

# DIGITAL INTERACTIVE VIDEO ONLINE

GHANA:UK

JANUARY 2004 : JULY 2004

Dialogue for Development

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What have you personally enjoyed most about the project?

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“How we were able to create a dialogue with our ideas.”

*Fati Mohammed*

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# table of contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	5
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	7
<b>Introduction</b> .....	10
<b>Methodology</b> .....	11
<b>Key findings</b> .....	13
Multiculturalism, Religion .....	13
Nationalism, Personal & social development .....	14
Gender Awareness .....	15
Domestic relationships & responsibilities .....	16
Leisure, Dress, Use of technology to promote dialogue .....	17
<b>Developing Dialogue</b> .....	19
<b>Progress</b> .....	22
<b>Challenges</b> .....	23
Scope, Technical issues .....	23
Attendance in UK, Personal, social & educational development in Ghana .....	24
<b>Data collection &amp; analysis</b> .....	25
UK .....	26
Ghana .....	27
<b>Wider Impact</b> .....	28
<b>Financial Report</b> .....	29
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	30
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	32
<b>Annexes</b> .....	33
ANNEX 1: Participants: Evaluation forms, Learning journals, Attendance	
ANNEX 2: Website: Dialogue, Message transcripts	
ANNEX 3: Evaluating: Evaluation framework, reporting structure, Progress & artistic reports	
ANNEX 4: Press	
ANNEX 5: Phase 1 Proposal	



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# executive summary

## Background

The D.I.V.O. Project is a six-month pilot project which ran during the first half of 2004. It is an *online digital video dialogue* between young Muslim women from Accra, Ghana and a multi-cultural group of students from Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School for Girls in London, UK. Together, these young women explored culture and gender through storytelling, technology and digital filmmaking.

## Purpose

The D.I.V.O. Project was conceived to promote cross-cultural understanding and to address pressing educational and empowerment needs of young women in Ghana and the UK. Gender issues, particularly teenage pregnancy and STIs (sexually transmitted infections) were easily identified as common problems faced by both groups of young women. The aim was to offer participants the opportunity to communicate their experiences of these issues to a partner group of peers through digital technology and provide a compelling and motivating basis for the project.

The project aims are:

- 1) To increase participants' cross-cultural awareness
- 2) To improve participants' IT skills
- 3) To increase the ability of young women to make informed choices about gender and sexual health

## Key Findings

"I thought all the people in the UK are Christian and I also thought they are all white." *Habiba Alhassan*

A number of cultural issues were identified and examined by participants over the course of the project. These included:

- **Multiculturalism in the UK:** Participants in Ghana were surprised to find the UK group comprised of Black, Muslim and Asian girls from many different cultural backgrounds.
- **Nationalism:** UK participants were impressed with the levels of nationalism and pride in being Ghanaian expressed by footage sent by the Ghanaian group. Only a few members of the UK group describe themselves as "British", some noting that they lacked the sense of belonging to the nation so evident in the Ghanaian group.
- **Social structures:** Many social structures were identified as being different for the

groups. These included relationships with boys and personal freedoms as well as domestic relationships and responsibilities. Conflict with parents was identified as a common problem and explored through several clips.

“(We) shared the same ideas about friends and peer pressure.” *Nyanit Koang*

- **Personal and social development:** Personal and social development is evident among participants in both groups. In Ghana, participants reported 98% improvement against stated aims. In the UK, participants reported 73% improvement against stated aims.
- **Gender awareness:** Many aspects of gender were explored through workshops and films. This included differences in approaches to ‘early relationships’, personal freedoms, peer pressure, financial influences. Both groups have cited greater gender awareness as being an outcome from participating in the project.
- **The effective use of technology to promote dialogue between two geographically separated groups:** Digital technology, especially digital interactive video technology has been the key to genuinely creating a sense of sharing beyond boundaries.

### Challenges

There were a number of challenges to the project as follows:

- **Scope:** Keeping progress aligned in each of the three aims of culture, IT & gender was sometimes challenging over the course of the project.
- **Technical issues:** The original website solution did not function as anticipated and was too complex for participants. Technical skills among the participants in Ghana were undeveloped.
- **Communication Issues:** Although primarily effective, there were some communication challenges between facilitators due to the remote nature of the project and part-time facilitation commitment in the UK.
- **Attendance in the UK:** Attendance in the UK dropped and then fluctuated. Other extra curricula activities competed for the UK groups’ attention and impacted on attendance.
- **Personal, social & educational development of participants in Ghana:** Participants in Ghana had underdeveloped teamwork, focus and listening skills and required significant extra input to develop a vocabulary for cooperative groupwork and dialogue.

### Recommendations

- **Scope:** Specialist facilitation support in Gender and Culture related areas, along with IT training support, would ensure stronger delivery.
- **Technical Issues:** Some technical delivery issues, such as Video Conference quality and laptop compatibility could be improved through better technical support. Dedicated development staff attached to project would improve end website product.
- **IT Learning support:** Groups with limited exposure to IT need extra support to develop skills and fluency in order to communicate virtually. In Ghana, the group is currently being supported with typing workshops.
- **Facilitation support:** Dedicated subject-based input would ensure depth and breadth of subject areas, which would improve participant experience. Fulltime support and commitment from facilitators in all locations is desirable.



- **UK Groups:** Phase two should include schools willing to make a curriculum commitment to the project. The D.I.V.O. Project falls well within several KS3 & 4 subject areas such as IT, Citizenship and PHSE. Other groups could also be explored, such as school leavers, who would have more availability to participate.
- **Needs Analysis:** Needs analysis would help match project design with participant needs and in the setting realistic aims and objectives.

## **Conclusion**

This pilot project has proved the D.I.V.O. concept and a genuine sharing of cultures and ideas has taken place. Young women who would never have met have touched each other and grown through the experience.

# introduction

## Background

“I have to say that I’m really excited about this project because it is innovative and has a certain “energy” about it!”

*Farida Shaikh, British High Commission*

The D.I.V.O. Project grew out of the end of the British High Commission sponsored Islamic Girls Rights and Leadership Project which was run by the British Council in Accra from 2002 - 2004. This peer-educator project was focused on developing leadership and human rights awareness in participants – young women from the Muslim areas of Nima-Maamobi in Accra<sup>1</sup>. A key aspect of this project which had yet to be realised, was the opportunity for the participants to connect with peers in the UK.

After discussions with The Guardian Newspaper, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School for Girls was approached as a potential partner for the link. The Guardian works with EGA on a number of projects as part of its Corporate and Social Responsibility programme. The Key Stage 4 Manager and Assistant Head Teacher at EGA, Ms. Treasa Owusu Bonsu, is Ghanaian and was very keen to support the project. The recently opened ‘Platform 1’ Community Learning Centre, positioned on the edge of the school grounds, was able to provide access to the creative technologies required, including DV cameras, laptops with editing capacity, broadband Internet and Video Conferencing and a space in which the group could meet. In Ghana, these resources were provided by the British Council.

Scoping documents were followed by a formal proposal which was accepted as a project jointly funded the British Council, the British High Commission and the Guardian. With the proposal accepted, the London Coordinator, Nicholas Pilton, was appointed and EGA participants assembled.

In December of 2003, Jo Confino Executive Editor of the Guardian Newspaper travelled to Ghana and met with a self-selected sub-set of the Islamic Girls project. Together they recorded a ‘welcome clip’ of songs and enthusiasm for the girls in the UK.

Workshops began in London on the 26th of January with the showing of the Ghanaian welcome clip and recording of reciprocal greetings and introductions. Within three weeks, the Project Coordinator was en-route to Ghana, where we were able to launch the project in the Auditorium at the British Council in Accra on the 18th February 2004.

<sup>1</sup> Why we created the project:

Traditionally in both Accra and Kumasi, Islamic groups have stayed within ‘zongo’ areas as immigrants from the north.

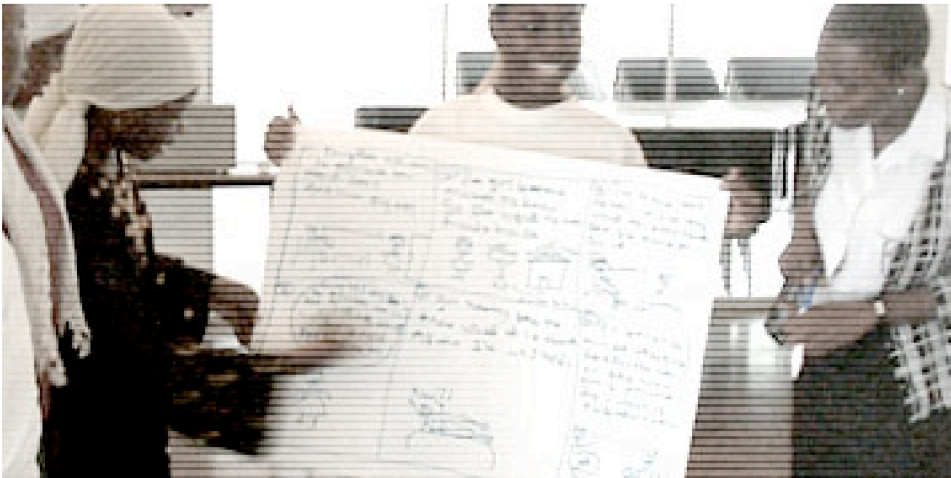
Established over a century and half ago, these areas have remained largely Islamic and have some of the worse problems in Ghana of urban deprivation. The people are poor with over-crowded houses, poor water and sewage provision, high rates of unemployment, teenage pregnancy and disease.

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/ghana/ghana-society/ghana-society-community-programmes/ghana-society-islamic-girls.htm>

# methodology

## There are three aims at the heart of the D.I.V.O. Project:

- 1) To increase participants' cross-cultural awareness
- 2) To improve participants' IT skills
- 3) To increase the ability of young women to make informed choices about gender and sexual health



Issues and ideas for the dialogue are generated through workshop activities exploring identity, culture and gender. Content is initiated by asking “who are we and what would we like to show the other group about our lives?”. Stories and media sent in response influenced what each group chose to examine next. The workshops used active discussion techniques drawn from drama and Theatre for Development including play, improvisation, storytelling, image theatre, explorations of voice, movement and space, status, mapping and other participant-centred techniques.

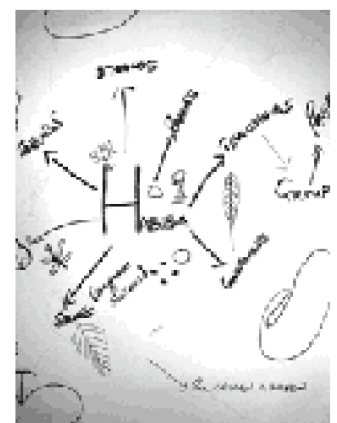
The narratives generated and identified through workshops are translated by participants into short films to share with their partner group.

Participants are taught Digital Video and filmmaking techniques, such as storyboarding; camera shots, angles, moves & transitions; in-camera editing and audio recording. The groups take collective responsibility for conceptualising, planning and filming their stories. The clips created are uploaded to the project website for viewing and discussion with the partner group.

“... I can now create something with my own imagination. I can speak out with-out feeling shy in a group of people.”

*Bilqees Nuhu*

As our communication with our partner group was fully conducted through digital film and technology, we have explored several current technological platforms: video-conferences, online group discussion, e-cards and private messages supported all supported the



Relationship mapping  
GHANA

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Is Digital Video and IT a good way to explore cultural and gender issues? If so, why?

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“Yes because we can create a story based on our own life and culture.”

*Adizatu Mahaz*



exchange. Participatory film-making techniques encouraged teamwork, focus, analysis and planning. Skills acquisition and dramatic activities in turn, promoted self-esteem.

The impact of improved confidence and self-esteem is evident in both groups, with many participants noting that they can now 'speak out' when in a group. This also had a positive effect on the quality of the dramas presented, the young women became increasingly demonstrative and articulate with their voices, movement and use of space.

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Please describe any changes you notice in your relationships or relationships within the group which could be a result of the project:

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“...I can now talk in public, and also easily in making friends.

I also express my views when my friends are making choices.”

*Bilkis Idriss*



# key findings

## Multiculturalism

The predominant assumption amongst the Ghanaian group was that all people in the UK are white and Christian. The multiculturalism of the UK group was unexpected in Ghana. They were surprised to find Black girls from several different cultural backgrounds, including Ghanaians who spoke Twi. Learning a Jamaican song and making an Origami box or 'hat' during our introductory Video Conference was memorable for the Ghanaian group and emphasised the cultural diversity of the UK group. Some members of the Ghanaian group reported change in their assumption of UK society as being racist.



This illustrated a clear difference between the groups, and highlighted for the Ghanaian girls both that there are many cultures that make up UK society and that Ghanaian society, for them, is essentially mono-cultural.

“Ghanaians are confined in their culture, that is individual culture unlike the UK when you look at their ways of doing things as they have a few cultures around them...”

*Abdul Rashida Razak*

## Religion

The Ghanaian participants were also surprised by the religious diversity in the UK group, being particularly interested in the Muslim girls amongst the group. Ghanaian participants interpreted this as a 'freedom of religion' in the UK and identified this as a similarity between the cultures.

“Both Ghanaians and the people of the UK have freedom of worship” *Rashida Mohammed*

## Nationalism



“They (Ghanaians) have pride in their culture. They feel strongly about their roots and background.” *Jayon Charles*

UK participants were impressed with the levels of nationalism and pride expressed by footage sent by the Ghanaian group. The majority of the UK group does not describe themselves as “British” citing instead their cultural heritage - Chinese, Jamaican, Ghanaian and Iraqi.

In comparison with Ghana, the UK groups’ sense of identity is highly individualistic being primarily aligned with their respective cultural heritage as well as being heavily influenced by fashion, trends and popular youth culture. UK Participants noted a lack of national identity in UK culture as well as an absence of “belonging” to the nation.

In response to the footage sent from Ghana, the UK group undertook independent Internet research in order to seek out similar elements of British identity. This was the first time they had explored the symbolism behind the Union Jack or heard the words of the national anthem. While they found the activity interesting, they also noted that these artefacts hold no ‘meaning’ for them.

## Personal and social development

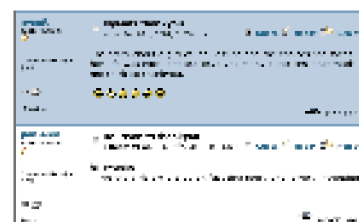
The combination of Drama, gender-awareness, teamwork and IT skills has led to personal and social development in the majority of participants in both locations. Many participants have commented positively on ‘teamwork’ and improved listening and cooperation skills is evident by observing interactions within both groups. This change can be attributed to the devising and filmmaking process, which is wholly cooperative in essence. The creation of a story requires many people, who need to share a common vision. Listening and negotiation are essential to establishing consensus. Filmmaking also necessitates teamwork and trust. These activities promote a sense of unity and group achievement.

“The most memorable aspect is the clips that we made as a key to the development of we the girls in Ghana and the UK girls.” *Bilqees Nuhu*

Individual development is evident in many participants, most noticeable in those who came to the project with limited experience with personal public expression. It has been particularly rewarding to witness shy participants growing in confidence to a stage where they are able to express their views in public and individually within the films. Girls who began the project withdrawn or silent have found the courage not only to speak out but also to influence group stories.

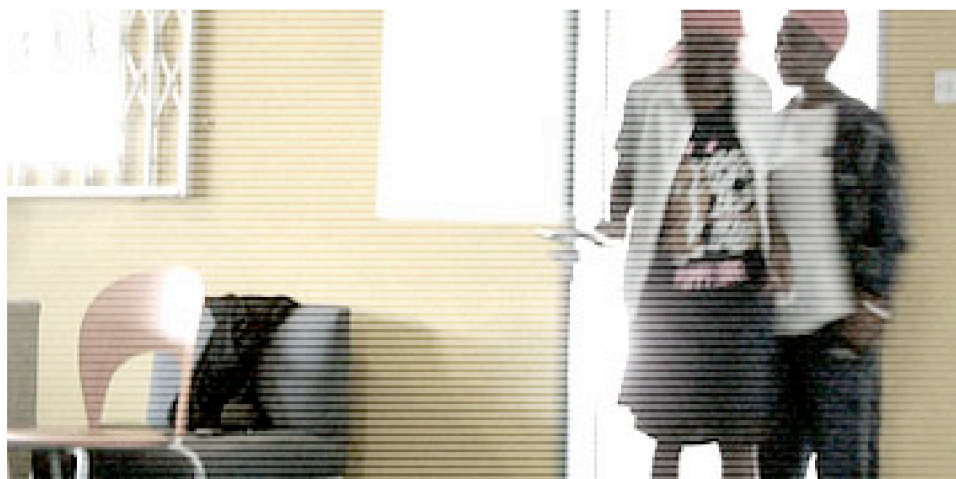
Participants have continued to show growth within their groups in terms of friendship and support for each other. This has been observed in the sessional reports of both groups.

One-to-one exchanges through the website have impacted positively on participants. Warmth and friendship is evident through the online exchanges. A selection of these form Annex 2. Although we experienced some challenges with the website, participants commented favourably on the ability to be able to contact the UK group in this manner and have developed a sense of working together, despite being separated. The ability to view the clips with autonomy was well received.



Sample dialogue from website. See Annex 2 for further transcripts.

### Gender awareness



“They are allowed to make male friends and also (to be) engaged in boy/girl relationships.” *Madinatu Akib*

A clear point of difference which emerged early in the exchange was that the UK girls were “allowed to be in early relationships with boys”. The group in Ghana are severely protected or restricted in this sense and so were very interested in how this was in the UK. For them, having male friends is not straightforward, and a ‘boyfriend’ is forbidden.

At the community event held in Nima on 19<sup>th</sup> June, the group decided that boys would not be allowed to attend. This was in part due to difficulties caused within the community when boys attended previous public events, and in part a choice to keep the event exclusively for young women and the participants’ loved ones, only.

All of the clips from the UK exploring boy-girl relationships showed that their relationships were unrestricted by adults although they face pressure from peers. Young women in the UK have the freedom and responsibility to make decisions for themselves about their relationships with boys. The story that launched the video dialogue was of a young woman in the UK who feels compelled to have sex in order to fit in with her friends. She becomes pregnant and is abandoned, first by her friends – who were lying, the boy and finally by her

What would you say are the main cultural differences between the UK & Ghana?

“We are less restricted than in Ghana”.

*Jayon Charles*

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What would you say are the main cultural similarities between the UK & Ghana?

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“Some of them also face difficulties, as some of us here in Ghana.”

*Laila Yakubu*

mother. The problems associated with teenage pregnancy were identified as a similarity between the groups – being an undesirable situation in both cultures.

The Ghanaian participants also identified peer pressure as an issue in their lives, including pressure to be in ‘early relationship’ or to have sex. The key difference is that the social stakes are higher. A young woman contemplating this issue is beset with influences from community, friends and family.

One Ghanaian story examining the issue of early relationships ‘the Dilemma’ showed a young woman who was both interested in a boy **as well as** the financial support he was offering her. This story highlights a common conflict identified by the Ghanaian group: the relationship between money and sex. We ran further workshops that explored a young woman’s status within this type of relationship which looked at what happened when a young woman accepts or rejects such offers. It was a familiar problem and difficult for the participants to be certain about how status was affected in this situation, given that financial status is also desirable for them and that this method of acquisition is clearly in direct conflict with their social code. It was very clear that the popular opinion of the group is that a young woman should definitely **not** meet a boy, or accept his money. However it is also clear that this does happen.



‘The Dilemma’ was taken to the community where the Ghanaian group held a peer-led workshop for their loved ones. Around 50 girls attended, working in small groups with D.I.V.O. representatives to take ‘the Dilemma’ and create five films based on what happens next. This event was highly successful, both for the D.I.V.O. girls, who organised the event and logistics and were able to autonomously lead and support their peers through the devising and filmmaking process and also for their friends who attended the day. Seeing their stories presented in the form of mass media was compelling.

Both groups have cited greater gender awareness as being an outcome from participating in the project. In Ghana, the group has been able to identify issues of equality and status and explored how these affect their daily lives.

### **Domestic relationships & responsibilities**

As young women, the Ghanaian participants are expected to make significant contribution to the running of the household. Domestic work features heavily in their average day, starting with cleaning and food preparation before the rest of the family raises. They take care of their



siblings and help them be ready for school. While the levels of domestic work are not really comparable, it was interesting for the Ghanaian group to note that members of the UK group are also expected to contribute to household tasks, such as looking after younger siblings. This was noted as a point of similarity.

The Ghanaian group mainly live in extended family units, while the UK group live in nuclear families. This was noted as a point of difference.

“We are also more independent when solving problems, whilst they share their problems with their friends and family and try to sort them out together.” *Wendy Lam*

When faced with family conflict, Ghanaian participants tended to look for solutions and support within their family group. This was explored through several clips and alternate endings. Clips from the UK, showing conflict with a parent were repeated showing the conflict resolved through support from the extended family. Workshop discussion identified many role models for Ghanaian participants such as community leaders, teachers and elder family members. This group has a strong knowledge and ready access to their role models.

### Leisure

Personal leisure time was also obviously different, being virtually non-existent for the Ghanaian group due to their domestic responsibilities. They are additionally socially restricted from attending parties or movies, which are also restricted due to local availability and financial hardship.

Several members of the groups noticed and commented on this.

### Dress

‘Dress’ was noticed immediately by participants. The UK group was generally in uniform, a contrast to the Ghanaian group, who attend different schools, with and without uniforms. In Ghana, the group were very interested in the Muslim girls within the UK group, and their wearing of ‘scarf’ or ‘veil’. They noted a similarity in being allowed to wear scarves in class, a Ghanaian participant mentioned she feels improved by this knowledge.

### Use of technology to promote dialogue and friendship

The exchange between participants is wholly mediated through technology. Participants have communicated their issues and made friends without physically meeting. This has taken place mostly through the website, where participants have created and customised their user accounts, logged in, exchanged private messages, held public discussion and viewed clips. Technology has made communication beyond physical borders a reality for the D.I.V.O. group.

- **Website:** Once the simplified website was in place, participant usage and positive feedback increased. Participants use the website in an independent and autonomous way, replying to personal messages and choosing clips to view.

A difference can be observed between the groups in terms of use of language and articulation, however this does not appear to have had a detrimental effect upon their communication. Members consistently demonstrate enthusiasm and positivity with their comments and responses towards each other.

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What would you say are the main cultural differences between the UK & Ghana?

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“The difference between the UK and Ghana is that they are allowed to go out at week-ends, but here it is not allowed. They are also allowed to do whatever they want.”

*Jamilatu Suieiman*

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Is Digital Video and IT a good way to explore cultural and gender issues? If so, why?

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“Yes because it can serve as a reference and as evidence. It is also a short way of sending a message to someone far from you.”

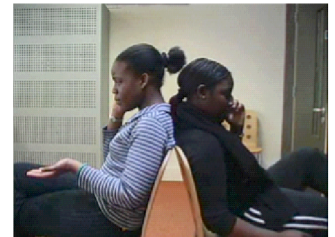
*Laila Yakubu*



- **Video:** The digital video stories and documentary video footage was incredibly compelling for participants. The fascination generated by seeing both their own stories and those of their partner group represented in manner of traditional television cannot be overemphasised. Video has been the key to genuinely creating a sense of sharing beyond boundaries.
- **Video conferences:** Video conferences provided enhanced sense of presence to the project. VC's continued to hold high profile within the project, due to their live and immediate nature. It remained exciting for participants to interact in real time. However there were so drawbacks - participants often had to repeat their contribution very slowly and loudly several times due to poor audio and video quality during video conferences. This made communication stilted which was sometimes challenging for both groups.
- **E-cards:** In Ghana, participants have really enjoyed sending 'e-cards' to each other. These are provided through online services that offer preformatted multimedia greetings with limited textual customisation, but which often include music, animations and pictures.
- **IT & DV skills:** In Ghana, 100% of participants reported increase in IT skills, knowledge and confidence. In the UK, 70% of participants reported increased in IT skills, knowledge and confidence. In Ghana, evidence of this increase is observable through workshops and contributions to the website. In the UK, main change was affected through acquisition of filmmaking skills.

# developing dialogue

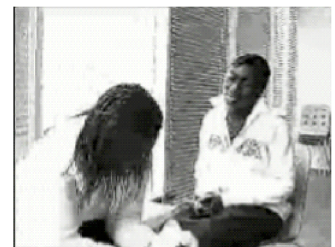
The first exchanges between the groups were introductory group videos. These were mostly songs and personal greetings. This was followed up with the first video conference on 16th March. Both groups prepared culturally significant contributions to share. These included songs, poems, riddles & handicrafts. The UK group prepared the first drama to launch our dialogue and performed it during the video conference.



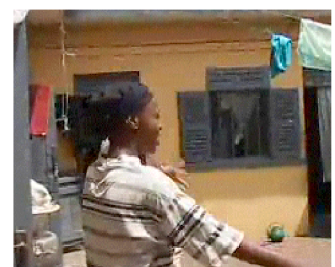
- **UK01 Maria's Story:** Maria's story looks at peer pressure and teenage pregnancy. Maria has sex because she thinks her friends are too. She becomes pregnant and is rejected first by the father, and then thrown out by her (single) mother. This was a fine and thoughtful start to the dialogue which immediately communicated to the Ghanaian group.



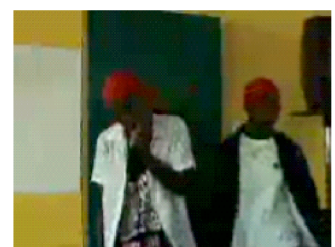
- **Alternate ending to Maria's Story:** The Ghanaian group immediately identified with Maria's story - and the problems of teenage pregnancy and peer pressure. These continued to be identified as a common problem for both groups. The Ghanaian group decided to rewrite the ending of the story, introducing another character - the father - who intervenes on behalf of the daughter to stop the mother throwing Maria out.



- **UK02 Stereotypes:** The next story to arrive from the UK was 'Stereotypes'. This story explored traditional gender roles and included a flashback in time. A daughter comes to her mother looking for support to be an engineer - after having been ridiculed at school for this choice. The mother recalls her own childhood, when she witnessed her father assaulting her mother after she suggests taking part-time employment. She has developed into a strong woman, empowered in work and family life and is totally behind her daughters choice 'If you want to be an engineer, I'll back you all the way'.



- **Ghanaian documentary footage:** The next footage from Ghana was informal footage shot during small group discussion, which looked at specific information about Ghana and in which Ghanaian participants demonstrated such a clear sense of belonging and fondness for their country, along with footage shot in and around the Nima market. We visited a participants home as well as several Islamic schools. This footage had significant influence on the UK group.



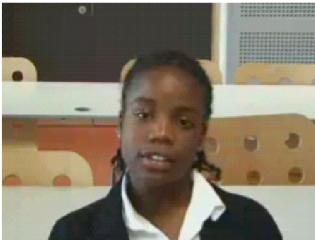
- **GH Story 1:** This is a story about a girl who's mother refuses to educate her about sex. The girl turns to a friend, who advises her to try it out for herself to see what it is like. The girl becomes pregnant. Upon confronting her mother, her mother realises her refusal to discuss this matter with her daughter has led to the situation and asks forgiveness.



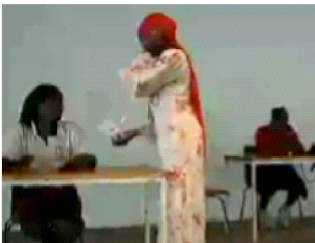
- **GH Story 2:** In this story, a girl asks her mother's permission to go outside with a boy and his friend. The mother allows this. The boy and girl have a personal discussion, which concludes with the boy asking the girl to attend a party with him, which she accepts. The girl returns home later than expected and finds she has forgotten about the food she was in the middle of preparing - it is burned! Her mother expressed concern and worry.



- **GH Story 3:** This is a story of traditional gender roles - the story opens with a family scene and discussions of the daughters' futures. One girl hopes to be a Doctor, but the other girl wants to become a musician - a very unpopular choice with her father, who forbids it "Not in this house, do you understand, not in this house!" The girl turns to her community leader for support, who agrees to intervene on her behalf. Fifteen years later, we see the girl performing at a concert!



- **UK Documentary footage:** In response to the Ghanaian footage, the UK spent several weeks exploring aspects of their own cultures to communicate to Ghana. This included insights into youth culture, Chinese culture and the symbolism behind the Union Jack. The UK group filmed around the school, pointing out the unique aspects of their environment, such as the garden containing the multinational flags representative of the EGA student body.



- **GH The Dilemma:** The Dilemma was an important story for the Ghanaian group, which we worked with for several weeks, devising, developing and exploring. We used different character based techniques to uncover the story and as a result, created a story with more depth and insight. It is the story of Fussina, a 16yr old girl from Nima. The story is made up of several threads: Fussina has noticed a boy at school - and has even had a dream about him "he's chasing me in my dream". However she knows she is forbidden to meet him, not only that, but her mother is a single mother who had to drop out of school when she became pregnant with Fussina. The father is not around. They are poor, the mother is a trader in the market, but they have high hopes for Fussina, who is a scholarship student. Fussina is approaching her friends for money to purchase a pamphlet she needs for school when the boy Staf (Mustafa) decides he likes the look of Fussina and sends notes to her, urging her to meet him. Fussina is conflicted and turns to her friend, who suggest that Staf maybe able to help her out with her financial problems. This is Fussina's dilemma. The story ends with Fussina meeting Staf.



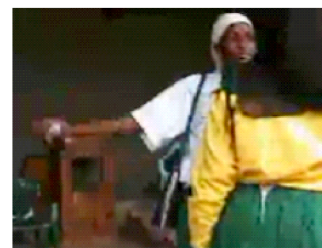
The Dilemma formed the starting point for the stories created during the peer-led workshop held in Nima on Saturday 19th June 2004.

- **Nima Story 1:** Fussina accepts Staf's proposal and receives gifts and money from him. Her friends warn her against this arrangement. Fussina eventually has sex with Staf and becomes pregnant. When Fussina's mother hears this news, she dies instantly!

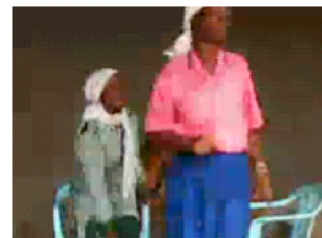


- **Nima Story 2:** In this story, Fussina also accepts Staf's proposal. Their relationship lasts about a year before he asks her for a 'favour'. The favour is sex and as Fussina has promised to do anything for Staf, she has sex with him and becomes pregnant. In order not to end up as her mother, she goes for an abortion, which she dies from.

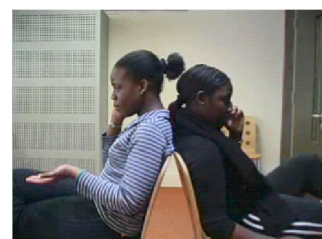
- **Nima Story 3:** Fussina accepts Staf's proposal and in this case, upon the advice of her friend, decides to keep the relationship a secret. Staf helps Fussina with her homework and buys her books for her studies. Staf tells his father about Fussina, who promises to take them both to the USA to continue their education. This story closes when the papers arrive and Fussina tells her mother about her plans to go to America. They are both very excited.



- **Nima Story 4:** Fussina accepts Staff, they begin seeing each other and eventually Fussina becomes pregnant. Staf does not accept the pregnancy and rejects Fussina. Later, Fussina blames her friend for giving her bad advice. She is now a school drop-out, like her mother.



- **Nima Story 5:** Fussina is encouraged by her friend to be in relationship with Staf because of the financial support he can give her. Fussina listens to her friend and then decides to discuss the issue with her mother. Her mother suggests another source of income: working in Fussina's aunty's shop. Fussina later decides to go to University, she is able to go with the financial support of her Aunty. Fussina's friend, who encouraged her at the beginning, has been involved in early sexual relationships and contracts HIV/AIDS.



- **UK03:** The third story from the UK shows young people in a party scene. A girl who has been drinking fancies a boy and wants to go off with him. Her friend makes an unsuccessful attempt to intervene. The girl has unprotected sex and contracts a sexually transmitted infection. Her friend is there to insist she visits the clinic for help.

- **UK04:** The final story from the UK group examines family relationships and school performance pressure. Conflict arises between a daughter and her mother when the daughter wants to have some fun during the holidays rather than attending extra schooling. Her mother refuses to negotiate, the daughter rebels, running away from home.



- **Alternate ending to UK04:** In response to the clip about summer school from the UK, the Ghana group created a story in which the situation was mediated by the girl's grandmother. There have been two such stories, where the Ghanaian group have proposed resolution of conflict by introducing another family member.

### Forming friendships

As the project progressed and the website became populated with the clips above, participants relationships moved on from initial introductions to exploration. Participants were consistently open and enthusiastic in their messages and comments to the website. Direct offers of friendship were initiated in the form of sending 'e-cards' - requiring a participant to visit a separate website and to know the email address of their recipient. Participants often sent messages 'just to say hi' in the form of general support. There has also been a situation where a girl from the UK has been assisting a girl in Ghana with locating a picture to represent her on the website. A pleasing curiosity about food and customs is evident. Message transcripts form Annex 2.



# progress

dialogue. n conversation between two or more people, esp of a formal or imaginary nature; an exchange of views in the hope of ultimately reaching agreement.

The Chambers dictionary

In order to give a sense of visual & audio dialogue through videos on the website, we wanted to generate significant volume of clips for exchange. A rolling schedule of weekly 'devise & film' and 'edit & upload' workshops was planned prior to project start. While it eventually became possible for both groups to devise and film a story in one 1.5 hour session, at the outset, both groups required significantly more time than available in one workshop session to achieve this. In Ghana participants attended twice the amount of workshops of the UK, plus a further 8 weeks of voluntary technical workshops.

## **Our objectives are to:**

**1. Stimulate and support cross cultural dialogue through creative workshops and web-based technologies.**

Objective one was addressed both through planning and exploratory work in workshops and through discussions generated on the website. Within workshops, we looked at identity and culture, identified and discussed issues and methods for sharing this with our partner group. Video conferences were carefully planned to include formal and informal discussion as well as performance aspects. Prior planning and preparatory work ensured that periods of communication were maximised and meaningful.

**2. Train participants in web-based IT and DV skills.**

Objective two was addressed through filmmaking workshops and use of the website.

**3. Discussion and storytelling workshops exploring gender and sexual health issues. Participant led dialogue on gender and sexual health issues.**

Objective three was addressed through workshops exploring gender, conflict, status and sexual health. These workshops and discussion provided the main content for the stories created by the groups.

# challenges

## Scope

Having three focal aims relating to culture, gender and technology for the project was challenging. In depth movement in all areas was not always possible, due to time constraints and participant availability. Dialogic development was slower than expected due to the discrepancy in prior experiences among participants.

## Technical issues

- **Website:** Participant feedback has listed difficulties experienced with using the website as one of the challenges of the project. The initial feature-rich website solution did not function properly and additionally, was too complex for the participants. There were challenges in motivating the contractor responsible to implement changes, which culminated in the installation of a second, simpler html-based site, with limited functionality. While we had a documented understanding of the requirements for the initial website, the reality of remote implementation showed that this arrangement was not sufficient to ensure success.

The initial inspiration for the website was for a site where participants would be responsible for the uploading of their stories. In reality this was beyond the scope for participants in both locations. While in the UK, some Video editing took place, due to the complexity of this task and the limit of the groups experience, this hardly happened in Ghana. Compression and uploading of clips remained primarily a task for the facilitators.

- **Technical support:** technical requirements requested at outset of project including access to enhanced network capacity for video upload/download remained unfulfilled until close to the end of the project. This made website and media management difficult and time consuming.

- **Video Conferencing:** While video conferencing was popular with participants, extremely poor audio and video quality made communication frustrating. Participants are lively and our exchanges relied upon more physical movement than normally experienced in a video conference setting. The project located another partner, DfID Ghana who were able to provide improved quality.



### **Attendance in UK**

While the project initially attracted over twenty students wanting to take part in the project, this decreased to around half this number. Repeated recruitment requests added one further participant, taking membership to 11. Average attendance for this group is six to seven participants per session.

The members of the UK group often had other demands for their time – choirs, science trips, jazz club, study leave and holidays, normal priorities for busy schoolgirls. Despite the low numbers a committed core group emerged and much progress was made with these young women.

### **Personal, social & educational development of participants in Ghana**

The Ghanaian group required extra time and input in order to develop listening, focus and teamwork skills. This impacted on the development through dialogue between the groups. However significant progress has been made by this group, who now display very positive teamwork skills. The group is self motivated and able to independently negotiate stories and their filming as well as to discuss issues with sensitivity and clarity. Extra workshops, initiative, determination and enthusiasm all contributed to an improvement in skills. The group now has a good base and vocabulary for participating in an autonomous manner in a technologically mediated exchange.



# data collection & analysis



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What was the most memorable aspect of the project?

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“Making a film where I was the lead.”

*Nyanit Koang*

Data has been collected through sessional reporting, monthly Artistic reports, Video diaries, journals and participant evaluation. Sessional and Artistic reports were completed by facilitators and were structured to reflect the aims and objectives of the project. The evaluation structure which supports the project forms Annex 3. Artistic & progress reports form Annex 3 along with sample Sessional reports.

Video diaries were conducted 1-to-1, without supervision as peer-led evaluation. Sample journal entries form Annex 1 and full participant evaluation can be found in Annex 1. Attendance records form Annex 1.

## UK

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING	IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY		IMPROVED SLIGHTLY		NO CHANGE		DETERIORATED	
Has your knowledge of your own culture:	0	0%	3	60%	2	40%	0	0%
Has your knowledge of Ghanaian culture:	2	40%	2	40%	1	20%	0	0%
<b>IT SKILLS</b>								
Have your IT skills:	1	20%	3	60%	1	20%	0	0%
Has your confidence with IT:	1	20%	2	40%	2	40%	0	0%
Has your knowledge of IT:	1	20%	2	40%	2	40%	0	0%
<b>GENDER AWARENESS</b>								
Has your knowledge of Gender & Sexual Health Issues:	2	40%	2	60%	1	20%	0	0%
Has your awareness of personal choices:	2	40%	2	40%	0	0%	1	20%
Has your awareness of personal rights & responsibilities regarding Gender & Sexual Health:	3	60%	1	20%	0	0%	1	20%

## ATTENDANCE

Total no of participants: 13

Total no. of sessions: 21

Average no. of participants per session: 7.4 (57%)

Average no. of sessions attended per participant: 13 (61%)

## ANALYSIS

Members of the UK group were already familiar with many of the technologies. Some had prior insight into Ghanaian culture, due to their personal histories and all have had considerable sexual health input. As a result, change accountable to the project is less dramatic in this group.

*“I got much more close to some of the girls that I work with.”*

*Christobel Massaquoi*

Although the group suffered from erratic attendance, a core team of committed participants emerged, who clearly benefited from the project.

Skills derived from the dramatic and participatory video process have impacted very positively upon this group, particularly in terms of teambuilding and confidence.

## GHANA

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING	IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY		IMPROVED SLIGHTLY		NO CHANGE		DETERIORATED	
Has your knowledge of your own culture:	11	79%	2	14%	1	7%	0	0%
Has your knowledge of UK culture:	5	36%	9	64%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>IT SKILLS</b>								
Have your IT skills:	7	50%	7	50%	0	0%	0	0%
Has your confidence with IT:	5	36%	8	57%	1	7%	0	0%
Has your knowledge of IT:	2	14%	12	86%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>GENDER AWARENESS</b>								
Has your knowledge of Gender & Sexual Health Issues:	9	64%	5	21%	0	0%	0	0%
Has your awareness of personal choices:	5	36%	9	64%	0	0%	0	0%
Has your awareness of personal rights & responsibilities regarding Gender & Sexual Health:	13	93%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%

## ATTENDANCE

Total no. of participants: 17

Total no. of sessions: 43

Average no. of participants per session: 13 (77%)

Average no. of sessions attended per participant: 34 (79%)

## ANALYSIS

Change accountable to the project is more dramatic within the Ghanaian group. Twice the amount of scheduled workshops, plus extra technology workshops, initiative, determination and enthusiasm all contributed to a marked improvement in skills and significant movement against stated aims. This group is now at a stage where they could independently contribute to an online dialogue.

# wider impact

Beyond the initial 30 participants, the D.I.V.O. Project has impacted and influenced various groups, with strong potential of accessing further audiences.

- **Peer-led community event:** The peer-led workshop held in Nima on Saturday June 19th directly impacted approximately a further 50 participants. These participants were all young Muslim women drawn directly from the core groups' personal networks. These women were presented with a story addressing issues from the project, and then asked to decide 'what happens next'. Participants worked in small groups, led by D.I.V.O. representatives who helped them to define and translate their ideas into a storyboard, rehearse and perform them. The event culminated in a public screening of the films for the wider community that afternoon - an audience of approximately a further 100 people. The event was well attended by local media and received national news and press coverage.

- **Public events in London:** Public screenings of the project documentary have been held at the Guardian and the British Council, widening the project audience and stimulating debate about the issues raised. We also plan to show the documentary in a school assembly at EGA in September 2004. These events should reach a combined audience of around 200 people.

- **Divoproject Website:** While the website is primarily being used by participants, there is potential for wider audiences to contribute and interact. Enhancing the functionality of the system will offer greater opportunities for public contribution.

- **The Guardian:** The project is currently promoted publicly under the Guardian Unlimited's Community projects section. With readership of over 8 million<sup>†</sup>, potential public audience for the project is vast. The D.I.V.O. Project also forms part of the annual 'social audit' - a printed publication presenting the Guardian's community activities. The project also features in the current annual report and on the corporate intranet, accessing both internal and external audiences.

- **OneWorld:** A story and footage from the project is featured on the OneWorld TV website. OneWorld TV, an online independent media platform with a human rights agenda for video journalists and filmmakers, has a membership of over 3500 in 56 different countries. Through this avenue, the project documentary was submitted by the OneWorld TV Community World Strand for screening on the Community Channel on SkyTV. The documentary screened 12 times during September 04 and is now on 2 year contract. Further distribution through various media channels is being explored.

† <http://adinfo-guardian.co.uk/product-performance/index.shtml>

\* This figure does not include audiences touched through the divoproject website, the Guardian Unlimited, the British Council and British High Commission websites.

<http://www.divoproject.org>

<http://bcnet.britishcouncil.org:8000/newsflash/divo220704.htm>

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/ghana-society-community-divo.htm>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/values/communityprojects/story/0,14333,1166426,00.html>

<http://www.britishhighcommission.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1025273317568&a=KArticle&aid=1086626804869>

## Core participants

D.I.V.O. Participants .....30  
 Nima workshop participants .....50

## Audience participants

Nima audience .....100  
 Guardian & British Council .....50  
 EGA Assembly .....250  
 Participants Phase 1 .....480\*

# financial report

£28715 was given to the project. Of this, £21950 was allocated to staff, £2400 to technical resources, £2800 to travel and £1980 T&T in Ghana. Not all of this money has been utilised - changes have been made to staffing estimates as it was necessary to change the website developer and we have only needed to pay for one teacher at EGA, rather than two as budgeted. We were able to avoid a 'bridging fee' for our video conferences, which we requested extra funding for.

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Monthly progress reports, including financial reports form Annex 3.

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## **Project underspend**

The project is underspent. These funds will be redirected into development of the website in line with the initial inspiration for the system.

Research or consultation into current platforms to enhance interactions needs to be undertaken. There are many models available - bulletin boards, multi-person blogging and content management systems. Careful evaluation is needed to implement the most suitable system along with thorough technical management and documentation.

# recommendations

Have you noticed any change in your perceptions of UK culture? Please list.

“Initially I thought all the people of the UK spoke one language and thus come from the same lineage, but I have now erased this impression I had.”

*Rashida Mohammed*



## **Phase 2**

The D.I.V.O. Project should move forward into a second phase. Much of phase 1 has been taken in preparatory work in terms of technology and participant readiness. Groups need to acquire a vocabulary for the form of technology, before they can articulate their perspective. The Ghanaian group are now well equipped to move forward and many useful lessons have been learnt. The project needs consolidation to become sustainable.

## **Website**

The website should offer participants the opportunity to upload and contribute their own media. The system should be designed with thorough interaction, usability and functional consideration.

## **E-cards**

Ghanaian participants loved sending preformatted 'e-card' greetings to each other. Offering additional semi-formatted features such as the ability to make your own card through the website would be very exciting.

## **Use of video**

Video has proven to be a stimulating form for participants, lending immediacy and tangibility to their virtual exchanges. Participants contexts were dramatically different, which could have presented many challenges were we relying on more static media. Video helped them to understand each other very quickly.

## **Diversity vs nationalism**

EGA is a specialist language college, where over 50 languages are spoken and a high value is placed on cultural diversity. As the UK group identified a lack in a sense of national "belonging", an area that would be interesting to explore in phase 2 would be to consider whether promoting diversity creates an absence of national identity and whether this contributes to a sense of alienation within a nation.

### **Cultural vs religious identity**

In Ghana – the group claims both Muslim and Ghanaian identity. The participants are either ‘Ghanaian Muslims’ or ‘Muslim Ghanaians’. Separating these influences out was beyond the scope of this phase. A rich skein of possibility exists in examining these multi-faceted influences.

### **Gender**

Examining Gender in different contexts bears further in-depth exploration. While we have looked at traditional and non-traditional work and how this can be supported or restricted for women, there is a vast area here for exploration. Examining the different types of choice available to participants from different cultural contexts and the impact these choices have on their lives.

### **Values**

Financial hardship is a constant factor in the lives of the Ghanaian participants and is often cited as the cause of the problems facing their community. Further in-depth investigation into the differences between social and economic values could yield further insights for participants. Despite living in a situation of financial desperation, joy and happiness is constantly present and evident in the Ghanaian group.

“Life may be harder to them because of money, jobs and how developed their country is. But to me I think things that don’t involve money are the most important and they have that.”

*Wendie Lam*

# conclusion

The D.I.V.O. Project has been a highly successful pilot project that has proved that using interactive digital technology, especially digital interactive video technology to explore and promote cultural understanding between remote groups is a powerful and meaningful method of sharing context.

The magic of moving images has brought life and tangibility to the participants exchange, immediately generating empathy and mutual understanding. Issues effecting the participants have been clearly expressed and explored. Both the process of creating participant-led, issue based films and the viewing of the films themselves has stimulated and supported dialogue between the groups. Seeing their own stories presented in the familiar form of mass-media has been compelling and motivating.

Creating a film relies inherently on teamwork. Participants need not only unity of vision and direction, but also the ability to trust each other to negotiate and delegate the multiple tasks. Working together to create a short film generates a strong sense of achievement for the group as a whole and is an extremely bonding process.

Through participating in the project, quiet and withdrawn girls have developed confidence to speak and influence group decisions. Listening skills have been noticeably enhanced and a strong feeling of support within and between groups is immediately evident.

As much effort has gone into development of the project during phase 1, phase 2 is necessary for widening impact, ensuring sustainability and value for money.



# annexes

## 1. Participants

Evaluation Forms

Learning journals

Attendance

## 2. Website

Sample discussion

Message transcripts

## 3. Evaluating

Project Evaluation Framework

Reporting Structure

Progress and Artistic Reports

Sample of Sessional Reporting

## 4. Press

## 5. Phase 1 proposal



Participants  
Evaluation Forms  
Learning journals  
Attendance

annex 1



Website

Sample discussion

Message transcripts

# annex 2



Evaluating  
Project Evaluation Framework  
Reporting Structure  
Progress and Artistic Reports  
Sample of Sessional Reporting

# annex 3





Press

# annex 4



Phase 1 proposal

annex 5