



American Refugee Committee
INTERNATIONAL

Through Our Eyes:

**Participatory communication for community empowerment
and social change**



Reference: APS #M-OAA-EGAT-WID-07-248
Cooperative Agreement: EWD-A-00-07-00002

SEVENTH QUARTER REPORT

April 1 – June 30, 2009

Submitted to:

**U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
Office of Women in Development (EGAT/WID)**

July 2009

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1) Introduction/Background

Through Our Eyes is implemented by American Refugee Committee-International (ARC) and its partner Communication for Change (C4C). The project uses community-generated, participatory video activities to address gender-based violence (GBV), harmful traditional practices (HTP), and related health concerns in conflict-affected settings.

Participatory videos initiate a dynamic process of local engagement and dialogue on sensitive issues, such as GBV and HTP. Videos are produced by, with, and for community members through a process that emphasizes collaboration and inclusion. The faces, scenarios, and locales in the videos have immediate resonance for viewers and the medium is accessible to all, regardless of literacy level.

Originally piloted in Guinea and Liberia in 2006, *Through Our Eyes* has received multi-year support from USAID/WID. This funding enables activities with ARC-Liberia, ARC-Rwanda, ARC-Southern Sudan, ARC-Thailand, and ARC-Uganda. Activities are ongoing in Liberia, Rwanda, and Uganda. Activities will be initiated in Uganda and Thailand in 2009.

2) Report Overview

Progress was made on all three project objectives this quarter. Key activities included scoping visits to Uganda and Thailand, follow-up trainings in Southern Sudan and Rwanda, the initiation of baseline assessment activities in Liberia, and revisions to the desk review and Community Video Training Guide.

A meeting was held with the project's AOTR, Julie Hanson Swanson, on April 1, 2009 to provide project updates, and discuss upcoming assessment and travel plans.

A briefing on the *Through Our Eyes* and upcoming training activities was held at the WID office on April 29, and was attended by representatives from USAID, OFDA, ARC and BPRM.

3) Security Situations: Liberia, Rwanda, Uganda, Thailand, Southern Sudan

The security situation in Liberia, Uganda, Thailand, and Rwanda remained stable during the reporting period.

In Southern Sudan, the ARC office was put on lockdown for SPLA Day (May 16), due to security concerns. The *Through Our Eyes* trainers had originally been scheduled to leave Yei, Southern Sudan on May 16, but were required to defer their departure from Yei by three days, until the security concerns alleviated. Otherwise, there were no other security concerns affecting ARC program implementation in Southern Sudan.

4) Program Implementation

4.1) OBJECTIVE 1

To conduct an in-depth desk review, in conjunction with participatory pre-, mid-term, and post-intervention assessments, on relevant social norms that influence or sustain targeted GBV/HTP issues in conflict-affected populations in Liberia, Rwanda, and Pakistan.

Activities ACCOMPLISHED during reporting period:

- **April 2009** – The Participatory Communication Coordinator, Reproductive Health Officer, and Senior Health Technical Advisor held discussions with a specialist in participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) techniques to discuss baseline assessment approach, and to discuss possible future collaborations.
- **April 2009** -- Feedback on draft assessment tools was solicited from several monitoring and evaluation experts and feedback will be incorporated into the final drafts.
- **May 2009**—Draft baseline assessment tools were sent to WID AOTR Julie Hanson Swanson for review. Her feedback was incorporated into the final tools.
- **June 2009**—A revised draft of the desk review was completed, including background information on participatory communication methodology, special concerns related to GBV and HTP programming in conflict affected settings, profiles of relevant initiatives, and a table of 38 communication initiatives related to GBV, gender roles, and/or harmful traditional practices in development and conflict-affected settings.
- **June 2009** –The baseline assessment tools and action plans were finalized for Uganda, Rwanda, Southern Sudan, Thailand, and Liberia. Prior to completion of the tools, feedback was solicited from several monitoring and evaluation experts at international agencies in Washington DC.
- **June 2009** – The Participatory Communication Program Coordinator oriented Through Our Eyes focal points in each country to the assessment tools and kept in regular communication with all teams as they prepared for assessment activities.
- **June 2009** – The Liberia team completed the unstructured/semi-structured component of the assessment. Transcripts were sent to the Program Coordinator for analysis.

Activities PLANNED for next reporting period:

- Solicitation of feedback on the draft desk review
- Further revision of the desk review (to be finalized by October)
- Completion of baseline assessment activities in Uganda, Rwanda, Southern Sudan, and Liberia (*Thailand assessment activities to be completed by October*)

4.2) OBJECTIVE 2

To facilitate knowledge, attitude, and behavior change related to relevant GBV/HTP issues in each country/cultural context.

Activities ACCOMPLISHED during reporting period:

- **April-June 2009** – The Participatory Communication Program Coordinator and C4C Consultant provided ongoing technical support related to video production and GBV/HTP/gender themes covered in the films to the Liberia, Rwanda, and Southern Sudan teams through calls, emails, and meetings in-country.
- **April-June 2009**– The teams completed 19 playback sessions in Rwanda, 12 playback sessions in Southern Sudan, and 12 in Liberia
- **April-June 2009**– The teams completed 5 new videos in Rwanda, 4 in Southern Sudan, and 3 in Liberia
- **April- June 2009**- The Liberia team conducted playback training sessions for the following partner agencies: LIGHT Association for People Living with HIV/AIDS, Fistula Rehabilitation Center, FIND, and ARC Peer Educators in Lofa County.
- **May 2009** --The Participatory Communication Program Coordinator traveled to Uganda for a scoping visit (May 2-7), to prepare for the initiation of Through Our Eyes activities in Gulu. The trip presented the opportunity to brief staff on Through Our Eyes activities, meet with partner agency representatives, discuss budget and management, identify a Through Our Eyes focal point, and select potential video team members.
- **May 2009** – The Participatory Communication Coordinator (Chelsea Cooper), C4C consultant (Lauren Goodsmith), and Liberian Communication Specialist/Through Our Eyes Trainer (Albert Pyne) traveled to Yei, Southern Sudan to conduct a six day follow-up participatory communication training for the Through Our Eyes team. Just prior to this trip, two local Through Our Eyes coordination focal points were identified.
- **May 2009** – Immediately following the training in Southern Sudan, The Participatory Communication Coordinator, C4C consultant, and Liberian Communication Specialist/Through Our Eyes Trainer traveled to Rwanda to conduct a six day follow-up participatory communication training.
- **May 2009** – Following the initial training in Yei, Southern Sudan, participatory communication activities have also been initiated within ARC's program in Nimule, Southern Sudan.
- **June 2009** – The Participatory Communication Program Coordinator and other key ARC staff attended the “Engaging Men in Preventing and Mitigating Gender-Based Violence in Post-Conflict Settings in Sub-Saharan Africa” symposium, sponsored by World Bank/ICRW/MenEngage (June 8, 2009).
- **June 2009** – The Participatory Communication Program Coordinator conducted a scoping visit to Thailand to prepare for the initiation of Through Our Eyes activities in Nu Po refugee camp. The trip presented the opportunity to brief staff on Through Our Eyes activities, meet with partner agency representatives, discuss budget and management, identify a Through Our Eyes focal point, and select potential video team members. *USAID/WID funds were not used to cover any of the travel-related expenses for this trip.*

Activities PLANNED for next reporting period:

- The Participatory Communication Program Coordinator, C4C Consultant, and Southern Sudanese Communication Specialist/Through Our Eyes Trainer Rose T. Michael will conduct a two-week initial participatory communication training in Gulu, Uganda. *USAID/WID funds will not be used to cover expenses related to the initial training.*
- Increased focus on improving quality and quantity of community playback sessions in each country site
- Provide continued technical assistance and support to Liberia, Rwanda, and Southern Sudan teams

4.3) OBJECTIVE 3

To create a toolkit and advocacy materials to facilitate replication and disseminate lessons learned among an international audience to aid others in the use of participatory communication to address GBV/HTP.

Activities ACCOMPLISHED during reporting period:

- **April 2009** – Tom Hommeyer, video production and digital editing specialist, held a two day digital editing training session for the Participatory Communication Program Coordinator and Communication for Change consultant (April 21-22).
- **April 2009** -- A briefing on the Through Our Eyes and upcoming training activities was held at the WID office on April 29, and was attended by representatives from USAID, OFDA, ARC and BPRM.
- **May 2009** – Rita Curtis Meyer was contracted to digitally enhance drawings for the Through Our Eyes Community Video Training Guide.
- **May 2009** – The updated draft of the Community Video Training Guide was reviewed by the Through Our Eyes team in Liberia
- **May 2009** – Reporting forms for video production and playbacks were updated and reviewed with each country team.
- **May 2009** – Key members of the Southern Sudan and Rwanda teams were interviewed on film, to learn about their perceptions of how the project has influenced change in their communities, and what they personally have gained from participation.
- **May 2009** – The Participatory Communication Program Coordinator met with Mission representatives in Gulu, Uganda and Kigali, Rwanda to brief key focal points on the Through Our Eyes project.
- **June 2009** – Tom Hommeyer, video production and digital editing specialist, reviewed the Community Video Training Guide and feedback was provided through a call (and three typed pages of in-depth feedback) with the Participatory Communication Program Coordinator and C4C consultant (June 10).
- **June 2009**-- The Participatory Communication Program Coordinator traveled to Kampala, Uganda for the ARC GBV Partnership Conference, where she facilitated a session on behavior change communication and male engagement, and presented the assessment tools developed for the Through Our Eyes baseline assessment. *Travel costs to, and within Uganda, for this conference were not charged to the USAID/WID grant.*

- **June 2009** – Rose T. Michael, Through Our Eyes focal point in Southern Sudan, was honored with the Mildred Leet Award for the Advancement of Women at the 2009 Interaction Forum in Washington DC.

Activities PLANNED for next reporting period:

- Follow up briefing for participants at the April briefing (and others) to provide an update on recent scoping activities and trainings in Uganda, Rwanda, Southern Sudan, and Thailand.
- Subtitles will be created for the Sudan, Rwanda, and Liberia interviews so that the interview footage can be shown and disseminated on a wider scale.
- The Participatory Communication Program Coordinator, Reproductive Health Program Officer, and Senior Health Technical Advisor will meet with Lauren Goodsmith (C4C Consultant) and Sara Stuart (C4C President) to discuss the current status of Through Our Eyes activities, and future activities and plans for project advocacy.
- The C4C consultant will submit an updated draft of the Community Video Training Guide to the ARC Participatory Communication Program Coordinator, Reproductive Health Program Officer and Senior Health Technical Advisor for review and revision.
- Opportunities for project-related media/public relations will be further explored.
- Create updated list of videos produced to date, project-wide.

5) Lessons Learned and Applied Action

VIDEO MESSAGING:

Having clear, concise, and gender-sensitive video messaging is critical to behavior change communication efforts. Otherwise, viewers may leave the video playback with a message other than that which was intended by the video team. Technical support to the teams this quarter included a major focus on theme selection and plot development. It had been previously noted that some of the teams' videos had included complex plots that were hard to follow, lacked a clear message, and included components that may not be entirely consistent with a gender sensitive approach. During the trainings in Southern Sudan and Rwanda, the trainers reviewed the "Guidelines for Creating Communication Materials on Violence Against Women" (Raising Voices) with the team, and reviewed several past films within the context of the Guidelines. The teams came to realize some of the areas that lacked clarity or appropriate messaging. The Through Our Eyes focal points and ARC support staff were also encouraged to help disseminate these messages during video work in the future.

SOUTH-TO-SOUTH SHARING:

During this quarter, sharing of experiences across project sites played a valuable role. Albert Pyne, ARC Liberia Communication Specialist and member of the Through Our Eyes team, co-facilitated the participatory communication trainings in Rwanda and Southern Sudan. Through the trainings, videos, personal experiences, and technical advice was shared across Through Our Eyes project sites. The Rwanda and Southern Sudan teams were excited to see and hear from someone who has been working with the project for several years in an external setting. Through this project, ARC and C4C are hoping to prepare a Network of communication specialists and master trainers who will be able to continue project activities well into the future. During the scoping visits to Uganda and Thailand, videos from Liberia and Southern Sudan teams were screened

for staff and partner agency representatives. The videos helped the teams to visualize how the project works, and sparked ideas for themes that they may want to cover in the future. During the Program Coordinator's field assessment orientation and support calls, advice was provided to teams based on challenges, lessons learned and suggestions provided by the other teams implementing Through Our Eyes activities. It is hoped that in the coming months, a web forum will be created where team members can go online and provide updates, photos, and technical advice to each other, with the aim of further strengthening their cross-country relationships, emphasize their role as leaders, and help to enable them with the confidence to approach each other for support.

CENTRAL IMPORTANCE OF PLAYBACKS (key monitoring tool):

During this quarter, the Participatory Communication Program Coordinator and Communication for Change Consultant continued to encourage the teams to focus attention on the quality and number of playbacks conducted. The Liberia team had continued to produce videos in large numbers, in spite of the fact that they already had 40+ videos on file. This resulted in a de-emphasis on playback efforts. In Rwanda, too, it was noted that many of the playback facilitators did not seem fully confident with moderating discussions after the video screenings. During the trainings in Rwanda and Southern Sudan, playbacks were emphasized as a priority topic. Team members role-played with each other, conducted directly observed playbacks within the communities, and then provided feedback to each other on strengths and areas for improvement. The number of playbacks increased significantly in Southern Sudan from April (prior to the trainings) to May and June (after the trainings). The central importance of playbacks was also emphasized with the Liberia team during regular support calls.

6) Voices from the Field

"In our site here we produce tapes when we ask the community to identify the problem in the community that is affecting them. Then we produce the tape that is in relation to that problem in order to address it...If you see the participatory video approach, like the discussion we take in the community, it tends to give local solutions to local problems. When the community comes up with the solutions, then you guide them with the discussion...A solution that is given by the community is a solution that they can follow."

- Guya Cons, ARC Southern Sudan Through Our Eyes Team Member

“It normally carries a positive message. The drama that we film is by the community, and it is for the community, and it makes the community happy that they see their own people performing in that drama, and then they feel satisfied with the message. I think there will be a great change.”

“In the playback, they like it, and they even encourage us to continue taking it to other communities, not only to remain with them who are acting in the drama, but also other communities to learn more about what is taking place on GBV and HIV/AIDS so that they will also learn how to change and how to protect themselves.”

- Rose T. Michael, ARC Southern Sudan Through Our Eyes Team Leader and Master Trainer