain gender norms and stereotypes, and their need for organisational support to provide them skills and resources. Hierarchy within a project often originates because of the dependency on external donors for funds. My research has revealed that this hierarchy is marked by a focus on donor-driven objectives, organisations and trainers holding power over participants, conflicts between organisations and participants' needs and objectives, and impacts of the projects being defined by donors/organisations.

The conceptual model proposes the actions that can be taken by organisations to impact participants' agency-development positively (in the two grey boxes). These actions can ensure that a virtuous cycle is created, where meaningful participation leads to the development of participants' agency, which in turn leads participants to challenge certain gender norms (in shaded grey boxes) and so on. It also suggests that if this virtuous cycle continues (represented by blue dashed line), supported by the

actions from organisations, and participants continue to gain agency, participants' agency can be sustained.

While gender power relations and hierarchy within a project emerged as the two aspects impacting participants' agency-development, I found that the two are also linked to each other (represented by the thinner black arrow). For instance, if the project is not donor-driven, and includes young women participants' needs, the participants' agency can be better developed to negotiate gender power relations. Also, if participants are able to challenge certain gender norms, they can feel enabled to pursue their valued goals, and have a more meaningful participation in the project.

The following two sections explain the influence of gender power relations and hierarchy, synthesising the findings from Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Following this, I present my arguments for a new approach towards participants' agency-development through participatory video practices.

7.2.1 Gender Power Relations in the local context

In this section, I look closely at gender power relations that exist in the local context to understand how they impact agency. There has been much discussion in the literature that agency of certain groups can be restricted when another group dominates them, and therefore, power structures need to be included while studying agency (e.g., Frediani 2010; Ibrahim and Alkire 2007; Kabeer 1999). Drawing from this body of literature enables a deeper analysis of the impact of gender power relations than is generally available in the literature on PV practice. While some scholars writing on PV with women have brought out how PV enables women to challenge hierarchical power

relations, gain confidence, express themselves and bring up issues (e.g., Khamis 2009; Protz 1994; Waite and Conn 2011), it has still been limited in terms of understanding how gender power relations impact women's agency and its development, particularly over a course of few years. My analysis of how gender power relations influence participants' agency, falls under three broad categories: 1) Gender power relations within the household and community; 2) Young women bound by gender norms; 3) Access to resources and gaining skills for negotiating gender power relations.

Gender power relations within the household and community

Women often have lesser power than male members within a household (e.g., Agarwal 1997; Iversen 2003; Peter 2003). As within households, power relations exist between different groups within a community, which can suppress the participation of less powerful groups (Guijt and Shah, 1998). My finding is in accord with such literature. Household members, who usually have more power over young women, may restrict their participation in PV projects (Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1). In addition certain members in the community, who act as gatekeepers to the outside world and hold power over a group of young women, may also restrict organisations from starting projects with them (Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3). In the literature on PV, it is often implied that PV helps participants challenge such power relations and norms (e.g., Bery and Stuart 1996; Kawaja 1994; Protz 1994; Rodriguez 1994). Though, there is not much discussion on what forms of norms or stereotypes can be challenged and how.

If the PV process enables the participants to build a relationship of trust with local communities, which initially opposed the participation of young women, the same communities might subsequently start supporting both the project and young women's

participation (Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1). Drawing on the literature on agency and groups (e.g., Fukuda-Parr 2003; Stewart 2005), I suggest that working with communities allows participants to extend their agency freedom, which supports them in negotiating various gender norms. It also leads to participants' agency achievement in the form of: i) having dialogue with the local community, ii) assuming leader-like positions, iii) mobilising communities to act and iv) advocating with local government, to create impacts. Therefore, if participants continue to work with local communities, they might be in a better position to be able to challenge certain gender power relations, gain more power and become agents of change.

However, despite the mobilisation of apparent community support observed in my fieldwork (Chapter 6, Section 6.3), young women may eventually face difficulties in continuing their participation due to some other extremely strict gender norms set by the household members and the community, such as norms around marriage (Chapter 6, Section 6.4.3). Nevertheless, even if negotiating such stricter gender norms is extremely difficult, certain participants might be willing to challenge them, since they want to pursue their well-being and agency freedom, and therefore, sustain their agency (Chapter 6, Section 6.4.3).

While the literature on PV implies that PV can help participants challenge gender norms, it does not address the complexities emerging from the presence of various gender norms and stereotypes. I bring in more in-depth understanding of gender power relations at the household and community level, and suggest that while PV can support negotiation of power relations, this negotiation remains an ongoing process, where participants can continue to gain agency if they can gain more power.

Young women bound by gender norms

Gender norms can result in women accepting certain stereotypes and having a false perception of their well-being (e.g., Agarwal 1997; Hilsdon 2007; Lipman-Blumen 1993). Young women participants live in a gendered environment, and sometimes even subscribe to several gender stereotypes themselves, for example the assumption that women are not good with technology (Chapter 4, Section 4.3.4). Kelan (2010) suggests that a woman working with technology is, on its own, undoing gender. If organisations recognise these stereotypes and help participants reflect on various gender issues around them (Chapter 4, Section 4.3.2), challenge gender stereotypes by performing the supposed masculine roles and working with technology such as the camera and the computer (Chapter 4, Section 4.3.4) and provide a gender-sensitive learning environment (Chapter 4, Section 4.3.2; Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1), it provides the participants the opportunity to explore, build and express their agency to challenge norms and stereotypes.

The literature on PV suggests that less powerful groups can gain the ability to represent themselves and challenge stereotypes through PV, a process that helps them recognise their own agency (Kawaja, 1994; Protz, 1998; Einsiedal, 1996), but does not discuss what influences their representation. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.4, Cahill (2010) has cautioned that participants might represent the status quo of gender power relations during drama/drama-videos. There have been discussions in other bodies of literature that women's agency often exists within their local social and cultural contexts (e.g., Frediani 2010; Hilsdon 2007; Ibrahim and Alkire 2007). Even while young women's agency is being developed and they start challenging norms and stereotypes (for instance, based on influence by mainstream media), some of them may continue to promote certain aspects of their identity

interpreted by others as acceptance of oppressive gender norms (Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1).

I propose that while participating in a PV process can enable participants to challenge stereotypes, the way they represent themselves remains a complex issue, since participants can be influenced by both local and global contexts. They may choose to challenge certain stereotypes, while accepting others. There is also an intricate relationship between gender norms and participants' agency, and having the opportunity to represent ones' self does not necessarily mean challenging stereotypes and the various forms of oppression.

Access to resources and gaining skills for negotiating gender power relations

Access to resources, such as the human and social resources that serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice, is a pre-condition to exercising agency (e.g., Kabeer 1999; Sen 1993). Resources are often immensely important for young women participants to negotiate gender power relations and gain agency. Organisations often provide resources to the participants (human, social and monetary), such as staff members negotiating with the household members (Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1) and community gatekeepers (Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3), or monetary resources in the form of a stipend/salary (Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5), which support them in negotiating power.

The ability of participants to achieve their valued needs, and therefore, negotiating stricter gender norms, also depends on the skills they gain. Therefore, building skills is extremely crucial to developing their agency. The Capability Approach suggests that a person's capability depends on personal characteristics (Sen 2000). I suggest that gaining skills increases the capability, i.e. the ability that a participant has to achieve

their well-being and agency freedom. The participants' gained skills influence their personal characteristics (such as having more confidence), which makes them more able to convert their resources into capabilities.

However, skills-building is not only critical for developing participants' confidence, but it can also be associated with whether they feel their agency can be sustained. While the literature on PV discusses that training and video-making enhances participants' confidence (Riano 1994; Shaw 1997; Stewart et al. 2008), my research offers a deeper insight in that participants want to develop their skills to achieve other agency aspects, such as monetary earnings. They can use these earnings for improving their position of power within their family and community, and bettering their lives (Chapter 5, Section 5.2.3). This brings an understanding of the needs and objectives that participants might have, or develop, as they continue to participate in a project. This insight emphasises the importance for organisations to be aware of participants' needs and aspirations to ensure that participants' agency is built progressively and sustained.

7.2.2 Hierarchy within a project

Hierarchy within a project is a central factor that influences participants' agency-development. In Chapter 1, I framed participation as a complex issue by presenting critiques from the literature which stated that the participation of people in development projects was often efficiency-based and initiated with pre-determined objectives of development agencies and donors (e.g., Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Narayanan, 2003; Parfitt, 2004; Puri, 2004). For example, Parfitt (2004) argues that this creates power relations between communities and donors/organisations in development projects, where donors/organisations hold more power than communities.

In this section, I bring together the findings from Chapter 4, 5 and 6 and show that the critique of participation is well-founded, and in particular that hierarchy within long-term participatory video projects affects participants' agency-development. I present new insights on the influences of hierarchy across four categories: 1) Donor-dependency and hierarchy; 2) Organisations, trainers/facilitators and hierarchy; 3) Young women participants and hierarchy; 4) Participants' understanding of impact.

Donor-dependency and hierarchy

In Chapter 2 I argued that hierarchy within a PV project has not been addressed sufficiently in the literature on PV (Section 2.5.1), even though there has been a substantial critique of participatory approaches in the literature on participation (e.g., Cooke and Kothari 2001; Narayanan 2003; Partfitt 2004; Puri 2004). Applying the analysis of these critiques of participatory approaches to the specific case of PV, I showed that long-term PV projects, funded by donor-agencies, are often driven by the agendas and objectives of such agencies, creating an inherent hierarchy in the project. The hierarchy becomes apparent right from the project conceptualisation stage. Even though less powerful groups within a community may be recognised and invited to participate in the project by donors and organisations, the valued goals and objectives of these groups are not necessarily included (Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3). The dependency on donors further results in organisations working primarily to ensure that the project fulfils donor-determined objectives. The focus and effort towards meeting participants' needs may remain significantly low across the different phases of a long-term PV project, especially during the funded period.

However, hierarchy is not always present in all PV projects and across all phases. Certain organisations may take efforts to ensure that participants' objectives are also included in the project (Chapter 5, Section 5.2.3). I would argue that while donor-dependency can perpetuate hierarchy, it is each individual organisation's efforts and priorities that determine the participatory approach in a long-term PV project, i.e. whether a long-term PV project is driven to meet pre-determined objectives or if it includes participants' needs and objectives. I discuss this further in the following section.

Organisations, Trainers/Facilitators and hierarchy

Long-term PV projects may have a hierarchical setup as presented in Table 2, (various actors, their objectives and power they can have over others), an argument corroborated by my empirical findings. However my research also reveals another dimension, based on the difference between the two case studies – different organisations may understand their responsibility towards their participants differently. These different understandings can determine what an organisation prioritises in the project – pre-determined donor objectives versus the participants' needs. The priorities become especially evident when an organisation needs to run the project without external donor's funds (Chapter 5, Section 5.2.3). Most of the literature on PV does not discuss hierarchy within a project, and only a few scholars have identified how it can affect the participatory approach in PV (e.g., Harris 2009; Shaw 2012). My research suggests a more in-depth understanding is needed and I propose that the participatory approach of an organisation can be understood through whether it: i) focuses on participants' skills-building and supports their aspirations, ii) gives them access to resources, iii) enables them to decide how they want to represent themselves, iv) provides them the freedom to select topics for videos, v) allows them to set their own

benchmarks for quality of videos, vi) allows videos to become a medium to communicate their perspective and vii) enables dialogue and engagement with the local community.

As with organisations, trainers/facilitators also become a part of the hierarchy, when a long-term PV project is inherently hierarchical and they have power over the participants (see Table 2). Though trainers/facilitators are key in maintaining a participatory approach and ensuring that participants' needs are met during their learning process, they are sometimes pressured to compromise on participants' learning in order to meet the pre-determined outputs (Chapter 5, Section 5.2.3). They might also impose their own values and benchmarks over the videos that participants make (Chapter 5, Section 5.3). Thus I suggest that due to a hierarchical setup, trainers/facilitators may voluntarily or involuntarily limit participants' agency.

Moreover, as I discussed in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.4), if an organisation determines which participant can remain in the project, based on how efficiently she meets its agenda and outputs, it has a direct impact on the participants' trust in the PV project to affect their lives positively and to promote their agency. My analysis is reinforced by the extensive discussions in the literature about whether the power that some actors have over others limits their agency (Frediani 2010; Ibrahim and Alkire 2007; Kabeer 1999; Nussbaum 2003). If an organisation maintains hierarchy by pursuing its own freedom and taking decisions on outputs, participants' productivity, topics for videos, engagement with community and so on, it can also restrict participants' freedom and agency.

Hierarchy also poses a hindrance for participants to access resources which organisations control. These include monetary resources (in form of stipend), human resources (in form of support staff and grassroots workers), expertise on development issues, networks with other NGOs and government authorities. I discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 that whether or not an organisation limits participants' access to these resources directly affects the sustenance of participants' agency. This underlines that in a long-term PV project dominated by hierarchy, participants remain largely dependent on the organisation to access resources. Their dependency can then restrict them from realising their potential and becoming agents. Therefore, I suggest that while an organisation might need to provide such resources in the initial stages for participants' agency-development, participants should also be enabled to access resources on their own to be able to express their agency and sustain it independently.

The donor-dependency of the project can perpetuate a hierarchy through the resulting conflicts of interest that organisations and trainers/facilitators maintain. The dynamic this sets up can persist even beyond the funded period, limiting participants' freedom and agency. I propose that when there is hierarchy in a project and the more powerful actors curtail freedom of those who are less powerful, organisations may need to act to overcome the inherent hierarchy. They may need to ensure that their and the trainers' freedom does not limit participants' freedom and the ability to access resources, pursue their goals and sustaining their agency. The discussion here provides an extremely important insight for participatory approach within long-term PV projects, and how it influences participants' agency-development.

Young women participants and hierarchy

Taking account of participants' needs and objectives is presented in the literature as a fundamental issue for a truly participatory project (e.g., Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Narayanan, 2003; Parfitt, 2004; Puri, 2004). I further propose that if an organisation is unable to take on board its participants' objectives, it can lead to conflict between the participants and the organisation. Such conflict can even result in participants entirely rejecting the project and leaving it. However, when organisations commit to support participants to pursue their valued goals, participants are able to continue to engage (Chapter 6, Section 6.4.3). This lends the understanding that even though participants might hold the least power amongst the different actors in a long-term PV project (see Table 2), they still have the ability to oppose a process which is non-participatory, restricts their freedom and limits their agency. This also has an implication for whether a long-term PV project can continue while remaining hierarchical in nature.

I have discussed in the earlier section that the literature on agency emphasises that agency is dependent on resources. I suggest that though resources are a pre-condition for the young women participants' agency-development, the relation between resources and agency-development becomes complex when a PV project is hierarchical. While organisations can provide resources to the participants, they may also dominate the participants. In such a case, participants' access to certain resources might not necessarily lead to an increase in agency, since their freedom is being curtailed. Participants may also value their freedom more over the resources, and can leave a PV project if they feel that other actors are dominating them. This provides a significant insight that having freedom during a participatory project can be equally (or sometimes more) important to the participants for sustaining their agency, than having access to resources.

Participants' understanding of impact

In PV, the ability to create impact through community action or advocacy is seen as critical to the participants' expression of their agency (Bery and Stuart, 1996; Molony et al., 2007; Plush, 2009b; White, 2003). I have also suggested in Section 7.2.1 that creating impacts through mobilising communities and advocating with government are forms of participants' agency achievement. However, I would also argue that what is considered impact is in itself problematic, and this in turn can affect participants' understanding of their own agency. While participants might want to consider both tangible and intangible changes in the community as impact (and as their agency achievement), donor agencies and organisations might value the tangible impacts more (Chapter 6, Section 6.4.1). The participants' assertions of whether their work has been transformational and impactful can be influenced by what the donors and organisations consider as authentic transformations. This leads to the insight that while participants may get the opportunity to bring transformations, their understanding of whether their work is bringing changes might be guided by the definition of impact set by the donors and organisations.

Sen (1999, p.19) suggests that an agent is *"someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well."* However the analysis presented here shows that a participants' own understanding of whether she has achieved something meaningful, and whether she is an agent, might largely be affected by external criterion set by donors/organisations rather than on her achieving her valued goals and objectives. Whether or not participants can come to

take charge and become agents of change is therefore heavily dependent on the hierarchy within a project.

7.3 RE-THINKING HOW TO APPROACH PARTICIPANTS' AGENCY-DEVELOPMENT

In this thesis, I have brought together the concepts of participation, agency and gender norms to critically explore participatory video practices. I drew on Sen's conceptualisation of agency to investigate the various aspects of participants' agency. This has enabled me to respond to the gaps in the literature on PV and propose a new approach to participants' agency-development through participatory video.

Firstly, I argue for looking at power relations in the local contexts in more depth. In the literature on PV, there has been some discussion about how power relations can be challenged by less powerful groups (Bery and Stuart 1996; Rodriguez 1994; Tuladhar 1994; Turner 1992). However, it is often overlooked that power relations give rise to several norms and stereotypes, and that participants need to challenge these norms and to negotiate gender power relations on a continuous basis in order to become agents of change. While participating in a PV project can initially enable less powerful groups to challenge certain gender norms and gain more power, it might not necessarily help them continually engage with social change. I therefore suggest that power relations need to be included in the analysis of participants' agency, and moreover the analysis should encompass the nature of relation between power and agency - that negotiating power relations and gaining agency is a constant and progressive process.

Secondly, this research has shown that power structures exist not just at the household and community level. There can be hierarchy within a PV project too, which has been acknowledged only recently by few scholars, for example Harris (2009), Low et al. (2012), Milne (2012) and Shaw (2012). There is very little discussion of how hierarchal relations within projects affects participants' agency. I therefore argue for including power structures that exist within a project while analysing long-term PV projects and its impacts on participants, which comprises: 1) participants' negotiation with more powerful actors for their freedom in the project; 2) participants' ability to achieve their valued goals, including their well-being and agency-freedom; 3) participants' ability to become agents of change in their local communities.

Thirdly, it has been claimed in the literature on PV that training in video-making skills builds participants' confidence (Riano 1994; Shaw 1997; Stewart et al, 2008). However, what is not unpacked is the idea that participants may want to achieve skills and training beyond what is pre-determined in a PV project. I identify this as a critical factor in determining participants' ability to further negotiate gender power relations, explore their other agency aspects and pursue their well-being and agency-freedom. Participants' agency-development is therefore, not determined by the skills that donors/organisations decide to provide them, but what participants find as crucial to achieving their own goals.

Fourthly, the research has shown that resources are essential to participants' agency, reinforcing Kabeer's (1999) suggestion that resources are a pre-condition to agency. In long-term PV projects, it is usually the organisation managing the project that controls and provides the resources to participants, including monetary and human resources. However I did not find any literature exploring how organisations' control of resources

can impact participants' agency-development. I responded to this gap in the literature by showing that in a hierarchical setup, organisations can limit participants' access to resources, which participants can find as a restriction on their freedom and agency achievements. My thesis also argues that although organisations may need to provide resources, participants should also be enabled to access resources on their own, to sustain their agency independently. Based on my research, I further argue that if a PV project that offers limited resources and restricts their freedom, participants, who have already gained some agency and value their freedom, may prefer other opportunities beyond the project. Sustenance of participants' agency is, therefore, driven by participants' ability to access resources on their own rather than being indefinitely dependent on the organisations.

In summary, though the current literature on PV addresses some of the issues around power relations in the local context and hierarchy within a project, there has been little in-depth and critical analysis of how these aspects impact participants' agency. This thesis presents a holistic way of analysing participants' agency and its development, emphasising the nature of power relations, the role of a hierarchical set-up and its effects on participants' goals and objectives. It expands the understanding of what participants' value and what impacts their agency and its sustenance.

In Section 7.4, I discuss the implications for policy and practice that these insights suggest.

7.4 REFLECTIONS ON POLICY AND PRACTICE

In this section, I show how this research informs participatory video practices undertaken with less powerful groups. It contributes in three areas: 1) The impact of local power relations on participants; 2) The impact of hierarchy within a project on participants; 3) The role of long-term PV projects in building agents of change.

In doing so, this research responds to the increasing interest in PV projects within international NGO practice and the need for more evidence and analysis, to understand the role of PV role in participants' agency-development.

7.4.1 The impact of power relations at the local level on participants

This research brought attention to gender power relations at the household and local community levels, and their impact on the PV process and participants' agency. It showed why it is essential to consider power relations at the household and community level. As discussed in Chapter 2, whilst there is some discussion on power relations, there is little in-depth and critical understanding of their impacts on the participants and the sustenance of their agency. As was found in this thesis, power relations manifest themselves throughout a long-term PV project, and in forms of various gender stereotypes and norms.

When donors and NGOs recognise such power relations, they are better able to support the development of participants' agency. Based on these findings, I proposed the conceptual model of PV as an agency-development process (Figure 7), which presents the impacts of power relations. It emphasises the need for continuous negotiation by participants because of their complex local social environment, and their

need for developing skills and gaining resources. The findings in this study can therefore be used by both donors and NGOs to think about how they can invite less powerful groups to participate in the PV process, enable their participation and progressively build their agency.

This research showed that it is essential for NGOs to consider the local context of the participants, including power relations, to allow participants to reflect on the existing gender norms. It highlighted that participating in the process can enable participants to challenge gender stereotypes and norms. They can also have the opportunity to start negotiating gender power relations at both their household and community levels, and ultimately engage local communities in dialogues. Alongside, NGOs need to provide participants the opportunity to build their skills, so that they can pursue the goals they value, such as a better livelihood, and also develop their other agency aspects, such as their education. Further, agency freedom encapsulates working for the well-being of others. Pursuing agency freedom implies that working with communities towards their well-being, propels participants into leader-like positions. Participants gain meaning, motivation and purpose to their work when they start receiving support from their household and community, which also promotes their agency. Therefore, NGOs need to provide opportunities to its participants, which allow them to work with their community on local development issues.

This research also shaped the insight that certain gender norms are extremely difficult to negotiate, which is crucial in understanding the challenge the process faces in ensuring continual engagement of young women with social change. At the same time, I have argued that the scope to negotiate and challenge these much more strict gender norms still exists. The findings, therefore, imply that donors and NGOs should look at

continuously strengthening the agency of young women participants by enabling them to i) participate in the PV project, ii) reflect on their own situation, iii) learn skills and gain confidence, iv) gain resources, v) negotiate power, vi) challenge stereotypes and norms and vii) work with their community, to continue their engagement with social change.

7.4.2 The impact of hierarchy within the project on participants

This research also contributes to understanding how hierarchy within a PV project impacts the process and young women's agency-development. As discussed in Chapter 2, the power structures within a project are often ignored while studying PV. My research has shown that though PV is supposed to be a participatory process, the setup of the projects is often inherently hierarchical. The donors providing the funds for the project largely control its objectives and outputs, and there is little negotiation of these during the process. The NGO's dependency on funds translates into organisations being driven more to achieve those pre-determined objectives and outputs, rather than focusing on their participants' learning needs and valued goals. Trainers/facilitators are also a part of this hierarchy and might either be pressurised to meet the pre-determined objectives or impose their own values, rather than including the participants' needs. This emphasises the need for organisations and trainers/facilitators to ensure that participants have the freedom to make decisions concerning their objectives.

Sometimes, organisations may even decide whether a participant can remain in a project, based on how efficiently they meet the required outputs. Disregarding participants' needs extends the impact beyond an individual participants' learning and

affects their belief in the process to improve their lives. This understanding is significant for organisations and donors for maintaining the project's relevance to its participants, so that they continue to participate in the PV process. An important finding was that though participants may have least power in relation to the other actors in the project, they can leave the project, if it fails to adopt and maintain a participatory approach.

This research also highlights that hierarchy within a project determines NGOs' control over resources that can support community action and advocacy, which participants see as a crucial form of expression of their agency. Moreover, what is considered impact and authentic transformation and whether participants can be considered as agents of change might be determined by donors and NGOs, overpowering participants' own understanding of social change and their agency achievement. Hence, a participatory approach has been found to be critical to whether participants are able to view themselves as agents of change.

All the above discussed aspects regulate how participatory the process of a long-term PV project is, and if it significantly contributes to participants' agency-development. The findings from this research are vital in informing the PV practice about the need to be truly participatory for ensuring participants' continual engagement with social change.

7.4.3 The role of PV in building agents of change

PV can be understood in terms of building lesser powerful groups' agency to bring social change in their local communities. This required a repositioning of participation, which included linking participation to the agency people have for participating in their social and political life.

In Chapter 2, I divided the PV process (as adopted in the long-term projects) into six phases. Through Figure 4, I demonstrated how each phase of the process can be linked to participants' agency-development. The analysis in the following data chapters showed that while during each phase of the process there are opportunities that can be created for participants to develop their agency, there are also certain factors which can limit it.

As shown through this research, the various opportunities that emerge, allow participants to start negotiating power relations at their household level and start exploring their agency, i.e. finding out how they can achieve the goals they value. When the participants start getting trained, their agency can develop further, as they start thinking more critically, gain skills in video-making, and begin engaging with their community. Making the videos and raising critical issues through those videos, enhances their confidence further in achieving their goals. When participants start resisting the gender norms through dialogue with community members and are able to involve their community in taking collective action, they can express their own agency, and demonstrate that they can bring change both in their and their community's life. Finally, when participants are able to engage continually in creating impacts towards bringing local social change, their agency is sustained. This analysis brings some crucial insights for both policy and practice. It can contribute to further work on PV, which aims to find further evidence to how participants can build their agency as citizens and are enabled to ultimately participate in their social and political life in a sustained manner.

However, data presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 demonstrated that there are several factors emerging from the local gender power relations and hierarchy within a long-term PV project, which restrict the process of agency-development. This finding implies that a PV process does not necessarily build agency and empower participants in the way that has sometimes been claimed by its enthusiasts. The analysis in Section 7.2, presents my core arguments, which highlight the impact that gender power relations and hierarchy within a project can have on participants' agency-development. This can help donors and organisations to think more critically about how it can ensure the development of participants' agency rather than restricting it, when they conceptualise and implement PV projects.

My research also underscores the need to develop in-depth evidence to address claims that PV is an essentially empowering process and to further critically look at PV, thus contributing to emerging debates in the field. In Chapter 8, Section 8.3, I discuss the contribution to this growing body of knowledge that this research makes.

7.4 CONCLUSION

In this research, I have developed a comprehensive critique of long-term PV projects. In particular, I focused on young women participants' agency and studied how their agency can develop. I suggested that while participants' agency can develop through each phase of a long-term PV project, there are various factors which come to the fore during each of the phases of the process that could also restrict agency.

I proposed a conceptual model of participatory video as an agency-development process, based on the evidence that I found during my data collection. I argued that

understanding gender power relations in the participants' local contexts is essential for understanding agency. I also underpinned the importance of understanding the nature of participation in PV projects in determining its impact on participants' agency-development. I reflected on how the analyses could inform the policy and practice of NGOs adopting PV projects.

In the next and concluding chapter, I use the synthesis in this chapter to present answers to the research questions, and also discuss the contribution that this research makes to knowledge.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 OVERVIEW

This research sought to understand how young women's agency gets impacted when they participate in a long-term PV project funded by donor agencies and implemented by NGOs, with the stated purpose of participatory community development. It looked at both positive and negative changes that the participants experienced during the course of the long-term PV projects. In doing so, it brought together the concepts of participation, gender norms and agency. This research gains importance in the context of the burgeoning work being done by PV practitioners with local communities across the world and especially in India. Moreover, participatory approaches and practices have come under a lot of scrutiny over the past two decades, and in the context of the critiques of participation, there is an immense need for studying the growing field of PV, which has been claimed by several practitioners and academics to be an empowering process.

While the field of PV practice has been expanding rapidly, there has not yet been much academic critique of it. There was, therefore, a need for research-based evidence and analysis to understand PV practice in depth. Several scholars have also been stressing on developing a more in-depth understanding of the relation between participation, agency and power structure. In view of this, I addressed significant gaps that emerged after the critical literature review on PV, while keeping agency, participation and gender norms as the central concepts in this research.

In Chapter 1, I introduced a conceptual model (Figure 1) of the three key concepts of participation, agency and gender norms to study long-term PV projects, which framed the analysis in the data chapters. These three concepts and the linkages between them were identified based on both my professional experience and the literature. I also explained in Section 1.4 that India was chosen as the country of study because of several NGOs implementing PV projects for local community development, the complex socio-cultural dimensions of gender power relations in different communities and a strong gender agenda in participatory development policies.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the three key concepts and how they guide this research. I then undertook a critical literature review of PV. I also formed an analytical framework (Figure 4), which mapped the development of agency on to different phases of long-term PV projects. Since a long-term PV project may not necessarily be linear, this model provided a structured way for analysing the long-term PV projects studied in this research.

Based on the critical literature review, I proposed that when young women participate in a long-term PV project, there is an opportunity to develop their agency throughout the process. However, the literature does not address several issues that emerge during the process, which I formulated as the gaps. This in turn helped in framing the research questions, through which I focused on finding out the factors that can either further or restrict participants' agency. There was also an emphasis on finding out and analysing how the gender power structures at the local level and the hierarchy within a project affect agency-development.

My approach was to gain an understanding of the experiences of the young women participants and obtain their point of view on their agency-development. To do so, I chose the research to be a participatory one, where the participants collaborated with me in uncovering their needs and issues. For this purpose, I also chose PV as a research method. Using PV provided me the opportunity to learn about the participants' understanding of participation in their respective PV projects. Further, taking this approach also helped me gain access to the participants' perspectives, experiences, knowledge and understanding. This provided multiple perspectives, which aligned with the research questions to gain insightful and rich data for a holistic understanding of a long-term PV project's impact on the participants' agency. The aim was to situate the young women participants' point of view on long-term PV projects, along with data from other actors and secondary sources building the setting of the projects.

Selecting India as the country in context helped in finding appropriate cases, since there are several NGOs running PV projects. I could find and select long-term PV projects being run with young women in different parts of the country. The different local contexts provided variety, whereas the focus of the two organisations on gender also added to the balance between the two case studies.

A case study approach was integral to my research, particularly, because the long-term PV projects were bounded systems. It was found appropriate, as it offered the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the complex contextual situation and participants' experiences, and the flexibility to include unanticipated issues arising in the field. However, it also created a challenge in maintaining rigour, which I addressed through collecting extensive data through several methods and undertaking meticulous thematic data analysis. The insights gained through the data collection and analysis

contribute to knowledge that could be used to inform practice, as well as further research on PV. This chapter aims to set out those insights by discussing the key findings and the contribution to knowledge that this research makes.

In this chapter, I first begin by coming back to the research questions and presenting the key findings from the empirical data and synthesis. Next, I discuss the contribution to knowledge that this thesis makes. Section 8.4 presents the limitations of this research and discusses how the ideas from this research can be taken further and into other areas. I finally conclude with the journey that this research has helped me make from ideas emerging out of my own professional experience to rigorous investigation and in-depth academic insight on PV practice.

8.2 KEY FINDINGS AND THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In Chapter 7, I had presented the core arguments that this research makes based on the synthesis of my findings. Here, I present the key findings of my research, which respond to the research questions posed in Chapter 2.

Main Research Question

How does participating in a long-term PV project impact the agency of young women and enable them to continuously engage with social change in their communities?

Sub-question 1:

“What are the various ways in which participants’ agency can be developed through a long-term PV project?”

This research has shown the potential that long-term PV projects have for building participants' agency. The analysis revealed that the entire process offers the opportunity for agency-development in various ways. Central to agency-development are a few factors, namely, inviting participation from less powerful groups, building a learning space that is sensitive to local power structures and their manifestations, resources that help participants negotiate power, skill-building that enhances their ability and confidence, video-making that allows for self-expression and representation, screenings and dialogues that create a way to resist power structures and norms, and opportunity to initiate action that creates impacts and contributes towards local community development.

While my analysis revealed that a less participatory process restricts agency rather than building it, it was also emphasised in the discussion in Chapter 7 that participants have confidence in themselves and a certain sense of agency due to their gained level of skills. If they feel that the process does not support them in achieving their valued needs and limits the opportunity to improve their lives, they can look at other prospects beyond the PV project to achieve them.

My research demonstrated the inter-relationship between the different phases of a long-term PV project and agency-development. It also put emphasis on the different factors that can help build participants' agency. Further, it offered insights into how a long-term PV project may still encourage participants to express their agency (though to a limited extent), in spite of the process being less participatory. However, a less participatory process could impact certain participants' agency adversely, which I will discuss in the answer to the third sub-question.

Sub-question 2:

“How do the existing gender power relations within the local community affect participants’ agency?”

In the context of critiques of participation, this research focused on understanding local power structures, and how they impact both participation and agency of less powerful groups in a community. It focused on gender power relations within communities and looked at how it adversely affects the agency-development of young women participants. The different local contexts of the two case studies in India also helped expound how the gender power relations in the local context can affect participants’ agency. The community that Mahita worked with was much more traditional, where gender power relations were more complex due to the religious structure. The issues that the Mahita participants faced with regard to gender power relations were also different to some extent from those in Akshara.

The analysis demonstrated that young women are bound by gender power structures at the community level, which control their participation in the projects. I used the concept of intra-household inequality to uncover power relations at the household level which influenced whether young women could participate in a project that required them to work with video cameras and technology.

However, this research also showed that the negotiation of gender power relations at both household and community levels is possible. This negotiation can be made possible in a few ways. Firstly, support and intervention from the NGO helps participants in convincing both community gatekeepers and family members for their participation. Secondly, the monetary resources, in the form of a stipend for the

participants, also support them in negotiating power at the household level. Finally, some young women can use covert forms of resistance to ensure their participation, such as by not informing the male members of their families about it.

Further, the analysis demonstrated that young women themselves are also bound by certain gender stereotypes, which influences their agency-development. Young women in both Akshara and Mahita were initially afraid of working with the camera and computers because of the prevalent stereotype that women are supposed to be inferior in the use of technology. Certain stereotypes were also reflected in their self-representation on video due to the highly complex relation between the local and global cultural contexts they were influenced by, and their identity as women.

This research also showed that while the process enables young women to challenge these power structures, norms and stereotypes, certain norms, such as those around marriage, are very strict, which restrict a young women's participation even at much later stages in a project. However, the evidence and its analysis also revealed that some young women are ready to negotiate even those stricter norms in an attempt to further express their agency and be agents of change. Therefore, summarily, this research found that though the power structures (in this context, the gender power structures) at local household and community levels can restrict the less powerful groups' participation and agency-development, the process can offer the possibility of constant negotiation of increasingly stricter norms.

Sub-question 3:

“How do the hierarchical relations between the different actors within a PV project influence participants’ agency?”

This research has shown that since the long-term PV projects studied were funded by external donor agencies, donors had an inherent ‘power over’ other actors because of the funds that they controlled, which led to a hierarchical setup. Such hierarchy remains largely unopposed due to the NGOs’ and training organisations’ dependency on donors for funds. The participants are usually in the lowest rung of this institutional hierarchy. In essence, this hierarchical setup affects how participatory the project is, which influences the participants’ agency in several ways. Therefore, as it was stated in Chapter 1, Section 1.2, even the long-term PV projects in India were driven by the larger framework of current participatory development policies. They also had several paradoxes in the participatory approach they claimed to adhere to.

Firstly, donor agencies tend to set their own objectives, often failing to include the project participants’ needs and goals at the project conceptualisation stage. The NGO and the trainers/facilitators appear to be pressurised to meet those objectives, and therefore, occasionally compromise with the participants’ learning and valued needs. Increased focus on the output, such as the number and quality of videos, often limits the opportunity for participants to enhance their learning and build their agency. They remain dependent on the NGO for support and do not have skills that allow them to become agents of change outside the project’s boundaries. Secondly, a hierarchical setup means that the participants sometimes have very little decision-making power. This permeates into the various aspects of the process, such as participants’ self-representation, raising critical issues, communicating perspectives, engaging with communities and so on. Not being able to take their own decisions makes participants

feel powerless in a process that is supposed to build their agency and enable them to become agents of change. Lastly, the participants feel extremely discontented, when they feel that they are mostly producing outputs determined by the donors and NGOs and working towards fulfilling their agenda. Participants also lose trust in the NGO when they feel that their participation is being driven by how productive they are. This becomes detrimental to participants' agency, particularly when they feel that their abilities are being questioned.

However, my analysis also demonstrated that the participatory nature of a project varies during its different phases. For instance, while a project might be extremely participatory during project initiation and provide participants with opportunities for enhanced learning, NGOs can control decisions made during video-making. Further, I also determined that though NGOs are driven by donor agencies, and compromise with the participatory nature, individual NGOs behave differently. An individual NGO may have the ability to ensure that the process becomes truly participatory, particularly, when they are not dependent on donors.

This research also shows that the participants' experience of hierarchy determines whether they perceive the NGO as supportive and the PV process as valuable, or the NGO as controlling and the process as detrimental to their agency. This largely determines whether participants can see themselves as agents of change, and if they can continually engage with social change processes in their community. I will return to this in the answer to the last sub-question.

In summary, this research has shown that the institutional setup of long-term PV projects, funded by external donor agencies, leads to an in-built hierarchy in the

project. This setup ensures that the power of some actors over others is often not questioned. It can be detrimental to participants' agency, especially when they experience that their objectives are not being considered, their learning is not being focused on, they are powerless to take decisions and are only fulfilling donor and NGO agenda.

Sub-question 4:

“How can a participants' agency be built to an extent for them to continually engage with social change in their communities?”

Long-term PV projects need to be seen in the context of the local background they are set in. This research showed that power structures, both at the household and community levels and within the project shaped whether participants could become agents of social change.

My research demonstrated that young women are severely restricted in their ability to voice their issues and engage with local social change because of the dominant power structures in their households and the local community. As presented in the above theme, though the PV process enables them to negotiate gender power relations, negotiation remains a constant factor for young women participants. They face challenges of stricter gender norms, which they may find improbable to negotiate. Therefore, this reduces the prospect for them to become agents of change and engage continually with social change within their community.

As this research also showed, hierarchy within a project and the nature of participation influences participants' agency-development process. Often objectives are determined

by donor agencies, which focus on achieving specific outputs rather than the learning and agency of the participants, who remain dependent on the NGO's expertise and resources to create impacts in their local community. When the project fails to focus on participants' need to gain skills which can enable them to improve their lives on their own and become agents, their scope of expression of agency becomes limited.

However, it was also shown that when the approach of the project is truly participatory and the objectives include enhancing participants' learning, they can begin to explore other avenues to express their agency and bring social changes in their community, such as by stepping out of their homes to pursue further education or careers. Moreover, when participants are given the opportunity to pursue their valued goals, they become a key in furthering the PV project itself, since they want to keep working with the project and also want other young women to join. The analysis also demonstrated that a truly participatory process may enable young women to keep challenging stricter gender norms as they become more confident of becoming social change agents in their local community.

Therefore, this research has shown that while certain gender norms are extremely difficult to negotiate and can reduce the probability of young women becoming agents of change, a truly participatory process that responds to their needs and objectives, can still enable them to continually challenge those norms and raise their voice. Becoming agents of change in the context of local power structures, is thus, determined by the nature of participation that the PV process offers.

8.3 CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE

There are two main contributions to literature that arise from my work. Firstly, I suggest that long-term PV projects should be analysed in the context of local power relations and power structures within a project, to understand their role in developing participants' agency. Secondly, I have built an enhanced understanding of what influences agency. I discuss these contributions in the following sections.

8.3.1 In-depth understanding of power relations in long-term PV projects

I have found that though there is literature that focuses on the issue of power while analysing participation and agency (e.g., Frediani 2010; Kabeer 1999), there is little literature on PV itself which addresses it. I drew from the literature on participation and gender to bring an understanding of how participation of less powerful groups is influenced by power relations – both those at the local level and the ones that exist within a project.

It has been acknowledged in recent literature that most scholars put emphasis on how PV has been able to empower and enable less powerful groups (Low et al. 2012). The almost celebratory nature of such literature conceals the real nature of power relations. There is also an assumption that participating in a PV process by itself can enable people to challenge power relations and stereotypes, create their own representation and raise their issues, start a dialogue, and encourage local social action. However, the process of enabling participants to become agents is usually challenging in the presence of oppressive power relations. This study has shown that numerous factors come into play that can create this challenge – there was a need for participants to

constantly negotiate power, reflect on the power relations, access resources, build skills and meaningfully engage with the community.

Hickey and Mohan (2005) present the argument against participatory approaches that there is insufficient understanding of how power operates, the role of power structures and agency in social change, and a tendency to treat participation as a technique. I also found the literature on PV to be limited in the extent to which it answers concerns about how a participatory approach can be maintained in a PV process. I concur with Frediani's (2010) suggestion that power with, power over and power structures need to be included in the analysis along with power to, for understanding people's agency. While PV is apparently participatory, the dependency on donors creates an inherent hierarchy. Actors, namely donors, implementing organisation and trainers/facilitators, have power over the participants, and therefore, they can restrict participants' freedom. The nature of participation, though, can change in long-term projects, since situations might vary over a longer period of time. A truly participatory PV project, where power structures in the project and in the local context are addressed, can support participants in developing their agency and sustaining it more effectively.

The exploration of power relations at the local level and of hierarchy in the project has provided an in-depth understanding of how less powerful groups' agency can be impacted when they participate in a PV project. The research thus contributes to the emerging critiques of PV, and to the limited literature on PV practice.

8.3.2 Deepening the understanding of impacts on agency

I have found that there are various factors which impact agency. Scholars talk about various factors, such as personal attributes, social and environmental factors (Sen 1993; Nussbaum 2003), resources (Kabeer 1999) and domination of certain groups (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007). This study concurs with these suggestions, and builds an in-depth understanding of how agency can be impacted in a participatory project in particular. It builds on how these impacts happen as the project progresses through its different phases.

Agency of people is influenced by their personal characteristics (Iversen 2003; Nussbaum 2003; Sen 1999). However, each person has some agency situated within them (even if restricted) to resist power over them in an overt or covert manner (Peter 2003). When participants are supported, they become more able to resist social norms, pursue their valued goals and become agents. This support can be in form of resources, including human, social and monetary resources, which can impact agency, as suggested by Kabeer (1999). Access to resources helps lesser powerful groups to negotiate power with the more powerful ones, which provides them the opportunity to build their agency further. In addition, gaining skills, which can help people access more resources, is crucial for agency. Sometimes, gaining certain skills can also influence a participant's personal attributes, such as becoming more confident.

Agency is dependent on social and environmental factors (Sen 1993), which in the context of this research were the local power relations. Power relations tend to be pervasive – they manifest in various ways, such as norms and stereotypes, and also contribute to building the local social and cultural context in which people live. Since

less powerful groups are situated within these contexts, they may even be accepting of certain norms that restrict their agency. Nevertheless, reflection can enable participants to understand such environmental factors, which can then help them to use their agency to influence these factors in turn. They can engage with more powerful groups in their community and work towards the well-being of others, negotiate power and gain more powerful positions.

Some actors can dominate certain groups and restrict their agency because of the institutional structure (Frediani 2010; Ibrahim and Alkire 2007). A hierarchical structure can exist within a proclaimed participatory project, where some actors can dominate the participants. They can dominate decision-making, restrict the participants' freedom and even limit the participants' access to resources. Yet, when participants have gained certain agency, they can extend their power to resist this domination, even if they have not gained more power than the other actors. They can also value their freedom more, than becoming bound by the NGOs providing them the resources.

Studying participants' agency has shown that gaining skills and resources, reflecting on their own situation and working with more powerful groups, helps participants build their agency. It has also shown a dichotomy – while NGOs can provide resources to participants to build their agency, they can also dominate them and restrict their agency. This research has thus furthered the understanding of factors that influence agency, particularly, in the context of participatory projects.

8.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PV PRACTICE

The motivations for this PhD research were strongly embedded in my own experiences as a PV practitioner. While this thesis makes significant contributions to literature, it also brings out strong implications for PV practice. Here, I list the recommendations that emerge from my findings that can be useful for PV practitioners, engaging in both long and short-term PV projects. I have categorised the recommendations based on the different phases of a long-term PV project, as identified in Chapter 2, Section 2.5, namely, Project conceptualisation and initiation, Training, Video-making, Screening and Discussions, and Community action and Advocacy.

During Project Conceptualisation and Initiation

While the term 'Participatory Video' suggests that it is about a participatory approach to video, my research has shown that it is difficult to adopt a truly participatory approach in NGO-based PV projects, mainly because of the dependency on donors. This dependency is reflected during the initial phase of the project, when the participants' needs and objectives are not considered. The local social context also emerges as an important factor in the initial phase, since it determines whether less powerful groups in the community are able to participate or not. To ensure that the initial phases of their PV projects support participants to explore their agency, PV practitioners should:

- Recognise and understand the power relations that exist within the participants' households and community they intend to work with.
- Enable participation of less powerful groups by negotiating with community gatekeepers and other more powerful groups.
- Ensure that the participants' needs and objectives are understood well and included in the project, before the project is implemented.

- Consider providing resources to the participants that can help them in negotiating power.
- Provide opportunities to the participants to reflect on their own situation of oppression and start challenging stereotypes, through workshops and activities in the community.

Training

It is during this phase that the participants are trained in the various aspects of PV, including video-making, understanding development issues, undertaking community engagement and public-speaking. The main concern that emerged was that the trainings focussed mainly on donor-expected outcomes and not necessarily on participants' needs. To overcome this concern, PV practitioners should:

- Ensure that the training environment responds to the existing power relations. For instance, ensure that there is a female trainer or coordinator for women participants.
- Ensure that the training design is truly participatory, and not just about implementing participatory exercises and games. Also ensure that sufficient time and attention are given to let the participants develop the skills.
- Evaluate how participants want to use their skills to bring a change in their personal lives. For instance, the training they receive can also support them in gaining livelihood through other employment opportunities.

Video-making

The video-making phase is the one in which addressing the hierarchy between the NGO and the participants assumes the greatest importance. If the participants have to truly build their agency through video-making, the PV practitioners should:

- Provide the opportunity to the participants to decide whether they want to represent themselves and their personal lives on a video at all, and enable them to represent themselves in the way they feel is appropriate.
- Appreciate and recognise the complexity of the local social and cultural contexts, and not impose their own value systems on how the participants should represent themselves on video.
- Enable a truly participatory process in determining which issues should be covered in the videos, so that the issues that the participants feel are important for them and their community are included.
- Enable community engagement through their participation during video-making.
- Focus more on content which can create more impact in the community, than stressing on better technical quality videos.
- Treat video as a medium for the participants to express the changes they want in the community, than just as a product which communicates messages.
- Reach a mutual understanding with the participants on culturally appropriate messaging in videos.

Screenings and Discussions

This is the phase during which the participants' engagement with the community is enhanced, when they start building their leadership within the community. For the participants to be able to do so, PV practitioners should:

- Ensure that the community is aware of the project and understands its purpose fully.
- Conduct screenings with the various groups in the community.
- Create a space for discussion between the participants and community members, after the video screening.
- Discuss about the possible actions that the community could undertake along with the participants and the NGO.
- Ensure that the engagement with the community is continuous and that participants are able to maintain the relationship that they have built with them, and adopt leader-like positions.

Community Action and Advocacy

Participants place a lot of emphasis on their work in initiating a positive change in their communities. They also want to include both tangible and intangible changes as impacts of their work. However, a critical factor in enabling such changes is the resource that an organisation can provide to its participants. The recommendation to PV practitioners, thus, is that they should:

- Include both tangible and intangible changes in how they define impact in the community.
- Provide participants with resources, such as their field-staff, to follow-up on actions to be taken by community members.

- Link existing programmes to the actions that communities can undertake, if possible.
- Maintain a functioning network of other NGOs, which can support follow-up action.
- Leverage on their existing relationships and networks to advocate with the local government.
- Provide on-going support to participants to continue negotiating power relations within their community.
- Provide participants the access to other support networks and train them on how to access such resources on their own, thereby enabling them to continue being agents of change in their communities independently.

The above recommendations can support PV practitioners to implement PV projects that are more participatory in nature and can better enable less powerful groups to become agents of change in their community. While this research has produced new knowledge on long-term PV projects, it also has certain limitations, which I discuss below.

8.5 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

This study has contributed to the literature on PV practice and produced new knowledge on the role of agency in a participatory process, within the scope this PhD research offers. Here, I discuss the limitations, considering the scope of the study, and the possibilities for future research.

8.5.1 Studying short-term projects

I did not explore short-term NGO projects, which form a large part of the practice. This was a conscious decision to be fully able to focus on the distinctiveness of long-term PV projects. PV projects can be as short as a few days, and in those the relation between the process and agency-development can be extremely different. An interesting comparative study, generating rich data, could have included both long-term and short-term initiatives, since the dynamics in short-term ones are very different. There could be several insights that long-term projects could draw from the short-term ones and vice-versa. Studying just short-term projects could also produce valuable data in understanding how such projects can meaningfully contribute to participatory development.

8.5.2 Interrogating PV as a research method

PV is being used increasingly in other fields, such as research or monitoring and evaluation. However, the scope of this research was limited to studying PV as practiced by NGOs in India. I myself used PV as a research method, but did not analyse my own process, other than using it to generate data. Doing that analysis could have made an important contribution to this thesis, but it would have also added yet another layer of complexity, which would have been difficult to incorporate in a thesis that is focused on the practice of NGOs.

Several researchers are asking similar questions even on PV as a research method, such as negotiation of the researcher and participant agenda, addressing of power relations through research, or the long-term impacts of using PV. Therefore, the

knowledge that this thesis produces can support analysis by researchers on their use of PV as a research method.

8.5.3 Innovations in PV

As a radical notion, and placing themselves at the centre, participants in Akshara felt that the process should have equipped them to own and run a PV project independently. In doing so, they were offering an alternative solution to how they could become agents of change in their own right and work with their communities. These participants saw the potential in the PV process, if they were given the opportunity to have their own participatory space.

During data collection, through personal communication, I also found an instance of a participant from another Community Video Unit, who had left the CVU and started a community video group independently, with limited personal funds. He trained youths in his community to make videos and work on the issues of the local slum¹⁸. What participants in Akshara were inspired and motivated to do, has already been made possible somewhere else.

This research could not focus on PV projects that are initiated by community members themselves, independent of external funding. It is probably an area for further research to explore instances where participants are able to start such projects, independent of external donors and NGOs, and express their agency as citizens.

¹⁸ Link of their video on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImZIF0Pw_IQ&feature=share

Though, there might be very limited examples where communities or individual community members have developed and run a PV project on their own, as it requires technical knowledge. There are constant innovations taking place, with technology becoming cheaper and more accessible. For instance, mobile phones offer ways of producing videos at very low costs that can be shared through community screenings or web-based platforms, and are being taken up as emerging options. A participatory action research project could also contribute a lot towards developing an innovative and alternative solution to the current donor-dependent PV projects.

8.5.4 Media and Technologies

This research demonstrated how agency is central to a PV process, and can be developed to build participants' role and capabilities as citizens. However, there are many other technologies and media that use a participatory approach, such as photography, radio, or different web-based technologies. Some understandings from this research can be useful for studies on these. A comparative study between different media and technologies can provide interesting insights into the role of participation in agency-development.

8.5.5 Collective Capabilities and Communities

I have explored PV to re-position participants as citizens in their local community, and understand the process of agency-development. A critical aspect was collective capabilities. In Chapter 6, it was shown that engaging with the community was essential for participants' agency as citizens, and it was discussed that not just the

participants drew agency from the collective, but the community was also able to take actions and bring social changes by coming together.

Research, shifting the focus to communities as the group to be studied, could bring forth further and in-depth knowledge on the role that PV can play in building collective capabilities of communities, and how they can work towards their collective development needs.

8.6 CONCLUSION

I was motivated to undertake this research based on my professional experience as a video trainer and researcher in PV projects. The idea was to critically investigate PV projects implemented by NGOs for participatory community development, to understand its effects on participants' agency. The journey that I undertook in the form of this PhD research helped me translate my questions and ideas into a critical and in-depth investigation, which finally led to finding answers about PV practice of NGOs.

The central finding of this research has revealed the significance of PV projects for young women's agency-development. Participating in PV projects can provide young women an opportunity to develop their agency, as they go through the different phases of their PV project. Young women gain resources, undergo skills-development, produce videos, work closely with community members and undertake community mobilisation and advocacy, all of which help them become agents of change. Despite this, my research has shown that hierarchical power structures within the project and gender power relations in the household and community considerably impact young women participants' agency-development.

Unravelling the power relations in the local context and the hierarchy between different actors in each PV project is necessary to understand the different experiences of the participants. It also helps reveal the particular factors that restrict or support participants' agency-development to ultimately become agents, who can engage with social change in a continual manner. Through that, the importance of adopting a participatory approach has been highlighted. It places emphasis on young women realising themselves as agents and goes beyond participants just producing pre-determined outputs of donors/NGOs for the projects. Looking at participants' agency as central to the wider impacts the PV projects by NGOs can have on community development, reinforces the argument that people should have the ability to control things they value and pursue their goals towards their development and well-being.

Adopting a gender lens to understand participants' agency-development highlighted that power relations within a household and community can play a significant role in whether the participants have the opportunity to be involved in participatory projects initiated by donors, develop themselves as agents and engage with social change processes to drive local development. While studying PV projects' effect on participants' agency-development, use of a gender lens has emphasised the need to consider, one, the non-homogeneity in local communities and two, the power relations between different groups. It helps in revealing how participatory projects can support the less powerful groups in becoming agents.

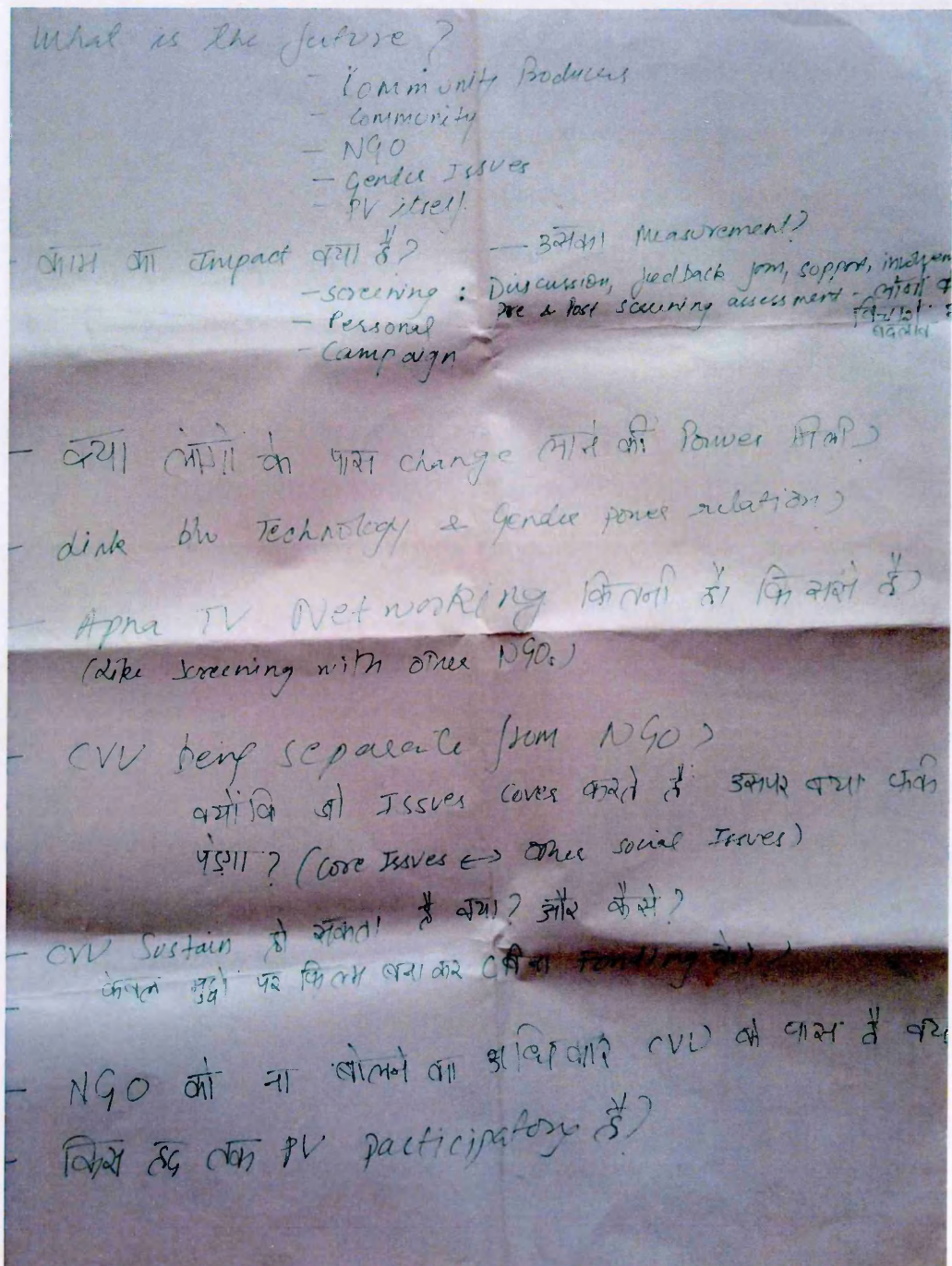
This research is significant at this juncture of time, as it contributes to the field of PV, which is becoming increasingly prominent, both in the NGO and academic sector. It provides empirically based academic analysis to the emerging discussions on PV and

its use in participatory development for social change. It is particularly significant in the context of India, where participatory approaches, including PV, are being adopted by several NGOs, and where the gender agenda in participatory development policies is being critiqued for not enabling actual participation of women. This research offers an insight into how long-term PV projects, within the broader context of participatory approaches and development, can offer the opportunity for young women to develop their agency and become agents of change in their local community. It builds an understanding of how participatory development projects can be effective in ensuring the participation of less powerful groups, and give them the opportunity to meaningfully participate in their own development, take charge and bring the social changes they want, to improve their lives.

Appendix 1: Examples of blogs, websites and toolkits of PV projects

Blogs/Websites	Toolkits
http://www.c4c.org/about/articles.html	http://insightshare.org/resources/ri-ght-based-approach-to-pv-toolkit
http://ccafs.cgiar.org/blog/participatory-video-nepal-voicing-womens-perceptions-climate-change	http://insightshare.org/resources/pv-handbook
http://www.drishtimedia.org/content/community-video	http://www.arcrelief.org/site/PageServer?pagename=videoforsocialchange_toolkit
http://insightshare.org/pv/pv-nutshell	http://www.projectinggirpower.org
http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/water/resources/wp_resources_videos/wp_participatory_video/	
http://www.smarttoolkit.net/?q=node/418	
http://www.videovolunteers.org/impact/	
http://www.videovolunteers.org/wp-content/uploads/Video%20Volunteers%20Book.pdf	
http://www.worldindigenousnetwork.net/win-conference-darwin-2013/participatory-video-process-a-tool-of-empowering-indigenous-peoples	

Appendix 2: Photographs from the field on Akshara participants' list of questions



Appendix 3: Guides used in the field

Interview Guide for the young women participants

BACKGROUND

- When did you start?
- How did you get to know about this work?
- What was your motivation behind doing this?
- Journey from when you started to now

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

- What have been the highlights – in your work and personal life? The ups and downs. When have you felt proud/confident about yourself?
- How has your position changed after starting this work – in your local community and your household?
- Being a part of the CCVU, what all was it that you could do, which you did not earlier?
- In what ways was the CVU and the videos made effective?
- What were the things you thought could have been improved? Like more follow-up action etc.?
- Personally, when did you think something was not as it was being shown in the video i.e. your own perspective differed from the one in the film?
- Do you think these films also reflect your personal experiences/ your own knowledge?
- What has been your role in the CVU, PV in general, and the organisation and how has it changed over time?

- What has been your personal and work experience and how has it changed through this time?
- What are the skills, you think, you have acquired over time, and how do you think that helps you now, or will, in the future?
- What do you see yourself doing in the future, both personally, and professionally?

ABOUT PV PROCESS

- How do you think a PV process can affect a girl's life?
- How were the topics decided? How did you find stories?
- Who was the community of the CVU, and what kind of a relation did you have with them?
- What is the role of community members, and how and in what levels in the entire process were they included?
- How were the different perspective of team member, NGO and the community accommodated?
- Why is gender perspective important in issues?
- What was your position in your local community as a community producer? How do you think people perceive you? (Anecdotes would be helpful)
- How do you think the people (community) you work with perceive this work? What do they see you as – one amongst them, something like a media channel, community leaders?

- How does the organisation (and you personally) work on these issues brought out in the videos? Like, is there advocacy after every video? Or some kind of action in a geographic community?

ABOUT IMPACTS

- Can you talk about the film and the outcome each one of them had?
- Has there ever been any unsettling incident in a geographical community because of your work?
- What are certain impacts that stand out for you? (personal experiences/stories; what happened in a community, the way a government department reacted)
- Is there any one thing you can point out and say, 'I know this has changed only because of this video'?
- What counts as an impact for you (not necessarily for the organisation)? For instance, the fact a woman spoke up against domestic violence in a public forum might be a big impact for you, but maybe not for the organisation.
- At what levels have you seen change happen? What changes? (including changes in you as a person)
- Do you ever feel the issue you are working on is so big, it might never change by something like PV (or even get affected in some way)?

Interview Guide for the trainers

- What is your background?
- Why did you start working with community media?
- What has been your experience with different groups?
- What kind of training was given (in brief) to this group?
- What are your thoughts about the training - the design, the participatory nature of it?
- What kind of approach did the organisation follow, given that it was a participatory training?
- In issue selection?
- In approach to issues, like, what kind of community involvement was allowed etc.?
- How independent or dependent were the participants from or to the organisation?
- How was the organisations' approach towards the participants, like in training, or attitude towards their future, or work security?
- Did the funding of the organisation affect issue selection or attitude and behaviour towards the participants?
- What was your experience with the girls?
- How was it to work with them on gender related issues?
- In particular what difference did you see the training make? On the participants? On the issues?
- What do you think is the most important component in turning them into agents of change? What are the factors that can work against it?

- Could you recount some experience where you felt that these girls could make/did make some change?
- What else needed to be done in the training/process (not just of filmmaking), which should have been improved to make the girls more capable? What more could they have achieved if that was done?
- How effective did you find the PV process in bringing changes through these girls?
- How do you think the components of organisation, funding, editorial board, training organisations play out?
- Any more thoughts, related to the training/entire process?

Appendix 4: Example daily diary

Akshara

29/01/11

What happened

- I went to the workshop in Dombivali, which is organised by Akshara with the college students.
- There were almost 10 students from different colleges in the workshop
- Rohina and Sandhya were taking the session today. It is the third session of the Digital Storytelling workshop. Samata was there too, supporting them. Anmol was not there today.
- The workshop participants were finalising their stories and have to shoot it next week.
- Sandhya told me that they had put up posters in the colleges and invited participation from students.
- They asked me to not take photographs of the workshop. I sat and observed the workshop.

General Observations

- Very interesting to see these college students being trained in DST by the community producers.
- They have a lot of confidence, there is an ease in their facilitation. They are participatory in their approach. I saw them constantly encouraging the participants to think about their stories how they want to represent things.

- They worked very freely with the groups, and it was a very friendly atmosphere. Workshop participants had open and free discussions with them
- The facilitators were clearly facilitating and not 'teaching'.
- Once you have learned something in a participatory manner, maybe it is easier to transfer it in a similar way.
- It was interesting to note how one of the workshop participants called up Rohina and said Sir is not there today so I wouldn't come. Rohina had to tell her that I am here and I would work on storytelling with you. How does it matter if Sir is not there or not? It does reflect their confidence.

Interaction with Participants

- I had a chat with Rohina on our way to get lunch for everyone. She mentioned that some of the girls face problems while trying to attend these workshops. She told me about a girl from the Muslim community who had been attending the workshop without her parent's knowledge. She told them later about it. She wanted to tell her personal story and wanted to photograph her parents. However, they got very upset and refused categorically. Rohina was now encouraging her to still shoot her story even if her parents had refused. We discussed how even to attend such a simple workshop could be so problematic for girls. Rohina said that is why she thinks that doing such kind of work is extremely important.
- Rohina also talked about certain issues like the new producers who were selected in 2009, did not know there would be a selection process towards the end. They were suddenly told that they have to leave in 15 days. It created a lot of problems for those participants. For example, for Varsha, her money had

brought some stability in her family and suddenly there was no money and everything went haywire. Eventually she was hired by Gender Resource Centre (through Yabsodhara). She said many participants faced similar issues and are now simply sitting at home. She was visibly angry over this. She told me, 'Go and ask them about their experiences at Akshara.' All of them (the producers) are still friends and visit each other during festivals and birthdays.

- She also said how they used to work for long hours earlier and never got compensated for it and now even if they are an hour late, the money is deducted from their salary. She questioned if they are not even staff members right now, but just Fellows, then how can Akshara cut their stipend. She thought that it was unfair that they were not treated like staff when it comes to remuneration, but when it is about doing work like video documentation, or about work timings they are treated such. She also felt that they have been working as Fellows for a very long time and there needs to be some change in their position.

Reflection

- Interesting that I had done the first DST workshop at Akshara in April 2009. Good to see that it has grown into this kind of an initiative
- Reminds me that Samata is a full-time staff in the organisation and I wonder if it affects the dynamics of the group.
- This whole thing of producers having to leave was raised in a different manner by Samata as well, in another conversation. She had asked what happens to these people if they are asked to leave or the CVU closes. They are left with

nowhere to go. Because they do have the skills and want to do something but just do not know what to do. Clearly, it seems to be a very sensitive matter for the participants, even those who are still working, and are even permanent staff.

Points to ponder

- So, what do such producers do? Do they continue doing something similar? Is it fair to train them, make a promise, show them hope and then not fulfil it? Is it something like an internship programme? Where only the best interns are kept? Is it really something participatory, then?

Appendix 5: Data Identifiers

NGO Akshara – O1				
Daily Diary	Interview	Focus Group Discussion	Participatory Video	Secondary Data
D1	I1-Samata	G1- on Research Questions	V1-PV 1 st part	SV1-103 Impact Stories
	I2-Rohina	G2- on Actors' Map	V2-PV 2 nd part	SV2-Apna Elections
	I3-Yashodhara	G3- on Actors' Agenda		SV3-103 Impact Video
	I4-Anmol			SV4-DSTs
	I5-Nandita			SV5 -Film on Apna TV
				SV6-Soch Sahi Mard Wahi
				SV7- Mom driving autorick
				SV8-PSA Missing Girls
				SV9-Toilet
				SV10 – Shout Aloud
				S11- The bucket
				SV12 W of Woman = Will
				SV13-Women can play too!
				SD1- CVU
				SD2- Trainers' Guide
				SD3- Power to Voice

NGO Mahita – O2				
Daily Diary	Interview	Focus Group Discussion	Participatory Video	Secondary Data
D2	I6-Masiya	G5- on Research Questions	V3-PV	SV14-Taaleem Zaroori Hai
	I7-Sameena	G6- on Actors' Map		SV15-Efforts
	I8-Yasmeen	G7- on Actors' Agenda		SV16-Kamyabi Ka Rasta
	I9-Amreen	G8- on Participants' experiences		SV17-Mera Bhi Sapna Hai
	I10-Reshma			SV18-Mujhe Jeene Do
	I11-Shakera			SV19-My Confidence
	I12-Anil			SV20-My story of success
	I13-Nitin			SV21-Nikaha
	I14-Ramesh			SV22-Our Rights
				SV23-Punishment
				SV24-Reflection on Social Exclusion
				SV25-Rights and Reality
				SV26-Role of Community
				SV27- Sahi Faisla
				SD4- GFC India Objectives
				SD5- Videoactive Girls Toolkit

Appendix 6: Excerpt of Summary Reports of Akshara and Mahita

Summary Report: Pilot Study at Mahita

28th Feb – 05th March 2011

The Community Media Unit

Mahita's Community Media Unit started with a funding from the Global Fund for Children in January 2009. This funding aimed at providing media training to adolescent girls through participatory methods, so that they can speak out about their own issues. The project ran under this funding for a year.

The training started with 26 girls, and after several of them dropped out, there are 10 girls left in the current team. After the funding from Global Fund stopped, Mahita has been raising funds on its own to sustain this group of girls.

These girls work on a more voluntary basis, where they come in when it is convenient for them. Mahita is also giving them a small stipend. There is one coordinator and one staff member of Mahita who supports them with technical issues.

This team usually produced one short news bulletin and one other video (either in fiction or documentary format). They have started screening their videos in the community areas from where these girls come.

Ethics, Consent and Copyright

I received the clearance from the Ethics Committee and therefore, I could proceed with getting the consent. I had decided to research with the girls above 16 years. The Organisation's director told me that six girls are above 16 years and four are below 16. However, when I asked them for their name, address and age, only one of them said she was below 16 years. It took me by surprise.

Ethics

While the girls were filling this information out, one of them simply said, 'Write 17 years, I must be 17.' That is when I realized many of them wouldn't have birth certificates and wouldn't know their exact age (interestingly enough, they have made a video on how girls sometimes cannot go to schools because their parents don't have a birth certificate and to get a certificate they have to pay bribes, and parents wouldn't want to spend that kind of money on a girl). It, therefore, becomes almost impossible for me to determine who to work with and not. I had to take a decision to go with the age the girls have said themselves.

Also, the parental consent that is required, from an ethics perspective, is definitely not simplistic and I think, very debatable. First, many parents initially did not approve these girls stepping out of the home at all, let alone go for a video training. Many girls lied at home about what they were doing, to be able to come to the training. Many drop-outs also happened because the parents did not approve. The same parents also get them married at an extremely young age (again, the girls have made a video on child marriage and marriages with Arab Sheikhs for money). How can then anyone assume that these parents, who illegally marry their girls off, can make the right decisions for their girls, which the girls cannot make themselves? Instead, the girls have managed to

change the perspective of their own parents post this training. I don't have to get parental consent anymore as the girls are above 16 years, but since it came up in the Ethics clearance, it really got me thinking.

Consent

All the girls, along with the coordinator, have given their consent.

All of them have mentioned they would like to be recognized for their contribution and have given consent for appearing in photographs and videos.

They mentioned that they have been on TV, newspapers etc., and wouldn't mind revealing their identity, instead they want more and more people to know about them and their work.

Copyright

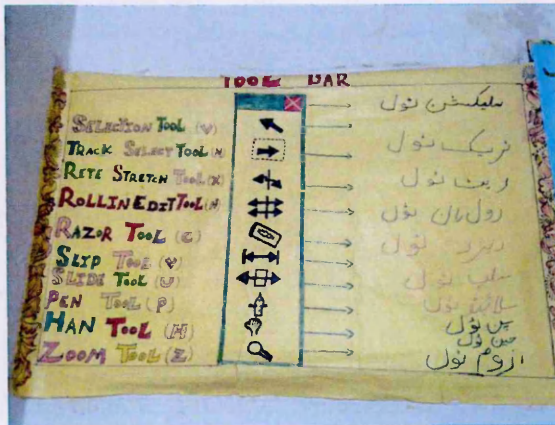
Like Akshara, they too wanted to have a 'All rights Reserved copyright' between Mahita and the Faculty. The Consent form has been modified accordingly.

Data collection

The one week at Mahita was extremely intensive. It included one interview and two group activities along with participant observation.

I started the week with an informal chat with Ramesh, the Director and Nitin, the trainer-coordinator. I went to their field office, where all the girls come, and saw most of the videos that they have made till now.

I gathered some basic information about how the work is going, what kind of videos are they making now, the process they are adopting, what their plans are of taking this forward etc.



Summary Report: Pilot Study at Akshara's Apna TV

18th Jan – 11th Feb 2011

The Community Media Unit

Apna TV is the name of the Community Media Unit, which for all practical reasons works as Akshara's project. What started as a Community Video Unit in 2006 has now become a Community Media Unit with three girls working full-time as media producers, one trainer/coordinator and two girls working with the unit along with another programme (Gender Resource Center) of Akshara.

My interaction till now has been with those working full-time.

Consent and Copyright

The issue of consent has been discussed with all the participants and the information (as in the information sheet) has been given.

All the participants have orally given their consent to participate in the research project till they are a part of Apna TV. (I haven't been able to get written consent as yet, because I still have not received a reply from the Ethics Committee).

The participants want to have their identities known, as they feel this is something they are proud of and would want to be acknowledged for.

They are comfortable appearing in photographs and videos.

We discussed on length about copyright issues. They do not want Open Content Licensing, but 'all rights reserved' copyright. They felt the data that is being generated here is mainly for self-reflection and academic purposes. They would not want it to be shared openly. They would want the copyright to lie with both The Open University and Akshara. I would, therefore, need to find out how best this can be done through the available copyright policies.

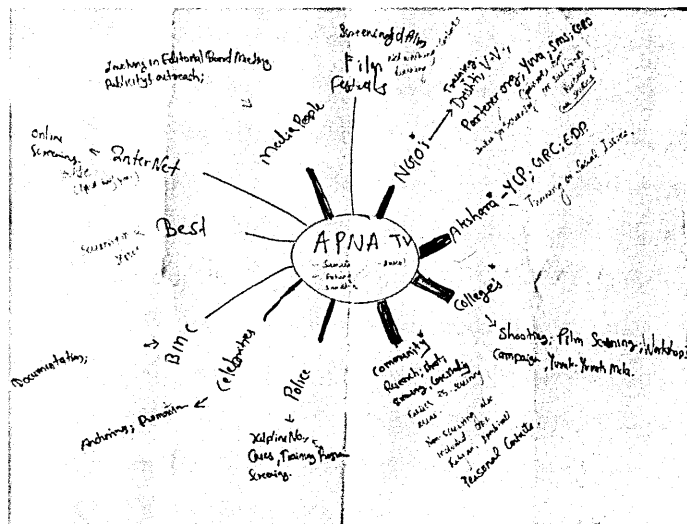
Data collection

I had apprehensions before starting at Akshara's 'Apna TV' (translates to 'Our TV') that I would be associated with my previous role as a trainer. However, it was comparatively easier to slip into the researcher's role. On the first day itself, when I talked to the participants about my previous work and what I am doing right now, it helped the participants understand my position as a researcher and my purpose of being there.

The first week was spent in acclimatizing with the participants and the organisation, explaining the research, the issues around consent and an overview of the research process. Though, I had planned interviews and group discussions in the first week itself, I refrained from conducting them, which I think gave both the participants and me enough time to get comfortable with each other.

I spent most of that week observing and asking questions about the work going on, to place my line of enquiry in an appropriate direction. This also gave me the opportunity to have several informal discussions, by-the-way talks, and get a sense of their work with PV.

I started the second week with a group activity of mapping out the various actors associated with Apna TV. This mapping would be helpful in working with the analytical framework.



Appendix 7: Excerpt of the Pilot Study Analysis

1. Participatory Video: Enabling participants

There is an existing argument that PV empowers the participants. Individuals participating in a PV project gain skills and experiences, which promote confidence, leadership and an active engagement with issues. (De Negri et al., 1998; Evans and Foster, 2009; Bery and Stuart, 1996)

Through the pilot study, I investigated whether PV enables women participants (referred to as video-makers from now on) to build their capabilities, realize their agency and become a part of decision-making processes, and if it does, then in what ways.

To investigate this, it was pertinent to first understand gender-based marginalization, which women face, in their local context, and then closely look at the changes that being a part of the PV process has brought to them personally, and in their environment.

1.1 Participation in video-making

- A PV process differs with different organisations, contexts, participants and agendas. So, the workings of a WAVE, a Mahita and an Akshara differ from each other as well. Certain things though are similar to PV initiatives. It is a skill-building process, where almost all the participants have no previous experience of handling a camera. The participants learn the technical skills of making a video, develop their critical thinking skills to communicate on issues

effectively and also present possible solutions. Learning the skills is critical to participant's expectations out of these projects.

- The participants usually come up with issues they would want to make a film on (Johansson et al., 1999). It being a participatory process, the focus is usually on basing the videos on personal experiences, which makes them more confident and sure of themselves. 'As a woman, I myself have known about the issues that I made a video on', Sulochana (WAVE). Although data suggests, inclusion of participants' personal experiences sometimes depends on the agenda set by the funding or the organisation. They might make videos on personal experiences during the training period, but when it is about making films that come as an 'output', the issues which fit organisational agendas are picked up.
- During the video-making the participants are encouraged to take up roles like that of a director, camera-person, narrator, editor with support from the facilitators. However, the format of the film might be restricted by what the participants have been trained into. Like Samata (Akshara) said in her interview, 'What really got overbearing was the format of case studies, success stories, vox-pop. It was very restrictive and lead to monotony.' Often, the organisation and the participants also seek inputs during video-making from their 'local community' as well, in form of research, surveys, interviews, vox-pops, feedbacks etc. The organisation provides its own expert inputs in the film as well through orientations, discussions and so on.
- In PV, it is important to focus on how participatory the process is even within an organisation to set objectives and agendas (Evans and Foster, 2009). Two questions were raised while working on the research questions with one of the organisations. One, if they could say 'No' to their NGO, when deputed to work only on, for example, video documentation of official events or other office work

than making videos on issues. Second, if their media unit can have separate identity from the organisation. This is crucial from the point of view of sustainability as well that whether this process can enable the participants to an extent where they can explore their own capabilities, or does it bind them within the organisation's limits. Also, there should be a space where the participants learn from each other and contribute to the social learning process (Underwood and Jabre, 2003).

- Local viewing of videos has been stated as being critical to a PV process (Lunch, 2007), which makes them critically aware about their personal and collective needs (White, 2003). Both Akshara and Mahita have focused on local screenings to first, build support for their own work and second, to mobilize those communities to work on their local social issues. However, their strategies are changing with time, based on the resources available, and their goals. For instance, Akshara has stopped screenings in slum communities by itself as it has limited resources, focusing only on colleges, but their videos are now being screened by other partner grassroots organisations in different slum areas.

1.2 Gender-based marginalization: The local context

- Syed (2010) asserts, 'The position of gender in societies is usually one of women's disempowerment and disadvantage to their male counterparts'. In the places where this study was done, there are several gender-based issues, which highlight the marginalization of women. There are gender constructs, which women have been 'upholding'; therefore, there are several challenges

they face when they participate in processes that might change their position in a patriarchal setup.

- The video-makers have mostly made videos on gender-based issues they see around them. In the two field work areas in Mahita and Akshara, the issues have ranged from infanticide, foeticide, child marriage to sexual harassment and domestic violence. They have also made videos on other social issues, but often with a gender perspective like basic amenities for girl students in schools, space for women to play etc., or as Clara (WAVE) mentioned in her interview, 'There were issues that girls are traditionally not allowed to get into. It is thought that a girl can never talk about an issue like that. I could talk about such issues through WAVE.'
- Most of the girls faced challenges when they started working as video-makers. The gender constructs that define what a woman can do, what her role in the society is, how her appearance should be etc., restricted the video-makers. For instance, Masiya (Mahita) revealed, 'When we used to go for shooting at the beginning, the boys would pass comments; they would talk about snatching the camera or breaking it.' On the other hand, many parents allowed the girls to participate in a project because of the stipend they got. Financial contribution by women, in these economically marginalized families, managed to allow the girls navigate through some of those gender constructs.

1.3 Power negotiation by video-makers

- Initially, many video-makers, especially at Mahita, did not reveal to their fathers/brother that they were involved in a PV project. However, once their videos were screened for the parents, and when they got media coverage, they managed to convince the family about their work (see Protz, 1994). Some of

them even restarted their studies and have started taking decisions on their own, as mentioned by Masiya (Mahita).

- They have managed to change other people's views about them, and build some support in their local areas for their work through meetings, screenings, inviting them to be a part of their films etc. Media coverage in newspapers and television has had a huge impact as well.
- However, this 'power negotiation' hasn't led to 'absolute' empowerment. They cannot take decisions regarding many matters by themselves, like travelling outside the city for trainings, meets etc., or make videos on issues, which might irk local community members. It is more a constant process, where power relations aren't instantly 'destabilised' but are challenged in many small ways.

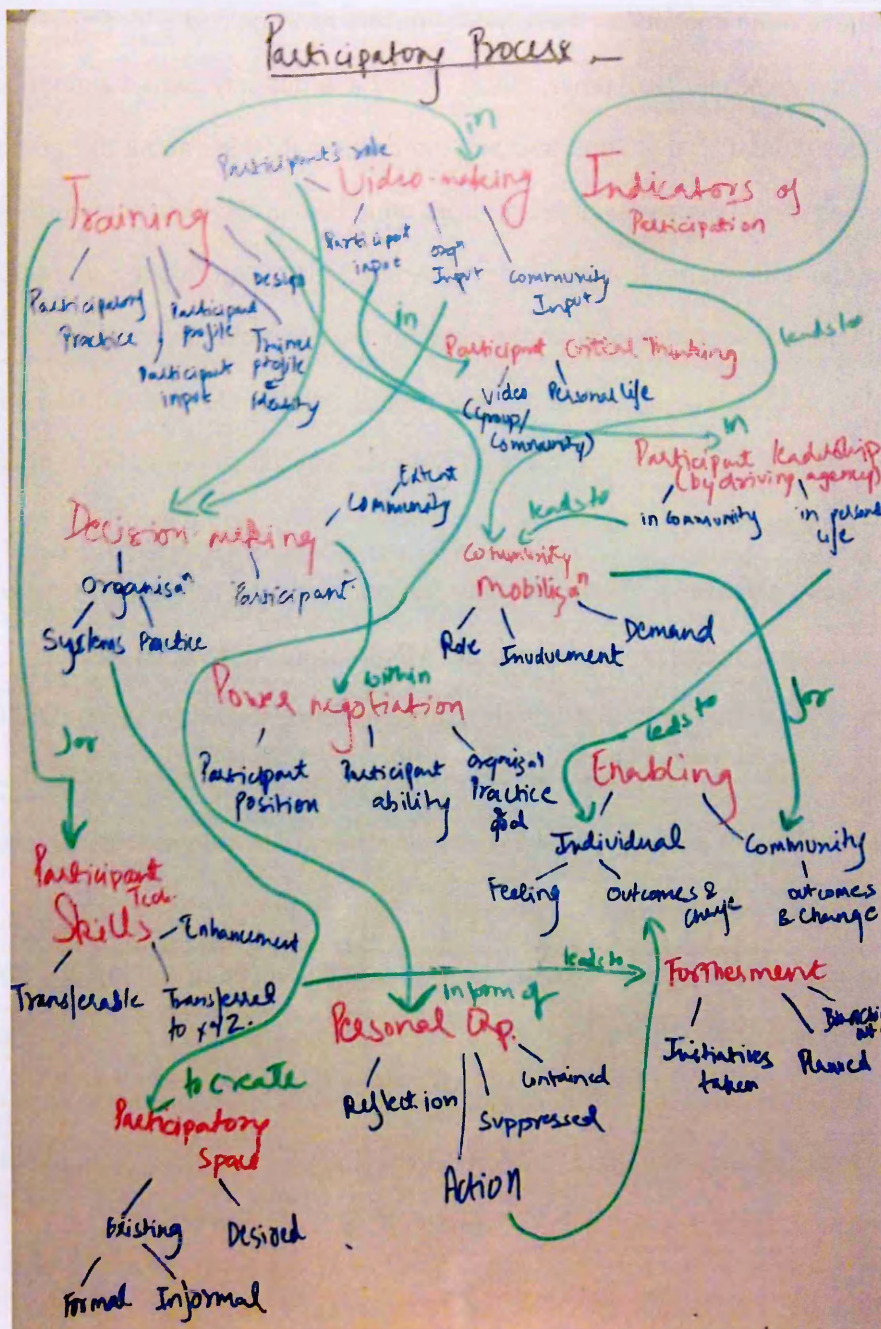
1.4 Initiatives taken

- Nonetheless, the video-makers have been able to talk about issues they could not earlier. They are making videos on gender issues around them, screening it to the communities, where communities either did not see certain issues as a problem like child marriage or sexual harassment of girls.
- They have also taken initiatives that challenge the popular gender constructs. As Masiya (Mahita) said, 'Now when we go they say - Arre those *Videowallahas* have come. Earlier they would say, these girls have no work and wearing burqas they move around with cameras, as if they've become big reporters.'
- They are building their own agency through such a process by being more aware, taking stand on issues, changing their position in their community by working on local issues, and expressing themselves while reaching out through videos.

1.5 Impacts

- There have been impacts as these video-makers have gained a 'powerful role' in their communities (see Turner, 1992). They have not only gained support for themselves, but also managed to make the community think about the gender issues and even take certain steps to work on it. Like in the local community in Mahita, parents married young girls to Arab Sheikhs for money in return, without proper knowledge of what the girl goes through post-marriage. After the screening of the video on the same issue, many parents pledged not to marry their daughters like this and some even reported when they got to know about child marriages.
- The video-makers are confident now to go and shoot videos, express themselves and also establish a dialogue in their local communities. Most of the interviewees said they feel that with the camera as a tool, they can contribute to changes. Their own perspectives have changed as well, 'Maybe there were doubts in my mind as well, which I explored through the videos' – Sulochana (WAVE).
- In many cases there have been impacts which cannot be 'seen' but like Samata (Akshara) says, 'Also, discussions happen because there are questions and there are questions because there is some conflict in what they thought and what we said through the film. So, we are doing such work which makes people question. And that is the beginning of change. That is change itself.'

Appendix 8: Example of a Cognitive Map



Appendix 9: Research Information Sheet

PhD Research Project: Exploring Participatory Video: Its impact on Gender-based marginalization in the Participatory Development Context

Researcher: Namita Singh

About

I am a PhD student at the Open University, UK. The course began in March 2010 and is due to finish in February 2013. Three organisations working with PV are participating in this research.

I would be collecting data at..... (Organisations' Name) fromto..... for a pilot study. The proposed dates for the full study are..... to.....

It will be a participatory research involving the people working with Participatory Video (PV) in the organisation. The video-makers in the organisation would be the key participants. The research would also involve participants making a reflective video on their PV practice and surroundings.

Aim of the research

This participatory research aims to answer questions on impacts of Participatory Video on gender-based marginalization. The research is set in the Indian context.

During the research, the aim would be to

- Understand the Participatory Video process as adopted by the organisation

- Help you reflect on your own practice and surroundings to further strengthen yourself and your work
- Support you to critically think about how your PV work impacts gender-based marginalization, in your personal lives, your community and the larger society
- Make links with PV and empowerment i.e. if PV has empowered you, your local community etc.
- Understand if PV is contributing to participatory development. If yes, then how?

Discussion

This information sheet provides information related to the research, data collection methods and data protection. After reading this information the participants give their consent to participate in the research.

Before the data collection starts, I would like to discuss, issues if any. Any questions about the research are welcome during this discussion. You can approach me personally as well, after the group meeting. Any participant who does not want to participate can communicate that to me personally.

Process

I have received an approval from the organisation Director to conduct the research here. However, it would be your personal decision whether to participate or not, after you have received the information about the aim of the project and understood it.

Research Methods

I would discuss the research aim and questions in detail with the all of you. You would

- be interviewed
- participate in group discussions
- make a video on your work
- Reflect on videos produced by you as part of your PV project

Participant Observation

I would be participating in and observing your daily activities at the organisation.

I would also want to spend time with you in your family/community settings, only if invited and allowed by you. This is for the purpose of understanding the local context further and getting aware of your personal experiences on gender-based marginalization.

Interviews

I would conduct personal interviews with all of you. The interview would aim to understand your personal experiences, thoughts and reflections on your work and local environment and the changes you have seen.

Focus Group Discussions

I would conduct 2-3 group discussions on themes focusing on impact of the work and reflecting back and improving your practice.

Participatory Video

The video to be made during the research would be made through a completely participatory approach. You would decide the theme of the video, the structure, the length and its final form. You will be the participants of the video in both making it and featuring in it.

Since it is a participatory process, you should choose the issues to be discussed, what you want to say and how you want to represent yourself. You would do the final editing too. The group should decide who the audience of the film should be.

You can decide to use the video either for yourselves and the organisation or decide to show it to select audience through organized screenings or decide to keep it public through dissemination over the Internet. This would be decided in the group when the video-making process begins.

The video would only be shown to an audience agreed upon by all the participants.

Data

Data refers to the information that I collect during this research.

- I would collect personal data that includes: Name, Age, Address, Educational Background and Occupation.
- Your personal data will not be shared with any unauthorised person/organisation. I would use aliases in the narrative text and quotes used from interviews, in the thesis to keep all the participants anonymous.
- I would collect data through the observation, interviews, discussions and video. Statements made during interviews and discussions might reflect in form of quotes in the thesis. The interviews would be used for narrative text. The video

would be in exactly the same form as made by the participants, in support to the thesis. This data (including the video) might also be used for further academic purposes like journal papers and conferences, other than the thesis.

- Your anonymity would be maintained in the narrative text in the thesis. Though, if you want to be recognized and identified for the data you have provided, that would be respected and your name would be mentioned in the narrative text.
- It might not be possible to maintain anonymity in a video recording and you might be recognized. Therefore, provide consent to be video-recorded keeping this in mind.
- You can always ask me how specific information/data will be used.
- You can also ask to have a look at data that has already been collected and relates to you. You will have access to all the data you have provided all times during the research. This is to ensure that you can re-check any information you are not confident you want to share.
- Any information shared by any participant in confidentiality during interviews would be kept so. I recognize that sometimes you might share certain information with me while answering questions, but do not necessarily intend to share it with anyone else. If the information is deemed as something crucial that needs to be brought out and both of us (the researcher and participant) decide so together, it would be shared with a responsible third person without revealing your identity.
- The data analysis would be shared with the research participants, also inviting their feedback. The outcome of the research would also be shared (either personally, if time and resources allow, or electronically).

Consent

- You would be given a consent form to approve your participation after receiving this information. All the data collected through observation, interviews, discussions and video would be used for the purpose of this research only. If you feel uncomfortable about the way data related to them might be used, you can withdraw your consent. You can also ask for example, for certain parts of an interview, or a part of video in which you feature, to be not used.
- All the data relating to you would be shared during the initial data analysis. You should think carefully about if you agree to the data relating to you, and inform me accordingly.
- I would also inform all the participants before the final writing-up of the thesis, to allow for changes if any. It is planned to submit the thesis in January 2013.
- If you withdraw your consent at any stage, all data relating to you would be destroyed immediately.

Data Protection

- All the data collected would be stored securely, and not disclosed or shared with unauthorised individuals/organisations.
- As mentioned above, all collected data would be used only for the purpose of my PhD research
- All the participants would be anonymised in the written report, unless they ask to be recognized for their contribution.
- The personal data and other collected data will not be passed to any third party, even once the research process is over.

- You have a right to access the data pertaining to you that is with me.
 - The data would be only with me at all times, with proper security and back-ups.
- The data storage is in compliance with the Data Protection Act as stipulated by the Open University.

Contact

Researcher: Namita Singh; n.singh@open.ac.uk

Research Supervisor: Dr. Chris High; c.high@open.ac.uk

Appendix 10: Research Consent Form

I,, agree to take part in the PhD research being conducted by Namita Singh.

I have been informed about the purpose of the research and the extent of participation needed from me.

I have been informed that personal data including name, age, address, educational background and occupation would be collected.

I have been informed that I would be anonymised in the narrative text, unless I ask to be recognized for my contribution.

I agree to be a part of the video to be made during the research and recognize that I may be identified if I appear in it.

I have been assured that any confidential information shared with the researcher, and my anonymity in that case, will be protected as specified in the Information Sheet.

I have been informed that I may refuse participation at any point by informing the researcher.

I have been informed that the published data (in form of the thesis, and including the video) might be used for further academic purposes like journal papers, conferences and other publications.

I understand that if I have any concerns or difficulties I can contact: Namita Singh at n.singh@open.ac.uk. If I want to talk to someone else about the project I can contact the Research Supervisor, Dr. Chris High at c.high@open.ac.uk

I assign the copyright for my contribution to the Organisation (Akshara, Mumbai) and the Faculty for use in education, research and publication.

Signed:

Date:

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