



BLOG, YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS /// THURSDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2019

Lights, Camera, Action: Raising Youth Voice Through Video



This blog is part of Changing The Story's #YoungChangemakers series. If you are a young person leading alternative actions for civil society building in the Global South and would like to be featured in the series, [get in touch!](#)

How can young people in developing countries take action over issues that affect them? [Imogen Davies](#) explains how Oxfam's [My Rights, My Voice programme](#) is supporting under 25s to convey advocacy messages through film.

People under 25 make up almost half of the world's population. Almost 85% of these young women and men live in developing countries. Despite these staggering figures, young people around the world often have little awareness of their rights, limited means of expressing their opinions, and no way to influence the decisions which affect them.

Oxfam's [My Rights, My Voice \(MRMV\)](#) programme is working to redress this balance by engaging marginalised young people in eight countries in Africa and Asia, enabling them to recognise and exercise their **rights to health and education services**. As a programme focused on **youth agency and active citizenship**, young people are at the heart of MRMV activities – learning about their rights, raising awareness among their peers, and engaging directly with duty-bearers to ensure that their voices and needs are heard and addressed.

This also means **young people are leading initiatives normally reserved for development professionals**. These include driving our communications products, developing our advocacy strategies and designing our learning journeys. How can we ensure that these processes are driven by youth experience and need, and involve young people in a meaningful way?

Participatory video is one way to implement youth-led planning and execution of our advocacy, communications and learning projects. Participants learn video camera skills through interactive games and a 'learning-by-doing' approach. Then they plan, shoot and edit their own films. The facilitators don't touch the cameras throughout the entire process. The participants alone decide what and how to film, and the video planning and editing is directed by the young people themselves.

The results show that they know what they're doing. In February this year, youth campaigners from the Nepal MRMV project took part in [a participatory video workshop](#) and made three films on community health care issues – here's an [overview](#). These were shown to local decision-makers and community members in the following months.

So what impact have the films had? As a result, **five village authorities have committed to providing solar panels in health clinics** to ensure that women who go into labour at night during the frequent electricity cuts no longer have to give birth in the dark. A local committee has also pledged money to build a laboratory in a village health clinic so that community members can undergo medical tests there without having to travel for hours to neighbouring villages – a right that is guaranteed in national law.

At the global level, participatory video has provided a flat, inclusive structure for young people of diverse nationalities and ages and in different campaigning areas to connect with one another. It has helped them share their ideas and strategies across countries, and decide collectively on common advocacy goals. **Supporting youth-led and executed processes through participatory video contributes to MRMV's aims in a number of ways:**

- It ensures that the story of the programme is told in the words of the young people we are working with.
- It puts the experiences of those young people at the centre of Oxfam's work.
- It provides a 'safe' space for the young people involved to explore different issues in a fun and creative way, which helps to build their skills and confidence.

Last December, youth activists from the eight country projects met in Nairobi for a [Global Advocacy Workshop](#) and made a short video, ['The Power of Youth for Change'](#). And this year in June, a workshop supported youth representatives from across the MRMV programme to make a 4-minute video on ['The My Rights, My Voice Journey'](#). This set the agenda for the MRMV Annual Learning Event with Oxfam staff and partners. Both of these videos were made after just one day of training and planning.

The resulting videos are a quick and engaging way of communicating the importance of working with and being led by young people on issues which they identify as important.

With youth making up such a sizeable percentage of the populations in the countries where Oxfam and its partners work, and figures predicted to rise significantly by 2050, methods like participatory video will be increasingly important as a means to highlight the poverty and inequality facing young people in our world today.

Find out more

- Watch ['The My Rights, My Voice Youth Journey'](#)
- Watch the overview video ['Our Right to Health Care in Nepal'](#)
- Watch ['The Power of Youth for Change'](#)
- Read more about the [My Rights, My Voice programme](#)

This post was originally published on [Oxfam's Views & Voices platform](#).

About the Author: Imogen Davies is Oxfam Great Britain's Global Advisor on Youth, Gender and Active Citizenship.

TAGS: [EDUCATION](#) [GOVERNANCE](#) [HEALTH](#) [RIGHTS](#) [YOUTH](#)