

## **'Conversations with the Earth: Indigenous Voices on Climate Change'**

Climate change is here, it is happening now. This is a message that can be heard from indigenous groups, from Cameroon to Panama. On the 29<sup>th</sup> October Soledad Muniz, from non-governmental organisation 'Insight Share' gave a talk hosted by CUiD about working with indigenous groups using participatory filming methods to get across this powerful message. Through watching some of these films the audience were provided with an engaging and emotive account of *the* issue of our time.

Insight Share's work focuses exclusively on participatory video (PV) methods as a means for community empowerment. We saw how PV is used in a range of places across the world, from Gateshead in England to Andhra Pradesh in India. Through this work Insight aims to enhance development activity by handing over control to communities and bridging the gap between such communities and decision-makers.

Insight's involvement with the project 'Conversations with the Earth' engages indigenous communities from six different countries across the world, with the aim to document the impact of climate change in their communities so that they can share this with the rest of the world.

In a video made by the 'Baka' indigenous group from East Cameroon the audience learnt how climate change is causing drought, seasonal irregularity in the weather and poor banana harvests. The 'Kuna Yala' indigenous group from Panama used their video to highlight the decreasing fish stocks and the implications of Western companies' exploitation on their food and medicine resources.

These films not only illustrated the material changes that these communities are experiencing but also the cultural dynamics of climate change. In both Cameroon and Panama the distancing of the indigenous groups from nature also represented a distancing from their ancestral and cultural identities as climate change transforms their homes and surroundings.

The importance of documenting this is made ever more poignant and urgent in the lead up to international climate change discussions in Copenhagen in December. A representative from all of the six countries involved in the Conversations with the Earth project will be going to Copenhagen to screen their communities' films.

Challenging questions asked by the audience allowed Soledad to demonstrate a keen awareness of the pros and cons of Insight's participatory methods. He acknowledged the issue of overcoming internal differences within communities when the community themselves, not Insight's facilitators, are in charge of the project. For example, the problem of gender roles within the communities was highlighted following the dominating male presence in the Panama video. Yet the discussion of Insight's work in the UK was able to provide a refreshing example of the positive application of the same development methodologies in both developed and developing countries.

Overall Soledad's talk provided a convincing yet self-critical account of participatory video methods which was powerfully demonstrated in the Indigenous Voices on Climate Change project.

Produced for [www.humanitariancentre.org](http://www.humanitariancentre.org)

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For more information:

[www.cuid.org](http://www.cuid.org)

[www.insightshare.org](http://www.insightshare.org)

[www.conversationearth.org](http://www.conversationearth.org)