

The Role of Participatory Video Method in Enabling Filipino Older Persons to Change Myths about Aging

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Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) has advanced by leaps and bounds, opening the world and bringing people and nations closer to one another. Knowledge generation was made easy through these various inventions. First world countries have used ICTs to advance their economy, promote their own culture, and their political agenda. But what are the implications of this development to the so called *third world countries* like the Philippines and its citizenry?

Neville Jayaweera, in his article “*Rethinking Development Communication*”, opined that communication technology can bring about *social change* or development but only when accompanying structural reforms are adopted. To prove his point, he cited the results of a research undertaken between 1973 and 1983 by the University of Leicester in India with the sponsorship of the World Association for Christian Communication which were quite revealing.

.....social change was a product of a whole range of factors among which mass media were an important, though not a primary element. However, they also found that mass media tended to benefit most those segments of society who were already well – off, and merely to consolidate existing inequalities, rather than erode them (p. 83).

In third world countries particularly, where inequity is widespread, the introduction of ICT may fuel development and boost the production of outputs. However, the benefits of the so called surplus may not directly impact on the majority of the people.

The real critique should be that Third World countries have failed to match the adoption of technology with appropriate policies for structural reforms.

Inequalities widen and the status quo is consolidated and perpetuated. What is worse, the new technology tends to be used as a substitute for carrying out long overdue structural reforms. It is in this context that the ‘revolution of rising expectations’ becomes translated into a spiral of rising frustrations (p.84).

Thus, with the improvement of ICT, several questions come to mind:

- a. Have majority of the people, more particularly the marginalized sectors of society, been able to gain access to and utilize these technologies?
- b. Have they benefited from its use?
- c. What benefits did this advancement bring to them?

Guided by these considerations in their work with marginalized groups and communities, the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD), through its Research and Extension for Development Office (REDO) integrated the participatory approach in producing video materials. This undertaking is part of their continuing advocacy program for and with marginalized Filipino sectors. Although serendipitous at first, the REDO team/communication catalysts took effort and are still in the process of enriching the construct of PVP together with their partners and other stakeholders.

Now on its third year, the REDO has decided to document its experience in developing advocacy materials utilizing ICT with particular focus on the productions made for and with older persons, being part of a bigger program serving older persons. The following objectives guided the documentation of the events and episodes:

- a. elucidate on the process that the communication catalyst/s undertook in enabling the older persons to tell their stories through PVM;
- b. describe the conscientization process that the team/communication catalysts and the subjects went through along the way of production;
- c. explain the effect/s of using ICT to surface the myths about aging that are existing in the Filipino culture;
- d. identify the learnings, strengths and limitations in the use of the PVM as seen by the subjects; and
- e. pinpoint the benefits and potentials in doing video production, using the participatory method as perceived by the research team/communication catalysts.

This endeavor is significant because the integration of participatory approaches in the use of an advocacy tool is pioneering in community organizing and development. More significantly, it will strengthen the Filipinos' deep-rooted belief that older persons are an important resource in any society. However, because of the current myths about aging that permeate Philippine culture, their value has been reduced in importance and their contribution to Philippine society has become invisible. For a long time now, there are stereotypical notions that have guided Filipinos in the way they relate with the elderly as manifested in language and behavior. As a result, many of them have been neglected and cut off from the mainstream of family and community life.

Advocacy therefore is quite important in order to demystify the current notions that disempower this sector. The wisdom that they acquired from their life long experiences has to be utilized. Consciousness raising is needed among older persons themselves,

family members, and the community as a whole in order for them to enhance their status and improve their well being.

The Research and Extension for Development Office, College of Social Work and Community Development (REDO, CSWCD) and its Advocacy Program

The Research and Extension for Development Office operationalizes the vision of the College which is a *transformed socio-economic, political, and cultural structure, through the sustained collective participation of all sectors toward a humane, democratic, and sovereign Filipino society where people are empowered and free to realize their potentials*. Its programs and projects are mainly in the areas of research, extension, and publication work. In carrying out its functions, the Office is guided by a set of development principles that seeks to address the issues of equity and equality:

- a. Clients/partners are human beings who must be regarded, not as objects, but subjects in the development process.
- b. The participation of the affected sectors as well as partners and stakeholders is valuable and should therefore be elicited.
- c. Awareness building is a necessary component of advocacy work.
- d. The framework for assisting marginalized sectors needs to be holistic in approach.
- e. Networking with government, non –government and people’s organizations at the local and national levels ought to be done to generate greater support in addressing the issues of these sectors.

As part of an academic unit, REDO recognizes the increasing problems of poverty, unemployment, inadequate social services in the Philippines brought about by the widening gap between the rich and the poor. Thus, in its research and extension programs and projects, the Office provides venues for discoursing about new constructs or development frames that are being introduced as well as applies or integrates new ways of looking at development theories or perspectives. These undertakings are done on a continuing basis. A concretization of such attempt was the integration of participatory approaches in the production of video advocacy materials.

Advocacy, as a component of community organizing and development, is a major extension program of REDO. The Office supports the efforts of its partners in bringing to fore certain conditions that result from issues of inequity and inequality. This is in line with its goal of increasing the understanding of its clients/partners about their problems; enabling them to identify their own issues; and empowering them to make their voices heard, to express themselves and say what they want to say in their own words.

Thus, all Office productions dealt on particular issues, largely affecting the low income Filipinos but with particular focus on women in the urban poor setting, rural and urban informal workers, company workers, and older persons. To date, the Office was able to

make six productions, two of which were shown in a mainstream medium, the television-
“Bahay-Bahayan” and **“Kwentong Buhay ng mga Manggagawang Impormal”**.

- a. **“Basura”** (Trash) was the first output of REDO. This was a group production to demonstrate the skills that the participants have acquired during the training. It was part of the requirement for finishing the training course organized for the REDO team. It is a 2 minute video production revolving around the problem of waste disposal, portrayed by a young woman who was in the habit of littering only to find out later the ill effects of her actions.
- b. **“Tanaw”** (Perspective or Standpoint) and **“Panahon”** (Time), which will be discussed in greater length in this paper, were inspired by the community activities that were being held during the period. Continuing awareness building among older persons and caregivers as well as and a research on older persons were being conducted then. A member of REDO who undertook the production saw the need to highlight the manifestations of *ageism* and *gerontophobia* in Philippine society. These videos were intended to help deconstruct the pervading myths that disempower older persons and enhance the regard for them by family members in particular and Filipinos in general. It was also meant to awaken development practitioners and funding organizations to the inadequacy of programs and services for the elderly. The materials were co-produced with the local government of UP Campus.
- c. **“Bahay-Bahayan”** (Playing House), captured the miserable situation of families in a government housing project in Vitas, Tondo. It was co-produced with a women’s organization, Samahan ng Maralitang Kababaihan sa Kalunsuran (SAMAKANA).
- d. **“Ikaw Ba’y Mangggagawa?”** (Are You a Laborer?) described the experiences of workers and their struggles as members of a workers’ union fighting for their welfare in a multinational corporation. The video was co-produced with Ilaw at Buklod ng Maggagawa (IBM).
- e. **“Kwentong Buhay ng mga Manggagawang Impormal”** (Life Stories of Informal Workers) documented in five areas, the daily toil of informal workers, majority of whom are women, their problems and issues as well as their advocacy for a fair trade.

From Video Production to Participatory Video Production

The REDO became involved in video production after SONY, Japan approved a proposal submitted by the Office requesting for a complete set of equipment and capability building for the REDO team. The purpose was to provide the Office with the requirements to enable them to document the experiences of fieldwork students in the three departments, Social Work, Community Development, and Women Studies. This

tie-up between REDO and the CSWCD academic programs was intended to enrich the collection of indigenous teaching, training, and advocacy materials of CSWCD. In July, 2003, the equipment arrived as a loan to CSWCD. In January, 2004, the members of REDO were given a two-week training on video production by an employee of SONY. The first production, an output of the trainees, came out in 2004.

At the same time that the video project was being conceptualized, REDO was in the process of moving towards being a Center for Participatory Development. The team was then consciously integrating participatory approaches and strategies in its programs and projects. This development is worthy of mention because it became a push factor that motivated the Office to seriously consider this construct. Thus, making video production participatory was floated by a member of the team whose educational background was in Mass Communication. There was skepticism at the start because a number of the team members have a clear understanding about and experiences in doing community organizing work using participatory approaches. Being a new thing to them, some concerns surfaced. The first was the question of access. Are funding agencies open to assisting groups who are interested in setting up their own production facility considering the high cost of the equipment and maintenance? The second was utilization. The whole process of undertaking a video production is highly technical. Considering their limitation in reading and writing, can community groups be trained to make their own production? Can the whole undertaking be sustainable? The third was the time element. Those who will be involved in video production will have to realize that it is a time consuming endeavor. With the many responsibilities that they have as parents, bread earners, and community leaders or members, can they still stretch their day or week to accommodate additional work?

Although the production of video materials continued, there was no serious discussion about this until the late 2004 when the documentary on the informal workers was being produced. More informal talks about the topic took place, initiated by a member or two in the group until most of them became interested in it. Team members, who took greater interest in the subject area, began to review literature to find out the existence of the concept as well as the views about it and experiences of other groups or countries utilizing the approach. Later, an orientation about PVP as well as focus group discussions (FGDs) and exchanges were conducted with partners and other stakeholders. These efforts were attempts to socially construct PVP as a tool for development workers to strengthen their advocacy efforts. As a result, the knowledge and perspectives of those who participated in these activities broadened. It can therefore be said that, although serendipitous, the conceptualization of PVP underwent a process of reflection on experiences, sharing, discoursing, analyzing, and synthesizing knowledge.

REDO also saw to it that the video production would be accessible to and utilized by the faculty, students, partners, and other development practitioners. A complete set was given to the library and the list of materials was uploaded in the CSWCD website. Film

showing was conducted to provide venues for viewing them and getting feedback from the viewers.

Participatory Video Production: Empowering Marginalized Filipinos to Enhance their Status and Improve their Well Being

Based on the information generated from these activities, REDO was able to conceptualize a framework in utilizing PVP in its development efforts.

PVP as a Construct

Shirley A. White in her article “*Participatory Video: A Process that Transforms the Self and the Other*” defines the concept as a “*tool for self – definition and empowerment*” (2003:66) and “*for education and training*” (2003:67). According to her, for individuals, appearing in a production enhances a person’s self-esteem, gives recognition that s/he has something valuable to share or contribute. The experience also helps the person systematize his/her thoughts, enhance his/her analytical skills and creativity and increase his/her awareness. For groups, *it can serve as a powerful force for people to see themselves in relation to the community and become conscientized about personal needs* (2003:64). The participation of the people who are directly affected by the issue in the production itself enables them to bring out their own viewpoint and express themselves in a way that is understandable to them. That in itself is empowering because it develops their confidence. That in itself is transformative because with the medium, the marginalized can speak to the audience without consideration of their economic background or social or political status.

The results of the focus group discussions with those who participated in the video productions of REDO revealed a similarity with the perspective of White. Some of the responses included:

- PVs create awareness on the problems and issues of the community and as a result, these can be given appropriate action. -Resident, Barangay UP Campus
- *Binabasag ng PV ang elitistang pagtingin sa media. Ang alam ko, pag gusto mong ma TV ka, magbabayad ka ng airtime at mahal yun! Pero sa PV, nabibigyan ng pagkakataon na ipakita ng mga mahihirap ang kanilang mga kwento nang walang niisip na kabayaran.* (PV deconstructs the elitist stance about media. Appearance on television would mean paying for air time which is quite expensive. PV though

provides an opportunity to the poor to tell their story without worrying about payment.) – Nanay Lita from SAMAKANA-Vitas

- ***Makamasa ang PV kasi epektibong medium ito lalo na sa mga di nakapag-aral at di marunong magbasa at magsulat.*** (PV is pro-poor because it is an effective medium for those who were not able to attend formal education, for those who can not read and write.)-Vic from IBM SMC Chapter
- Educational, has an empowering process – Members, PATAMABA
- Simple, but raises important questions - Members, PATAMABA
- ***Maging daan upang maipakilala at makatulong para sa pagpo-promote ng produkto*** (It will serve as a vehicle for promoting our product.) – Member, PATAMABA
- ***Makapanghihikayat ng mga bagong kasapi ng PTMB*** (It will encourage others to join PTMB.) - Member, PATAMABA

It is interesting to note that in addition to enhancing the self and increasing the awareness of those who participated in the process, they brought to fore other features of PVP that they included as part of the construct. The inclusion of the poor and treating them as subjects in the video production process deconstructed the elitism of information and communication technology. Some participants who are informal workers also pointed out that the material became a tool for marketing their products because a number of viewers contacted them when the former saw the video. Part of the audience who are informal workers from other areas also signified their interest to join PATAMABA.

A Guide for Undertaking the Process

Making a difference in the lives of individuals, groups and communities is the main purpose of REDO's existence as an office. Thus, its strong adherence to interactive, dialogic, and people centered programs and activities. That was also their main consideration in undertaking the preparation of advocacy materials. In the whole production process, participation became the key to ensure that the subjects and their group/s gain something from the process.

In the purview of development, the *communication catalyst* (facilitator or change agent) sees to it that in PVP, the subjects' involvement will have a long term effect on them. ***Participatory communication*** with its ***“ideological, practical, and functional dimensions*** (2003: 36) must be utilized to keep their commitment to and interest for the project alive. ***It involves people in an interactive way, making communication resources accessible to them directly, in turn, helping the grassroots people acquire the knowledge and skills that enable partnership in generating messages*** (2003:37)

A suggested guide has been conceived to help in the implementation of the abovementioned frame work. The application of this perspective should however be seen

in a continuum. Factors like the individual members' capacities and the level of group functioning have to be taken into consideration in undertaking such endeavors.

Indicators	Process
<p>Pre production phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the subjects' understanding of PVP? ▪ Were the costs and implications to the group discussed? ▪ How was the need for undertaking a PVP established in the group? ▪ Who were involved in the decision making process? ▪ Were commitment and support for the activities that will be undertaken generated from the general membership? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a certain level of relationship with the group or community (building of rapport and trust). The communication catalyst works in partnership with the community organizer. ▪ Assess the level of group functioning including their knowledge about their VMG and the various activities that the group has been undertaking. ▪ Get some basic demographic information about the members including their ages, marital status, number of children, educational attainment, occupation, and family income, and their knowledge about ICT? ▪ Through participatory communication, orient them about the method and how it can be used for the organization's purpose/s. With the new information and possibilities, the subjects will be able to discuss the implications of this endeavor to them as individuals and as a group and decide if they are ready to embark on it or not.
<p>Production Phase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What was the time frame for this production? ▪ Who were involved in the management of the production? ▪ Being a partnership, how was the project managed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ With a decision to pursue a joint project, partners plan, talk about partnership and management arrangements.
<p>Research and Script Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was there a session on script writing? ▪ Who were involved in the preparation of the script? In the research work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having gotten the commitment of the group and particular individuals, the communication catalyst initiates the

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How was the script organized? 	<p>conduct of meetings as well as discussions and facilitates in the negotiations about the topics/content areas to present. These activities become venues for deepening skills in analysis and project management. The research is done in partnership with the group. The attitude of the communication catalyst is one of <i>“deference to the people and the community”</i> (2003:23).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training on scriptwriting can be conducted for identified group members who have the interest and are willing to participate in this activity. ▪ Ethics comes into play and discussed at this stage especially when there are delicate topics which will be covered in the script.
<p>Shooting, Interviews, Recording of the Narration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What does control over technology mean? ▪ Is enabling the subjects to appear on film and be heard sufficient enough to say that the development process is proceeding or is ownership of the equipment necessary to make that claim? ▪ Does having the necessary skills in operating the equipment the only way to claim empowerment? ▪ What footages will be taken to illustrate the peoples' situation? ▪ In relation to the interviews, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -who will speak for the group? -What examples will be highlighted? -How will interviews be handled? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussions about access and control of the technology in relation to PVP may be undertaken to define how participatory is being participatory. Will it be involvement all the way? This will mean that the subjects will have to be trained in handling the camera, in selecting subjects, and in using certain shooting techniques. In this case, exposure and hands on or experiential learning can be arranged. Can the involvement be selective depending on the capacity of the members? What is important is the recognition of their valuable contribution to the production. <i>In participatory message development, the videographer simply becomes a vehicle for telling someone else's story</i> (2003:23). Thus, in this case, the <i>communication catalyst</i> keeps in mind that the decision of who, what, how, where and when emanates from the subjects. They and their

	<p>stories will be the focus of the interviews or narration. This information will definitely contribute to knowledge generation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ethics and what to shoot comes into play in this phase. This concern, too, must be a topic of discussion and decision making at this juncture.
<p>Video Editing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the involvement of the subjects in this phase? Should it be in the whole phase or in identified activities where their inputs will really matter? ▪ Who will decide which endeavors will need the most significant inputs from the subjects? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This phase of video production is quite technical and time consuming. Again, the same concern as the one indicated above will apply. For interested members of the group, an orientation about this phase will help in appreciating what is to be done. Exposure to the activities may be possible as well as enabling those who are interested to have a feel in doing some of the things that need to be done, like helping arrange the shots, photos, footages, musical scoring, and giving out their opinions or ideas on how to improve certain frames.
<p>Critiquing and Finalization of the Output</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In reviewing the output, was there a sense of satisfaction among those involved and the general membership that the video captured their own situation? ▪ Can they say that it was really their work? ▪ What contribution did it make to their own as well as to their group's development? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The concretization of the group's effort can be seen in the draft and ultimately, in the final output. ▪ The group takes the lead in commenting on the contents of the draft because the film is their story. Technical improvements may be done by the <i>communication catalyst</i> in consultation or with the approval of the subjects. ▪ Assessment about the experience is done to determine its effects on the group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How did the project serve the group's purpose/s? -What benefits did individual and the group derive from the experience? -What were the limitations that they went through? -What problems did they encounter?

	-On the whole, what can they say about the whole experience?
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Utilizing Participatory Approaches in the Production of Older Persons Videos to Change Myths about Aging

The number of older persons worldwide has been steadily increasing. The interplay of economic, social and political factors has affected their wellbeing. International helping agencies have become aware of the problems and issues of this sector and have considered their condition a development issue. It is for this reason that REDO, CSWCD undertook an advocacy program for and with older persons.

As was earlier stated, there was no convergence in the meaning of PVP among the team members at this stage of production. However, it should also be pointed out that the principles of development adhered to by the office has guided the communication catalyts in relating with their subjects/partners.

Panahon and *Tanaw* were the earlier videos produced by REDO. Both presentations highlighted the issues related with aging. The former, a 10 minute presentation showed a woman demonstrating her apprehension because she was already growing older. Then she began questioning why this particular feeling. This is **gerontophobia**, the fear of aging. Some older persons also came out with their own experiences describing a lowering of regard for them by family members on account of their age due to pervading myths. This is **ageism**. It is manifested in various forms like:

1. Discrimination – refers to the prejudices experienced by older persons on account of their age. Examples of this are putting an age limit to training and study benefits and privileges of an employee; specifying a retirement age for employees
2. Marginalization – is manifested by their having less control over benefits, privileges and services. Their capabilities or contributions are not recognized. Examples of this are the inadequate programs and services for this sector and the lack of information to understand the changes occurring in their bodies and the effects on them.
3. Abuse is manifested in many forms:
 - Psychological/emotional – isolation, neglect, absence of interaction with members of the family and making fun of them as shown in our language and the Pinoy sense of humor. Terms like *gurang*, *tanda*, and *laos* meaning old are often associated diminishing ability (*makakalimutin* (forgetfulness), *mabagal kumilos* (slow foot); weakening (*masasaktin*, *alagain* (sickly); and loss of attractiveness (*tuyot* (dried up), *wala ng asim or amoy lupa*). They are characterized as having *ugaling matanda*

(attitudes of old people like *masungit* (cranky), *makulit* (irritatingly repetitive), and *mahirap pakisamahan* (difficult to deal with).

- Economic – refusal to provide for the basic needs of older persons
- Verbal – threats, curses, shouting at them.

The latter, a 15 minute production went further into discussing the roots of ageism in addition to the disclosures of the elderly. In this material, an active advocate for **well aging** explained the influence of the beliefs about aging and older persons (myths) and practices that colonizers introduced and rationalized by a set of human development theories.

A. Enabling Older Persons to Tell their Own Stories

Before taking the actual footages, the communication catalysts saw to it that rapport with the community residents in Barangay UP Campus and in Angat, Bulacan was established. The local officials in the area were aware about their presence. Time was spent with particular families so that they would be more comfortable in the presence of the team. The older individuals who were chosen and were willing to face the camera to disclose their ideas and experiences were oriented about the project, the topic that they would talk about as well as the methodology in generating information. They were free to ask questions and give suggestions. The communication catalysts emphasized that they were to reveal only those information that they are comfortable making known.

From their experiences, the communication catalysts pointed out that it is important for one to be sensitive to and empathize with the subject's emotions. Preparing them for the shooting, processing what transpired and replaying the tape later will make them feel important and will develop/enhance their self confidence. To the subjects, the production itself is indicative of the value of their contribution. Where before, there was nobody to talk to, now with the showing of the video, they will have the attention of countless people. The experience was quite enjoyable to the older persons because of the realization that they were able to help.

B. The Conscientization Process that the Subjects and the Communication Catalysts Went Through

The communication catalysts who undertook the video production had fondness and strong respect for older persons, being Filipinos. But they could not deny being influenced by pervading beliefs about aging. At the personal level, the disclosures of the subjects were very educational to them. There was a realization that what were natural before should no more be accepted as natural like the remarks making fun of older persons and other manifestations of the low regard for them. They realized that the mind set and the behavior towards older persons have a disempowering effect on them. According to them, they began to understand these people better and became more aware of their sensitivities. At the level of the local government unit in UP Campus, the resolve to continue on with the advocacy program for older persons became stronger.

By their very own experiences, the older persons who were interviewed were very much aware of their own situation. The mere opportunity of raising their issues and the possibility of being viewed by a large audience were enough to give them joy. In bringing to fore their experiences, they debunked certain myths pervading in the Philippine culture. Many of the subjects also surfaced the inadequacy of government programs for older persons and side by side with those, they enumerated their own needs.

C. Effects of Using ICT in Surfacing the Myths about Aging

In the focus group discussion (FGD) held with partners and local government officials of Barangay UP Campus, the participants recognized the positive effects of ICT in general, not just in advocating for the well being of older persons. Some of them said that PVP depicts the reality that the community people themselves see. Through the presentations, more people become aware of the various concerns of groups and communities. With the raising of consciousness, more people now will be motivated to help in addressing their community problems.

It was also emphasized that PVP is pro-poor. It breaks the elitist view about ICT because it provides a rare opportunity to the marginalized and discriminated upon to access and utilize equipment that are affordable only to the privileged. Moreover, the purpose for the undertaking is for them to tell their own stories, to make their voices heard.

D. Learnings, Strengths and Limitations in the Use of PVP

The FGD results also revealed that the subjects saw their experiences as worthwhile. Because individual older persons were interviewed rather than a group, the benefits that they mentioned were only at the level of the self. For instance, they agreed that they became more systematic in the presentation of their topic. They were surprisingly articulate and self assured in front of the camera.

The project provided channels for interacting with the communication catalysts and these opportunities sharpened their skills in analyzing and systematizing the information that they had about their own situation.

The difficulties and limitations that the subjects, other partners and stakeholders (not just older persons) identified in the FGDs conducted were mainly in the areas of:

- Cost of using the technology – How can grassroots organizations possess and maintain a facility of their own? Are funding agencies willing to subsidize these projects? Will the project be sustainable in terms of maximally utilizing the equipment and having trained members who will produce videos on a continuing basis? The time element has to be considered too.

- Productions being time consuming – Can groups spend that much time for endeavors such as this one. Ensuring participation of the general membership will mean considerable period that will be spent for discussions, consultations, and similar activities.
- Technical expertise is needed in the management and operation of the equipment and facility.
- Groups may use the equipment and facility not for the purpose that it was intended.

E. Benefits and Potentials

PVP as an advocacy tool that will be used by the **hidden or unrecognized** sectors of Philippine society will definitely enliven the organizing and development efforts of communities as substantiated by those who participated in the REDO productions, including the older persons.

Particular to the older persons, the invisibility of older persons in the mainstream of family and community life as well as the existence of ageism and gerontophobia are now being recognized. With the use of PVP, more older persons will awaken to the realization that they are a valuable resource in Philippine society. Moreover, they can have quality in their lives “**well aging**”. More development agencies, both government and non-government will open up to deconstructing their views about aging and older person and will come up with programs that will enhance the status and improve the well being of older persons. Greater benefits can also be seen when more funding agencies will open their window to providing assistance to such types of projects.

Reconstructing Participatory Approaches in VP

The PVP framework developed by REDO implies that empowerment will be achieved if the participation of the subjects and the group is substantial and the duration should be from the conceptualization of the project up to the evaluation phase. Moreover, the involvement must be based on informed choices. The ownership of the facility and equipment was a necessary element in empowerment as it will bring about the access and control of the resources that they need.

In reviewing the process of development, *Tanaw* and *Panahon* may be seen as a mainstream production. However, from REDO’s experience, participation of the group and the subjects has to be seen in a continuum and in consideration of their level of awareness about their issues. The matter regarding ownership will have to depend on the present capabilities of the subjects and group in this area.

The results of the interviews with the communication catalysts, the subjects, and the other stake holders would show that participatory approaches were used in relating with the subjects, interviewing and shooting. There are some considerations in undertaking this endeavor:

- a. The communication catalyst/s should have a high level of awareness about the issue/s of older persons so that they can help in systematizing their experiences. They should also be of the belief that maturing individuals can make valuable contribution to the project. In relating with these individuals, they are seen as subjects and not as passive recipients of instructions of what to say and do. The communication catalysts have to be sensitive in debunking the existing myths about the latter.
- b. The empowerment of older persons can be seen as both a means and an end. It can happen at the levels of both the individual and a group. Opportunities for discussion and decision making should be made available to these people so as to enhance their capabilities in management and analysis, as individuals and as a group.
- c. Networking with committed organizations working for and with older persons will definitely help in obtaining accessing to and utilizing video facilities and equipment. For older persons, this arrangement will be more realistic and convenient for them rather than working to possess them.

In summary therefore, it can be said that with political will, the use of PVP as a tool in advocacy work can significantly effect development in the true sense of the word. To Neville Jayaweera, that means equity and equality.