

## Community Communications and Micro-Level Shifts: The Case of Video Volunteers' IndiaUnheard Program

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**Abstract :** Community Video (CV) is a participatory medium that has immense potential to strengthen community communications and amplify the voice of people for their empowerment. By building capacities especially of marginalized community groups and providing a platform to freely voice their ideas, CV endeavours to bring about shifts towards more participatory, bottom up development processes and greater power in the hands of the people, especially the disadvantaged. In various parts of the world, among marginalized community groups, community video initiatives have become instrumental in facilitating micro-level, yet significant changes in communities. Video Volunteers (VV) is an organization that promotes community media and works towards providing disadvantaged communities with journalistic, critical thinking and creative skills they need for catalysing change in their communities. Working since 2002, VV has evolved a unique community media model fostering locally-owned and managed media production, as well as building people's capacities to articulate and share their perspectives on the issues that matter to them - on a local and a global scale. Further, by integrating a livelihood aspect within its model, VV has actively involved people from poor marginalized communities and provided them a new tool for serving their communities whilst keeping their identities intact. This paper, based on a qualitative research, seeks to map the range of VV impacts in communities and provide an in-depth analysis of factors contributing to VV impacting change in communities. Study tools included content analysis of a longitudinal sample of impact videos produced, narratives of community correspondents using the Most Significant Change Technique (MSCT) and interviews with key informants. Using a multi-fold analysis, the paper seeks to gain holistic insights. At the first level, the paper profiles the Community Correspondents (CCs), spearheading change, and maps their personal and social context and their perceptions about VV in their personal lives. Secondly, at an organizational level, the paper maps the significance of impacts brought about in the CCs communities and their association, challenges and achievements while working with VV. Lastly, at the community level, it consists of analysis of the nature of impacts achieved and aspects influencing the same. Finally, the study critiques the functioning of Video Volunteers as a community media initiative using the tipping point theory emphasizing on the power of context that is constituted by their socio-cultural environment. It concludes how empowerment of its Community Correspondents, multifarious activities during pre and post video production, and other innovative mechanisms have enabled in center staging issues of marginalized communities and snowballing processes of change in communities.

**Keywords :** community media, empowerment, participatory communication, social change

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