



Dispatch

Cellphilm in Four ATVET Colleges: A Mirror, Reflecting Gender Issues in Ethiopia

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Introduction

This dispatch builds on Jackie Kirk's commitment to participatory work with girls and young women, particularly her highlighting of the significance of the Girls Education Movement (GEM) to transform schools. This is something she saw as converting "education systems and societies into environments where girls can achieve and have equal opportunities" (Kirk & Garrow, 2003, p. 5). This dispatch focuses on my experience of running "cellphilm" workshops (a method described below), which I facilitated with the hope of contributing to social change in support of more justice and equity, specifically for young Ethiopian women.

The cellphilm workshops were part of my summer internship program activities (in June & July 2017) in the Agricultural Transformation Through Stronger Vocational Education (ATTSVE) project, which is a six-year project in Ethiopia, funded by Global Affairs Canada. McGill University is one of the partners of this project, the focus of which is building institutional capacity to address issues of gender equity, gender-based violence, and sexual health in four Agriculture Technical Vocational Education and Training (ATVET) colleges.

Ethiopia has a high prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) (Gelaye, Arnold, Williams, Goshu, & Berhane, 2009) and SGBV is one of the major problems faced by female students in post-secondary institutions (Arnold, Gelaye, Goshu, Berhane, & Williams, 2008; Shimekaw, Megabiaw, & Alamrew, 2013). The ATTSVE project tries to build capacity in the colleges to combat SGBV and empower females so that they can fully participate in all aspects of life.

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What is Cellphilming?

Cellphilming is a participatory visual research method (MacEntee, Burkholder, & Schwab-Cartas, 2016). Participatory Visual Methodologies (PVM) can contribute to making spaces for new dialogues in communities, which can lead to changes in perspectives, policy debates, and policy development (Mitchell, De Lange, & Moletsane, 2017). Cellphilming is one of the methods employed in PVM, where groups of participants use their camera phone (or tablet) to make videos in response to a prompt, question, community issue or challenge (Schwab-Cartas, Khan, MacEntee, & Burkholder, 2017), and to highlight specific or noteworthy issues in communities. The method is used by practitioners, activists and educators to encourage community members – who might not have filmmaking experience – to get involved in a process that can not only address the social and individual challenges of a society, but also raise awareness and offer solutions (Burkholder, 2017).

Cellphilming Workshops: Participants and Steps

Participants in the workshops I conducted were students and instructors of four ATVET Colleges (Maichew, Woreta, Nedjo and Waolita Soddo) located in four different regions of Ethiopia. The number of participants varied between 24 and 28 people (see Table 1) depending on the institution, and participants were selected by the ATTSVE project’s Gender Clubs directors. The instructors, who also participated in the workshops, were Gender Club leaders. In the selection process (specifically for students) it was important to have relatively equal numbers of participants of both genders.

College Name	Number of Participants				Number of groups & Cellphilms created
	Students		Instructors		
	Females	Males	Females	Males	
Woreta	11	9	1	3	4
Maichew	7	10	3	3	4
Nedjo	12	10	3	3	5
Wolaita Soddo	6	16	0	6	4
Sum	36	45	7	15	17
Sum	81 students		22 Instructors		17 Groups & Cellphilms in total

Table 1. Cellphilming workshops at a glance.

The steps of the workshops varied slightly among colleges, but generally they were conducted as shown in Figure 1. Each workshop in each college was one day long except the last workshop (in Wolaita Soddo), which was a half-day due to the time constraints of participants.

After an ice breaking activity, I started each session with an introduction to PVM and the concept of cellphilm, along with screening some samples of cellphilm. The language of the workshops was English. I did not think this would be a problem as English is the language of instruction in all four colleges. However, in practice, the English knowledge of students was weak, and sometimes there was need for translation from English to Amharic or Oromo. ATTSVE project's Gender Officer volunteered to help with translations, and participant-instructors also helped whenever needed.

After addressing the importance of (a) visual ethics (Mitchell, 2012), (b) selecting an appropriate genre, and (c) identifying the audience of the films (Mitchell, 2011), I divided the participants into groups of five or six. The next step was brainstorming about the prompt: "Gender issues (gender equity) in my college." This prompt was in line with ATTSVE project's goals in addressing gender-related issues at the colleges. During this process members of each group discussed the topic with each other, and each group came up with a list of issues in their colleges and shared their ideas with all participants. After this, the members of each group voted for the most important issue on their list, and collectively selected a topic for their video. The next step was storyboarding, in which the groups planned out a script or scenario for their short video (one to three minutes) by writing or drawing the contextual details, such as time, location, and roles. Drawing the script helps to visualize the idea and make it more tangible to every group member.

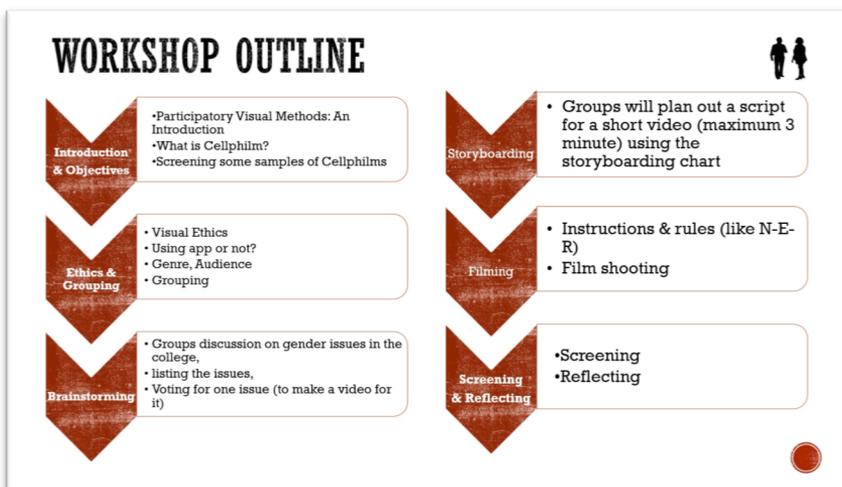


Figure 1: Workshop outline from my Powerpoint presentation.

Filming was the next step. In this stage, participants started filming the scripts they had already created. I encouraged them to adopt the No-Editing-Required (N-E-R) approach (Mitchell & De Lange, 2011). Since the tablets we were using had a pause option, we used the Pause-Shoot-Pause-Shoot approach (P-S-P-S). Another option would have been to use what Mitchell, De Lange and Moletsane (2017) refer to as the one-shot-shoot. The workshops ended with screening the videos made by the groups and by encouraging participants to reflect on them. In the reflection part, participants were asked to share their ideas on what they liked about the video, what they did not like, what they would change, how they see the presented topic or issue, and how they would change the situation or solve the problems in question.

A Word about the Filming Devices

It is recommended in participatory visual methodologies to take advantage of local technology to avoid the hierarchical power dynamics that arise when people have uneven access to new technological tools (e.g., complicated video recording cameras). For this reason, cellphones are often recommended (MacEntee, Burkholder, & Schwab-Cartas, 2016). However, in ATVET Colleges one challenge was that some of the participants did not have access to smartphones with cameras. To address this gap and create an equal opportunity for everybody to participate, the ATTSVE project provided four tablets in each workshop, and each group used one tablet for filming. The tablets were user friendly and easy to connect to laptops or computers, and videos were easily transferable. For transferring videos from tablets to Mac computers, one might need to have the Android File Transfer app, which is free and accessible from the Android website. It is recommended that workshop organizers familiarize themselves with the technical issues of the digital devices that they might use in the field. Having a basic knowledge of troubleshooting skills can help in problematic situations. As I already knew, there was no internet in the colleges, so I had planned to work without using it. The lesson is that organizers should be ready to handle technical issues and should always have a backup for each situation (e.g., electricity failure).

Experience in the Field

Each college gave me an opportunity to put what I had learned theoretically into practice. Apart from having a background in Social Science and Women's Studies, before leaving Canada for this internship program in Ethiopia I familiarized myself with the concept of cellphilming by background reading, learning how to run a cellphilming workshop, and practicing with students in a McGill University class. Fortunately, on the last

day before leaving, I participated in a training session in the Participatory Cultures Lab (PCL) about how to run a cellphilm workshop, which was held by Joshua Schwab-Cartas, co-author of the book, *What's a Cellphilm?* (MacEntee, Burkholder, & Schwab-Cartas, 2016).

Although I had already run Photovoice workshops in my TAship programs for undergraduate students at McGill University, and although I had been exposed to many discussions and sessions linked to cellphilm for two years in my PhD program, running a workshop about this PVM in Ethiopia was new and challenging for me. A big part of this challenge was the different context of the four workshops, which were held in different regions of a country that I had not been to before. To overcome this challenge, I tried to familiarize myself with the history of Ethiopia as well as its diverse population and culture.

Lessons Learned

In total, the four workshops in four colleges resulted in 17 cellphilms. The cellphilm titles show the variety of sexual and gender-based problems in ATVETs, including (but not limited to) “Sexual violence (harassment);” “Stop abduction;” “Less participation of female students;” “Stop emotional violence against females;” and “Performance differences between male and female students.” As the project unfolded, I noticed differences and commonalities among the colleges.

Woreta ATVET College

Overall, the participation of students in this workshop was relatively good. Male students were more vocal than female students, but the overall participation of females (after encouraging them to participate) was acceptable (in comparison with other colleges). It was anticipated that female students might be more silent, so it was not a surprise for me. However, this is an issue that one needs to find a solution for on the spot, as the correct solution is always context-dependent. I tried to make the workshop a safe space for everybody, specifically for young women, to be able to share their ideas. For example, I put males and females in separate groups to prevent males from being the dominant voices in mixed-gender groups.

In this college, the busy schedule of the instructors did not allow them to attend the full day, so we could not have them as participants. But they observed the activities whenever they were in the session, and helped with translation from English to Amharic whenever needed. Not knowing the local language sometimes put me in a weak situation regarding having control of the class, but two efforts helped mitigate this challenge. First, I familiarized myself with as many Amharic words as I could before leaving Canada and

going to the field. Using even a few words in the local language contributed to a friendlier environment and conveyed the message that I was interested in their language and had tried to learn it, which helped foster the instructor-participant relationship. Second, I had the support of instructors, as my peers and colleagues, who already have teaching experience as well as fluent English knowledge. It was helpful to have local teachers with knowledge of both English and the local language and culture to help facilitate the workshops.

Maichew ATVET College

The experience of the workshop in the first college (Woreta) demonstrated the importance of having instructors involved in the workshop activities to better reach the ATTSVE project goals. So, in Maichew College, I encouraged instructors to participate in a full day workshop and each group had at least one instructor with them.

The workshop taught me the advantages and disadvantages of involving instructors in the same group with students. Although instructors helped with facilitating the discussions in the groups, my observations showed that in different activities, students relied on the leadership role of instructors and yielded to them to initiate activities. The hierarchical relationship between instructors and students reinforced this unbalanced situation. I did not observe any difference between male groups and female groups regarding power dynamics between instructors and students, which suggests that males were relying on their instructor in the same ways as females were.

Nedjo ATVET College

Based on what I learned from the workshop in Maichew College, in Nedjo instructors were arranged in a separate group. This adjustment worked very well, and I observed more activity and creativity by students in their groups. One of the main challenges in this college was the low level of participation in group discussions, specifically among female students, when it was time to share ideas with the whole group of participants. This happened in spite of having constant translation from English (my language) to Oromo (participants' language) in this workshop. Methods used in the first workshop were not as effective in helping encourage participation. However, the cellphilms created by the students were very creative and interesting.

Wolaita Soddo ATVET College

The workshop in Wolaita Soddo happened in the second week of July when students were finishing their academic year and leaving for summer holidays. Due to the busy schedule of the students and instructors, the workshop in this college was held for a half day. Accordingly, I needed to shorten the theoretical parts and focus more on the practical activities. The participants were very active in this workshop; it was the most active workshop of all. Participants were vocal and happy to speak out and share their ideas. I learned from the coordinator of the ATTSVE project that most of the student participants were graduating from the college that semester, meaning that the students in this workshop had more life experience on the campus (in comparison with other colleges); this might be the reason for their active participation in the workshop.

Conclusion

Overall, PVM worked very well to facilitate engagement from a diverse group of 103 people (81 students and 22 instructors) to discuss SGBV issues in ATVET Colleges. In the process, participants were encouraged to think more deeply about SGBV, share their ideas and reflect on problems that are mostly faced by female students. In this regard, reflections made by male participants on men's role in causing gender-related issues and the possible ways of preventing them were quite interesting.

Regarding the Process versus Product approach (Mosher, 2012), in participatory methodologies participants learn through actually performing and doing tasks. Cellphilms created by students and instructors confirmed the importance of approaching college communities as active partners in implementing prevention and educational policies against Sexual and Gender Based Violence, which is one of the main goals of the ATTSVE project. Moreover, the participatory engagement of the students and instructors through cellphilm on these critical issues reveals that people have effective ideas to share, but they need the appropriate tools, support and space to engage with these challenging topics.

Accordingly, I frequently reminded participants at all the colleges that we cannot think about change and NOT raise our voice. Change will not happen in silence and if we want to experience the change, we need to break the silence. This is what a cellphilm helps to do: raise a voice and make it loud, clear and sharp.

It is this point that takes me back to Kirk's work. She (Kirk & Garrow, 2003, p. 14) emphasised the importance of working "on the problematic issues of girls' participation," and analysing these issues with girls themselves. As she highlights, "moving in these directions, we hope that

space and support may be created for girls to authentically take up agency in ways that have meaning for themselves” (Kirk & Garrow, 2003, p. 14).

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