CRS CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

Communication challenges

Aid and development workers face a variety of communication and documentation challenges. Program staff must introduce their projects to local donors and coordinate their efforts with partners. Participants need prompt updates about management decisions and easy access to program resources. Meanwhile, programs must keep records for monitoring and evaluation requirements and donor reports, even as team members attempt to minimize administrative costs.

A quick, inexpensive solution

In Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, Catholic Relief Services' field officers are using digital video cameras, simple video-editing software and YouTube to document their progress and improve communication among staff, partners and donors. Staff can produce short, effective videos in as little as a day or collect footage for future use. These efforts strengthen project management, emergency programming,

CRS conducted a three-day workshop on Integral Human Development and disaster risk reduction to support the Gaza Risk Reduction and Mitigation project. Participants provided feedback for a video, which is available at http://youtu.be/WlZ3Fw15KU8.

monitoring and evaluation, reporting, in-country representation and outreach initiatives.

It is difficult to travel in the Palestinian territories. Videos offer a way for managers to share important messages with staff. Key meetings can be recorded for team members who are unable to attend. Likewise, cameras are an asset during emergencies, when workers need to conduct rapid assessments and provide updates about evolving situations.

Low-budget videos can improve monitoring and evaluation efforts by providing an easy way to record best practices, lessons learned, testimonials and "before" and "after" observations. Staff can then use the videos as training tools. This helps country programs to scale-up their projects more efficiently and avoid repeating mistakes.

Videos can enliven presentations to partners and may be useful to include in donor reports, especially when donors are unable to visit program sites. CRS Headquarters is able to assist country programs that would like to produce high-quality videos for public dissemination.

A data collector and a community member fill out a beneficiary selection form. Trainees in Gaza watched this video to learn more about a new beneficiary selection methodology. The video is available at http://youtu.be/M-Ftd9l5oxs.

What It Means to Be a Dad in Gaza offers testimonials from fathers who received psychosocial services. To watch the video, visit http://youtu.be/c-TwxFSl-EU.

Results

As of July 2010, the Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza team has produced ten videos. Subjects include CRS' programs for psychosocial support, urban vouchers, food security and youth activism.

Some of the videos were created to highlight successes. *What It Means to Be a Dad in Gaza* offers testimonials from fathers who received psychosocial services. *CRS World Food Program E-voucher Pilot* gives an overview of CRS' urban voucher project, a demonstration of a magnetic card reader and an interview with a shopkeeper who participates in the program.

West Bank Beneficiary Selection was envisioned as a training tool. Data collectors and community members discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a new methodology for selecting beneficiaries. The video was shown to trainees in Gaza who could not travel to the West Bank.

One video was designed to facilitate a monitoring-and-evaluation initiative. Staff interviewed beneficiaries of a humanitarian assistance program. The footage served as documentation for an end-user survey and a beneficiary-satisfaction survey.

The Youth Voices and Community Action program used videos to convey young people's messages to controversial decision makers. This allowed participants to communicate their concerns without endangering their lives or reputations.

To view some of CRS' recent low-budget videos, please visit the web addresses that are listed in the captions or go to http://www.youtube.com/user/CRSTechProductions.

This one-minute video explains how the Gaza Risk Reduction and Mitigation program is relevant to disaster risk reduction programs in the global sense. To watch the video, visit http://youtu.be/199HbmDzwgs.

Looking Ahead

Inexpensive digital video cameras and video-sharing services promise to transform communication and documentation strategies. The Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza team is placing a new emphasis on storyboards in order to improve the quality of its videos. CRS staff can access related resources on CRS Global, including *PQ Video Handbook* (http://tinyurl.com/czgjjnl), *Media Relations Handbook* (http://tinyurl.com/7jeyruu), *Marketing and Communications Handbook* (http://tinyurl.com/7u52ytm) and *Agency Identity Manual* (http://tinyurl.com/7d56w8p).