

# Video

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## How to use video to help your campaign

### The aims of this chapter

This section of the training manual will provide detailed instruction on the operation of video equipment. It will also identify the various ways video documentation can assist your campaign.

The chapter is divided into three key sections:

#### Section 1. Video as a campaign tool

- 1.1 Why video is useful
- 1.2 Planning and building a strategy
- 1.3 Your issue and your audience
- 1.4 Campaign videos

#### Section 2. Technical and practical information

- 2.1 What is a video camcorder?
- 2.2 A guide to shooting with your video camcorder

#### Section 3. Your video checklist

#### Section 4. Production lists

### **Important note Read before proceeding!**

This manual provides guidelines for the effective gathering and use of video for your campaigns – but it has limitations:

#### **Technical Considerations**

The technical aspects of operation are tailored to the use of digital video (mini-DV). If you want to use an alternative format, contact EJF for manuals tailored to other specific formats (e.g. Hi8, VHS). But, please note that this training manual should always be **used in conjunction with the manufacturer's manual provided with your particular video camera – always read the manual thoroughly.**

## SECTION 1. VIDEO AS A CAMPAIGN TOOL

### 1.1 Why video is useful

#### Video can and does change the world.

Video, film and photographs are part of a truly international language, transcending national, cultural and linguistic boundaries.

- Video can be used to bring an issue to life, making it interesting and intelligible to a wide diversity of people, including those who are not directly affected by the issues you are addressing.
- A good video news release (VNR), or short documentary can evoke strong interest and emotions that can work to gain support for your campaign from different audiences. By attracting the interest of the media, public, civil society groups, politicians and policy makers, video can be used to generate local, national and international action.
- Video can provide irrefutable evidence of a problem – such as illegal logging, pollution, or abusive actions against local communities. It can help to show who is causing a problem and what exactly they are doing, as well as showing the impact on people and the environment. Video doesn't only have to document problems – it is an invaluable tool to show solutions.
- Video can be used to stir international action and it can also bring direct benefits on local or national levels. Modern communications can send images, detailed information and factual evidence from an isolated village to the world's power centres instantly.

### 1.2 Planning and building a strategy

#### Planning a clear communications strategy will be central to the successful development and use of your video.

This should include a clear outline of at least the following:

- What is your message?
- Who do you want to reach with your message, who are you trying to talk to?
- What do you hope to achieve with your video and how can it complement your other research and advocacy?
- What format do you want to use to deliver your message – what will be your finished video product (Video News Release, documentary?)
- Do you have access to edit facilities – can you afford them?
- How will you distribute your video material?
- What is your budget and time-frame?

☛ See the **Activist Training Manual** chapter on **Media**.

☛ **REMEMBER**  
**Always take care to stay safe, DO NOT take any unnecessary risks and ensure you and the people you film are not put at risk.**

### **Example The use of video to achieve localised goals.**

EJF and the Center d'Etude et de Developpement Agricole Cambodgien (CEDAC) have filmed testimony of farmers in Cambodia who are successfully producing organic crops (without using highly toxic pesticides). In this way we can provide information about the alternatives to other farmers who still use these dangerous substances. The video messages will be delivered to them by people they can understand and identify with – other farmers.

The goals are to: have a direct beneficial impact on the health of farmers, their families and communities; reduce toxic pesticide residues in the wider environment and impacts on wildlife; and to reduce the negative health impact of pesticides on consumers of farmers' produce.

This is a good example of how to create and use video as an educational tool.

### **Example The use of video on an international level**

Filmed reports of the Ethiopian famine in 1984/5 led to an international outcry against the human suffering. In the UK and USA concerts were organised and internationally famous musicians performed to raise funds to help alleviate the famine. This was shown on television around the world and raised millions of dollars for famine relief.

A properly trained video operator and photographer with the necessary equipment can:

- Document and expose illegal actions or abuses against people and the environment.
- Reach different audiences at local, national or international levels, gaining interest and winning support.
- Develop highly effective educational materials.
- Show the alternatives to destructive practices, highlighting successes and building on prevention, as well as cure.

☛ **Video cameras provide an extremely valuable tool to the investigator, researcher or campaigner. Your video camera can help you gather the evidence you need to fulfil your campaign goals.**

### 1.3 Your issue and your audience

The first steps to successfully using video for your campaign are:

- Identifying the message you want to convey, highlighting the key points and explaining them clearly
- Establishing which images will help you to do this
- Identifying who you are trying to reach with your message
- Developing a plan for how you want to use the video you have gathered

#### What is my message - How do I tell my story?

The first step is always to draft an outline or preferably a script for your video. This applies whether you are just producing a “rough-cut” of key images for a TV news station to edit and broadcast or whether you hope to produce a finished educational video.

Try to make a “chain” of images that captures the key points of your story. This should contain images that illustrate what is happening and why. If it is possible include video to show solutions or alternatives.

Ask yourself the following questions and see if you have video to illustrate each aspect – then draft your script or outline:

- What are the problems and what images best describe them?
- What impact are these problems having on people and the environment; or
- What will be the impact if a project (for example a dam building project or a mine) goes ahead?
- Who is causing the problem(s) and who is making the decisions that affect your issue?
- How are they doing this?
- Why are they doing this?
- How did people and the natural environment exist before the problem arose?
- What can be done to solve the problem?

☛ **Successful campaign video, like research, needs to be planned.**

#### ☛ **REMEMBER**

**Before setting out to gather video evidence, make sure you have a clear idea of the type and range of images you ideally want to capture. This should take into account how and where you plan to use your video (e.g. in schools or on TV news), who you want to reach and what the key points of your message are.**

### What video and other images already exist?

It is a useful starting point to look at other organisations' videos, websites and published reports, or to look at local and international television programmes and newspapers. See if they have any information or images you may be able to use. Think about what the images mean to you and how they reflect the issue and complement your written information.

This process may also help you gain ideas and inspiration and help identify any other organisations or individuals that you may be able to work with. It could also save you much time and money.

### What new images do I need?

At this stage it will be useful to produce a draft list of the new images you need to illustrate your issue and where and how you might get them.

When doing this it is important to outline the most important facts and features of your issue and how they could be illustrated on video.

Always make sure that you have clearance (in writing) to use any video that you or your organisation have not filmed.

Often it will not be possible to get all the video you would like – focus on the key elements, what you must have to tell your story.

#### **Example Saving the elephants from extinction - the international ivory ban**

During the 1980's around half a million African elephants were poached for their ivory – the continental population being halved in less than 10 years. As a result of this rapid decline and growing concerns about the survival of most elephant populations, wildlife organisations around the world began to campaign for a ban on the international trade in elephant ivory which fuelled the illegal poaching of elephants. To enlist public and political support many of these organisations combined disturbing footage of poached elephants with magnificent film of these animals in the wild taken by private television companies. Global concern generated by media coverage resulted in an international ivory trade ban and poaching in many areas virtually ceased overnight.

#### **REMEMBER**

**You always have to check copyright on visual images and respect the rights of the owner.**

### **Example The impact on local communities of a mega-development project in Indonesian Borneo (Kalimantan).**

*The video plan includes identification of the footage needed to illustrate the following questions:*

*In 1997, major works began in Kalimantan to develop one million hectares into a major rice growing area. The project was condemned by scientists, environmentalists and advocates for local communities because it would destroy the communities' livelihoods whilst benefits would go to wealthy government officials and business people based in Jakarta. The ecosystem and soil was in any case totally unsuited to rice production and it was widely agreed by scientists that it would only be able to support a handful of rice harvests.*

*Traditional (adat) land rights which had been recognised for generations were swept away and villagers which opposed the scheme were forced from their land.*

*Before the project began the area was largely covered in forest on deep, wet peat soils. The scheme involved the construction of many vast drainage ditches and fires were used to clear the forest – the area became one of the prime sources of smoke and deadly haze that engulfed Southeast Asia in 1997/98.*

#### **What are the problems and their impact?**

Interview local people who had lost their livelihoods as the forests were cleared and the rattan gardens and fish-ponds they had made a living from were destroyed by the fires and drainage channels. Film the burnt / burning areas and the dried up ponds. Find out what has happened to the wildlife and what this means for the people. Ask them about the smoke from the fires and the health impacts.

Ask people what they want or need to make their lives better, e.g. halt the project, assistance to replant their lost crops, re-build fish ponds, confirmation of land rights.

Film testimony by scientists, agronomists and other experts (making sure they are willing to appear in your video).

#### **How did the people live before the development?**

Interview communities to find out how they made a living in the past and take positive images and interview villagers who have not been affected by the scheme.

#### **Who is doing it and how?**

Take video of the drainage canals and the construction machinery. Take video of company logos and workers.

#### **Why are they doing it?**

Show rice seeds and paddy fields – including crops failing on the acidic soils. Video the company headquarters of the companies that are making money out of the project – to show that it is not a development project for people, but for a few individuals to make money. Film politicians' homes in Jakarta, find ways to highlight their power and wealth.

#### **What are the solutions?**

Show that there are alternatives – video communities who are living sustainably in other areas unaffected by the project. Show other suitable areas or methods for rice cultivation. Get testimony of recognised experts.

## Who am I trying to reach - Who is my audience?

As part of your planning you need to decide how you want to use your video; in what way will it have the greatest impact and best complement your other research; and how to best deliver it.

In most cases it will be helpful to identify one or more from the following:

- Your national or local government or its agencies
- Other governments and development agencies (which may have influence)
- The media (as a means to reach a specific target audience, such as your national government or consumers of a product)
- Local or regional communities or a national audience
- International agencies (such as United Nations or other intergovernmental agencies)
- Specifically targeted audiences, such as educators in schools or universities and their pupils or other NGOs

Think about the images that have been used by others to address each of the audiences above. How have campaigning organisations represented their case on television, in newspapers or in educational videos?

Always keep in mind your target audience – if you are hoping to reach policy makers and politicians, achieving coverage on national and international news channels is more likely to reach them; if you are trying to reach children in an educational video it will not be appropriate to use disturbing images.

### Exercise Planning your video

Take an issue currently in the news and which you have some knowledge of and write down an outline of the images you would want to illustrate the story from beginning to end.

Write out a list of the people you would want to reach with your video (e.g. politicians, educators) and what mechanism you would use to get it to them (e.g. VNR, documentary).

## 1.4 Campaign videos

There are many different ways in which you can use video to communicate your message and it is extremely important to identify the best way of using it for your particular goals.

In most cases it will be helpful to identify one (or a combination) from the following list to deliver your video:

- To create a video news release (VNR) for distribution – usually with a press release and as part of a more detailed media strategy – to television and news stations. (see section on VNR below)
- A short fully edited video production tailored to speak directly to policy makers, international agencies (e.g. your own or other governments, aid and development agencies, United Nations bodies or other intergovernmental groupings)
- Educational videos, either for distribution through non-television networks (e.g. libraries, schools, directly by “road-shows”, or other NGOs or agencies) or via television broadcast
- By the media in local or international television programmes, such as television news, current affairs or special interest programmes
- Via your or other organisations’ web-sites (as new technology allows the broadcasting of video material via the web)

### Editing your video

Before editing your video, the following key elements must be considered:

- Editing can be extremely expensive and time consuming. You must be fully prepared before you begin to edit your material.
- All your material must be clearly identified by the person who shot it, to give date, time, location and subject. There must be no doubt, **as it is vital that you can ensure the factual accuracy of your video information.**
- It is always strongly advisable that you edit with someone who knows your video footage well (preferably the person who actually filmed it) and someone who understands all the background details to the issue.
- You must have all the material you need to make your finished video with you, including any information for titles, credits, copyright notices and subtitling.
- You must understand what finished article you want to get out of the editing (e.g. a VNR or a documentary or just a rough-cut).

### NOTE

**Vast amounts of time, money and effort can be spent producing videos that will never be seen or only seen by people for whom they are inappropriate and will have no impact – or even a negative effect.**

**NOTE This section of the manual does not attempt to explain the process of editing. If you have any specific enquiries about editing you can contact EJF directly and we will try to answer your questions.**

## Distributing your video

Just as important as the format, content or target audience is how you are going to distribute the video. Distribution can be expensive and time consuming, but it is essential – if the video just sits on your shelves it will be no use to anyone.

The following are the key factors to consider before you start production and begin distribution:

- What is my budget for reproduction costs and distribution?
- What format do I need to produce my video on (for example, a US-based television news company will always prefer video in NTSC format, a UK-based company will prefer PAL, both will prefer digital beta tapes).
- How many tapes will I need to produce for distribution?
- Have I got full written clearance to use any video material which came from other sources?

Always make sure all your videotapes are correctly labeled with your contact details, copyright requirements and have a shotlist with them.

If you are sending videos to media companies always request that your tapes are returned to you as soon as possible (request that they cover any carriage costs).

### Video news release

Producing a Video News Release (VNR) can be one of the most effective and efficient (both in terms of money and time) ways of getting your video and its message to a wide range of television media. However, a VNR is usually most effective as part of a broader media strategy, when it is coupled with a press release and efforts to secure media coverage.

Before deciding to produce a VNR you need to be reasonably confident that you can make your issue interesting to the media you have targeted.

The basic elements in creating a VNR are:

- A short 5-10 minute rough edit, highlighting your best visuals and key elements of your campaign message.
- A clear description and shotlist of the material on the video.
- A means of highlighting the VNR and distributing it in a timely manner and in the appropriate format(s).
- At least one spokesperson who is fully informed of the issue to give television interviews to interested media.

### **Example Saving the shark - protecting the oceans**

In 1999 the international conservation organisation WildAid began to develop a global campaign for the conservation of the world's fast declining shark populations. Each year around 100 million sharks are killed in fisheries – many die unnecessarily as they are by-catch (accidentally caught and not used by fishermen).

Sharks are apex predators important to the wider health of marine ecosystems and for many generations sharks have provided an extremely valuable food source for local coastal communities. WildAid decided to highlight these two key roles played by sharks and to look at the wastage of industrial fisheries.

As sharks inhabit international waters and international action would be necessary to begin to combat this problem, WildAid decided to launch its campaign using a VNR and press release from an international media centre – London. The 6-minute VNR achieved coverage in more than 100 countries and was shown on international networks like CNN and BBC World. The VNR and press strategy had effectively taken the first step in the campaign to raise public, political and media interest and concern.

**Over 25 beta and 10 VHS copies of the VNR tape were required.**

### **Budgets and money**

Video can be a very cheap way of generating information and raising awareness about issues you are working on. It can also be extremely expensive and time consuming.

Before you start a video project, work out your budget. You will need to have a good idea of costs (and your budget) for the following:

- equipment and materials (video tapes, batteries etc)
- travel and subsistence while you are taking your video (if it takes you away from home)
- post-production (including editing, distribution)
- the time you and your colleagues spend on the project

☛ **Before you start a video project, work out your budget.**

## SECTION 2. TECHNICAL AND PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### 2.1 What is a video camcorder?

Video camcorders give two main functions:

- **Camera** The camera section itself has three main components – the lens, viewfinder (and some also have an LCD screen) and the controls for focus, exposure, white balance, zoom and other camera functions.
- **VCR** This is the recorder component. It works in exactly the same way as a home video player and features the same basic functions: Play, Record, Pause, Forward/Rewind, Stop, Eject. The VCR records images from the camera (rather than a TV).

There are a number of vital accessories for your camera:

**Carrying case**

**Spare batteries and charger**

**Video light**

**Tripod**

**Microphone**

**Video tapes**

#### Operating a camcorder - the basics

- Insert a charged battery and turn the power to “on” – for the camera function.
- Press the eject button on the video cassette tray and insert a tape, ensuring that it is facing the right way. The cassette mechanism is quite delicate so be careful.
- Referring to the manufactures manual, *always make sure you are not recording “burnt-in” time code, date or other information from the camera* – this is almost never any use to you.
- Make sure you have a firm grip or your tripod is correctly set up. Upon start up most camcorders will work to the automatic settings (set at the factory) and for the inexperienced user these will usually be sufficient, at least until you know your camcorder.
- Look through the viewfinder and frame the shot you wish to take.
- Now press the record button for 15-20 seconds, record your shot and then review what you have taken on the VCR. Remember to turn the camera off once you have finished.

**When you have finished recording on a tape, protect your valuable images by pushing the tab to prevent accidental erasure.**

#### REMEMBER

**Always read and use the manufacturers manual to assist in the operation of the camcorder.**

## 2.2 A guide to shooting with your video camcorder

### Introduction

**The most important element to shooting useful video is getting to know your equipment.**

Once you have learnt how the Camcorder works in different light conditions and with different methods of operation (e.g. with tripod) there is nothing to stop you taking excellent video – but this will take plenty of time and practice.

Allow yourself as much time as possible to plan and think about your project before you start shooting.

Try different ways of taking the same shot and note the different results. View your video after shooting in conjunction with your notes and remind yourself of what worked and what did not. Note your successes and your failures – get to know the camcorder and find out what it can and cannot do.

### The 10 Second Rule and other useful actions

The **10 second rule** will help you capture the video you need. Always video a bit more than you think you need, avoid unnecessary camera movement and always film a minimum of 10 seconds of each image. Always keep this in mind and if in doubt count to yourself, filming even just 10 seconds in difficult circumstances can seem like hours.

**Date, time and time-code** Never, never use the date/time stamp recorded on to the video, this can make it unusable. It does not provide any proof of when the film was taken as the date and time can be added by anyone at a later stage nor does it help the editor.

**Tell your camcorder where you are and what you have filmed** It is often helpful to simply record yourself to say the location, date and subject you are filming – giving you and your editor a permanent record of exactly what you were doing. This can be very helpful, particularly when you are filming under difficult conditions and under time pressure.

☛ **ALWAYS** use a log sheet and note book to write down information as you take video. Examine the **Pre-production and Production Check-list forms** that come with this manual.

☛ **REMEMBER** Review and check your video and sound before you leave a scene.

## Grip and stability

### Using a tripod

**Wherever possible, use a tripod to ensure steady images – generally you should only film without a tripod where it is impossible to use one.**

- The tripod should be placed on a firm surface.
- The leg height can be adjusted as needed and the image seen through the viewfinder should be horizontal (you can adjust the height of individual legs so as to achieve this).
- Make sure that the clips on the legs are fully tightened and secure and take care that the tripod will not be blown or knocked over. If you are using headphones or microphones that are attached to the camera, make sure that people using these do not walk away and pull the tripod and camera over.

**The one problem with tripods is that they can draw attention to what you are doing.** This may simply be that you attract inquisitive children who will make filming difficult, but it could also be that you attract unwanted attention from wrongdoers and others.

### Hand-held shots

- Hold the camcorder firmly with the grip strap tightened over your hand so that you can operate the on/off button with your thumb. Use your other hand to provide extra support and stability to the camcorder.
- Place your elbows firmly against your side.
- Make sure your footing is secure and stand with your feet apart to help your balance.
- Try and lean against or sit on a steady object (wall, car) to steady your shot.
- If you are kneeling down, use a raised knee to prop up the arm that is supporting the camera.
- You can also film low angle shots by lying down with your elbows resting firmly on the ground.
- Filming whilst walking is quite difficult – try practicing this, keeping your knees bent and your body lowered and move smoothly in order to avoid jarring the camera with each footstep.

Virtually all camcorders now have a **steady-shot** anti-shake function. Some are better than others – try filming both with and without steady-shot on.

☛ **Be aware of your own safety – if you need to remain discrete and move on quickly then operate the camcorder in your hands.**

**TIP** See how the camera operates with steady-shot on. When filming fast-moving objects (such as cars), the camera will sometimes create a digital effect which renders the video unusable.

## Focus

**Focus is the means to create the sharpest and clearest image possible. It is one of the most important factors affecting the quality of the video image.** On digital cameras, autofocus is usually quite good and may be sufficient for many of your needs, but if you have any doubt, use the manual focus (this can be used in conjunction with the auto-focus test button which shows you how the camera would focus).

Manual focus can be particularly useful in a number of circumstances such as:

- Insufficient light
- Subjects with little contrast (against walls, sky etc)
- Heavily backlit subjects (e.g. those with the sun behind them)
- Bright or reflective subjects
- Moving images e.g. a march where there are many subjects (people) that confuse the camcorder. It will continually seek a stationary subject to focus on and if it can't, it will not be able to focus at all
- Shooting a stationary subject when using a tripod can sometimes be improved by focusing manually

## Sound

Sound can be as vital as the visual image itself – if you are recording an important statement from an expert or key witness it will be of no use, however good the visual image, if the sound is not to a certain standard.

Natural sounds or background noise (traffic or music) can lend interest or a sense of location to your video. However, unwanted noise can be distracting, in which case try to move location or use an external microphone. Wind can be a problem as it rushes over the microphone – a thin sock can be used to decrease this sound, but this may dull the sounds you actually want to record. Again, check sound levels and review a section of videotape to make sure this is not a problem.

Also bear in mind that some rooms or buildings produce echoes as the sound bounces off the walls (e.g. in bare corridors). Interviews and other recording should be carried out in rooms with carpets, curtains etc that absorb sound rather than reflect it, or outside.

Camcorders have a built-in microphone which should be adequate to pick up general background noise (e.g. children playing, traffic or machinery noises). However, it will pick up sounds from all directions (**omni-directional**), not just the one in which the camcorder is pointing. Because of this and other limitations, these microphones will often not give you good enough sound quality and should be supplemented by using an external microphone.

**External uni-directional microphones** can be used to pick up sound from a specific location or person. Clip-on uni-directional microphones are the best way to capture dialogue (with little background noise) when you are interviewing someone. These are very small microphones and are usually powered by their own battery and plug into the camcorder.

## REMEMBER

**If you plan to use the camcorder's zoom function, always focus on the most distant object you want to video (so that everything in front of that object or horizon is in focus).**

**TIP** *If you are using manual focus whilst interviewing or filming someone – focusing on their eyes will produce the best results.*

## REMEMBER

**Whenever sound is important – and it usually is – check it through headphones and on the recording levels on your camcorder.**

## REMEMBER

**Interviews should always be conducted using an external uni-directional microphone to minimise background noise.**















