

“Unsung Among Us”

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INTERIM REPORT



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1.

PROJECT CONCEPT:

INTRODUCTION

Unsung Among Us is a venture to harness possibilities that the digital technology brings in its wake. It makes recording of visuals and sound a move economical and viable proposition than it was. The (digital) camera has left the shoulder and it now sits in the palm of our hand, almost like a pen or a brush, ready to use. Any one can make use of this possibility to enrich and empower his society.

This opportunity is being put to use to record the unsung among us. Those who live in our society hidden in the weave of our socio-cultural fabric, educators, technicians, agrarians, men and women who enrich our society, the unsung who contribute to our lives through their beliefs, skills and crafts. They are found in our immediate locality, on lonely roads, empty fields with their true thoughts and genuine philosophies.

The project “**Unsung Among Us**” encourages those from the same environment to come forward to identify, document, reveal and explore their unsung. To eventually make ten minute long documentary films on their Unsung. Informed and initiated through the infrastructure of the panchayats, fourteen individuals will be selected from all fourteen districts of Kerala. They will be invited to The Grameena Patana Kendram, Thiruvananthapuram for a radical training on all aspects of the digital film making. Induced by Dogma films and the writings of John Rouche, a training programme is devised for the same. That the camera has evolved into a small device,

both light and inexpensive compared to the heavier cameras of the past, is the inspiration to a new kind of looking and recording that is now sweeping the world. That it is so easy and free to use, that those who were far removed from this fantastic invention of the twentieth century, can now on their own dexterity record events and people in their own ways of seeing is the primary motivation behind the project. A way of seeing that is direct and pure without in any way tainted by the prescriptions of the specialist. Then the consolidated information can be utilised by the existing society and the future generations as a worth of property of their own without intellectual barriers.

OBJECTIVES

Develop Participatory Model for media, achieving indigenous knowledge through short-term research in cultural and technological history of Kerala.

Content creation from across all levels of the society through reinforced information collection, documentation and dissemination

Empowerment, capacity building, democratisation of knowledge and social demonstration of the achieved local strength and possibilities without any hindrance of technological hegemony.

METHODOLOGY

The individuals or groups who contribute to the society that are not established or known through traditional media, are to be

identified by their own neighbors and co-habitants, communities, cultures, philosophers, skills, crafts, contributions and ideologies are identified, recorded and published by local people.

Training in cinematography, sound recording and editing are among the different stages of the project. During the last five months, identification, sorting, script writing and documenting activities on proposed characters have taken up by the research team. The list of local organization and individuals who contributed to the process are given below.

PRINCIPLE FINDINGS

- Local groups and individuals with adequate interest from different parts of the state.
- Rapid selection, prioritization, processing of data are essential for time bound completion of the programs.
- Wider scope and possibilities are there in digitizing the process of unsung.
- Empowerment of local public in participating in documenting of adopted persons, facilitation of local organizations and small groups etc are the vital stages of the project.

RESULTS

The notable results achieved till the date of this report can be summarised as follows.

1 Focus Group discussion on thematic performance.

An interaction with invited experts in the field of social science, science, indigenous studies, cinematography, applied arts etc held at the IITC, during March 2004 so as to evolve a mechanism for thematic performance of the project. It can be treated as the basic stone of project unsung.

2 Pilot projects for formulation of films on the unsung.

As part of initial stage of implementation few attempts were taken as pilot projects and short films on such characters have formulated along with a chronological black and white print methodology so as to train the local people in all aspects of digital film making and recording of their own unsung.

3 Content development, networking with local people.

The most meritorious result in the project implementation is the mobilisation and creative contribution among the local people so as to fix their unsung, narrate their life and do the content development by themselves.

4 Field visit for information and collection.

It is a two way process of learning and teaching ie to learn from the local public regarding the life of their

unsung and teach them to how to record, edit and materialise their ambitions related to the unsung.

5 Preparatory workshop, script development and film making.

At each selected spots preparatory workshop with effective partnership of local people, script writing camps were held so as to evolve the structural base for film making and fundamental teaching on practical know how of digital film production.

6 International workshop participation at Bangkok in July, 2004

IITC was invited to the AMIC workshop and was represented by the project director at Bangkok on behalf of the project team.

The designed implementation shall be continued from stage by stage

PROJECT IMPLIMENTATIONS

1. Field trip for identification of level groups and characters.

The research team has visited different districts in Kerala so as to identify characters and groups who can be incorporated into the **Unsung Among Us** project.

By these visits persons who can be associated with the project implementation are identified. Interaction with such individuals, institution, organizations, etc., has provided primary information

regarding the proposed “**unsung**” (short listed local groups and organizations are noted in the annexure)

2. Interaction with Local Government Representatives.

Representatives of the 991 local Govt. institutions, Village Panchayat Presidents were assembled in a statewide conference and they were provided with the information regarding **unsung** research so as to invite their initiatives. A general introduction regarding the project and detailed explanation of the activities, an entry form for characters and groups along with printed material for ready reference were also distributed to them. They are also provided with an entry form in order to give information regarding any **unsung** from their own locality to the IITC project team as early as possible.

3. Brain storming with invited personalities

At different locations including at Karakulam, Parumala, Kallar Vellinezhi, Pampadi etc. interactive sessions were organized to create awareness about the research among the local public. Brain storming session were organised to explore the details of their **unsung**. Agenda of the sitting was

- i). Personal Introduction
- ii). General Introduction of the Project
- iii). Interactive communication
- iv). Preparation of detailed minutes
- v). Sorting of information

- vi). Sharing of ideas regarding the methodology of the project
- vii). Projection of the model films and discussion on the basis of methodology.
- viii). Strategy development for recording the decided unsung.

PROCESS EVOLUTION

Pilot films to be shown at the workshop to initiate discussions and as probable methods of documentation are already implemented at two places, one at Thiruvananthapuram District and another at Pathanamthitta District.

For the implementation of Pilot activity an organisation called Adikala was identified as the local associate. In the partnership and participation of “Adikala” volunteers, the following processes were done.

- i. Preliminary Discussion
- ii. Unsung descriptions
- iii. Plot Designing
- iv. Script Development/still photographs
- v. Cinematography/ filming.
- vi. Sound Recording
- vii. Editing
- viii. Preview –Evaluation-Interaction
- ix. Final Editing
- x. Projection

The very same process was followed with local adoptions at Parumala also. The resultant products are at present given for final editing.

Conceptualization – The available information were collected through different efforts and consolidated into the structured time frame. The physical, ideological, practical specialties of the proposed **Unsung** were inserted into a skeletal framework. As a result, recording was made as of a living legend with all of their peculiarities.

Partnership – Not only in the identification and selection of characters the local people have participated in the conceptualizing and visualizing process also.

During the production stage of these two experimental test films, the team faced constraints such as non-availability of studio facility and recording facility at each rural place.

Disciplinary orientation -The short-listed characters are from different disciplines such as

1. Folklore
2. Folk drama
3. Ritualistic Arts Forms
4. Linguistics
5. Music
6. Martial Arts
7. Dalit Culture
8. Indigenous Technology
9. Indigenous medicine

Stake-holder involvement - At the stage of pilot Projects we saw considerable involvement of the stake holder (those who identified the unsung and initiated the process of documenting them) in this activity. By realizing their role, they became ready to learn camera work and to seek principles of editing and recording in post-production activities.

Apart from the technical, in sociological and cultural aspects, the stakeholders expressed much enthusiasm to take over the project as their own initiative. They accepted the same as an agenda of their public activity because through the project, they saw the golden chance offered to know their own heritage, history, and future prospects with the documentation of the **unsung among** them.

The most commendable experience is the wholehearted involvement of the **unsung** themselves; often not considering their age, in all difficulties that comes along with filmmaking.

Notable here is the importance provided to the gender balancing in the project. The first **Unsung** among the Pilot test films is a very old woman singer of the Kaani tribe from the Western Ghats.

SCIENTIFIC OUTPUTS

-Poster on Unsung

A poster on the **Unsung Among Us** Project, with information regarding all aspects of the project, including how one can approach, select, and get started on documentation of **the unsung among us**.(Annexure)

-Brochure

A brochure is produced, published and distributed among the stakeholders of the project. The brochure has been prepared in bilingual format. (Annexure) This has been reached to all Panchayath centers across the state of Kerala to be distributed among the public.

-Publications

Unsung project has been presented to the public through newspaper publications. A detailed press release has been circulated in this respect.(Annexure)

-Digitized version

A multimedia- CD was generated from IITC, GPK that can be made use of as an information dissemination tool. In addition to these measures a material has been developed for LCD projection to convey each and every aspects of the project Unsung to the interested.

KNOWLEDGE CREATION

An office mechanism in the project center has been evolved with technical know how and supportive technological instruments. Four members of our core team have acquired the knowledge related to documentary film making with sophistication.

TRAINING

As part of the next stage of implementation the project team has decided to conduct the following programmes.

- (a) Local Presentation and Interaction on **Unsung** with assistance of the pilot project results.
- (b) Centralised workshop at Trivandrum for **ten days** to train the stake holders/ people with local initiative.
- (c) Setting up of a traveling studio cum recording mechanism so as to impart knowledge regarding those areas to the stakeholders.

CAPACITY BUILDING

The researchers have already convened two sittings of the experts in the project work so as to discuss the initial aspects.

Now we are planning to organize a workshop with participation of experts in multiple fields so as to improve the capability of the project team. This sitting will help us to make it as an evaluation workshop, performance audit platform etc for the project.

As part of extensive institutionalization measure we are also ready to install a full fledged studio facility in IITC, GPK so as to provide technological know how and qualitative perfection to the

project. This will help us to generate creative contribution from the stakeholders of the research project in the future.

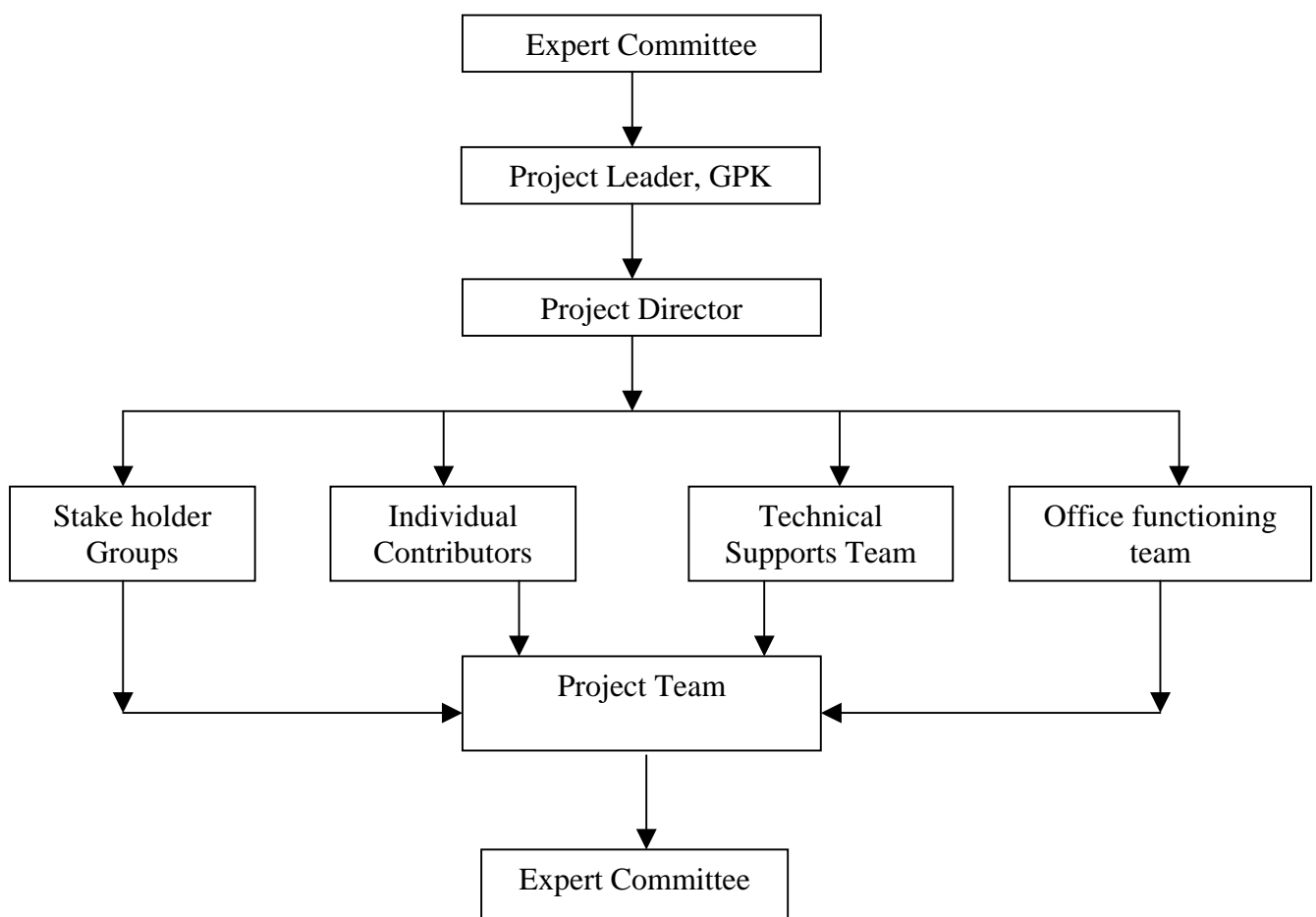
As part of the administrative re arrangement at IITC GPK we have established a separate office facility for the project with an office assistant and a technical assistant. For the performance of postproduction activities a group of trained hands from IITC GPK have been employed by the project. In addition to this, two Film and Video students from The National Institute of Design, Ahemdabad, India, in designing the training programme that is slated for The 20th of September 2004, assist the Project Director.

Particular Contributions

By this time we have availed contributions from Mr. Sebastian, Prof. Balachandran, Shri. P.K. Kalan, etc in the multifold implementation activities of the project and research work.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Flow Chart of the Project Management Team



INTERVENTION BY GPK

- a) Strict performance audit.
- b) Close evaluation and scrutiny of the work
- c) Day to day management.
- d) Advancement of creative activities
- e) Strengthening the local public
- f) Implementation of the next stages

Impact

(1) Performance Analysis

- ❖ Initial Information Collection – Good
- ❖ Preliminary Sorting of characters –Good
- ❖ Information dissemination –Good
- ❖ Response from local people – Satisfactory
- ❖ Response of participants- Entrance
- ❖ Field work and script work –Good
- ❖ Production Stage- Good
- ❖ Post Production- Under evaluation stage

These inferences are given by the expert team analysis on the basis of the project work till today.

(ii) Corrective Measures-

- ❖ Revisit to the project calendar
- ❖ Time schedule factor
- ❖ Performance monitory
- ❖ Technological Perfection
- ❖ Amalgamation of technologies.

List of Local organizations

Pazhashi Memmorial Grandashala, Wayanadu

Adivasikalakendram Pulpally, Wayanadu

‘Gothra’, Thrissur

Tagoore Library, Parumala, Pathanamthitta

‘Adikala’, Nedumangad, Thiruvananthapuram

Brothers Library, Kachani, Thiruvananthapuram

Folklore Accademy, Kannoor

‘C-Dit’, Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala Grama Panchayat Association, Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala Shastra Sahithya Parishath, Kollam

Grama Panchayat, Vellinezhi, Palakkad

Grama Panchayat, Pampadi, Kottayam

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