OUR VALUABLE VOICES

Community Digital Storytelling for Good Programming and Policy Engagement

CARE INTERNATIONAL IN VIETNAM | 2015

care®

THE VALUE of COMMUNITY VOICE

Vietnam thrives on a rich tapestry of stories across generations; personal and collective stories that form precious threads in the fabric of a diverse nation of more than 90 million people. There are valuable stories waiting to be told by Cham fisherwomen and men living in An Giang; by Hanoi street cleaners living with disabilities; by farmers growing cassava in the Quang Tri highlands. Such stories not only help us understand the diversity of this dynamic country, but can also inform important development decisions that impact the people whose stories most need to be heard.

BUT NOT EVERYONE'S STORIES ARE LISTENED TO.

Often people living in poverty or vulnerable situations struggle to have their voices heard. These people may not speak the official language. They may be restricted by gender, social or cultural norms, or affected by stigma. They may have restricted access to local, regional or international policymaking spaces. They may lack the confidence to raise their voice with more influential people in society. Or they may be so busy making a living that they cannot attend community discussions.

EXTRA EFFORTS ARE NEEDED TO MAKE SURE ALL OF VIETNAM'S STORIES CAN BE SHARED AND VALUED.

CARE believes that a vibrant, diverse society becomes stronger when everyone can equally contribute their voice to decisions that impact them. This is why CARE is using **Community Digital Storytelling (CDST)**; an innovative participatory development approach that enables people to gain knowledge, build their confidence and share their concerns with others who can address them. CDST builds on the full potential of people often unheard; strengthening the wider society in the process.

Through Community Digital Storytelling, community members collectively create and share stories in their own language using audio, photos and music. The resulting photo-videos are often 3-5 minutes long and in the local language. These stories are driven by the community members themselves who develop the content and decide what photos best represent the narratives they want to tell. In many cases, local participants take their own photos for their stories.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS DECIDE WHAT TO SAY AND SHOW; AND NARRATE THE STORIES IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE.

CDST often works with the poorest and most vulnerable people in a society who are rarely included in mainstream media or in policy debates to amplify their most pressing concerns. Both the process of creating photo-videos and the process of social and policy engagement through storytelling are equally valuable. This means that reflection, dialogue, debate and mobilisation are priorities for strengthening community voice and ownership.

Cover Photo: Ay Sah, Cha Wa Ri Giah, Mây Sâm and Sa Mi Roh decide which photos they want to use in telling their story about climate change impacts in their community in An Giang province in the Mekong Delta. Left: Mohamad Sền and Uss Mal participate in a CARE CDST climate change activity in December 2013 with Cham fisherwomen and fishermen.

Community Voice in the Mekong Delta

In An Giang province, Cham fisherwomen and men as a subgroup of the wider Cham community often work through the night; casting their nets wide in search of a good catch to sell at the morning market. During the day, they send their children to school, fix their fishing nets, do embroidery, pray at the local mosque, repair their boats and get a bit of sleep before going out to fish again. As many are landless or land-poor, their lives depend on the river and the weather and they are highly affected by a changing climate. However, because they have little time to attend community meetings, are very mobile, and often do not understand or speak Vietnamese (the official language in Vietnam), it can be difficult for them to gain local climate information or share their concerns with influential community members or decision-makers.

CARE recognised these challenges facing this particular subgroup when it asked Cham fisherwomen and men in An Giang if they would like to use Community Digital Storytelling to talk about climate change. CARE explained that through the activities they could share their stories and use those stories to build relationships with local and national policy-makers to jointly address their concerns. They agreed, and five Cham fisherwomen and eight fishermen worked with CARE and its partners in December 2013 to tell their stories.

Two community narratives emerged through lengthy discussions about flood – the main climate event that impacts Cham fishing communities in An Giang. The stories show how the participants experience increasingly unpredictable floods, how it impacts on their daily lives and what they already do to deal with these changes.

Above: Cha Wa Ri Giah, Sa Mi Roh, Mây Sâm, Sa Ki Roh and Ay Sah. Right: Ma Hi Ri, Hô Sanh, A Min, Sa Lay Man, A Dam and A Bu Ba Co. Not pictured: Sa Go Lês and Du Sôh and Ossa Mal.

Community members are actively tackling the problems through a diversity of strategies such as building higher bridges, tying their boats to trees during strong storms, taking jobs on land and teaching their children to swim. However, such efforts are not always enough to keep them safe, healthy and out of poverty in the face of a changing climate. But a more resilient future is possible, as they describe in their CDST photo-videos. The fisherwomen and men identified solutions such as attaining resources and training for disaster response teams, building bridges so their children can get to school safely, and securing land for housing or to dock their boats during times of flood.

Through the storytelling process in the hands of fisherwomen and men themselves, an authentic picture emerges as to how Cham people living on boats or by the river are affected by increasing and more severe floods. Their stories add to a wider conversation about how development programming and government policies can more effectively help different at-risk groups adapt to a changing climate.

CHAM IN AN GIANG

The Cham people are remnants of the Kingdom of Cham Pa (7th to 18th centuries) that stretched from current Central Vietnam to the South. Nowadays, Cham are living in South-Central Vietnam and upstream Mekong Delta provinces bordering Cambodia such as An Giang. The large majority of the 14,000 Cham in An Giang practices Islam and speaks the Arabic language. The Cham are matrilineal and inheritance passes through the mother. They mainly do small-scale husbandry, fishing, on-farm and off-farm wage labour, small business and handicraft (embroidery) but are also increasingly migrating temporarily or permanent. The Cham also have strong oversees connections with Cham communities in Malaysia, which brings cultural, educational, economic and other enriching exchange.

Benefits of Community Digital Storytelling

- Storytelling can provide valuable and often new insight into how vulnerable people live. This supports better development programming and policy.

- Valuable grassroots knowledge emerges through storytelling processes. What is learned helps development programming and policy be more responsive to local realities, priorities and solutions.

- CDST can also support and accelerate efforts within wider participatory activities that aim to empower community members. For example, women traditionally may not speak up during community meetings; but their concerns may be valued when shown as a photo-video.

- The photo-videos' visual and oral nature is a powerful medium for involving community members, especially those who do not read or write. It allows them to share reflections and learnings in their own voice and language.

- Stronger relationships are often formed between the people making the photo-videos and those who watch and discuss the stories with them.

CARE & COMMUNITY STORYTELLING AROUND THE WORLD

CARE has used Community Digital Storytelling in Vietnam, Kenya, Mozambique, Ghana and Niger primarily with communities affected by disasters and a changing climate. This has included fisherwomen and men living in the Mekong Delta, rural farming communities in West Africa and pastoralists in East Africa. These communities have used CDST to better understand how they are impacted by disasters and climate change, to share how they are responding and adapting, and to prioritise what can be done to adapt and strengthen their resilience. While CDST has worked well in a climate change context, it can be adapted and used in other contexts that aim to raise community voice for social change and justice.

Cha Wa Ri Giah from An Giang province borrows CARE's project camera to take a few photos in her community. In developing their CDST photo-videos, the Cham fisherwomen used a smaller, point-and-shoot camera.

Community Digital Storytelling Values

Community Digital Storytelling is a participatory development approach. It is a variation of 'digital storytelling,' which is a short-form process of using digital media for people to share their life stories. CDST builds on this approach by promoting collaboratively created group stories that people use specifically in a development context to improve programming and policy. CARE's Community Digital Storytelling approach prioritises six important values that can foster greater community participation and voice:

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN: CDST prioritises community-driven participation where community members are valued for their involvement as equal partners with the supporting organisation. They decide the best story they want to tell in their culture and context, lead in developing the story and approve the final photo-videos. The implementing organisation and other stakeholders are partners in the story production; often facilitating the technical aspects and add supporting information to the issue being discussed.

FLEXIBLE & EMBEDDED: CDST is a flexible approach that can be adapted depending on the context where it is used. CDST activities are not done in isolation. They work best when strategically embedded into wider development initiatives that aim to increase local voice, foster empowerment and strengthen policies so they can benefit people living in poverty or marginalisation. This also helps ensure that storytelling activities support on-going, experiential learning valuable for building community confidence and leadership.

RESPECTFUL: CDST is respectful towards cultural and social difference and customs, with a particular focus on gender. Thus, all activities should consider how people may be limited in sharing their stories due to gender, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, etc., and aim to overcome any barriers. The storytelling activities should never put a person at risk or do harm. Harm can occur in apparent or subtle ways related to local power dynamics, sensitivities in sharing stories and the potential to disempower if participants' voices are not valued when shared. Community storytelling activities should thus analyse and minimise any risks prior to implementation.

DIALOGUE & LISTENING: CDST stimulates meaningful dialogue through filmmaking and storytelling, enabling people to more actively engage in issues that impact their lives. The activity also aims to facilitate more engaged listening between community members and local, regional, national and/or international decision-makers so people can take positive action. In this way, storytelling is valued as a process for social change rather than a method for making promotional videos or to document a development program.

INFORMED CONSENT: CDST makes certain that all people involved in the stories provide **informed consent**; especially children and their parents. This means that participants – and anyone photographed for the final CDST videos – fully understand and agree to how their photos and stories might be shown and to whom. The participants should review the final photo-videos for their approval before they are shared with a wider audience. Participants should also have the chance to limit public presentations if this would make them uncomfortable.

SMART TECHNOLOGY CHOICES: CDST deliberately uses photography, narration and easy-to-use software as a smart technology choice. Compared to video, the CDST approach is often less expensive, can be easier to technically teach and learn, and is more accessible as a visual, hands-on learning tool during the storyboarding development process. For CDST to be more easily replicable, the approach promotes using free software that is accessible on the internet to create the final photo-videos.*

*While other software can be considered, the Mekong Delta CDST project used Audacity, Microsoft Photo Story 3, Microsoft Movie Maker and Microsoft Office PowerPoint. See www.careclimatechange.org/files/CDSTGuidelines.pdf.

SELECTING PARTICIPANTS FOR COMMUNITY STORYTELLING

Selecting the Community Digital Storytelling participants is a vital part of CDST's success in raising community voice. Therefore, it is important to be aware of how local power dynamics affect who participates, and to keep the overall program objectives in mind. Remember that those who raise their hands first to participate may not benefit the most. If people in more privileged positions within communities are selected to participate, the CDST process could inadvertently reinforce local power structures instead of challenging them to benefit people living in poverty or marginalisation.

BE AWARE OF LOCAL GENDER NORMS AND DYNAMICS. SEEK WAYS TO INCLUDE CHALLENGES, CONCERNS AND STRATEGIES FROM ALL GENDERS, WHILE BEING MINDFUL OF LOCAL CUSTOMS AND CULTURE.

Participants may gain more from working in homogenous groups where they feel more comfortable to talk about issues in more depth (e.g. mothers of young children, elders, young men, etc.). Or it might be more valuable to explore and share various concerns on a topic from different perspectives within a group (e.g. extended families, gender-based violence activists or youth environmental clubs).

For example, if a program aims to build the confidence of vulnerable women who rarely speak up in decision-making, facilitators need to pay special attention to working with those who might be shy or reluctant in expressing their interest to be involved. While having a safe environment during story development can help people feel more comfortable – such as separating men and women into their own groups as in the Mekong Delta CDST activity – one should respect individuals' decisions so people do not feel forced to participate.

The community can also be encouraged to select participants according to their roles and knowledge about the issue to be discussed (such as the impacts of a changing climate on the village over time). However, it is important to be mindful that some people might be obvious experts on a subject, but others might have valuable knowledge that is not recognised. Such knowledge can emerge during the storytelling process.

Above: A Dam, Sa Lay Man, A Min, and Ossa Mal listen to CARE staff and government partners explain the CDST activity and how community members participate through telling their own stories. Right: In the first storytelling meeting, the Cham fisherwomen, CARE staff and government partners work together to develop a mind map as a way to visually identify issues that they want to address in their community story on the impacts of flood.


Three Stages of Community Digital Storytelling

CDST works through three stages that should be adapted to the local country, culture and context: Preparing the Story, Developing the Story and Sharing the Story. For example, in some contexts, permissions may be required from government partners to ensure public screenings and/or wider distribution of the final photo-videos. If so, this process should be included during the planning phase and prior to the implementation of the CDST activity. (See how CARE adapted CDST to work with a Cham fishing community in the Mekong Delta, Trangs 14-24.)

PREPARING THE STORY

Facilitation Training: The first step in the CDST approach is often to train an individual or a facilitation team to conduct Community Digital Storytelling with community members. People who work closely with communities often make up the facilitation team: NGO staff, partners and community leaders. In some cases, CARE has trained local journalists to build on their storytelling skills. The training includes technical learning and guidance on facilitating collective storytelling processes; which is a unique skill that needs time and practice. Facilitators also need sufficient time to understand and internalise CDST's foundational values. An individual, experienced CDST facilitator can also directly conduct the storytelling process.

Activity Introduction: The facilitation team introduces the storytelling activity to the community group, working with them to identify the participant storytellers. The trained CDST facilitation team uses mind mapping to generate story priorities. It then equips the participants with storytelling and camera skills so they can visualise their stories on a particular issue. Because CDST is promoted as an embedded activity, this phase assumes that the community group is already engaged in the issue through other participatory activities and that it is beneficial for them to engage further on the topic through collective storytelling.
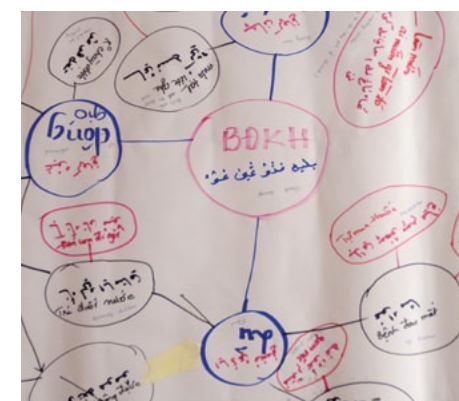
MIND MAPPING

Mind mapping for story development is a participatory technique that can creatively generate, visualise and structure ideas. It is used in the CDST process as a visual aid to organise information and draw up a story. Mind mapping starts by a person drawing a circle in the middle with the overall topic. Participants unpack the elements of this topic by adding more circles in different sizes and shapes. People can also use letters, symbols, pictures, arrows, etc. to show the linkage or relationship between different issues.

DEVELOPING THE STORY

Story Visualisation: Community members take photos of their lives to visually explain the story they want to tell. The CDST facilitation team prints the photos. The community group reflects on and discusses their photos to develop their story. This is done through multiple sessions so that people have time to personally and collectively reflect on the topic, take additional photos and determine what images best represent their story publically. Discussions about who the photo-video is for and why they are making it should occur throughout this stage to ensure everyone agrees on its purpose and that the messaging fits this greater conversation.

Story Creation: Community members create their community story. They build a storyboard using the final photos they want to use. Referencing the photos, they collectively develop a script outline – or a more detailed script if possible – to determine what will be said when the photos are edited into the photo-video. They decide who will work with the facilitation team to record the narration and do so in their local language. The community members perform their own music to use or work with the facilitators to find locally appropriate music and obtain copyright permission for its use.

Story Production: The trained CDST facilitators – and/or local community members – undertake the technical production of the CDST photo-videos, guided by the community photo-based storyboard and narration. This includes editing the photos, narration and music into a final photo-video and adding subtitles as needed. If community members are interested in engaging in the technical production, sufficient time must be part of the timeline to learn both the technical aspects of CDST photo-video production and how to edit a good story.

In many cases, CDST photo-videos are not expected to be of the same quality as professional photography or video productions. This is because there is more value placed on the message development and in the participants taking the photos themselves to build their confidence than on the aesthetics of the final production. If a higher-quality production is important for the participants and they have the time available to build such skills, additional training would be required. As well, equipment should be provided if they will produce stories on an on-going basis.

Based on the photos the women have selected, Sa Mi Roh from the Cham fisher community discusses their story about climate change impacts and the solutions they have identified to help them adapt.

SHARING THE STORY

Story Review and Video Approval (Community Sharing): Community members review the produced video for approval. If needed, changes are made for another round of reviews. Once approved, copies are provided in appropriate formats for the community members and dissemination. A strategy is finalised for screening the photo-videos as appropriate for the context and in line with community agreements (from local to national to international screenings).

Public Story Discussion for Response (Public Sharing): The photo-videos are used to create discussion spaces for policy engagement between community members and those who can best respond to concerns raised in the stories. This might include one-on-one meetings or larger photo-video screenings and dialogue sessions with the local community; media; local or national organisations and policymakers; and/or other key decision-makers at national, regional and global levels. Community members should be involved in determining who will see the photo-videos and be part of the resulting discussions where possible as this can deepen their confidence and capacity for engaging with and influencing decisions that affect them.

DOWNLOAD CDST VIDEO GUIDELINES

To use Community Digital Storytelling in the Mekong Delta context, CARE Vietnam adapted the approach from CARE's 'CDST Video Guidelines.' The publication includes technical details about how to implement CDST: www.careclimatechange.org/files/CDSTGuidelines.pdf. CARE developed the guidelines in collaboration with the Adaptation Learning Program in Africa. Watch the ALP CDST photo-videos at www.careclimatechange.org.

The participating fishermen's group from An Giang province watch their photo-video story for the first time with CARE staff and government partners. In the meeting, they discuss what they learned from the activity, if they will approve the video and whom they want it shown to for further action.

Is CDST a Good Approach for Your Organisation?

Development organisations increasingly value storytelling for raising the voice of people whose voices are rarely heard. However, not all programs or situations may be well suited for Community Digital Storytelling. Before deciding to use the approach, organisations should first ensure that the six CDST values can be adhered to (see page 7). They should then specifically consider capacity, commitment and context.

CAPACITY

Having the appropriate facilitation capacity will determine if CDST is the right approach for your organisation.

- CDST requires a strong facilitator or facilitation team. There are two approaches you can take:

  o Hire an experienced CDST facilitator to lead the CDST activity.

  o Train organisational staff or partners as CDST facilitators who can lead CDST activities.

- If training a facilitation team, sufficient time and resources are required to gain the necessary facilitation and technical skills to use and replicate the approach, especially in relation to internalising the values of CDST.

- Training support beyond the initial activity through additional CDST initiatives and/or mentoring for skills retention is also valuable for more effective capacity building.

Above: Trần Phan Thái Giang from CARE records the audio narration of the Cham fisherwomen story about climate change impacts and adaptation strategies in An Giang province, as narrated by Ay Sah in her own Arabic language. Right: A See Yah from the Women's Union, Sa Ki Roh from the Cham fisher community, Miguel Coulier and Phan Trọng Luật from CARE Vietnam, and Dương Thị Tuyết Đông from a government partner review the community photo-videos on their laptops.

COMMITMENT

Having a commitment to integrating CDST into wider programming that fosters social change will determine if CDST is the right approach for your organisation.

- CDST is most effective when strategically incorporated into programming and policy engagement design where it can contribute to empowering efforts that support people in raising their awareness and confidence on issues important to them.

- Community storytelling is an iterative process that aims to open up new spaces for dialogue and influence with decision-makers. As such, it requires sufficient time, resources and support for identifying community concerns, building people's confidence for sharing their stories, creating the photo-videos and engaging in policy debate and dialogue.

- CDST is not a self-promotional activity for consultation or gathering community voice for the organisation's benefit.

CONTEXT

Having the ability to understand and mitigate risk in varying social and political contexts will determine if CDST is the right approach for your organisation.

- CDST supports people to meaningfully participate in telling their own stories. This can sometimes challenge or disrupt the status quo as community members collectively mobilise and engage in decision-making spaces. Organisations should be willing to support community members in any processes that might put them at risk.

- Photography can further marginalise people if the photos or final photo-videos are used against them later as evidence, such as in cases of gender-based violence or human rights abuses. Thus, organisations need to assess risks through discussions with participants and community leaders to ensure people are aware of and willing to participate. Some risks can be mitigated through efforts that conceal participants' voices and identities.

- In some situations, it may be especially risky to discuss and publicise sensitive issues with vulnerable groups, such as children or sex workers. Ethics must be considered and safeguards must be in place.*

*Ehical choices mean that everyone acts appropriately to ensure that children, and other vulnerable groups, are represented in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Any images are to be honest representation of context and the facts, and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images. As well, CARE follows international Child Protection Policies that ensure people treat all children fairly, and with respect and dignity, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

STORYTELLING
in the MEKONG DELTA

In An Giang province, Vietnam, CARE worked with landless and land-poor fisherwomen and fishermen in sex-separated groups to tell their stories about how they are affected by climate change. While the stories addressed similar issues, they reflected the difference experiences and perspectives of women and men. For example, the women's photo-video focused more on children's education and health and the men's photo-video focused more on livelihoods and infrastructure. Such knowledge from two different perspectives helps CARE, its government partners and community members develop more inclusive climate change adaptation strategies.

Separating women and men specifically brought out issues valuable for not only CARE staff, but also the fisherwomen and men themselves. For example, when watching the women's photo-video, the men said they more fully realised how much support their wives provide on a daily basis and in times of disaster. Such recognition can strengthen family relationships, increase women's status in their families and build confidence for the women to speak more freely in community meetings about their concerns.

To develop their stories, participants first took photos of who they are as fisherwomen and men and how they are adapting to climate change. With the CDST facilitators, they then sorted through printed photos to build a visual timeline of their story. Next, they took more photos illustrating the impacts of flooding and their hopes and visions for addressing those impacts. After further discussions, they took any final photos that they thought were missing. They then wrote a script and narrated it in their own language. When watching their final stories, the Cham fisherwomen and men expressed how proud they were in being able to express and share their culture, religion, climate change adaptation solutions and needs. They were especially happy to have photo-videos in their own language that show the reality of how they live.

Community Storytellers: Female Group: Sa Ki Roh, Mây Sâm, Cha Wa Ri Giah, Ay Sah, Sa Mi Roh; Male Group: Ossa Mal, Hô Sanh, Sa Lay Man, A Min, A Dam, Sa Go Lês, A Bu Ba Cơ, Du Sôh. Translators: Nguyen Thi Nhung and A See Yah; Female Group: Sa Ki Roh, Pha La Hy Giah; Male Group: Ma Hi Ri, Uss Mal, Mohmad Sên. CDST Facilitation Team: A See Yah, Trần Phan Thái Giang, Nguyễn Thị Kim Tuyến, Dương Thị Tuyết Đông, Phan Trọng Luật, Trịnh Trường Thái, Phạm Lê Hồng Ngọc, Nguyễn Phước Hải, Miguel Coulier. CDST Trainer: Tamara Plush.

Working as a Team

Community Digital Storytelling promotes locally driven photography and narration. However, the full storytelling process is a team effort. To help strengthen the response to the stories, CARE trained staff members and government partners as CDST facilitators. This team not only supported the Cham fisherwomen and men in developing their stories, but also continues to work in the region to strengthen Cham community members' resilience to climate change. The storytelling process also involved people with strong ties to the community to foster and support an on-going dialogue that can address concerns raised in the photo-videos. This included a Cham community member from the Women's Union and the Imam from the local mosque.

The Importance of Involving Local Decision-Makers

In An Giang province, CARE embedded Community Digital Storytelling into a multi-year climate change project that aims to strengthen the resilience to climate change of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the Mekong Delta region (see back cover). The project works with government partners to demonstrate community-based, equitable and gender-sensitive adaptation. The government along with CARE works closely with ethnic minorities, including Cham, to incorporate their concerns and aspirations in wider community climate change action plans.

Yet even within the wider Cham community, some groups are hard-to-reach – such as landless or land-poor Cham fisherwomen and men who live on their boats and often migrate seasonally to make a living. Hearing their voice is especially valuable for long-term climate change planning and action. But this can be difficult. This is why CARE used CDST with the Cham fisherwomen and men as a strategic way to reach this highly mobile population and highlight their concerns.

However, because collaborative storytelling and filmmaking is a relatively new approach in Vietnam, CARE found that the potential and value of the CDST process was not always easy for government partners to fully comprehend. And so, while the storytelling process did generate significant dialogue with decision-makers on the issues raised, the final Cham fisherwomen and fishermen CDST photo-videos were not approved by the government for public screenings. This highlights the importance in ensuring that all government partners are fully aware and supportive of the storytelling activity before it begins. Doing so assures that the government partners internalise all CDST values, see the potential benefits of hearing the stories, and increases the likelihood that the concerns of some of the most vulnerable populations in Vietnam have a stronger chance of being listened to for better programming and policy.

Nguyễn Thị Kim Tuyến and Dương Thị Tuyết Đông from government partners, Trần Phan Thái Giang from CARE Vietnam, A See Yah from the Women's Union and Sa Ki Roh from the Cham fisher community gather around the computer to edit the fisherwomen's story. They use the photo-storyboard that the women developed to guide the editing.

The Impact of CDST on the Cham Fisherwomen and Men

For the Cham participants, the storytelling process generated positive change even though the photo-videos were not publically shared. Through discussions resulting from the CDST activity, the Women's Union learned more about and recognised the vulnerable situation of landless and land-poor fisherwomen and fishermen within the wider Cham community. This increased its support of the vulnerable population. For example, the Women's Union collaborated with the private sector to locate housing for Cham people living on boats. As well, the CARE climate change project team was able to more appropriately respond to the Cham fisherwomen and men's concerns by providing better-tailored livelihood support as well as flood emergency supplies. A number of the CDST participants are now members of the local search and rescue team. As well, Cham fisherwomen participated in training targeted at women on first aid, family and health care during floods, and house strengthening.

> **'After working with the Cham people living on boats, I have a better understanding of what they need to adapt. When I participate in community climate change planning meetings, I push to make their needs a priority.'**
>
> Ms. Trần Phan Thái Giang, M&E Senior Officer and CDST Facilitator, CARE Vietnam

The issues brought up by the Cham in their photo-videos are also constantly being discussed at planning meetings with CARE project partners. One of the reasons is that the process increased relations and understanding for CARE staff and government partners who participated in the facilitation training. They said they are now more attentive in making sure that Cham fisherwomen and men's concerns are part of community-wide climate change plans. As well, they work harder to minimise the difficulties Cham fisherwomen and men face in participating in planning meetings. Prior to the activity, facilitators had assumed that many Cham people could comprehend, but not speak, Vietnamese. The CDST activity raised awareness of the value for Vietnamese-Arabic translation at information-sharing and decision-making meetings.

The community members also shared the printed photos from their stories at the local mosque. This helped to raise their profile and status in the wider Cham community and created new platforms for them to reach out and share their experiences and concerns.

Left: During a photo-sorting session, Cha Wa Ri Giah, Mây Sâm and Ay Sah smile as they create their photo-storyboard of their climate change adaptation story. Top: A Dam takes the CDST activity camera with him on his fishing boat. Bottom: The participating Cham fisherwomen and family members show the boats where they live.

CDST Recommendations and Lessons Learned

The storytelling project with the Cham fisherwomen and men was the first time CARE Vietnam had used Community Digital Storytelling. The CARE staff and government partner facilitators learned many lessons that can help make the community storytelling processes stronger. Below, such learnings have been adapted into six questions that practitioners can ask when implementing CDST to ensure the activity is consistent with its values. Following each question are insights into good practice and recommendations for the future.

1. Does everyone understand CDST as a COMMUNITY-DRIVEN Process?

GOOD PRACTICE: An experienced CDST facilitator met in person with the CARE Vietnam team well in advance to the storytelling activity in An Giang. This was valuable so CARE staff could understand the community-driven approach and create an activity and engagement plan consistent with the CDST values.

RECOMMENDATION: To gain government approvals, it is valuable for projects to have: a desk review of government guidelines on video and documents approval prior to the activity; orientation for government partners on the CDST approach to gain their support, involvement and commitment to approval; and an open, respectful dialogue between community members or representatives and government partners on the photo-video content and use of the video in the future.

RECOMMENDATION: Community members need an orientation to CDST through dialogue and examples prior to the activity so they can determine how telling their stories might be relevant and beneficial for them. It can also help stimulate wider discussions and reflection on the most appropriate photos they want to take for their stories once the activity begins.

With A Dam and his family on their boat, CDST activity translator Nguyen Thi Nhung displays one of the photos taken by the Cham fishermen.

2. Is the project designed to be FLEXIBLE and EMBEDDED?

GOOD PRACTICE: While CDST can be used with diverse communities on a wide range of issues, CARE chose to use CDST with a Cham subgroup of fisherwomen and men because they are a hard-to-reach, mobile population difficult to mobilise for community planning activities but nonetheless highly impacted by a changing climate.

GOOD PRACTICE: CARE integrated the CDST activity into a multi-year climate change program. This allowed the staff and partners to incorporate the concerns raised by the highly vulnerable Cham fisherwomen and men into on-going climate change programming and policy engagement activities.

GOOD PRACTICE: Keeping value-for-money in mind, CARE utilized the CDST process to contribute to programming goals. Even without showing the final photo-videos, the storytelling process raised awareness of the Cham fisherwomen's and men's local situation and needs. It also highlighted to policy-makers the value of including vulnerable populations in climate change adaptation planning. In the long term, this will not only bring benefit to those who made the photo-videos, but the wider community and society.

RECOMMENDATION: The CDST process does not end when the photo-videos are made and approved by the community. The full activity needs to include sufficient time and resources for additional screenings, dialogue sessions and distribution efforts that can further address concerns raised in the photo-videos. Such efforts should be strategically integrated into the wider program design.

RECOMMENDATION: Keep the project goals and objectives at the forefront during the storytelling activity to ensure that the technical aspect of creating the final photo-videos does not become prioritised over the objective of the CDST activity.

RECOMMENDATION: While initial CDST costs can seem high in relation to the production quality of the final photo-videos, its value is more appropriately measured through observing and evaluating the entire storytelling, sharing and dialogue process and its results.

Ay Sah shows how Cham fisherwomen often work in day jobs on land to help support their families, especially when their fishing livelihood is threatened by flood or other climate impacts, as Sa Ki Roh takes her photo.

3. Is the CDST activity RESPECTFUL within the local context and culture?

GOOD PRACTICE: Because the fisherwomen and men are a mobile population who often work at night, CARE allowed enough time for communities to take their own photos whenever they were available. This worked well for them to take their own photos at times and locations that fit best with their schedule.

GOOD PRACTICE: Language was a concern during the activity as Cham people speak Arabic, a minority language in Vietnam. As well, many of the participants do not read or write. CARE and partners deliberately invested in using multiple translators to make the participants feel comfortable and confident. Also for the facilitators who often work only in Vietnamese, this was a very valuable learning experience as it requires a lot of patience.

RECOMMENDATION: Consider that while participating in Community Digital Storytelling, participants are spending time away from financial, family or religious obligations. Meetings should be scheduled to avoid interrupting these and other activities.

RECOMMENDATION: Consider culturally sensitive issues. The facilitation team should ensure that participants fully understand and agree to the consequences of participating. This is especially important when working in risky and sensitive situations (e.g. engaging with religious minorities, victims of gender-based violence, people who have been trafficked, etc.). Considerations might be as simple as ensuring activities provide proper breaks for daily prayers or more complex where images need to avoid people's faces if raising concerns could put people at risk for violence, loss of their livelihood or stigmatisation. If the risks are too high for community members, the best decision may be not to use CDST.

RECOMMENDATION: Ensure that people are using simple language, and that translation is used where necessary. This is especially vital for complex issues like climate change and when working with ethnic minority groups who experience language barriers.

Ay Sah from An Giang province talks through the nearly-final photo-storyboard the fisherwomen have created. While they took more than 200 photos, they have decided to use 38 photos for the final CDST photo-video. She is working with the group to determine what additional photos are needed and to develop the script outline.

4. Are we prioritising DIALOGUE & LISTENING for better programming and policy?

GOOD PRACTICE: The CDST activity brought together CARE staff, government partners and local community leaders who work with Cham communities in the An Giang province to strengthen dialogue on local climate change adaptation. This conversation about the Cham concerns continues more than a year after the initial activity finished. The storytelling process increased everyone's awareness of the climate-related challenges faces by the fisherwomen and men, which helped improve the relationships between community members and others who could listen and help address the issues raised in their photo-videos.

GOOD PRACTICE: The Cham CDST photo-videos were developed over a three-week period, which allowed time for the facilitators to learn, reflect and support the storytelling process. It also allowed time for the Cham people to develop their stories through an iterative, community-driven photo-taking process.

GOOD PRACTICE: Collectively community members, CARE staff and government partners identified potential decision-makers who might be interested in listening to and address specific concerns raised in the photo-videos for policy action. This information fed into recommendations for further action.

RECOMMENDATION: Use the storytelling process to build and strengthen relationships at multiple levels. This can include strengthening connections between people who live in the same community, as well as their connections to more powerful decision-makers. Because storytelling is unique in many communities, the CDST process and final photo-videos can be used to open spaces for dialogue that may not have existed before.

RECOMMENDATION: Approach CDST as a learning-based activity, allowing time for dialogue and engaged listening. Ensure there is time to link what is being communicated through stories with strategic and specific action plans that addresses the concerns raised by community members.

The Cham fishermen's group and Ma Hi Ri, the Imam at the local mosque, discuss which photos they want to use to tell their climate change adaptation story.

5. Are we ensuring INFORMED CONSENT and copyright permissions?

GOOD PRACTICE: Participants in the Mekong Delta activity made sure that people photographed understood how the photos were being used and provided informed consent. Consent forms were verbally translated in the local language, which were read to participants who could not read. Children's parents were asked as well for their permission.

RECOMMENDATION: Finding appropriate music can be a challenge as it not only has to fit the mood of the story, but also is best without lyrics so the narration can be clearly heard. Because of this, be sure to allocate sufficient time and budget to locate music for the photo-videos and to get proper permissions. If community members decide to record music, this will also take time, resources and audio recording equipment.

6. Are we making SMART TECHNOLOGY CHOICES?

GOOD PRACTICE: To keep the production process affordable and simple, the Mekong Delta CDST activity was conducted with workshop materials, two computer laptops, a DSLR camera for activity photos; two point-and-shoot cameras for community use, an audio recorder, a microphone, headphones, laptop speakers, an external hard drive, a projector and a screen. It also used free software so the editing process could be more easily replicable with the facilitation team members.

RECOMMENDATION: Because CDST is a technology-driven storytelling process, it is good to purchase equipment in country so it can be replaced easily for future projects if needed. As well, by using basic technology and free software, the activity can be more easily conducted within development programs without having to go through lengthy procurement, budgeting or IT-approval processes.

A Dam from An Giang province takes a photo for the fishermen's photo-video using a point-and-shoot digital camera provided during the CDST activity.

Cham fishermen in An Giang province prepare their nets as they start their fishing day on the Mekong River.

Community Digital Storytelling in the Integrated Community-based Adaptation in the Mekong Project

In order to support vulnerable communities in the Mekong Delta Region adapt to the emerging climate change effects and improve their climate resilience, CARE International in Vietnam is implementing the *Integrated Community-based Adaptation in the Mekong* (ICAM) Project in five communes of An Phu district – An Giang province and Vinh Chau district – Soc Trang province, from August 2012 until June 2015. Funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the project is specifically targeting the most vulnerable in the two target provinces such as poor women, landless, land-poor, ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups through the following three expected outcomes:

- Communities and local authorities have improved capacity to undertake gender-sensitive analysis and planning for community-based adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

- Improved community resilience through the implementation of sustainable, community-level, integrated CBA and DRR interventions that benefit vulnerable people, particularly women.

- A strong evidence base and strengthened civil society provide a foundation for the scale up of community-based, equitable and gender-sensitive adaptation in the Mekong River Delta.

To build climate change awareness, raise voice and strengthen connections between communities and their governments, in December 2013 the ICAM project launched the Community Digital Storytelling (CDST) initiative as part of the wider aim to promote community-based adaptation.

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