
ANNUAL REPORT 2012

VOICES OF WOMEN MEDIA

COLOFON

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ABOUT VOICES OF WOMEN MEDIA

VISION

Voices of Women (VOW) Media wants to contribute to a world wherein women from marginalized communities are empowered and their voices strengthened.

MISSION

VOW Media is an international non-profit organization that is committed to providing women from marginalized communities with innovative media tools, such as video, radio and photography, to enable them to voice their own lives.

GOALS

- Our goal is to provide women with the means to reflect on their experiences and empower them so they can tell their own stories.
- We want women to have a strong sense of self-identity and provide an alternative perspective to mainstream media.
- VOW Media works to ensure economic, social and cultural rights of women and minimize violence against women through their empowerment.
- Our goal is to bridge the gap between society and our target groups by making their stories accessible; which in turn, has a humanizing effect on most of the groups we work with, who live most often on the fringes of society.
- To reduce negative stigmas held by participants and their communities. To help influence a positive change in behavior towards the themes of women's rights, sex work, migration, violence against women, trans-women's rights and freedom for gender identity.

Through the lens of a video camera, the stillness of a photo, and the strength in a single voice - women from marginalized communities create, in cooperation with VOW Media, multimedia self-portraits, offering a glimpse into their personal life experiences. VOW Media encourages women and girls to take control of their own image by teaching them how to use different forms of media as a means of expression.

VOW Media is an organization for women by women. We work with refugees, asylum seekers, teenage girls, victims of human trafficking, sex workers, economic migrants, trans-women, and more generally women from marginalized communities. By technically and artistically challenging the women, we want them to not only be empowered but also to make others aware of their situation. VOW Media hopes to give her participants a voice to accurately present themselves against stereotypes and misrepresentation in the mainstream media.

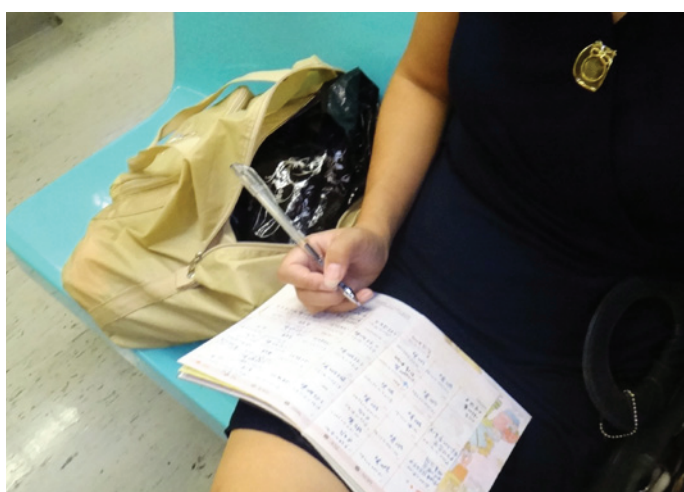
HIGHLIGHTS OF 2012

We launched the second edition of last year's successful project A Day In Her Life, reaching more women whose lives are connected to the sex industry and showing more of the diversity of stories that unfold behind the red curtains of Amsterdam's Red Light Districts.

After last year's research and networking, VOW Media started the project Breaking the Spell, providing creative technical skills to groups of young girls who have been victimized, or are at risk of falling victim to loverboys, as well as girls who have gone through severe traumatic experiences such as repeated emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse.

Our first international project was also realized this year. With Love from Taiwan was a project for foreign spouses that have married into Taiwanese families. This phenomenon of foreign brides in Taiwan has created communities of new immigrants from South-East Asia and China.

We spent the summer of this year on a strategic planning session that involved all VOW Media staff and volunteers. We assessed our current position and drew a clear direction for the coming five years.



PROJECTS

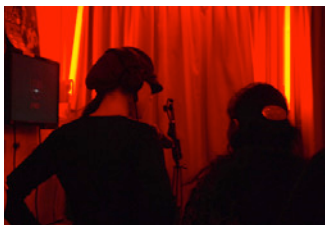
A Day In Her Life

After the successful A Day In Her Life project in 2010, VOW Media once again worked with women who are connected to the sex industry in Amsterdam's Red Lights District. Each woman created a body of personal work – using photography, radio and video - representing her life experience.

Their photographs symbolized a day in their lives – from the darkness of the night until the brightness of dawn. They also broadcasted live on Amsterdam's Red Light Radio, discussing questions like 'What did it mean for me to leave my homeland to start a new life in this country?' and 'Did I find what I was looking for?' These questions came up, as all of them came to the Netherlands in search of a better life. This simple act of speaking to an unseen audience, with the safety of remaining faceless was a turning point in this workshop. Knowing that there was 30-40 live listeners sparked camaraderie and a strong feeling to express themselves and get their opinions heard.

Combining the skills that they learned in photography and radio, each of them created a video self-portrait, showing their hopes, dreams or challenges that they encounter.

"It's very often, that many places that you go and you say, I'm from Bulgaria and a lot of people they don't even want to make the effort to go any further to look at your skills and your personality or know you more as a person."



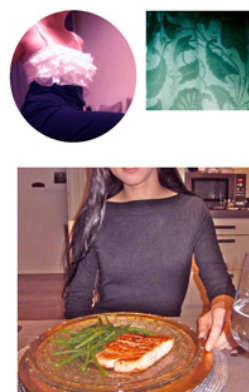
During the editing process, a participant, who is a former sex worker, became so excited about her video; she wanted to distribute her story with Spanish subtitles back to her homeland in Ecuador, where she had previously faced discrimination for identifying as transgendered. As she was leaving early, we rushed to edit with her so she could bring back DVD's and promote her film.

A Day In Her Life aspires to create a humanized and diverse picture of the sex industry. The stories that unfold behind the red curtains are very different from each other. Some women are forced in the industry, some of them do it out of own choice, and there are many more grey-zones in between. We hope to portray a spectrum of experiences of different women in their own voices of images.

Interior publication: *A Day in Her Life*

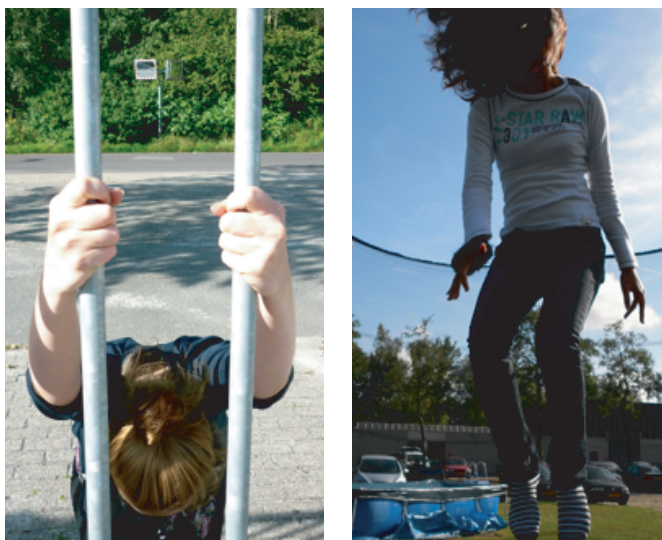


"My rainbow is inside of me, it was always there. I should not have gone so far to look for it."



PROJECTS

Breaking the Spell



"The past happened, I didn't have control over it. The future - I can determine that myself."



Calender & DVD: *Breaking the Spell*

"My voice is my most important instrument. I won't achieve anything without it."

"My grief makes me a stronger and richer person because of the things I've been through in my life."

In the summer of 2012, we started Breaking the Spell, a project that provided creative technical skills to groups of young girls who have been victimized, or are at risk of falling victim to *loverboys*, as well as girls who have gone through severe traumatic experiences such as repeated emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse. We did the workshops for three months in their shelter home, Fier Fryslân.

'Who am I?' 'What makes me strong?' 'What does freedom mean to me?' These were the questions they tried to answer through their photos. On their radio show, they discussed what their past was and how they see themselves in the future. They also discussed whether they differ from girls their age who are not living in the shelter home.

The project culminated in a diverse compilation of videos that they conceptualized and directed themselves. Their videos told diverse stories. For example, there was a video about a girl that want to show that she is not an object but a person with feelings, a video about creating your own identity, one about growing up with domestic violence and another about finding your strength in sports.

This workshop aims to empower these girls by making them aware of the strength in their own voices that were silenced by the *loverboys* or traumatic experiences. Also, the simple process of giving voices to women who are often silenced can create positive change in not only their lives but in the lives in the communities around them – their families who have also suffered, their friends, and also potential victims.



¹ Dutch term for pimps who prey on young teenage girls.

PROJECTS

With Love from Taiwan!

In October 2012, Vivian Wenli Lin traveled to Taiwan to conduct VOW's Media first international project, With Love from Taiwan! A project for foreign spouses that have married into Taiwanese families. This phenomenon of foreign brides in Taiwan has created communities of new immigrants from South-East Asia and China. Although they have been living there for a long time, they are treated as second-class citizens.

In this project, these women tell stories about their lives in Taiwan and the process of becoming Taiwanese. The result of this pilot project further established our future collaborations with networks in East Asia.



By showing the whole spectrum of experiences, people deciding on the future of these women - such as politicians and policy makers – will realize that there is not one unilateral vision of this industry, and that therefore no generalization can be made. We believe that every narrative, every story, tells us something about the society we are living in. All stories are relevant.

In the long run, we hope to make a difference in society, by showing that complexities of the lives of these women. Hopefully this will change the way in which these groups of women are perceived.



SCREENINGS



Displaced Daughters had a private screening for the friends and family of the participants in January. It was held in the same venue as the workshops, Studio West in Amsterdam.

Another screening at the same venue was held in April again. The DVD has also been screened at youth and migrant festivals worldwide.

Turning Point, which is one of the films produced during this project, was a finalist for the Adobe Youth Voices Aspire Awards 2012. It was also one of the thirteen finalists of the Pendragwn Youth Festival 2013.

VOW Media held a very successful premiere of A Day In Her Life 2012 in Theater Casa Rosso in Amsterdam's Red Light District in May, where three out of six women directors participated in a public question and answer sessions. The participants themselves chose the venue as it was close to their lives as sex workers in Amsterdam. Since then, the DVD publication has been distributed to sex worker rights and women's rights organizations and to film festivals worldwide.

A participant said, "My friends, when they watched my film, they said to me, - I can hear the strength and power in your voice."

A DAY IN HER LIFE 2012

SCREENING



SATURDAY, MAY 26, 2012
DOORS OPEN: 14H
THEATRE CASA ROSSO
OUDEZIJDS ACHTERBURGWAL 106-108, AMSTERDAM
SUGGESTED DONATION 5€



During the VOW Media benefit dinner at the autonomous center Joe's Garage in Amsterdam, A Day In Her Life 2012 was screened again.

A Day In Her Life 2010 was screened twice in Germany. In June, it was one of the films at the Sex Arbeit Film Festival in Hamburg. In August, it was shown at the Atlas Pancakes in Berlin.

A Day In Her Life 2010 was also screened in Greece at the Xylokastro Conference Center/ KDAP.

"I am proud of my life and my story and want to share it with everyone. I want to show them how strong I am and what I've been through has made me stronger."

INTERNAL STRUCTURE



Strategic Plan

Where did we come from, where are we now and where do we want to go?

VOW Media has grown a lot since 2007 when we first started. It is just timely to assess ourselves and make our strategic plan for the coming five years.

The summer of 2012 was spent together with our dedicated team to do this. Nancy Jouwe, an external advisor, facilitated this process. As a group, we assessed and talked about our internal organization – our core values, strengths and weaknesses – as well as our method of work – how we partner with organizations, publicity, finance, etc. We also discussed external factors that affect our organization. Through this process, we were able to establish our target groups and goals for the next five years, as well as ways of realizing these goals effectively.

Staff and Volunteers

Voices of Women Media is co-directed by Vivian Wenli Lin and Pooja Pant. Minouk Konstapel began as a volunteer in May 2011 and is now officially working as our Production Manager since September of the same year. Maria Serban-Temisan, a former volunteer, returned to VOW Media after a European Volunteer Service in Greece. Ilena Saturay, Tessa Askamp and Benine Bloemen have contributed a lot of work as volunteers. Ilena Saturay was a participant in the Displaced Daughter project and started volunteering for us in April this year.

This year, Ilena Saturay and Tessa Askamp not only worked in the office but also participated as workshop facilitators during the project Breaking the Spell. As VOW Media expands internationally, she trains her staff so that they are able to develop the curriculum and facilitate the multimedia workshops in their own regions.

An advisory board, consisting of Ellen Ambags, Annegriet Wietsma, and Doris Yeung, also assists VOW Media.

INTERNAL STRUCTURE - Workshops



The Office

We are based in Amsterdam. The office aims to operate as more than merely a work spot for staff members. It also functions as a media center, where everyone including participants of workshops, feels free to work on their projects. Staff members and participants work together in one room, which allows them to receive direct feedback and explanation when necessary.

Workshops

We find it important that our workshops do not have an authoritative atmosphere where we teach and the participants learn. Our methods of working emphasize equal engagement and interactivity.

Our contact with the participants does not stop when the workshops are over. We invest in a strong and sustainable relationship with our past and present participants. We work hard to continue relationship with them. Some of them still come by at our office to catch up, ask us to teach them computer skills, borrow a camera, and learn how to use Photoshop, Final Cut Pro, and other programs.

We also take the initiative to reconnect with them. For example, in the summer, VOW Media staff, volunteers and previous workshop participants got together for a barbeque picnic to reconnect with each other. Other friends of VOW Media also joined us.

Workshop Space

The workshops take place outside of the office. The exact location depends on the project and the partner organization. For example, this year's A Day In her Life took place at P&G292 space, while Breaking the Spell took place at the girl's own shelter home, Fier Fryslân.

Participants do not only work on their own individual projects – they also work together during the workshop. The women exchange ideas and provide on-the-spot feedback to each other. They are encouraged to create a network, where their work functions as a continuous learning experience. During this process self-development is stimulated. VOW Media staff and volunteers provide direct conceptual and technical advice.

COLLABORATION & NETWORK

VOW Media believes the Internet and social media are important for the promotion of the organization and networking with like-minded organizations. We update our website voicesofwomenmedia.org constantly. This website also provides information about screenings and other events organized by VOW Media. Furthermore, some photographs of the projects, as well as information about them are shared on the website. VOW Media has an online video account on Vimeo to share some videos: Vimeo.vow We not only share updates about projects on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/voicesofwomenmedia), but also news around the world concerning women's rights and issues. We now have a LinkedIn account: [Linkedin.vow](https://www.linkedin.com/company/voicesofwomenmedia)

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FONDS VOOR SOCIALE INITIATIEVEN

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Breaking the Spell

On the 8th of March 2013, International Women's Day, Breaking the Spell was premiered at the Rialto Theatre in Amsterdam. It was first screened privately in Fier Fryslân and after confirming that the participants were comfortable with their videos, later screenings were held at Joe's Garage and Peper 301 in Amsterdam and in an alternative café and bookstore in Bucharest, Romania.



Plans!

In the future, VOW Media in Europe will focus mainly on different groups of migrant communities. In May, we are planning a short photography workshop with women migrants from het Wereldhuis (the World house) and Steungroep Vrouwen zonder Verblijfsvergunning (Support Group for Undocumented Women). After this is completed, we are planning to launch a three-month long workshop with more women from these two organizations.

Adobe Youth Voices Summit 2013

VOW Media co-director Pooja Pant, volunteer Ilena Saturay and former participant Dionne Inge will be going to Santa Clara for the Adobe Youth Voices Summit 2013 at Santa Clara University.

Youth Exchange

A Youth Exchange with migrant youth from Greece, Romania and Spain will be held in the fall of 2013. Fifteen young migrants will be coming over to Amsterdam to join five young people here in a multimedia workshop, while at the same time exchanging experiences and getting to know the city.



VOW Media is setting up a new base and expanding in Asia. Vivian is connecting with other potential partner organizations in Hong Kong and Pooja is doing the same in South Asia, mainly India and Nepal.

VOW Media aims to make media accessible to marginalized groups of women whose voices are not heard. With more trained staff and volunteers, we aim to reach as much women as we can and give workshops – either small or big. Not only do we want to give workshops to different groups, but also for these groups to connect and have contact with each other so that they can connect their stories to each other, and place them on a larger, global perspective.

