



voices
of women
media

Voices of Women Media

Annual Report 2013



About Us

Vision and Mission

Founded in 2007, Voices of Women (VOW) Media is an international non-profit organization that seeks to empower women and girls from marginalized communities by training them to use innovative media tools such as video, radio and photography in order to enable them to voice their own lives.

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 that offer 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 have worked with refugees, asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking, sex workers, economic migrants, trans-women, and more generally women from marginalized communities. By technically and artistically challenging participants, we want them to not only be empowered but also to make others aware of their situation. VOW Media hopes to give project participants a voice to accurately present themselves against stereotypes and misrepresentation in the mainstream media.

Organizational Goals

- To provide project participants with the means to reflect on their experiences and empower them so they can tell their own stories.
- To encourage participants to foster a strong sense of self-identity and provide an alternative perspective to mainstream media.
- To ensure the economic, social and cultural rights of women and minimize violence against women through their empowerment.
- To develop a network of support and solidarity between project participants.
- To bridge the gap between society and our target groups by making their stories accessible. This in turn has a humanizing effect on the groups we work with, who mostly live on the fringes of society.
- To reduce negative stigmas held against 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.

Highlights of 2013

2013 was a busy year for VOW Media – from winning a prestigious award to increasing our international reach, 2013 has seen a real development in VOW Media's presence within the field of women's empowerment. Here are just a few of the things we got up to:

Art and Power Benefit Dinner - VOW Media was honoured to be chosen as a beneficiary of Elan Expertise and Arnhem Museum of Modern Art's benefit dinner in March. We gave a presentation and screening during the event, and received funding and a lot of positive feedback and new contacts.

Woman2Woman workshop - In July Pooja travelled to Palermo, Italy to attend a ten-day workshop, Woman 2 Woman – a workshop for women's personal development and empowerment. It was part of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Program and focused on such issues as women's ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Adobe Youth Voices Summit 2013 - As a participant in the Adobe Youth Voices Essentials community and a Finalist in the 2012 Aspire Awards, VOW Media attended the Adobe Youth Voices Summit in August, co-director Pooja and two young participants from Displaced Daughters travelled to Santa Clara, California to take part in the week-long event. The summit celebrated the creativity and potential of young people, and provided an immersive media arts experience where youth and educators from 23 different countries created an impressive body of multimedia work together.



European Youth Award - VOW Media and our partnering organization FAT were delighted to receive the prize as overall winner for our project Apna Haq (Our Right) at the European Youth Award 2013. The European Youth Award is a pan-European contest to motivate young people to produce socially valuable digital projects that address the goals defined by the Council of Europe and Europe 2020. VOW Media representatives Catalina and Ilena travelled to Graz, Austria in November to accept the award and take part in a packed program with many interesting workshops, keynotes and interactive discussions with specialists and professionals.

TransForming study session - In January our co-ordinator Maria Serban-Temisan attended the TransForming study session in Strasbourg, France. The event aimed at providing participants with knowledge and tools for working with gender, gender identity and gender expression.

International expansion - 2013 was a big step for VOW Media into the international arena. Following on from the success of our first international project, With Love from Taiwan, in 2012, we set up the project Apna Haq (Our Right) in India. Co-founder Vivian is currently in the process of organizing A Day in Her Life Hong Kong.

We Can Changemakers Annual Meeting - After becoming a coalition partner with We Can (end all violence against women) in 2012, we participated in the 6th Annual changemaker's meeting held in Amsterdam in April. We held a media workshop and together created a film highlighting the importance of combating violence against women.



Projects



Breaking the Spell – In 2012, we worked with young girls - who have been victimized by, or are at the 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 – in a series of workshops where they learned how to utilize different forms of media to create their very own self-portrait with photography, radio, and video. The film and photography resulting from the project was exhibited at many events throughout 2013, including film festivals and cultural evenings in Amsterdam.



Pieces of Home - We trained a group of (un)documented migrant women from het Wereldhuis to use photography to tell their stories of belonging and missing. This was a pilot project and we look forward to conceptualizing and initiating a new project with het Wereldhuis in 2014. The photography resulting from the project was exhibited at the World House Summer Celebration and at Kerkennacht (Church Night).



Apna Haq (Our Right) - During a three-month workshop young girls were trained to use film, photography and radio to tell their stories. They created a beautiful body of photography documenting their everyday lives, and a radio show in which they bravely recount the violence they suffer at home at the hands of their families. They also chose to make a film that addresses the critical issue of toilets; in their communities, up to 700 families share only 20 toilets. The film creatively shows how not having a toilet can have a major impact on people’s lives, particularly young women’s.



Displaced – The aim of Displaced was to bring together 23 young migrant women living in Romania, Greece, Spain and the Netherlands. Over a ten-day workshop in Amsterdam, we trained them to use film and photography as a means to explore their identities and control their own images of representation. In December we held an Advanced Planning Visit (APV) in which our partnering organizations each sent one youth and one youth leader to the meeting. The aim of the APV was for us to work on the final preparations for the project, which took place in January 2014. We discussed the curriculum, program, expectations and challenges, task division and exchanged good practices regarding the involvement and active participation of youth in the project.

Publicity

Our training workshops may have an end point, but that doesn't mean that a project is over. Disseminating the results of a workshop is an important part of VOW Media's work. In presenting participants' work to as wide an audience as possible, we hope to challenge negative stereotypes and promote marginalized women's voices. Participants play an active role in disseminating their work by holding screenings and discussions in their own communities, developing their advocacy skills in the process.

Film Festivals

Several of our films were selected to appear in film festivals throughout Europe. In April 'Breaking the Spell' was screened at TransVormers Festival in Amsterdam to an audience of 2000 people. Both 2010 and 2012 'A Day in Her Life' films were screened at Queer*Fem Fest in Bonn, Germany, and at LaDIYfest in Amsterdam.

Screenings and Exhibitions

'Breaking the Spell' received a lot of publicity throughout the year. In January we held a private screening for participants and their loved ones. The event was held at Fier Fryslân and was an opportunity for participants to celebrate their hard work during the workshop. We also held a pre-screening and benefit dinner for the project at Joe's Garage in Amsterdam. In February we held a pre-screening of the film at Biblioteca Alterniva in Bucharest before its official premiere at cinema Rialto in Amsterdam for International Women's Day. Screenings and discussions of the project were also held at De Peper and De Slang in Amsterdam.

A screening and discussion of 'A Day in Her Life' 2010 and 2012 was held at the queer feminist zine archive center Zsa Zsa Zine in Amsterdam.

In November we held a fundraiser for our upcoming project 'Displaced' at De Nieuwe Anita in Amsterdam. The event was a great success and opportunity to celebrate with our network. The event included live music, food, a raffle and an auction. We showed selected clips from 'Displaced Daughters' and 'A Day in Her Life' as part of the evening.



Queer*Fem Fest in Bonn, Germany



Live music at the 'Displaced' fundraiser, De Nieuwe Anita

Internal Structure, Collaboration and Network

Staff and Volunteers

VOW Media is co-directed by Vivian Wenli Lin and Pooja Pant. Production manager Minouk Konstapel has been working with VOW Media since May 2011. Maria Serban-Temisan has been working as coordinator since January 2013. We also had the help of fantastic interns Benine Bloemen, Marly Pierre-Louis, Catalina Diaz, Roseanna Macdonald, Ilena Saturay and Tessa Askamp, as well as many talented and enthusiastic volunteers.

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

The Office

This year we moved offices to a new building called Marci Panis where we became part of a new creative community. The office aims to operate as more than merely a work spot for staff members. It also functions as a media center, where present and former project participants feel 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

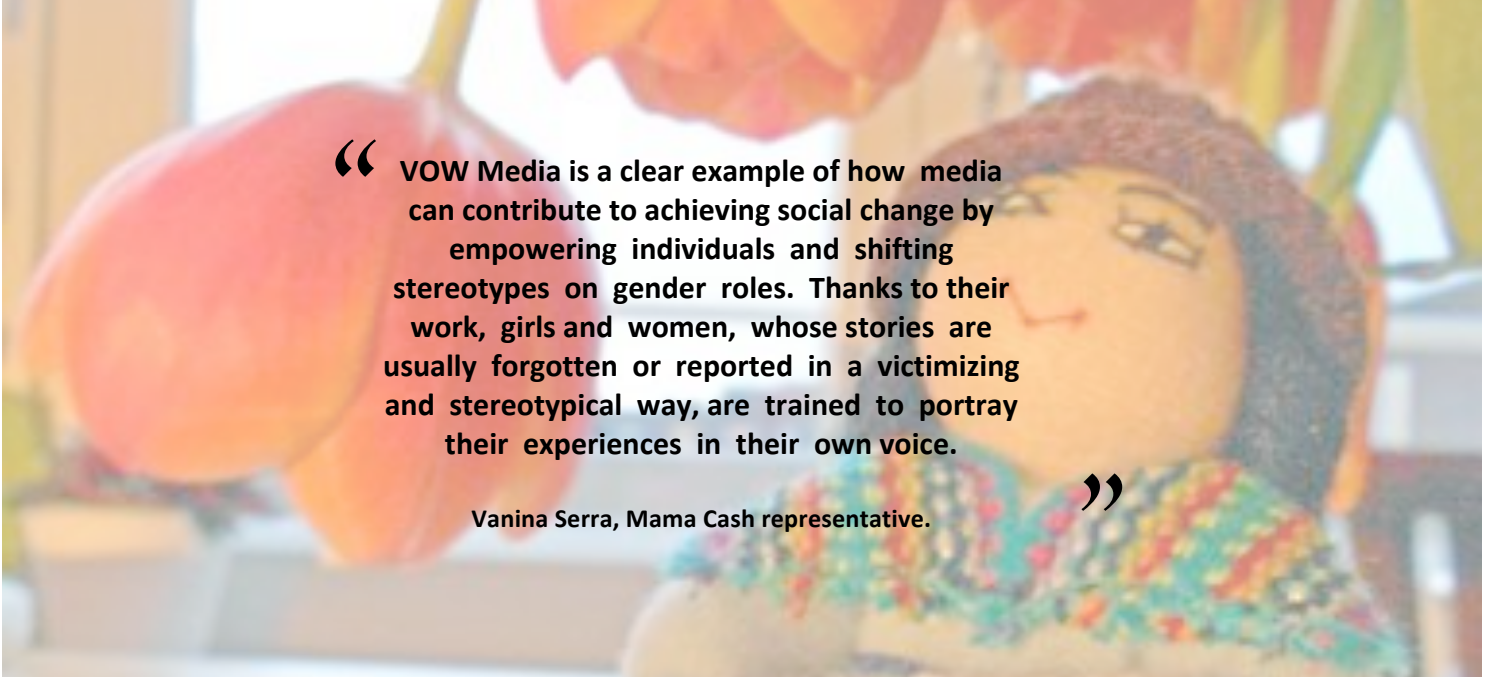
We find it important that our workshops do not have an authoritative atmosphere where we teach and the participants learn. Our methods of working emphasize equal engagement and interactivity.

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, and encourage them to hold screenings and projects in their own communities.

Partners and Funders

VOW Media's projects are always conducted alongside a partner organization that has experience in working with our participants. This year we worked alongside het Wereldhuis (Pieces of Home), Feminist Approach to Technology (Apna Haq), Orfeas Youth Organization, Support 4 Youth Development and Asociación Juvenil Intercambia (Displaced).

Our projects could not happen without the help of our funders. Thank you to Mama Cash, Global Fund for Women, European Commission's Youth in Action Grant, the municipality of Amsterdam, Impulsis, Nirnaya, our sponsors through crowdfunding and SPE Amsterdam. We couldn't do it without you!



“ VOW Media is a clear example of how media can contribute to achieving social change by empowering individuals and shifting stereotypes on gender roles. Thanks to their work, girls and women, whose stories are usually forgotten or reported in a victimizing and stereotypical way, are trained to portray their experiences in their own voice.

Vanina Serra, Mama Cash representative. ”

Preview of 2014

2014 is proving to be as busy as its predecessor, with a number of exciting new projects in the pipeline and the continued dissemination of our previous projects.

Apna Haq dissemination- While the multimedia training workshop is over, project participants will be as busy as ever organizing and holding film screenings and discussions of the project in their communities. They will also receive further training from our partner organization FAT, focusing on right to information and advocacy skills. We will also be disseminating the results of the project throughout the Netherlands and globally, submitting the film to festivals and holding public screenings. The Netherlands premiere of the film will be held in Amsterdam in May.

Displaced workshop and dissemination- The 10-day training workshop took place in January, during which we created a dissemination plan for Europe together. Participants will hold screenings and exhibitions in their home countries. VOW Media will be organizing screenings and discussions of the project throughout the year at various organizations including Amsterdam University College, de Peper, het Wereldhuis, Zsa Zsa Zine and Platform Spartak.



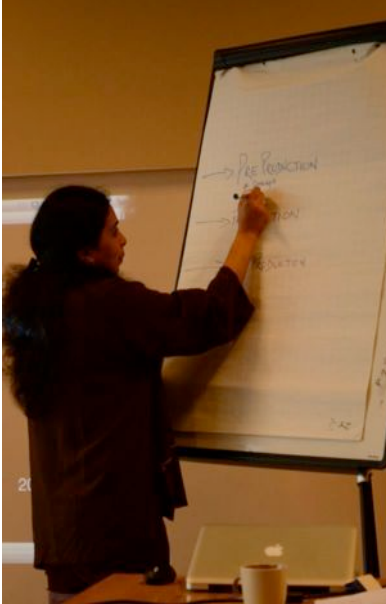
‘The negative stigma on sex work is strong in Asia, and it is a reality when compared to the open-mindedness found in Amsterdam. I find that this is why making media is important, so that other women among these communities can be encouraged to also speak up and have their voices heard.’

Vivian Wenli Lin, VOW Media co-director.

A Day in Her Life 2014- After the success of two previous projects with sex worker health center P&G 292, and the popular demand of previous participants, we will be conducting a three-month training workshop with women working in Amsterdam’s Red Light District, training them to use film, photography and radio. With the Red Light District slowly closing down, we wish to focus on the effects this will have on sex workers’ livelihoods. The multimedia body of work that the participants create during the workshop will help raise awareness of how sex workers are being affected by this issue.

Fundraiser- To raise funds for A Day in Her Life 2014, we will be holding a swap shop in late spring. The event will include a photography exhibition and film screenings of previous projects.

Migrant sex workers in dialogue- In June we will be organizing an exhibition on migrant sex workers in collaboration with sex worker-led organisations in South Africa. Together we will showcase work from our previous projects, discuss how to empower sex workers through media and exchange best practice.



Website: voicesofwomenmedia.org
Email: info@voicesofwomenmedia.org
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/vowmedia>
Twitter: https://twitter.com/vow_media
LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/company/3022941>

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