

MSUS Culminating Experience Final Report

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May 1, 2020

Oui Nous Pouvons: Subverting the Single Story of Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Effective sustainability communication is essential to the successful creation, implementation and maintenance of effective sustainability solutions. As journalists are often the intermediary between sustainability scientists or practitioners and the general public, they have a responsibility to learn how to tell these stories in a way that motivates audiences to design and support more substantive solutions. My project is an experiment in this kind of sustainability storytelling.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Togo I saw firsthand the harm that ineffective storytelling can do. There the dominant narrative of sustainable development – as something Northern citizens do in the South – has had a dampening effect on grassroots development efforts. In an effort to combat this narrative, I created a short-form documentary that follows the stories of one exemplary Togolese changemaker who successfully developed his own solutions to sustainability challenges in his community. The film was published online in both English and French; shared with staff, Volunteers and local counterparts of Peace Corps Togo; and modified into a shorter video profile for distribution via WhatsApp, the primary social media platform in Togo.

Focus groups organized to evaluate audience responses to the film indicated that it effectively elicits feelings of hope and inspiration in viewers, as well as an increased motivation to address problems in viewers' local communities. Participants also noted that its emphasis on local-led solutions counteracted Western development myths. This early feedback supports a growing body of evidence that solutions journalism more effectively spurs behavior change than its problem-centric counterpart. It also suggests that shifting the focus of development narratives from foreign to local leaders can also shift audience's perceived agency.

Table of Contents

Introduction and Background	2
Literature Review	5
Project Approach and Intervention Methods.....	10
Outcomes/Findings	11
Recommendations	14
Conclusions	15
Acknowledgements	16
Appendices	17
Apendix A.....	17
Apendix B.....	17
Apendix C	18
Apendix D	21
Apendix E	33
References	37

Introduction and Background

Stories are important. When told well, they can not only make us feel a full range of emotions, but they can also shape our desires, intentions, knowledge and beliefs. And it is these drivers that are often the most difficult to address when attempting to solve a sustainability problem. Using Arnim Wiek’s Framework for Solving Sustainability Problems, I looked at how stories might be used to shape motives and assumptions, two types of root causes that contribute to sustainability problems (Figure 1). Of these drivers, the one that interests me most as a storyteller is perceived agency/self-efficacy. If those of us who are contributing to sustainability problems don’t believe in our own ability to change and to create solutions, how can we hope to solve *any* sustainability problems?

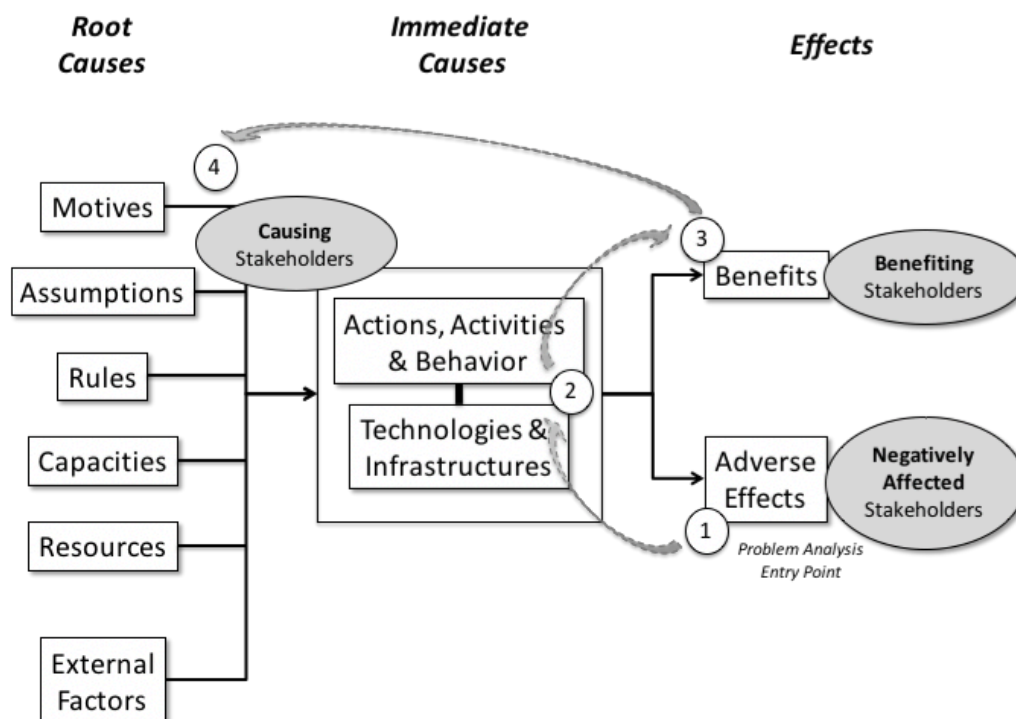


Figure 1: Wiek's Tool for Sustainability Problem Analysis

Unfortunately, most of the sustainability stories in the mainstream media seem to have a numbing effect on audiences. And sustainable development stories that cover countries in the global South have an actively *disempowering* effect on citizens from those countries. The dominant narrative on this subject tends to foreground citizens from the global North sacrificing the comforts of home to “make a difference” in poorer countries. At the same time that story encourages citizens in “developed” countries to ignore their own problems to try to solve those in another country, it discourages people in “developing” countries from trying to create their own solutions to local challenges. And this perceived lack of agency hinders the creation of locally-appropriate solutions. As a Masters International student, I got to witness this firsthand. After my first year in the MSUS program, I left for Togo to serve three years as a Peace Corps Volunteer. As an aspiring journalist, I wanted to take this opportunity to learn how to tell sustainability stories that *empower* audiences – especially those living in countries like Togo – to become change agents.

I was sitting in a hotel restaurant, trying to take advantage of the free WiFi, when a Togolese man approached my table and sat down. He had started a non-profit, and after explaining his work, he asked if I could help him find volunteers to come and teach computer skills to the kids in his program. “Do you know any other Germans or Americans who could come volunteer for a week or two?” I asked him if he had looked for Togolese volunteers yet. He had not.

This kind of thing happened a lot during my Peace Corps service. I came expecting my community to tell me what to do. It turns out they had been expecting the opposite. The field of sustainable development has changed a lot in the last few decades, but outside of the field, the narrative has shifted little, especially in the countries being “developed.” To many, development still looks like white saviors digging wells and building schools in poor African villages. So Northern voluntourists neglect sustainability challenges at home to sign up for month-long trips helping out in orphanages and clinics in the global South, often causing more harm than good. Even Peace Corps Volunteers who develop a more nuanced understanding of development usually use their platforms to talk about what they did, about the projects they led. And rural communities in places like Togo see development as a wish list of infrastructure projects to be delivered by a rich – ideally foreign – benefactor. The dream for many is to leave, to get to America or Europe, where the money and jobs are plentiful.

The thing is, there are lots of changemakers in Togo, taking initiative and creating solutions to local challenges. But they aren’t a part of the national conversation. The nightly news in Togo features shot after shot of government officials giving speeches at various development conferences and community events. Radio programs emphasize foreign news coverage. And the other primary source of news – WhatsApp – consists largely of questionable stories about political conflict, health and sorcery that get passed like wildfire from phone to phone. So none of my Togolese friends had heard anything about the man just 2 hours away leveraging his skills as a sociologist and artisan to run an ever-growing list of youth organizations and programs in his community. They hadn’t heard of the woman in the capital who turned disposable water sachets into bags. Or the partners who were teaching young people how to design, hack and invent using electronic waste and other locally available materials. These changemakers became my partners in this project: Aposto Atcham, the community organizer behind Initiative à Base Communautaire (INABAC); Aimée Abra Temou Lawani, CEO of the social enterprises Mi-Woè, SOLEIL and PINGOUIN; and Ousia Foli-Bebe and Hombadyita (Bruno) Kataba, founders of EcoTecLab. The four of them graciously allowed me to spend hours filming them so that we might together tell an alternative story of sustainable development to Togo’s youth and to idealist Americans. During my conversations with Aposto, Aimée, Ousia and Bruno, they told me that they dreamed of a Togo whose youth had the tools to become entrepreneurs instead of waiting in limbo for government jobs to open up. A Togo in which students were shown the relevance of STEM fields to their lives and in which they realized that they, too, could make, invent and create, using the materials available to them. A Togo no longer plagued by plastic pollution. A Togo in which citizens understood the importance of organic agriculture and supporting local farmers and artisans. A Togo in which citizens felt empowered to solve problems in their communities.

Before arriving in Togo, I had proposed to co-create a short-form documentary along with the “subjects” of the film and to publish it alongside a toolkit that would help audiences take action themselves to replicate or support the solution(s) presented in the film. I chose video because – in response to perceived audience demand, online

platform priorities and monetization opportunities – newsrooms are increasingly emphasizing online video in their reporting (Kalogeropoulos & Nielsen, 2018). I also wanted to focus on the medium in which I intend to one day work professionally. I felt that a participatory process would help me tell the story more accurately and help me practice a method I hoped to use in the future to address the dearth of voices from the global South in our mainstream media. And I hoped the toolkit would prove useful for audiences who might feel motivated to act but lost about where and how to begin.

Ultimately, I had to narrow my scope. Truly participatory film-making proved too ambitious for a Peace Corps Volunteer attempting to film stories taking place outside of her worksite. I also cut the toolkit from my proposal to allow more time to edit a cohesive film. Instead, I created a 13-minute documentary with editorial (rather than creative) input from my partners that has been published on Vimeo and YouTube in both French and English. This film focuses on Togolese sustainability solutions to complex local problems. Specifically, it follows the story of Aposto, whose captivating personality, low-budget interventions and convenient location a mere hour and a half from my site made him the ideal protagonist.

Additionally, I decided to add a mini video profile of Aposto to my scope to test a concept I ultimately hope to replicate for the other changemakers I filmed for this project. I want my partners' stories to reach a broad Togolese audience. While in Togo I realized this would only be possible if I were to distribute shorter videos through WhatsApp. Most people access the internet through smartphones, which are cheaper than laptops and more convenient than internet cafes, and most communication and sharing of news happens on WhatsApp – in groups and through chain messages.

Literature Review

In the last ten years or so, storytelling has gained a growing amount of attention in academia, especially among sustainability scientists and practitioners. Narrative and stories are increasingly seen as useful tools for communicating sustainability science, co-creating visions of sustainable futures and instilling values for sustainability in the next generation (Veland et al., 2018 & Miller, 2010). Meredith Bird Miller writes, "Storytelling encourages a sense of place, both locally and globally, and may motivate thoughtful environmental behavior that fosters sustainability" (p. 337). There is a wealth of literature like this that explains the power of storytelling through theoretical and historical lenses, argues for its use in various context and advises readers on how to use it effectively. I found fewer empirical studies on the impacts of stories on attitudes and behaviors, but those I found suggested that stories do have the ability to shape assumptions and motives. Some studies showed that these effects may be moderated by the audience's pre-existing attitudes. And whether these effects lead to concrete behavior changes is less well established.

As noted above, assumptions can be broken down into knowledge and beliefs. And while knowledge is rarely the most important determinant of behavior, it can be an important component in sustainability solutions. Certainly the lack of knowledge about problems like climate change and what causes it could be a barrier to acting in ways to mitigate it. And learning new information about it could lead to simultaneous shifts in

other determinants (such as beliefs about perceived severity or perceived action efficacy). While stories have been shown to increase knowledge, some studies suggest that this may be moderated by audience member's pre-existing beliefs (Schäfer, 2015). Taddicken (2013), for instance, surveyed German internet users to learn about the impact of mass media and online content on audience knowledge about and attitudes towards climate change. She found that for individuals who felt a need for more information about climate change, Internet use had a positive effect on problem awareness and behavioral intentions. Among individuals who perceived media reporting as exaggerated, however, Internet use had a negative impact on knowledge levels, problem awareness and intentions concerning climate change. So stories can increase their audience's knowledge about a topic, but it should be noted that people often seek out stories that reinforce their existing worldviews, and they may even interpret the same stories differently based on these biases.

What about beliefs? Studies on art of persuasion – shaping audience beliefs through story – have a rich history; what follows is just the tip of the iceberg. And what I found was... complicated. Some studies make a straightforward case for storytelling's ability to change beliefs. One 2017 study evaluated a pilot program to use a digital storytelling intervention to improve the type 2 diabetes outcomes in refugee and immigrant communities (Wieland et al.). The authors found that after watching a 12-minute video that included 4 stories in addition to educational messaging, participants reported feeling more confident about their ability to manage their diabetes in the future. They also reported increased levels of motivation about doing so, indicating a change in both beliefs (perceived self-efficacy) and motives (intentions). In other cases, stories did not appear to change self-reported beliefs, though they did change outcomes or behavior. For example, a study of over 400 urban high school students found that having students read stories about scientists who struggled intellectually or in their personal life did not have a significant effect on student's general beliefs about intelligence, effort, goal orientation and response to failure, but it did have a significant positive effect on their science grades (Xiaodong et al., 2016). This was odd because previous studies had established a link between beliefs about intelligence and academic performance. The authors suggested multiple explanations for this. Perhaps general beliefs about intelligence were distinct from beliefs about intelligence in science. Perhaps stories only change beliefs when they directly confront the audience's current beliefs, creating a sense of dissatisfaction with these existing beliefs, as suggested by research done by Rokeach & Grube (as cited in Xiaodong et al.). Or maybe in this case behavior was determined by things other than beliefs. The authors referenced other studies that found that teaching college students about civil rights led to concrete behavior changes but not significant changes in beliefs and attitudes about race.

Many studies on storytelling for behavior change have captured changes motives along with beliefs (as in Wieland's diabetes study above). While our assumptions guide us, it may not matter what we believe if the belief isn't aligned with our motives. I may believe that biking to work is important for reducing emissions, for example, but my desire to save time on my commute might be more powerful. So many behavior change studies attempt to measure whether an intervention impacts a participant's intention or motivation. In one such study done in Bangladesh, narrative storytelling was shown

to shift women's beliefs about perceived susceptibility to pregnancy, perceived benefits of pregnancy spacing and increased social support for family planning (preferences) but not on their use of modern contraceptives (Cooper et al., 2014). For while assumptions and motives can be important drivers of behavior, they're not always the limiting factors. Sometimes other barriers remain. And while stories may not have the power to address these other barriers directly, they may be able to draw public attention to them, to put them on the agenda.

Since I am especially interested in the effects that journalistic stories can have on motives, beliefs and capacities, I also looked into media effects theory. The hypodermic needle model "posited that the media could affect changes in attitudes, beliefs, and ultimately behavior. The model, however, failed to take into account individual beliefs and uses of media" (Stacks et al., 2001, p. 29). The model has given way to highly studied models like agenda-setting theory. This theory was first put to the test by McCombs and Shaw (1972), who found strong correlations between headline issues in the news and those on the agenda for the 1968 US presidential election (as cited in Stacks et al.). Offshoots of agenda-setting theory are attribute agenda-setting and framing theory, which postulate that in choosing how to cover issues – in decisions about what to include, exclude, emphasize or elaborate – news media provide the frame through which the public views these issues. Media scholars argue that this allows the media to shape public opinion and that these opinions, in turn, lead to behavior change (Stacks et al.).

This review suggests that there is ample evidence for the idea that stories have the ability to shape both assumptions and motives. While they may not have the power to address other behavioral determinants or root causes of sustainability problems, agenda-setting theory indicates that stories that gain prominence in the media may have the power to draw public attention to these other drivers. What this research also makes clear, however, is that not all stories are equally effective at altering motives and assumptions. So for storytellers looking to bring about sustainability transformations, what techniques should they use?

They might start by defining their practice. Andrew Bernier (2019), for one, distinguishes between storytelling about sustainability and sustainability storytelling:

Whereas telling stories about sustainability follows more traditional methods of storytelling, using narrative structures within a sustainability context, sustainability storytelling intentionally aims to teach, convey, and empower listeners with clear and engaging examples of sustainability in action. Not only do these stories demonstrate the skills and knowledge needed to make sustainable change in our communities, but they also empower and motivate an audience member to be a sustainability change agent. (p. 4)

If this is the vision sustainability storytellers and journalists aspire to, what are the most appropriate tools they should use?

Remember your Audience

The first consideration for all storytellers is to know your audience. This is especially important for sustainability storytellers in a media landscape marred by echo chambers. As Stacks noted, audiences control their media intake. We pick and choose which stories to listen to, especially when it comes to news stories. Bernier reminds readers that sustainability storytellers should be attempting to reach audiences who aren't already passionate about sustainability. He argues for an empathic approach that starts with seeking these people out, listening to learn what's important to them and then figuring out how sustainability could be meaningful for them. Storytellers, he writes, should then make this connection right away, attempting to engage sustainability detractors from the first sentence or shot.

Show, Don't Tell

Another suggestion from Bernier – one that comes up time and again in storytelling advice – is “show don't tell.” Many attempts at sustainability communication focus on conveying information, on sharing data, facts. But this information-heavy approach may not be the most effective, particularly if the goal is to change beliefs and intentions of those who don't already care about the issue at hand. Data is easily forgotten, but a good story stays with us. By sharing a story that exemplifies the data, storytellers can humanize it and make it real for audiences. Data can be used to strengthen the story, but it should not be the backbone. Evidence for the efficacy of this strategy comes from a 2013 study by Grace & Kaufman on the effect of storytelling on college students' attitudes toward sustainable agriculture. This mixed-methods study found that a story-based intervention had a more positive effect on attitudes toward sustainable agriculture than an information-based one. Open-ended questions asked after the intervention also revealed that one dominant theme among the group that received the story treatment and experienced a significant change in attitudes was “vivid description made it real” (p. 13). Another was “identification with the narrator” (p. 13).

Center Relatable Characters (or don't?)

This theme of centering relatable narrators or characters emerged several times in my research. In the Xiaodong study mentioned earlier, more students reported feeling connected to the stories when they involved struggle than the students who read stories of achievement. Humphrey & Adams (2016) also write that telling stories about people who struggle helps audiences feel empathy and better understand the desire for change (as cited in Bernier, 2019). Bernier echoes this idea by noting that all stories are defined by conflict (against person, against self, against nature or against society), and that sustainability is defined by conflict. Including it in sustainability stories can serve to make the stories more relatable, engaging and inspiring, giving audiences the motivation to overcome their own hurdles to becoming change agents. He also argues that too many sustainability stories feature organizations as their main characters. Audiences can't feel empathy for organizations in the same way they can for individuals.

While there is lots of evidence that this technique is effective for sustainability problems that require individual action, according to Zhou & Niederdeppe (2017), some studies suggest that it is less effective – detrimental even – for problems that require government or societal intervention. These authors tested the effects of personalized and depersonalized narratives on support for obesity prevention policies and found that personalized narratives reduced support for these policies. They suggest that this may be due to the fact that personalizing a problem with systemic causes “may draw people’s attention to the idiosyncratic features of the health problem, resulting in more individual-level thoughts” (p. 334). This study notes that using depersonalized narratives that feature collective characters can help highlight the systemic nature of a problem and draw audience attention to societal-level remedies.

I’ve experienced this conundrum in my own work. My applied project told a story of one man addressing systemic problems in his community. I felt that this narrative would be empowering for Togolese citizens who felt overwhelmed by the challenges their communities faced and for American citizens who may have a tendency to focus on the problems abroad rather than the problems in their hometowns. While small informal focus groups bore this out to an extent, in later conversations with one participant, my film was used as an argument to reform the U.S. welfare system, which this participant felt was being used as a crutch by a large proportion of its recipients. For this participant, the film’s message of individual empowerment was relevant to societal problems at much larger scales than even the problems addressed in the story.

Focus on Solutions

Arguably the most important suggestion I came across in my research was the tell sustainability stories that are solutions-oriented. Bernier advises dedicating about 75% of the story’s “what” to a solution and only 25% on establishing the problem. This idea is supported by a rapidly growing body of research on solutions journalism, a relatively new theory of practice in newsrooms. The Solutions Journalism Network defines this practice as “rigorous, compelling reporting about responses to social problems” (qtd. in McIntyre et al., 2018). This practice isn’t meant to be one of feel-good fluff pieces and blind praise. Solutions journalists are taught to analyze solutions critically, so as to better inform future solutions design.

One researcher tested the effect of solutions-oriented stories by preparing two different versions of the same news story and surveying audience responses. Participants who read the hopeful article were more likely to report feeling informed, to judge the piece as good reporting and to have more energy to engage and take action (Gyldensted, 2014). Solutions journalism has also been shown to have second-level agenda-setting effects; when journalists focus on a solution, so do news consumers (as cited in McIntyre et al.). And one study out of the University of Oregon found that solutions stories inspire greater trust and agreement with story-specific beliefs (Thier et al., 2019). Furthermore, the Tow Center for Digital Journalism found that readers of solutions stories started thinking of how to get involved with the solutions presented (McIntyre et al.)

One study that was particularly interesting for me, as someone who prefers to work in a largely visual medium, tested the effect of pairing problem-oriented, solution-oriented or neutral photos with problem- or solution-oriented news stories (McIntyre et al.). While a solutions-oriented story with a solutions photo made the readers feel the most positive, participants reported the highest interest and strongest behavioral intentions after reading a solutions-story with a neutral photo. According to the authors, the neutral images may have hit a sweet spot, being just interesting enough to pull the readers in without distracting them. Alternatively, the lack of information in the photo might have forced them to look more closely at the text for information. Another possible explanation was that ambiguous symbols may allow viewers “to associate meaning with whatever aspect of the overall narrative the viewer finds most persuasive” (p. 984).

Find the Balance Between Simplicity and Complexity

Stories are powerful when they are simple; plots that are dense with tangents and loops can be difficult for audiences to follow. But when telling sustainability stories – complex by definition – it is important to capture that complexity rather than omitting it entirely. Helping audiences understand the complex causes and effects of a sustainability problem can help them better design and understand possible solutions to it. As Bernier puts it, “The goal is to share simple yet strong stories that honor and navigate this complexity by highlighting resilience, revealing unknown connections, and celebrating emergence” (p. 10).

In addition, both sustainability storytellers like Bernier and solutions journalists argue for covering solutions critically, showcasing process and evaluating results. Critiques of solutions journalism sometimes imagine it to be “good news” journalism – fluff pieces designed to make audiences feel good – or worse, advocacy journalism that promotes certain policies or ideas rather than attempting to be objective. But those that practice it say that solutions journalism “demands rigorous coverage of responses to problems, focussing [sic] on how, is or can this problem be solved, and how does a proposed solution work?” (Kasriel, 2016, qtd. in McIntyre, 2018). This also entails covering the strengths and weaknesses of the interventions, and comparing them to other attempts. By covering solutions in the same analytical way they would cover problems, journalists can better inform those attempting to create, replicate, improve upon or implement solutions. Showcasing the process – the how – in sustainability stories can be beneficial for other reasons, too. As Andrew Bernier points out, modeling skills and competencies needed to design and implement sustainability solutions can make audiences aware of competencies they may need to develop themselves.

Project Approach and Intervention Methods

These are the lessons I applied as I attempted to tell my partners’ stories. The main film follows the journey of Aposto Atcham, from average Togolese student to sociologist to artisan to community activist. It establishes the local problems he is addressing, and it showcases his multi-pronged, ever-evolving solutions in both interviews and *cinema verité*. The film ends with statements from Aposto about his faith in Togolese youth and

his belief that anyone can do this kind of work if they adapt it to fit their community and work with others to find solutions.

In order to evaluate the success of my intervention, I needed to know whether or not my project communicated my partners' stories well enough to shift audience perceptions. To test this, I solicited feedback from 3 virtual focus groups, consisting of between 2 and 7 members each (for a total of 13 participants). Participants were shown the full film, *Banc d'Amour*, and then asked to answer questions about its main themes and their emotional responses. In order to help participants feel free to speak their minds, I sought out friends to facilitate these discussions. I also attempted to determine the film's effect on different audiences, in particular on American and Togolese audiences. The first two focus groups were held with American participants, and the third was held with participants from the Togolese diaspora. (My initial plan was to have a friend facilitate an in-person focus group in Togo, but then the coronavirus pandemic forced the evacuation of all Peace Corps Volunteers and shelter-in-place policies for Togolese citizens. A virtual focus group in this internet-limited environment was impractical, so a Togolese friend living in America hosted a virtual focus group here for other members of the diaspora.)

Though facilitators were given some freedom to let the discussion go where the participants led it, each group was asked the following questions:

- 1) What is your key takeaway from this film?
- 2) How did it make you feel?
- 3) Did you understand the problems the main characters are trying to address? Did you understand how the solutions implemented addressed those problems?
- 4) Do you believe the solutions implemented by the main characters will help their communities move toward a more sustainable future?
 - a) Do the solutions appear replicable? Scaleable?

Outcomes/Findings

The findings of these initial focus groups, though limited by a small sample size, were encouraging. When asked how about their understanding of the plot, specifically about the problems being addressed and how the solutions worked to address those problems, every participant was able to demonstrate their understanding by summarizing the key points. No one expressed confusion about the core problems or solutions, and every participant felt that the solutions were appropriate. Two American participants did express a feeling that the problem of teen pregnancy was overemphasized early on in the film, as the solutions implemented ended up addressing far more than this singular issue. I attempted to clarify this better in the final edit of the film.

All participants felt that the solutions presented in the film would help the community achieve a more sustainable future, and several noted that the solutions seemed very practical. One participant pointed out specific social, economic and environmental problems *Aposto* is addressing and noted that he is also working to bring about a

psychological shift in the community's sense of agency. Another argued that the solutions have *already* helped the community:

Everything is anchored in the community; all the materials, all the ideas are from the community. So automatically... these solutions helped – it's not that they *will* help the community – these solutions have *already* helped the community. We can feel through the faces of these kids their joy. They're really engaged. Already that has helped a lot.

Most felt that the solutions were both scaleable and replicable but that it would require more financial resources and infrastructure to scale up, that it would need to evolve as the nature of the problems evolved and that replicability would depend on the local context and materials available. One Togolese participant noted that he saw an opportunity here for the organization to adapt to address new problems posed by COVID-19 – specifically by sewing masks. (In fact, this is something Aposto and his team have already started doing.)

Participants also expressed a range of positive takeaways from the film. Many of these were messages I had intended to encode in the film, but several were happy accidents. Key takeaways mentioned included that the film: promoted grassroots, community-based solutions; showed a solution that was robust, layered and empowering; disproved common myths about development (that higher education is the only path to wellbeing, for example); was a call to action for similar communities in Togo; emphasized the importance of artisans; and redefined the idea of a dream (that the path forward isn't a straight line). I hadn't intended for these last two points to come through so strongly, but I am happy that these are the secondary messages being absorbed.

Most importantly, all Togolese participants reported feeling proud after watching the film. Several noted that they've always wanted to help their communities back home but haven't known how and that sharing ideas like this is helpful. All American participants reported feeling inspired and/or hopeful after watching the film. Though it remains to be seen whether these feelings will lead to behavior change – and it could be difficult to link any concrete change to the feelings evoked by one short film – available evidence suggests that hope is a more effective motivator than fear or sadness (Gyldensted, 2014). One Togolese participant shared that the film motivated her, that seeing someone from her country taking action made her want to help. One American participant reflected that she felt inspired to take action in her own community:

But I would say that it's different from a lot of the other development or sustainable [*sic*] documentaries that I've seen, where it's like, "Now, how can I help these people?" It's like, "No, how can I go into my community? Like Togolese people are going to be okay; it's not up to me to help them. But how can I help the community that I am in right now?"

Another American participant reported having felt discouraged by the restrictions imposed by the COVID19 pandemic but that the film made him think forward to things

he could get involved with when travel restrictions are eased. And a third noted that the film was a good reminder that his impact didn't have to come directly from his career, that he good still make help his community in other ways like volunteering. Several participants made the point that the coronavirus crisis makes this story all the more relevant to an American audience. In the U.S., we're going to see a lot more people in need, and the virus limits our ability to help each other in the ways we're used to. In the words of one participant, "I think now, especially in this time, we have even more in common with those Togolese people. Like we really don't have a lot. We've got to be creative." Just as revealing as what was said was what *wasn't* said. No American participant reported a desire to help the protagonists or asked how they might help them. (It may also be worth noting that although I gave the same instructions to all facilitators, only the American participants gave explicit, unprompted comments on how the film could be improved. There are many possible explanations for this in such a small-scale evaluation, but it may be worth exploring in a broader study. If this trend holds, could it be explained by different cultural norms? Or might it point back to the same imbalance in perceived agency this film attempts to address?)

One interesting question arose spontaneously in the second focus group: how would it change the film if I, a white American, were present in the film? This group of Americans was split, with half believing my presence would add context, clarify the filmmaker's lens and help ground the audience. The other half felt it would detract from the film's message of Togolese empowerment by shifting focus from Aposto to me. Curious about how a Togolese audience might feel about this, I added this question for the final focus group. None of the Togolese participants felt it would change the ultimate message of the story, but several felt that including a white face in the story would increase the film's appeal to a broader audience. The moderator of this discussion pointed out that it might even be taken more seriously in Togo "because when it's a Togolese who does something, his Togolese brother is going to criticize him... discourage him, say that it's not going to work. But... once seeing a white person in it, we set more stock in it. And it's sad." I am still grappling with this question. I am biased toward not including myself in the film not only for the message I believe it sends (that this story is only important because an American found it interesting) but also because my particular journalistic training emphasized allowing people to tell their own stories, without the interruption of the filmmaker's voice. Yet if including my story, my voice, my face, gets Aposto's story in front of more eyes or taken more seriously, there is a strong argument for including it. Rather than make this decision alone, I reached out to Aposto and am awaiting his response as I finalize my edits.

I did not include a question on unintended consequences among the discussion prompts, but while reviewing the recordings of these focus groups, I listened to responses for any potentially harmful messages they may have taken from the film. The only one I was able to identify was the inadvertently isolationist message that some audiences may perceive. We hear what we want to hear, and if someone were looking for a story to argue the case for less international aid, for example, it's possible they'd find that in my film. Though my intention is to convey a more nuanced message, it's difficult to do so in a way that doesn't reinforce existing development narratives. I

would need to test this film among groups more inclined toward isolationism to determine whether or not that message was truly an unintended consequence.

The focus groups did reveal some weaknesses in the film that are being addressed in the final edit. One technical critique that came up repeatedly was that the subtitles were difficult to read and went by too fast. Another critique that arose in the second focus group was that the film could benefit from either an introduction or an audiovisual technique that better sets the scene early on. One participant also had questions about some of the details of the solutions: whether raw materials were sustainably harvested and whether any thought had been given to circularity. I've asked my partner about these things and am awaiting his response, but I think attempting to address these in the film is too ambitious. If I had enough footage to create a longer film, it might be worth digging into these kinds of details, but for this particular story I think attempting to dive that deep would cause viewers to lose interest.

Though I was not able to get feedback from a larger, more diverse sample, this initial evaluation suggests that my intervention was successful. By telling a sustainability story that focused on solutions, I was able to elicit a hopeful response in the audience. And by centering a Togolese protagonist, I was able to provide an alternative development narrative that shifted audience members' perceived agency. While the responses from the Togolese focus group were likely skewed by the fact that they came from highly educated members of the diaspora, they showed that even among this group, sharing stories about Togolese-led development can inspire pride, new ideas and a renewed motivation to help one's community. American citizens also felt inspired by the film, but they felt inspired *by* the Togolese protagonist to help their own communities here in the U.S., rather than inspired *to* help the Togolese protagonists. This shift in agency may seem slight, but were it to take place among the American population at large, I believe it would profoundly change how we address sustainability challenges.

Recommendations

Aposto and his ACA and INABAC teams have already achieved a lot when it comes to communicating their work and sharing stories of their sustainability solutions. Their work has already gained recognition from Togolese government officials, international NGOs, and the Togolese artisan professional community. But it is not widely known among the general population outside of their local community. And it should be. The solutions developed by Aposto and his teams are inspiring because they are locally-initiated and feasible to modify and replicate. Aposto is already a role model for his community. Now he should strive to be a role model for the rest of Togo.

My primary recommendation to ACA and INABAC has been to find new methods to share their stories with new audiences in the country. Because internet connectivity in Togo is still relatively poor, my partners may find it difficult to share our full film with audiences in other parts of Togo. To really reach new audiences, I have recommended that they start a WhatsApp chain message using the shorter mini profile. If all ACA and INABAC artisans and volunteers with access to smart phones were to share this video with their WhatsApp contacts and groups, it could reach a much wider audience.

Additionally, while I believe that video can be a potent storytelling tool, it is not currently the most practical communications strategy to emphasize. Not only is the technology for producing video expensive and hard to protect in Togo, but the technology with which to view video is out of reach for many people. I focused on video because I felt it was an opportunity for me and the organization to create something we wouldn't be able to otherwise. But in the future, I think ACA and INABAC could find other creative ways of sharing their stories with a wider audience. After one of the events I had the privilege of filming, Aposto invited everyone to come together for an evening of music and oral storytelling. Why not collaborate with radio stations to use this type of traditional storytelling to share their work and promote their ideas? I have also connected Aposto to another changemaker I worked with for this project, who was involved with creating a Mobile Laboratory. This MoLab tours Togolese schools to get students excited about Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and the Arts. I think MoLab could potentially be a great vehicle for sharing INABAC's story, and I sense that these teams could learn a lot from each other.

Conclusions

It feels like common wisdom, especially in the sustainability community, that hopeful stories inspire action better than sad or scary ones do. Yet many of the sustainability stories told in the media have not incorporated this lesson. Solutions journalism is becoming a more popular guiding practice, but it has not yet become a dominant one. This project, though limited in evaluative scope, lends support to the growing body of evidence that telling solutions-centric stories instills more hope and thus, more motivation to act, in audiences. It also supports the idea that one can complicate and subvert dominant narratives simply by highlighting alternative ones. It suggests that by shining a light on local leaders, journalists and storytellers can chip away at the pervasive myth that sustainable development is something "developed" countries do to help "developing" countries. And it shows that shifting the focus of this story also shifts the audience's sense of agency. American audiences feel inspired to learn from a Togolese changemaker to tackle challenges at home. And viewers from the Togolese diaspora feel proud and motivated to find ways to support their communities back home.

This intervention did have some shortcomings, however. Notably, my choice of video as the medium for the story limited my ability to pursue a more participatory co-creation process. And while the final product will serve my partner, our process didn't do much to build his organization's capacity to tell its story on its own. Additionally, while the story structure seems to be effective, research I came across after creating the film suggested that I may have been mistaken to tell a personal solutions story about sustainability problems that are more systemic. This type of narrative may end up placing undue burden on citizens in Togo while leaving the government and other institutions unaccountable. Even among American audiences, this story could be used to reinforce arguments for things like restricting welfare. (In fact, it already has been used this way by a family member of mine.)

Because focus group participation was limited (and contained a disproportionate amount of my friends and family), my results are only preliminary. Rather than

providing sturdy evidence for my theory of change, they merely hint at its efficacy. To gain a more accurate understanding, I will need to perform focus groups with a much larger, and more randomized population, and ideally include some questions that will be asked before and after the film to measure change. I believe that this work could be built upon by other students. It's possible that my results are a product of the story itself, rather than the storytelling methods. This project could easily be built upon, modified and replicated to deepen our understanding of the effect of solutions journalism. A more robust study, for example, would compare the effect of a problem-focused approach and a solutions-focused approach to telling the same story.

Ultimately, this project has served to inform my practice as an aspiring journalist. The feedback I received was encouragement enough for me to continue seeking out stories of sustainability solutions, especially those that challenge harmful and disempowering narratives. My experience throughout this project has convinced me that stories that say, "Yes we can," are the most useful to our pursuit of sustainability.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to express my deep appreciation for Aposto Atcham and his family for not only letting me come film their lives over the course of several months, but also for feeding and housing me during these times. I will never forget their hospitality, and I am so grateful for the friendship we formed during our work together. I'd be remiss if I didn't also thank all of the volunteers and members of INABAC and ACA, as well as the community of Lama-Tessi as a whole, for everything they shared with me. I owe thanks, too, to Aimée Abra Temou Lawani, Ousia Foli-Bebe and Hombadyita (Bruno) Kataba, for their work with me on this project. Though I was not able to include their stories in the final piece for this project, I learned much from them, and I do plan to tell their stories in the future.

I'd also like to thank all of the friends and colleagues, who supported this project, from the countless Volunteers who recommended story subject to the friends who led and participated in focus groups. I owe particular thanks to Sam Gullion and Daniel Ryave for their feedback on my early edits and to Adora Shortridge, Eric LoPrete and Eric Dine Kombate for facilitating focus groups on my behalf. And to Kia T'Nique Thomas and Destiny Allen for supporting me logistically and emotionally throughout the filming process.

Finally, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the staff and Volunteers of Peace Corps Togo and to the Samala-Bas community. From language to cultural immersion, I learned so much from these groups that informed my work. This project would not have been possible without their continued love and support.

Appendices

Appendix A: Final Film: [Banc d'Amour](#)

Appendix B: WhatsApp Video Profile: Developing Togo – Aposto Atcham: Empowering Youth



Appendix C: Focus Group 1 Auto Transcript

Participant 1

21:40 Yeah, I really liked it. It's really cool. Like, especially at the end, saying our organization starts to bring people together and teach them like real skills that they could use

21:53 And there's like a bunch of, you know, social impact by having equity between the genders and trying to prevent like teenage pregnancy and all that. I think it's really good.

Moderator

22:06 I agree. Yeah.

Participant 2

22:09 All right. Yeah, I'll jump in. I loved it.

22:12 I think that using kind of just like place based example that Abby was able to to

22:19 Live through and work with that community.

22:24Just. It was an amazing like way that she portrayed that story and and I could definitely see how

22:33It would empower others to there's so many transferable aspects that you can take from that story that we just saw there that can be applied to virtually any community.

22:43Around the world. And so based on kind of like my understanding of the, of the, I think it accomplished the goal that she set out to accomplish overall in in sharing that story with us.

Moderator

22:55Yeah, I think I'd have to agree with that as well. This was my first time watching the video as well.

23:03I've seen her work on it for weeks and weeks, but this was my first time actually seeing and it was really, really great.

23:11So what would you guys say

23:14Was your key takeaway.

Participant 1

23:20I think for me the key takeaway is that, like, despite not being able to get a college education, there's still a bunch of ways you can make a community impact and

23:37And that community impact and have a vast array of other impacts from like the environmental impact social impact economic impact by creating that local economy and creating those community role models. I think it's really cool.

Moderator

23:53Yeah, I agree.

Participant 2

23:57I think there's, there are like there are layers to

24:02The takeaways that I had there. I mean, I like the approach of theirs is the advocate robust approach of trying to to still help while simultaneously.

24:18Assisting the youth in the community to like pursue education. There's also a lot of layering like skills on top of that.

24:27 That essentially all just come back to help the community and at the end of the day it's ultimately just empowering each and every one of these individuals towards kind of like a collective community empowerment of being able to work through problems together.

Moderator

24:46 Yeah, that was exactly where my mind was going to when when I think about my key takeaway. The first thing that came to my mind was empowerment

24:55 All of this had from the beginning to the end had empowerment written all over it to me and education as well.

25:07 When they talked about guiding guiding the children.

25:13 You know, if you give if you give people the right tools, then you'd be astonished at what you you what they can do with them, but it's a matter of actually getting those tools to them and empowering them to use them in the right ways

25:27 So all not know how how this make you guys feel

Participant 1

25:34 It definitely makes me feel that I was doing more to support the community.

25:41 I mean, Brian I are working well. Yeah, we're working on this like community impact project funded by Microsoft to like 3D printing

Moderator

25:50 A printing

Participant 1

25:51 To schools. And so that was going to be our like community impact, but because of the virus, like we can't really do that anymore. We're result prototyping and working on the technology but

26:03 We ourselves wouldn't be able to, you know, go out there, talk to teachers talk with students and really build this model.

26:10 But it makes me think of other ways I can support the community after things have settled down

26:18 Like if I end up moving to Silicon Valley. There's these like really cold Dixit cafes, or there's volunteers to help people fix any like broken toasters or light bulbs that aren't turning on.

26:31 Oh, that's so cool. Yeah, it's really cool way to promote reuse and it teaches like a lot of technical skills and brings community together. And so I'm like oh yeah that'd be really fun to get engaged with die like afterwards if I end up moving out there.

Moderator

26:48 That's really awesome.

Participant 2

26:53 Yeah, I think kind of touching on what we will we discussed earlier. But, but, again, like just the empowerment and and and the motivation, you know, fat of wanting to do more.

27:06 Sometimes I personally get get stuck in like my impact is going to directly tied to my career, but

27:13 But I think that we, this, this kind of broadens your, your horizons there and you can realize that it doesn't necessarily have to be like in the work that you're doing, day in and day out. But you can also take up more

27:25 A different like like you know volunteer volunteering approach or something within the community to

27:33 Really drive home that like community impact as well.

27:37 Uh huh.

Moderator

27:39 Yeah, I agree. When I as I was watching it. I felt like really motivated, like I felt very strong. I feel strong afterwards, like there's so many things that we can be doing that.

27:55 can accomplish many different goals at at the same time. So he is trying to tackle he's he's tackling education issues he's tackling

28:07 On

28:09 Skills and sex and

28:13 Like finances and all of this is just a one encompassing thing, but you can do it from so many different perspectives and lenses.

28:26 So did you guys did you understand the problems that the main characters are trying to address.

Participant 1

28:35 Yeah. Well, I think one of his main ones was targeted at youth getting HIV or getting pregnant and that impacting their future career. And so I think he really had a creative way to solve that problem by giving them more jobs and more skills so they can be more independent.

28:58 And to see that there's like more to life. There's like there's a lot more, they can do. Despite, you know, having kids and

29:07 I don't know, there's just a lot there.

Moderator

29:10 Uh huh.

Participant 2

29:12 Yeah, it's again, kind of like I was touching on just just layered approach of, of, I think that the some of the driving factors and he's really like attacking the driving factors for some of these issues in terms of

29:28 Like early pregnancies and and but but overall going even further back, just like the aspect of of teaching the youth that they don't need to

29:39 Necessarily wait around for some foreign aid to come in and assist them in their community like they're being empowered to do it on their own and and have the mindset and still enough out of early age.

Moderator

29:54 Uh huh. Yeah, I agree.

29:57 And on like just accounts that fits in perfectly with the next question. Do you did you understand how the solutions implemented address those problems.

30:11 So that was like exactly what you were just talking about the problems and the solutions.

Participant 2

30:19 Yeah, yeah. For me, both. And I think what was great about this video is you can you see it and in through like understanding reading the subtitles. But there's a lot of nice visual aid to see this in action as well simultaneously.

30:36 And that was great. So, you know, you're hearing about it, but you're also some up. I have to go back and look as I was, some of it. You know, I was sometimes focused strictly on reading the subtitles and

30:48 I'd like to go back and just like just focus on the visuals, but I think that there were some points where were

30:57 Some of the aspects might not necessarily touched upon.

31:01 In the the subtitles, but you're you're seeing that in action like your understanding what's happening just via the visuals alone and a lot of the like trade skills that are being taught

Participant 1

31:14 Yeah, I agree with Brian and I feel that the solutions really do support, but the main characters was trying to

31:23 Tackle so like the dying at the fabrics. The, the honey collection on creating chairs, like all these really great skills for kids and then being able to tie education in that and

31:37 To trade this diet fabric for books and then to get the books to kids. I think was phenomenal. And then getting kids to to participate in community can clean up so that also help the environment.

31:49 You know, that's kind of what sustainability is about. So I think that the solutions are really spot on.

Moderator

31:55 Yeah, I agree with that. And it's funny that you guys bring up the visuals part because

32:04 After she got on the motorcycle and then they traveled to the honey, the site where the honeybees were

32:10 I was like, This is amazing. This is my favorite part of video so far, like because you really get a sense of

32:16 What what these people are seeing where they're living the kinds of the environment that they're around like what kind of opportunities and challenges that they face.

32:26 And it just gives so much more visual contexts that would have been left out. Otherwise, so I I really liked that part two, and

32:36 And on that note, do you guys think that the solution that we're talking about here are replicable or scalable.

Participant 2

32:46 Yeah, certainly.

32:49 Many of basically all of them are in some form or another. Just dependent upon on the whatever problems are facing a certain community but but just the overarching idea of, of, kind of like capacity building and personal empowerment is so powerful.

33:12 As a tool to to help community alleviate or or

33:17 Find solutions for various problems and so absolutely

Participant 1

33:22 Yeah, I think that the ideas can be replicated, but probably not the materials, I feel that they've been trills but definitely be based on the geographical location like having bamboo.

33:34 Not everywhere is going to be able to have a booth me as well, how to use a different local plants and then for like the fabric dying. I don't know if those were natural dyes that they produce themselves if so that's awesome if they meet the shirts themselves with the shirts reproduce

33:52 So definitely like some of the like saw some of those like skills can be replicated, but the materials being used. I think would be tailored to specific locations.

Moderator

34:05 Yeah, I think I'd agree with that, too. And I'm sitting here thinking about, like other contexts where this can be used in many different areas. And if you take these underlying

34:18 Underlying values and beliefs that you give people give people hope and m and power so that they can, like,

34:30 Have greater capacity in their economy and their environment and their community. Amazing things can be seen, just like this, like, now they have a library and these kids have access to books. That's so awesome.

34:45 So,

34:46 Do you guys think that the the solutions that was implemented by the main characters can help their community move towards a more sustainable future.

Participant 2

34:58 I think, I think it's kind of like this this multiplier effect that that the main character are providing these initial solutions and

35:08 And my anticipation of what would come in the future, is that that out of these initial solutions. There'll be like more innovation amongst the youth who are coming up and

35:20 More ideas spread throughout the community and multiply, and just

35:24 Continuously see this robust process building upon itself.

Participant 1

35:29 Yeah, I think, also, if you know these kids end up going to college.

35:34 If they do end up going to college and if they bring their ideas.

35:39 Like all their learn education knowledge, skills and implemented in their local community instead of going off somewhere else. Because then it's like, how are they

35:50 Contributing back to the local economy and strengthening that. So I think that having good mix of kids that stay in the community that leave the community would be a good you know a good balance.

36:03 So, yeah.

Moderator

36:06 Yeah, where my where my my head roles with this is if you if you give kids the skills and like the the thought process. If you can teach them.

36:19 To do something with the resources they already have accessible at their hands.

36:26 Like there's these bamboo trees growing all around. So let's make a chair and then make profit out of it.

36:32 So that they can support themselves and have a greater livelihood and being able to like trade these things and then like

36:41 Learn how to work with others and learn how to talk to other people and learn how to problem solve.

36:47 These things are all really, really, really important skills that can like Brian said just build off of themselves that can be applied to so many things like

36:56 If they do go to college. If they don't go to college, those skills are going to be so crucial for their success later on in life and for like

37:04 Having that sustainable mindset instead of searching for something. Always. That's like not here having more and more and more. Let's look at what we can do is what we already have here in front of us. So yeah, I agree with you guys.

37:21 Were there any things. Were there any like comments, thoughts suggestions for maybe some critiques, or maybe like future directions docs, just like

37:31 Yeah, I'm taking notes, maybe some comments for Abby.

Participant 1

37:34 Yeah, I had some questions in the video. For example, when they harvest bamboo do the

37:41 Like the natives understand that, hey, we're only going to harvest fix this section of the band before. So that is still have time to replenish before we like cut even more like how are they making sure that they don't deplete the natural resource too much.

Moderator

37:57 But then also, like, do they have

Participant 1

38:00 Maybe a new way to recycle the textiles after us. Like, is there any kind of circular economy being implemented, where it could also create jobs, but at the same time. Keep resources in a cycle. So they don't run out of shirts or

38:16 Or something like that. So I'm just thinking like to be sustainable in the long term, making sure you have enough resources. So you try not to deplete two months of that, just so it can sustain itself.

Moderator

38:29 Yeah, that's a really, really great. That's a really great feedback point i'm sure obvious really going to appreciate that one.

Participant 2

38:37 Yeah, my feedback I think overall, like I said, it was, it was great and the time frame for how long the movie is is is like perfect for telling this story without dragging on. I mean, it was really concise and well done.

38:53 One thing I kind of touched on that earlier a little bit and this may just be like, personally, how I digest the video I just had a little bit of a tough time going back and forth between the subtitles and like the visuals, because sometimes the subtitles were going by somewhat fast.

39:12 And I don't know if there's any way to like slow it down just even like another half second or something like that. And it may only be me. So I don't know. But that was my only like takeaway. I still ended up was able to digest all that. But I was missing a few of the shots. I think

Moderator

39:28 Yeah, I think I'd agree with that, too, in the beginning, there was one of the lines of text. I don't remember which one it is off the top of my head. Now, but

39:38 When it was going through and given context, in the beginning, I could I missed like the last three or four words because it went. It went by quick so that's definitely good feedback, too.

39:50 Awesome.

39:52 Do you guys have any other thoughts, comments or anything like that.

Participant 2

39:56 No, I was happy to be part of this. It was fun.

Moderator

39:59 Yeah, me too. This is super cool.

40:03 All right, I'm gonna stop recording now.

Appendix D: Focus Group 2 Transcript

INITIAL THOUGHTS

Participant 1 – loved main characters, felt inspirational aspect, struggled with speed of subtitles – color of the font difficult to read; overall captivated for sure

Participant 2– why is Abby not in it?

Participant 1 – because when you make a documentary you're not really in it

Participant 3– very solutions oriented, inspiring, changed my perception of the agency – that it's not up to waiting on either outside communities or foreigners or your government to do something – if you see a need, it's important to support your own community. I can understand the definition of sustainability in terms of the community, but I wasn't sure if sustainability in this sense meant environmentally or... I know the thing with the beehives, that was a true connection to environmental sustainability, but I thought the rest of it was

tradition or economic or job sustainability, so maybe I'm answering my own question that it's more than one definition of sustainability being covered.

Participant 1 – yea, like society

Participant 4– I thought the film did a really good job of creating a narrative arc, that we saw the problem and then we saw the solution. Something that I was a little confused about – and maybe this is just because this is why the association was started in the first place – was teen pregnancy was painted as one of the featured problems, when I know that now this is a bigger thing than just solving teenage pregnancy and moms with unplanned pregnancies, so I was just wondering why that was featured when the arc encompasses so much more than that

Participant 1 – interesting part where guy riding bike to go to next place, from fabric to beehive guy – music gives you the vibe of where you're at – gives a backdrop when you're watching of where you are – could have been used a bit in the beginning to kind of set the mood or the backdrop and maybe even a few words from Abby herself or a narrator or something to put you here – here's what we're going to share with you or—

Participant 3– So stronger immersion from the beginning? Yea I think so, just like here we are and this is the landscape I'm gonna show you

Participant 5– Yea I totally agree with that, a little more of an introduction in the beginning as to what—

Participant 1 – What are you gonna see

Participant 5– Yea, I mean we quickly figured it out, but maybe a little more spelling out in the beginning would be great. I totally agree with that.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Participant 1 – Yea I feel like that's the big takeaway

Participant 2– You definitely get the takeaway that there's the pride in the community, and they want to be self-sustaining and everything, and there are multiple ways that that can happen. I just would have liked to see some sort of intro either from a narrator or from Abby like “Hey I went here on this project, and I thought the number 1 issue was teen pregnancy, and that was my focus on education or whatever, but as I integrated into the community, I learned that they were really sustainably focused, economically, socially, environmentally, and her video shows all those different ways, but I think having an intro that talks like that-that wasn't something she was expecting when she went there, and it

evolved and came out that way. And whatever hand that she had in that or that she witnessed in the community – I think more of that – like some kind of intro like we were all saying.

Participant 1 – I think that's important because part of the takeaway, too, at least for me that I'm left with is, it's almost like a call to action like if this is shown locally or in that region, like it's not so much for outsiders. It's more for those that are there, and in that community or surrounding communities, "Look," it's a call to action. We have to take care of ourselves, we have to teach our youth/people, we can't depend on outsiders. God only knows, when they have their own problems like right now they've gotta take care of themselves. So yea, I thought that was a big takeaway for me, too.

Participant 6 – My mom has pretty much agreed with everything that's been said, that this seems like a film that promotes community-based solutions and that everyone has a role to play in community development and that solutions can be found without outsider help or intervention.

Participant 2– Or also, just conveying that a little bit of guidance from the Peace Corps, and then the communities themselves can engage in these programs, you know, pay it forward and pass it on... I don't know, just another thought of..

Participant 1 – Yea like the reason, the actual engagement that spurred this..

Participant 2– Yea like what spurred this? Whatever the Peace Corps's doing like kind of enhanced this and enabled these people to become more self-sufficient and pass it on to other villages or, you know, whatever

Participant 3– I think I agree that the overall message is that the most lasting change starts small-scale, like it's community-based. I would also that that something that struck me was redefining what a dream is. So I think that the main character had initially said that he had these grand plans to kind of do something else, and a lot of people have this idea of being in a tie and working in a cubicle or having an office job or going to a university, but that's not... you know the path forward is never a straight line, you kind of take all these zig zags, so you have to kind of lay a foundation and be creative with what counts as being successful, that if you're able to take care of yourself and your community, it's only a stepping stone to those things that you want. So maybe the desk job is the not the immediate dream or the immediate goal, but you're still on your way there.

Participant 1 & Participant 2– Yea that's a great point

Participant 4– I think my major takeaway was kind of disproving these Western myths that we have about development, so I think so many Westerns think, "Oh like, upper education is your ticket to success," and that was definitely proven false through this documentary,

that even people with university degrees don't get those higher paying jobs, so I think that was really important. And then I think also at the end, it disproved this myth that we have that it's like the young generation vs. the old generation so often, but in those last scenes you saw like every age coming together, um it looked like kind of a fair that they had planned, so I thought that was really cool to see, no like young people do want to preserve tradition, and that it is a whole community effort. It's not just young people wanting to be sustainable, but the entire community is invested in this.

Participant 2- And I thought like a lot of the images and the video, it was just like so visually appealing, so colorful and interesting, and some of it seemed to go too fast. Like I wish I could have looked at some of the scenes longer. I think the quality of the video and everything was a real positive. And on some of it, I just wish it stayed on screen a little longer, you know what I mean?

Participant 1 - Yea is there a time limit, Eric, like a time constraint for this?

Moderator- I honestly don't know. It'd be a good question for her. I know she's been racing to stitch all this together over the past couple months. And I don't know how much of the length was a product of her own time constraints vs. the types of video that she had, I'm not sure.

Participant 1 & Participant 2- Yea

Participant 3- Also, just to add real quick, I also really liked the emphasis on the importance of artisans. So they're not necessarily teaching them—like they're teaching the kids accounting and all that, but they're focusing on like dyeing of fabric, they're focusing on rattlers—

Participant 1 - Yea, craftsmanship

Participant 3- That's really cool, like that's super important to the community as well

EMOTIONS

Participant 1 - I felt very inspired by that individual, you know, we all have different circumstances in our life, and for me personally, I strive to be someone that inspires others, but it's obviously very different here than there, and boy I just had a lot of respect for that guy. Like hearing someone that—and to Crista's point earlier, like with the teenage pregnancy and a lot of that stuff there that kind of—we got off that a little bit because it sounded like that's why he went down this path originally, right? But where he ended up taking this thing was the bigger picture and all of youth, and there was also that one point

where they were machete-ing stuff where “Boys and girls aren’t that different,” or it was something to that – I remember that comment. And that’s kind of where he took it, but I don’t know, overall I just found the central character to be one worthy of telling his story for 12 minutes and 24 seconds. It could have been longer, to Jill’s point, you know? We could have seen a little bit more, a little more of the sense of the culture, and like I said, a little music, a little intro, but otherwise I felt very inspired by that guy. For sure. Great story.

Participant 5– Yea, I agree. It was uplifting, for sure.

Participant 6 – My mom said that it made her feel good to watch these kids be happy, and what it is that they’re doing and learning, and that she also felt inspired by this person who was able to mobilize the community and work on solutions for issues that have been identified in the community, and she said that it made her, like, change her perspective on the way that she thinks of people in Togo, and this is coming from someone whose daughter lived in Togo for three years and so she’s definitely heard a lot about Togo and communities, and so the fact that this film was able to change my mother’s perception and perspective even more about the people of Togo, says a lot I think of the power of this documentary.

Participant 2– I’m just gonna add really quick it just also reinforces like the connectivity of, like, the global community, you know? And like when Abby first was going to Togo, it’s like “Togo? Where the hell is that even?” But then you see this video, and you see families and communities, and we all want the same things in our communities and for our children, and to see it spelled out so clearly in the video that way is something you wouldn’t expect to think is that we all really have the same dreams for our families and our children and want the next generation to be more well equipped than we were.

Participant 1 – Yea, like those individuals are everywhere, all around the planet, right? So in the US, they’re in the Lion’s Club or they’re in the—you know, like whatever—people that stand out from just their job to want to do more for other people and start things like this. I just think that’s great, also, to *see* that it’s everywhere, and there, specifically – that impression that whoever was speaking before me – that point about the preconceived notion of Togo. I admire your mom that she had the benefit of that. We didn’t. I mean I really didn’t know that much about Togo or that kind of thing, so it’s interesting to see that kind of thing dispelled with, “We don’t need to depend on China or the US or Europe or wherever, we can do this. Let’s call to arms, let’s rise up,” you know?

Participant 3– I think the piece definitely inspires a lot of hope. I felt very hopeful after watching it. Just to kind of echo what some other people are saying, that no matter what the odds are, there’s always going to be those people that just start helping, just start doing

something to help. And I think it also – my initial reaction was a reframing of the mindset that this is the long game. It's not gonna happen over night, it's gonna take a lot of these grassroots efforts, and it starts small, and it builds out, and it builds out, and it certainly doesn't happen overnight. So that was my impression, my initial reaction.

Participant 4– I think my initial reaction was pride. And I think that comes from having lived in Togo for two years. Part of my heart is definitely still there, so to see somebody in his own community rise up was really really exciting, and then I was also inspired, but I would say that it's different from a lot of the other development or sustainable documentaries that I've seen where it's like, "Now, how can I help these people?" It's like, no how can I go into my community? Like Togolese people are going to be okay; it's not up to me to help them. But how can I help the community that I am in right now?

Participant 1 – Wow, good, very good.

DIFFERENCE IF ABBY WAS IN DOC?

Participant 2– Well for me, it would just be in the intro of like, you know, "I am a member of the Peace Corps. I joined to go to Togo, and my anticipation or feeling was, and the result was something totally different," you know what I mean? Like, just, I don't know, just...

Participant 1 – I think I would equate that – 'cause I'm kind of on that same wavelength, but it's almost, like, you know, if you watch a really cool show on cable, right, and they always have that behind-the-scenes afterward, you know? It gives you a little bit, again, of just that backdrop of what the narrative is going to be, and I think rather than an afterward behind-the-scenes, maybe just a little bit right in the beginning would help, so that you do understand that you're seeing it through the eyes of a North American, right? To your point. Also what the lesson learned was, with the real takeaway – I started to do this, but look what else I found, and how inspiring is this? Yea they're gonna be ok. We're helping them, right, but these people exist, and look what they're doing. It's magnificent, you know?

Participant 5– Right, like maybe the narrative could be just a little bit like, she was expecting to go there and help just like they're expecting, you know, the white man to come and help, or whatever, and so that's kind of like what she was expecting, and yet this is what she found. That they're figuring out ways to do it themselves, and to pay it forward in their own communities and just maybe a little bit of a narrative about that, if, in fact, that's what she thought. I agree that when you're telling a story, first you tell them what you're gonna tell them, then you show them, then you tell them what you just told them, right? So I just think like a little bit, maybe in the beginning, just to understand.. because I had no idea

what I was gonna be watching today – just to kind of understand a little bit about what it was, I think would be helpful.

Participant 3– I think I agree with both of you that maybe a little more exposition is needed or more background or just more context in what we’re gonna be watching, but I think seeing Abby in it might’ve been a little distracting – like just beyond the personal excitement of seeing Abby on screen. I think if it’s supposed to be about self-sustainability and the independence of those communities, I think a lot more of that context could’ve been gotten maybe through the questions she was asking – like some of the interview questions that she asked the main character – or maybe showing how that community is interacting with the Peace Corps group, or some of these external—like rather than Abby saying it because I think if Abby was the one saying this on screen, it shifts it that it’s her story she’s telling and not necessarily the main character’s story. Like I liked that it was the continuity of it’s through his eyes, it’s through his community. I just think that some of the information we were desiring could be brought into it without Abby herself actually

Participant 1 – Right, that’s a really good point, Nina, and of course, for those of us that know her, you would be distracted, right? That’s why I thought in the beginning, from my first comment was, even if it wasn’t Abby setting that backdrop, is there a narrator, or is it someone – whether it’s a North American accent, or even a Togolese accent, whatever it may be, just to kind of set that story and set that narrative in motion from the get-go, that’s all.

Participant 6 – I know that, and maybe I’m too close to the project because I was still in Togo when she was filming, but I know that she worked really really hard for the people in the documentary to really be the ones to tell the story, and that she was really just there to capture it. Like, this isn’t Abby’s story to tell. I think including her in there physically would deter the entire intentions of the documentary.

Participant 4– Yea, I was really glad that Abby wasn’t in it for kind of the – like Participant 6’s point – this wasn’t her story, it was the community’s story. And I think if we saw Abby in it, it almost becomes a performance for this documentary as opposed to like this is an organic thing that’s happening in the community.

Participant 2– Yea I could see that. I guess in my mind I was just thinking of more like pretend you’re watching 60 minutes, and there’s the initial narrator that’s like, “We went to Togo, and we were expecting to find this, and instead this is what happened,” you know, not necessarily that she’s throughout the video or anything. And yea, maybe there’s better ways to communicate that than Abby herself and kind of get that point across.

Participant 1 – And even another thought is, even if it’s not Abby OR a narrator, that in the beginning of this thing, there’s a lot of verbage that gets rolled across the screen. Even that.

If that's where you dropped a little bit of local music or culture or the sounds of what it's like to be there, and scroll that stuff off a little slower, I think you can create that same kind of mood, and just get people ready for what you're about to show them that that's... you know?

Participant 4- To go with that, I actually appreciated that she didn't say anything or include anything about like, "This is what I thought I was gonna find, this is what I thought Togo was gonna be like, this is what I thought my community was gonna be like because I think it allows the viewer to realize their own biases that they have as opposed to going in knowing there's supposed to be a shift.

Participant 1 - Fair point, fair point.

PROBLEMS/SOLUTIONS PRESENTED

Participant 5- Well they're not getting jobs, they're not able to go to the university; there's other ways for them to find work and a trade, and that being educated in a trade is just as important as an education at school, and that that's a way for them to be sustainable is to look at other avenues of making money and.. I forget what the question was... yea people need jobs, they need to do something besides go to school, they need to earn something, and there's other ways for them to do that, and so yea just trying to teach those trades

Participant 3- Maybe another problem, not as obvious, was the transfer of knowledge, and there was a big emphasis that the main character had made that if you're learning something, or you're very good at something, you should know how to teach somebody else. So problem and solution. And the problem I think covers a lot of ground as to what you're trying to transfer knowledge about.

Participant 4- I think citizenship was another problem that was presented, so this idea that Togolese people have to wait for Americans or Europeans or Chinese people to come and do development for them, but instilling a sense of citizenship and advocacy.

Participant 1 - I mean, I felt, for me, the way it was that the problem was dependency, and the solution was rejecting the dependency and embracing independency or at least from even from a small group and then building outward, it's nice that people come to help us, and we appreciate it, but ultimately it's our responsibility to pass this on to the next generation and the one behind them and so on the things that we can do, the things that we can reteach and push forward. We gotta be on our own.

Participant 3- Yea, it's not sustainable to rely on other people in general

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE?

Participant 1 – I mean, it certainly came off that way, that that's something that... it felt also like something that's not just fabric, right? Which is also something marketable, but I saw jewelry come out of that and other stuff, and yea I think that does help that community. I think that is a sustainable model. It needs to be expanded, of course, to be truly sustainable for a larger bit of the population, but I did have that takeaway, yea.

Participant 3– I think it provides people, like maybe kind of the teen moms, who are struggling to meet their immediate needs – what they were learning is not only giving them a way to support themselves in the short term, but I think teaching a lot of kids how to do these skills also teaches these kids that they can learn things and they can seek out mentorship or support in their community and that there's something that's not just fabric dyeing or bamboo chair making or whatever – they can go out and learn it, but they can go beyond what they think they know what to do. So I think that that's pretty sustainable, too, that that's going to lead to a lot of sustainable solutions in the future for them.

Participant 2– Yea, I would have to say that I get that comment, too, like there is also that point of like, find your passion. You don't just take that obvious choice where you're told you have to have an education, or you have to do this or you have to do that. Like there are so many ways you can make a difference and excel and help your community and you know...

Participant 1 – Yea, there was even those that came to clean up the place and make it available to others. That was their joy. The one woman was like, "I want this to be a place people come, and if they don't I'm sad." I thought that was, you know...

Participant 3– They're all very practical approaches, like practical skills, or practical perspectives of it... being practical is, I guess, pretty sustainable

Participant 4– I would say it seems sustainable in the sense that it was attracting everyone in the community, so we heard from or saw everybody, so you saw the elders that were helping with the trades, and then you also heard from the mom that was like, "Yea, when this guy comes to town I tell my kids to listen," and you also saw the kids. So in that respect, it was also sustainable in that everybody was on board.

SCALEABLE/REPLICABLE?

Participant 1 – Replicability, 100%. Absolutely. I think, to me, that was one of the major takeaways, like I said, was locally showing this should be a call to arms for those that are like that individual to step up and bring others with them. On a larger scale? I guess so, but the community at that point would need larger cash infusion, would need to be able to mass produce these things, would need factories, and so I think more of a local approach and then see what happens is maybe a better approach, in my opinion.

Participant 5– I feel like Abby already showed the scaleability already, with her main character because he started off as a Participant 1 of two girls and was really interested in the teen pregnancy issue in his community, and so it kind of really started with girls it seemed like, teaching them the batik fabric thing, and then it kind of evolved into almost like a boys and girls club, it looks like – you know, what we would refer to as a boys and girls club – where he’s teaching the boys all the things as well. And so I feel like that was a realistic scaleability scenario for that community. Maybe replicating on that scale would be very easy to implement in other communities around there.

IN THE US

Participant 5– I feel like we have that, like with the boys and girls club

Participant 1 – Yea I like to think that’s already here, right?

Participant 5– Yea, you know? But we always need that, right? In so many communities, whether it’s called YMCA or boys and girls club or Big Brothers...

Participant 1 – Yea perhaps not enough, but I think it’s here. It needs to be blown up a little more, like shown.

Participant 2– And I feel like, too, in the US now, with the wealth that our country has, pretty much every child goes to college, which is great, and then we have an influx of kids that are college educated, and we don’t have in our country enough people in the trades, like electricians or mechanics or other things. Like there’s nothing wrong with choosing another direction, you know what I mean? And I feel like in some weird way, this kind of relates to that. Just to highlight, you know, you don’t always just go down the predictable, known path, you know what I mean? Now in our country the average age of an electrician is 50 years old. It should be like 35. But everyone’s gone to college instead of being an electrician or whatever. So in our country we actually have a need for people in the trades, so it’s just kind of interesting. I think in some way it is relevant even in our own country to reinforce like following what you want to do and finding a way to contribute that isn’t just the socially obvious, acceptable path.

Participant 3– I think there’s also maybe some parallels, too, like I’m sure a lot of people who have been through the American public school system wonder to themselves like, “When am I gonna use calculus? I wish that I had learned to balance a check book, you know? Or do my taxes.” So maybe just an emphasis or where we could improve in the US is more of these fundamental skills being taught to the younger generations or the older generations. Not focusing so much on SAT scores, as important as they are. But making sure that a lot of these life skills that will carry people forward in other ways are also emphasized as well.

Participant 1 – Yea like practical daily use.

Participant 2– A community needs like a range of different people and different skills and different jobs, you know?

Participant 6 – My mom says that she thinks that something like this could definitely be replicated in the states, that it really just takes like a motivated person or people to get something started, no matter what the specific skill is that’s being transferred to other people.

Participant 4– I think like the places where this does kind of already exist in the US, like YMCA or boys and girls club, like going a step deeper and saying, yea we’re teaching you these skills, but we’re doing this so that you can give back to the community. It’s not just so that you, yourself, can be successful, but instilling the sense of community and citizenship and pride and wanting to give back.

Participant 1 – Great! Well said.

MOTIVATED TO CREATE CHANGE IN YOUR OWN COMMUNITIES?

Participant 5– I feel motivated to go out of the house [big laugh]

Participant 3– Maybe not the most timely question, but yea definitely motivated. I think we’ve talked a lot about being practical. Even with our current social distancing, there are ways that you can still reach people using technology or provide aid that’s not physical or like handing someone something, and I think once we’re back to our normal society.. like Abby and I met, and in college we did a lot of emphasis on volunteer work, and I think we kind of lose that—well I lost it more so than Abby, who dedicated how many years to the Peace Corps, but it definitely realigns this interest in giving back and reacquainting myself with those personal values. That’s a long-winded way to say yes, I definitely feel motivated to help my community after seeing this.

Participant 4– Yea I would echo the same thing, that I definitely feel motivated and inspired, and I think now, especially in this time, we have even more in common with those Togolese people. Like we really don't have a lot, we gotta be creative. Like it's not an easy answer anymore of like, I'm just gonna go volunteer Saturday mornings or whatever. Like I think we have to be even more like those Togolese counterparts now because we are so limited.

Participant 1 – I mean for me, yea, inspired by this individual's life. But to see this and put together in this way, it adds a little, I don't know, a little push, a little sense of urgency, I don't know.. For me, approaching retirement, getting ready for the next thing, I've long thought about the stuff that Abby does and her sister Natalie and just inspired by that to take whatever I have from whatever I've got in life and how do you apply that to something that makes a difference for those that need to have that difference made. And they also had a brother who was that same kind of soul, and I feel that in this, too, so yea, inspired for sure.

Participant 5– great job – I was super impressed! ... The eloquence of some of the people you were with and telling this guy's story. It was really inspiring, and we're gonna have a lot of people that need help in our own country, and you definitely inspired me, so great job.

Participant 3– I think we all know Abby to be a great writer and a great storyteller, someone who has a really keen eye behind the camera, and I think that this is just another example of that, and I hope that this isn't just like a school project or a Peace Corps project, but that a lot of people can see this once she's done with it.

Participant 4– I'd say I feel very privileged to be able to see the film and speak into it a little bit

Participant 1 – enjoyable to see the skill set put into use in this way, and Moderator, you did a great job by the way, and to be able to offer up some stuff and to hear others do the same was great

Appendix E: Focus Group 3 Transcript

MAIN CONCLUSION OF VIDEO

1:00 Participant 1: Necessary to invest in the base (grassroots), go to the (?) areas, take charge of the (pregnant girls? Kids?), and teach them to take initiative. Especially in the domain of practice, not just theory, to value their hands

1:45 Participant 2: It's a way of improving the lives of youth, especially the kids (diminished?) in rural areas, to set kids to take charge themselves and also to develop to their full potential. Because where we grew up, we were taught that we had to go to school, just attend until the end and go to work. But we were never told, even while going to school, that we could also, on the side, try to sell something (start a business/be entrepreneurial). And the young man, he's set (on display?) this competency that will be very useful, especially to the youth in the (something) areas

2:32 Participant 3: There is a collective spirit, not individualistic. So in short, you need goodwill, as he said in the video to be able to initiate what he started because.... there's not money, as they said in the beginning of the video. It's a little difficult to devote the time, so you need goodwill, too, to be able to (succeed?)

KEY MESSAGE in one word/phrase

3:23 Participant 2: It's entrepreneurship

Participant 1: I agree.

FEELINGS

4:17 Participant 3: Me, I felt proud because (something), it's an idea that opens the eyes of the elders (fait ouvrir les yeux de les vieux?).

5:09 Participant 1: I am emotional, sincerely, very emotional, because this is something that we have (done?) for ourselves, and maybe for lack of certain raw materials, so the boy, our brother has. It's that that has made it so today we're not always on the same field with him to do the same thing. Truly, I am very emotional, and I want – and we always want – to do it, and well.. alas.

UNDERSTANDING OF PROBLEMS

7:10 Participant 2: Yes, we can understand. I can say that the youth are campaigning for the (reascension? Rebirth?) of youth, and especially the children (of the community?) to have there where the video was made. He is trying to initiate the youth to take charge of being (the base?)

winners?). And the activities he's implementing depending on the community are very enriching. You can't imagine that a kid who lives where there isn't even electricity, and that such an initiative comes and speaks to him of how to be an entrepreneur and how to be useful in doing this, in doing that – it's very enriching. And it allows the kids to keep busy; the more they're occupied, the less delinquency we'll have. We, ourselves, we know today what happens in our respective communities. That's what I have to say concerning that.

8:21 Participant 3: I think that it's an education, especially for young kids. It permits them to have an open spirit to find themselves not only at school, but also outside of school to be able to be innovators.

UNDERSTANDING OF SOLUTIONS

9:50 Participant 1: As Participant 2 said, we saw that he has truly brought this knowledge, this portion of education that is entrepreneurship and initiative. It wasn't there in the field. People didn't know that (something). The kids weren't seeing their own utility? The state and (something) are showing kids how they can take initiative, how to start something. And in the video, something that made me laugh a lot was the kid who said he could sell this chair for 6.000 CFA to an elder. Already the kid feels/believes in himself, that he can do something to earn money. That really struck me. It's a start. Even if the kid's idea isn't to help others, without earning something, he knows that an elder could have one of his chairs; he can sell that. Truly that touched me. A result that we can already see.

11:30 Participant 4: Concerning the solution... [ASK MODERATOR WITH SHE SAID]

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS?

13:40 Participant 1: There is a principle that says when a community's problem is resolved, this resolution will benefit (who?) a lot. That means, they went out in the community, they noticed things, they noticed the problems, they brought solutions. Automatically these solutions are going to help this community. They didn't go to Europe, they didn't go to another area and note things or take solutions from there and come apply them here. They brought nothing from the outside. Everything is (anchored?) in the community; all the materials, all the ideas are issued in the community. So automatically (something), especially the plan, these solutions helped – not that they *will* help the community – these solutions have *already* helped the community. We can feel through the faces of these kids their joy. They're really engaged. Already that has helped a lot.

15:00 Participant 2: Yea to add to what Participant 1 is saying, just now a kid, after having made a chair, says he could sell this chair for 6.000 to an elder, it's an economic contribution. We know it. The gentleman has also set in place a library that allows kids to go get information. He's working on education, how we can reinforce social life. On the environmental front also, he doesn't just instruct the youth or the kids, but you see that all the activities that were undertaken – whether in the

school, in making improvements, the community cleanups – he is in the process of working psychologically on this population, that we can't simply wait for people to come from elsewhere to help us, but we, too, through our (something) initiatives can try to do something. To live together is a fundamental element of society, (something) and it misses it today. I'm saying that this man works not only for the youth, but in doing that, he touches a broader audience. And that responds exactly to what a society wants. It isn't elsewhere, but it's a reality that we can (something), everyone lives it, we know it. It's very immovable, but that's life.

16:25 Participant 3: [inaudible] Well, as has been said, (something something), we must always something of the country (something), so the little kids they're (something), it something the facts of the people.

MARKET PROBLEM (IF EVERYONE HAS THESE SKILLS, WHO WILL BUY PRODUCTS?)

18:00 Participant 4: If there is a market outside the community, outside the (something), there we can sell these things. That will be somewhat beneficial if it doesn't stay only in the Togolese community

(Moderator points out that at the local level, when enough people know how to make the same products, there may not be a market for them.)

19:15 Participant 2: Concerning the market for products, there is already a problem. There aren't producers. But if these young people try to take that seriously, I can say that they could wait for/expect an expanded market. (something) they produce... An example: his bags, or his baskets... his baskets don't have to just be sold in the community, but we can try to develop some networks that – I don't know where, whether in Lome, or in the interior of the country - tries to enlarge these products. And everyone needs this support. It's support. All that is done (en fonction de... rien?). You need the support. You need the people who are going to work. There is one thing (I do?). You need the people to go to the market and sell it. And these kids there, they're encouraged.

Moderator: So a network must be created to manage it.

REPLICABLE?

21:00 Participant 1: I would say that a social problem is never a static problem, meaning a problem that doesn't change. Plus already (something) the community itself is dynamic, it evolves. The problems also evolve. It evolves with its problems. The solutions today evolved also (?). We can always modify them, and this also in relation with the evolution of the community's problems.

21:46 Participant 2: I would say, too, that everything changes, everything moves. We must live (?) in our time. Where does competition and innovation come from in all that we do? It's scalable— today we're crossing a crisis. I'm talking about the production of masks. If ever in the creation of everything this man does, there were the means for him to have started right away to do this (?) – I

saw already that there were fabrics that he makes, that he tries to develop or to release that genius, you see how many times that could pay off? It's scaleable.

MOTIVATION TO CHANGE SOMETHING IN YOUR LIFE?

22:55 Participant 3: Me I'd say yes because I've always wanted to help. I don't know how to start sometimes because I tell myself that I'm alone, I don't know who to contact, who to (something something). I think that deep down each of us has a will to help someone.

24:00 Participant 2: Me, it's not that I'm motivated. (That is lived/evident? That can be avoided?) All of us here are part of the African family. And at least – I don't want to say in detail – there is nobody in being here who doesn't want to help or give aid to someone who needs it. (That's obvious?) But how? In order to try to expand the target? That's the question we often focus on. To collaborate with whom? We say with one, we can go far, but when we are together—no, one we go quicker, but together we go farther. There are initiatives to encourage. If we are numerous, to try to have a dialogue or to share opinions like that, it's pertinent, and that will permit us to do much better than that. There is a lot to do, there is a lot. We must all – men and women – be a part of the solution because when it comes down it it, there is work to do.

25:17 Participant 1: Mainly, we're Africans, we know how (something..) fraternal. That's (something) [inaudible]

Moderator – We've been working in the field a long time, and it's a proud thing for us when we see someone doing the same thing. You just have to try to see which road to take to be able to (something) one's expertise, one's advice in the field. It's truly unfortunate when some Africans think that change only comes from the outside. Yea because I was in a village teaching for many years; when you're Togolese and you propose an idea, people reject it. But when the idea comes from a person of color (white?), it's that it's everybody who covers it, and it's sad.

IF ABBY IN THE VIDEO?

27:51 Participant 3: Me, I'll say yes and no. The yes, well, maybe that could bring more of an international audience, seeing a white person in the video. But personally, no for me, because for me the idea is to help (tout court me va?).

28:25 Participant 1: I would say no, that wouldn't change practically (anything?). The only thing that would change would be that she would be part of the discussion. But change the orientation of my ideas/response/reaction – I don't want to speak for others – but change the orientation of my ideas, I say no. What will be made of the video after, I won't say too much

[Moderator clarifies question. Would it change the *effect* of the video?]

29:30 Participant 1: I'd say yes, I'd say yes. This video will change, will have more importance for more people, but not everyone. Because today there are people who have understood a lot of things relating to whites and blacks. So that doesn't mean (?) - be it black or white - that it must automatically be like that. Today people no longer see color. People look more at gray matter (brains) in your head.

30:28 Participant 4: [inaudible]

31:12 Participant 2: It's still/nevertheless a reality, but sad - if ever a white person was part of this video, that could have more impact in the way of reporting or the media (?). That's what we were taught. Things are starting to change. The youth now are trying to become more aware. It's a work in progress. But controlling it hasn't changed because it's local. You don't have to change it. But at the level of the audience and to also touch a broader target, the personalities who know how to draw their attention compared (something) if it's a local person. If he sends that, for example, to a deputy/government official, he won't have time to watch that. But if he sees a foreigner, he will have said, "Ah!" You see? That touches on the matter of quality. And also seduction (?), we know it.

Moderator: Explains context of question and notes that if I were in it, video would have greater effect even in Togo because, as we know. Because when it's a Togolese who does something, his Togolese brother is going to criticize him, never support him, but discourage him, say that it's not going to work. But (something something) once seeing a person of color (white) in it, we trust it more (set more stock in it). And it's sad.

Participant 2 suggests that this group gather from time to time to catch up, support each other, etc.

Participant 3: This motivates me, and when I see someone from my country doing something like this, it makes me want to (something)

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