



WITNESS CHANGE

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

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Executive Summary

WITNESS CHANGE

Our society is shaped by stories. But the voices of marginalized people are often excluded, even when the stories are about them. *Witness Change* uses visual storytelling to support excluded people reclaim their narratives and improve their lives.

Witness Change's projects include:

- *Where Love is Illegal*, LGBTQI+ stories of discrimination and survival;
- *In My World*, stories of living with mental health issues, psychosocial and intellectual disabilities;
- *1000 Dreams*, refugee stories authored by refugees.

Central to all *Witness Change* projects is the amplification of voices of marginalized people.

2022

This year continued *Witness Change*'s focus on the storytelling coming from the communities we support. *1000 Dreams* continued, and stories collected by the original 40 storytellers continued to be translated and edited. Throughout the year the stories were published and shared on a regular basis. Additionally, a new *1000 Dreams* workshop was held in Bosnia, funded by the Heinrich Boell Foundation, as well as two exhibitions supported by the same foundation.

Where Love is Illegal took a large step as principle storytelling shifted from being authored by Robin Hammond, to three queer photographers. The *Where Love is Illegal* Fellowship was launched with three LGBTQI+ photographers collecting new stories from their communities. The fellows were Ukrainian Anton Shebetko, French/Algerian Camille Lenain & Ghanaian Kwasi Darko. *Witness Change* funded the creation of new work by these photographers and the photos/stories they collected have since been exhibited widely in prominent museums and galleries in Europe. The work was exhibited in London with Vans, the funder. Around the exhibition, a series of workshops were taught by *Witness Change* staff.

While no new work was produced in 2022 for *In My World*, the work of previous years continued to have a lasting and real impact. Thanks to *Witness Change* documentation of the chaining of people living with mental health struggles in northern Ghana, more than 30,000 USD was raised to support our partner Mental Health Advocacy Foundation (MHAF). Our work and subsequent money raised has supported MHAF to free numerous chained individuals and provide treatment for more than 50 Ghanaians, with that number growing.

Witness Change underwent major internal structural changes:

- A new management system has seen the organization become more focused and, as a result, more productive.
- *Witness Change* employed an additional staff member significantly increasing the ability to progress on projects.
- A fundraiser was contracted for several months to boost the organization's income.

A significant amount of 2022 was also spent creating and deepening relationships with partners. Moving into 2023, *Witness Change* will continue working on the impacts identified in 2022 and reaching more people, specifically those with the influence and power to create change. The organisation intends to strengthen its systems and organisational structure so that the small team can deliver its ambitious goals.

The Team

The work of *Witness Change* is delivered by a small team of part-time employees, a large number of volunteers and a fluctuating number of contractors. The strategic direction is formed in conversation with the Board and with consultation provided by the Advisory Board.

In the first quarter of 2022, *Witness Change* made the big step of hiring an additional part-time contractor. Sarah Syed joined the team to primarily assist with social media. She has grown into that role and taken on additional responsibilities, especially in supporting the processing of *1000 Dreams* stories.

Delivery Team:

- Robin Hammond
- Aude Barbera
- William Lounsbury
- Sarah Syed

Key Volunteers:

- Maddy Bazil
- Angela Pritchett
- Veronica Schorr
- Barnaby Falck

Board of Directors:

- Samantha Chiu
- Robin Hammond
- Bram Hanekom
- Leigh Ann Webster

Advisory Board:

- Michael Barron
- Emina Čerimović
- Kasha Nabagesera
- Pragya Lodha
- Dr. Langton Miriyoga
- Mariah Moore
- Hauwa Ojeifo
- Howard Pulchin

Our partners include

Allen & Overy	ICRC	The Refugee Journalism Project
Babel - Migrants Mental Health	INGKA	The United Nations
Doctors Without Borders (MSF)	International Organization for Migration	Translation Commons
Elton John Aids Foundation (EJAF)	Médecins Sans Frontières	Trint
Hootsuite	Open Society Foundations (OSF)	UNICEF
Human Rights Watch	OutRight International	Vans
Humanity & Inclusion (formally Handicap International)	Refocus Media Lab	World Bank
	The Gates Foundation	99 Designs
	The Heinrich Böll Foundation	

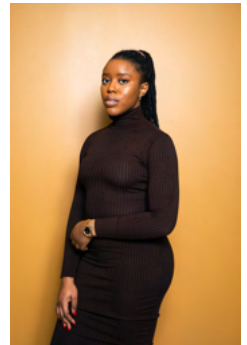
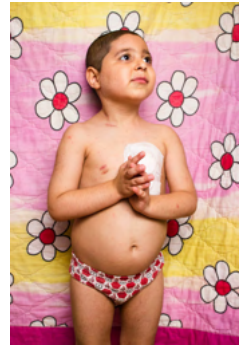
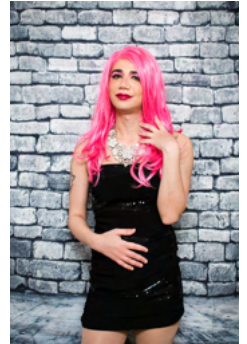
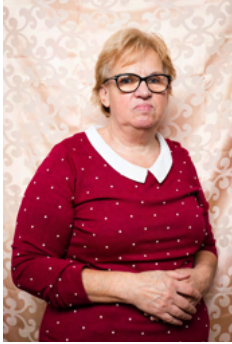
The Operating System

At the *Witness Change* 2021 Annual General meeting the proposal to change the organisations operating system was adopted. *Witness Change* used The Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) at the 2021 AGM to set goals, priorities, core values and assess roles and responsibilities. Following the AGM the system was immediately implemented.

Witness Change staff now have weekly and quarterly meetings that ensure the team is focused on the organization's key priorities. The regular monitoring of achievements towards goals provides for a much greater understanding of where progress is being made and where more work is required.

The first year of using EOS has revolutionized how *Witness Change* operates, but it was not without its teething issues. Regular meetings though have meant these issues could be addressed and resolved.

The 2023 AGM will provide an opportunity to clearly see how *Witness Change* staff have performed against goals set at the previous AGM. It will also be a time to evaluate how well EOS is being implemented and where improvements can be made.



1000 Dreams

Project purpose



Photo by Asif & Shawiz Tamimi

1000 Dreams seeks to change harmful refugee narratives through a storytelling project that tells the stories of 1000 refugees across Europe. *1000 Dreams* is entirely authored by storytellers with a refugee background.

THE IMPACT OF CURRENT NARRATIVES

Refugees are often depicted as invading hordes threatening European identity and placing unsustainable burdens on social services. Those more sympathetic to refugees, on the other hand, regularly represent them as helpless and hopeless victims. Both views often reduce people on the move to a stereotype - forgetting that each is a unique individual.

The refugee experience is hugely diverse. The prevailing, stereotyping narratives form attitudes which affect policies and practices that, at best, are not as effective as they could be, and at worst, can have severe negative impacts on the lives of refugees.

1000 DREAMS CHANGES THE NARRATIVES

For attitudes, policies and practices to change, the narrative must change.

HOW DOES 1000 DREAMS DO THAT?

For the narrative to change, the lives of refugees have to be authentically represented – their voices must be heard. *Witness Change* has hosted a series of intensive storytelling workshops, training people with a refugee background how to make a portrait and conduct an interview. The aim is to create 1000 stories (photo and interview), created entirely by storytellers with a refugee background. These storytellers are amplifying the voices of refugees and opening a door to their misunderstood and misrepresented world.

Interviews provide insights into the individual lives of refugees and the emotional impact of current policies and attitudes.

Supporting refugees to document the stories of other refugees allows opportunities for dialogue that isn't influenced by prevailing narratives. They are capturing the complex experience of a refugee.



1000 Dreams workshop - Lesbos, Greece

Activity summary

OVERVIEW



1000 Dreams workshop - Sarajevo, Bosnia

1000 Dreams storytellers continued collecting stories throughout 2022. *Witness Change* staff expanded their network of translators and story editors to ensure the stories continued to be shared. In June 2022, *Witness Change* ran a workshop in Sarajevo, Bosnia for seven new *1000 Dreams* storytellers. Sarajevo was chosen at the request of our funding partner due to its position along the “Balkan route,” a migratory path for asylum seekers traveling to the EU over the western Balkans. Bosnia is largely a transitory country with few people on the move staying more than a few days. Additionally, Bosnia is a compelling location because of its own refugee history. Many Bosnians have refugee experiences of their own, and the country has a reputation for being more hospitable than some EU countries towards people seeking asylum.

The workshop, mostly funded by the Heinrich Boell Foundation, was open to anyone with a refugee experience. The *Witness Change* team strove to recruit storytellers who reflected different refugee experiences. The seven storytellers selected represented our most diverse workshop group in terms of experience. Two came to Bosnia to join the workshop, one a long-term refugee in Spain and the other a former refugee from Bosnia. One person was a long-term refugee in Sarajevo. And four of the participants were actively “on the move.” From Burundi, Afghanistan and Iran, they had planned to stop in Sarajevo for only a few days but stayed to join our workshop and document stories of other refugees. Each of these participants brought new refugee perspectives to the *1000 Dreams* project. Two of the four continued to document stories along the rest of their journey and are sharing new stories from Germany.

WEBSITE

The *1000 Dreams* website continues to be maintained and updated with new stories. Additionally, all photos, regardless if they have a completed story edit yet, have been uploaded to the website. This allows *1000 Dreams* participants to have access to their completed photographic work while the interviews are being transcribed and translated.

STORIES

In 2022, *Witness Change* storytellers documented 54 stories for the project, with the majority of those documented by participants in the Sarajevo workshop. The seven storytellers who participated in the Sarajevo workshop have, to date, documented 51 stories of people from 10 different countries, with Iran and Afghanistan being the most represented. 30 of the 51 stories were from refugees who identified as men. Several of the storytellers are still producing new work and we expect to receive more stories from Iranians and Egyptians in the coming months. The stories produced were mostly of people actively “on the move” meaning they have not yet applied for asylum and are in transit. This is a wholly unique ‘type’ of story for *1000 Dreams*, where previously, the vast majority of stories focused on folks who had already arrived in the country where they planned to stay. The transitory nature of both the stories and the *1000 Dreams* storytellers, made collecting testimonies more difficult than any previous group, however, with many of the participants, this proved a surmountable obstacle resulting in unique and powerful testimonies.



Ahmed from Sudan

“At the end all I wanted was to take my children to safety,” says Ahmed (pseud, 45). A trader from Sudan, he built his life from scratch. But everything changed following the military coup in 2019. “People can’t feed their children,” he says. “There is a shortage of medicine, health, security... Maybe your sister is walking; they can rape her and it’s considered normal.” The head of a trade union, Ahmed was captured and tortured for three months. Even afterwards, threats were ongoing, and he had to flee to protect his family: “My son saw people being killed in the streets... Those children lived a life that’s too much for their age.” The difficult journey from Turkey to Bosnia left his children “psychologically tired and traumatized.” But Ahmed’s enduring love for them gives him hope. He wants them “to be raised like all the children in the world, to go to school and finish their studies,” he says. “My dream is to see them more successful and better than me in life, that is my only wish.”

Photo by ElSayed Mahmoud ElSehamy

WORKSHOPS



1000 Dreams workshop - Sarajevo, Bosnia

Witness Change ran a five-day, in-person storytelling workshop in the same format as the previous seven *1000 Dreams* workshops. The *Witness Change* team used their proven process developed over the previous *1000 Dreams* classes. The workshop taught photography & lighting techniques, interview skills, journalistic ethics and effective storytelling. Photography and file handling manuals created for the original workshops were updated to reflect the needs of this group and were used to support the classroom teaching and allow participants to work autonomously.

All students were provided with interview questions, personal releases in multiple languages and were instructed on how to ask the questions and gather permission while also ensuring the subject retained their autonomy and their safety.

The Sarajevo workshop took place from 20-24 June followed by four days of in-the-field support of the storytellers. Eight people began the workshop, with one dropping out before graduating from the program. Of the seven participants who joined the program, there were two women and five men. The workshop was held in the offices of *VII Academy - Sarajevo*, where local staff provided logistical support.

EXHIBITIONS/EVENTS

Heinrich Boell funded two exhibitions in 2022, bringing the *1000 Dreams* stories to two unique audiences. The exhibitions were held before the Sarajevo workshop took place, so none of that new work was featured, but those stories will begin being shared during events planned in 2023.

March 2022 - Bosnia, Sarajevo: 1000 Dreams was exhibited during a conference on migration held in Sarajevo. The conference brought experts in migration from around Europe and *1000 Dreams* storyteller Mirza Durakovic presented the project during the conference.



Exhibition: Thessaloniki, Greece

June 2022 - Greece, Thessaloniki: During Pride Month, Heinrich Boell funded an exhibition of queer stories from *1000 Dreams*, displayed at the Thessaloniki Museum of Photography. William Lounsbury and *1000 Dreams* Storyteller, Baxi Talibov spoke at the opening via zoom.

2023: More exhibitions are scheduled for the coming year with confirmed events in France and Belgium. Most excitingly *1000 Dreams* will be exhibited in the European Union Parliament.

PARTNERSHIPS



1000 Dreams workshop - Sarajevo, Bosnia

The Heinrich Boell Foundation

The Sarajevo workshop was funded for the most part by the Heinrich Boell Foundation's Thessaloniki office. Their work on migration focuses on Turkey, Greece and the Western Balkans, where they try to connect refugees, migrants and host communities as well as civil society, to strengthen their voices within EU processes. Neda Noraie-Kia, the Head of Migration Policy Europe, supported the creation and implementation of the workshop and her championing of the project has led to three exhibitions.

VII Foundation

The VII Foundation kindly loaned their Sarajevo offices to *Witness Change* to conduct the *1000 Dreams* workshop. Additionally, Ziyah Gafic, VII photographer, supported *Witness Change* in connecting with international aid organizations in Bosnia, finding interested refugee storytellers, organizing logistics such as transport and food.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

IOM provided *Witness Change* staff with camp access to interview potential workshop participants and, following the workshop, provided on-site mentorship to the new class of *1000 Dreams* storytellers.

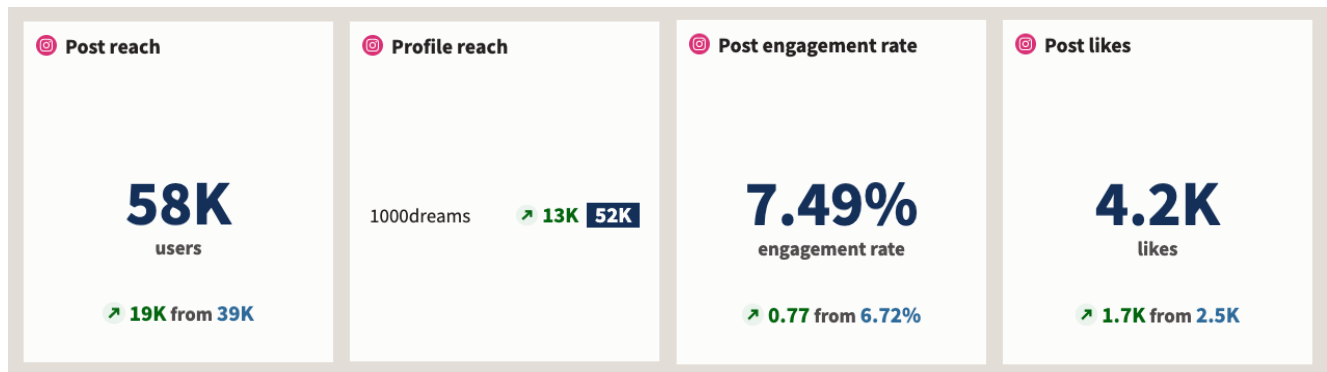
A Drop in the Ocean

A Drop in the Ocean is an NGO providing computers with Internet access in the Sarajevo camp where 5 of the participants stayed. Local staff helped storytellers access computers and the internet, allowing *Witness Change* staff to download photography file handling software to their computers so storytellers could transfer photo files to *Witness Change*.

Just: Access.

A UK-based transcription company. Just: Access is producing transcripts of all English language interviews, professionally checked, free of charge. *Witness Change* is discussing with Just: Access possible solutions for other languages as well.

SOCIAL MEDIA



The first Sarajevo stories began being shared on the *1000 Dreams* and *Witness Change* social media accounts in October 2022. 17 stories from Sarajevo have been shared since the launch date with the remaining scheduled throughout 2023. During the three months since 11 October, the *1000 Dreams* Instagram account has seen growth in reach, engagement and likes compared to the previous 3-month period.

To increase engagement on *1000 Dreams*, animated pictures were created using a quote and video transitions to allow the *1000 Dreams* stories to be used on TikTok and Instagram Reels. These short videos appeal to new social media users and increase *1000 Dreams*' exposure across multiple channels.



Photo by Hannan Dormiyani

Project evaluation

STORIES COLLECTED

Number of Stories Collected

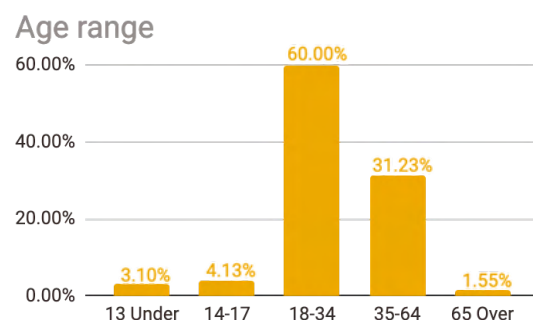
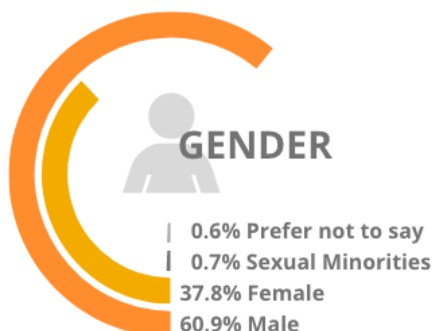
At the end of 2022, the *1000 Dreams* storytellers have collected 772 Stories. These stories showcase the diversity of the refugee experience. The people who shared their stories represent a range of lived experiences and backgrounds that make the *1000 Dreams* project truly unique.



Gender

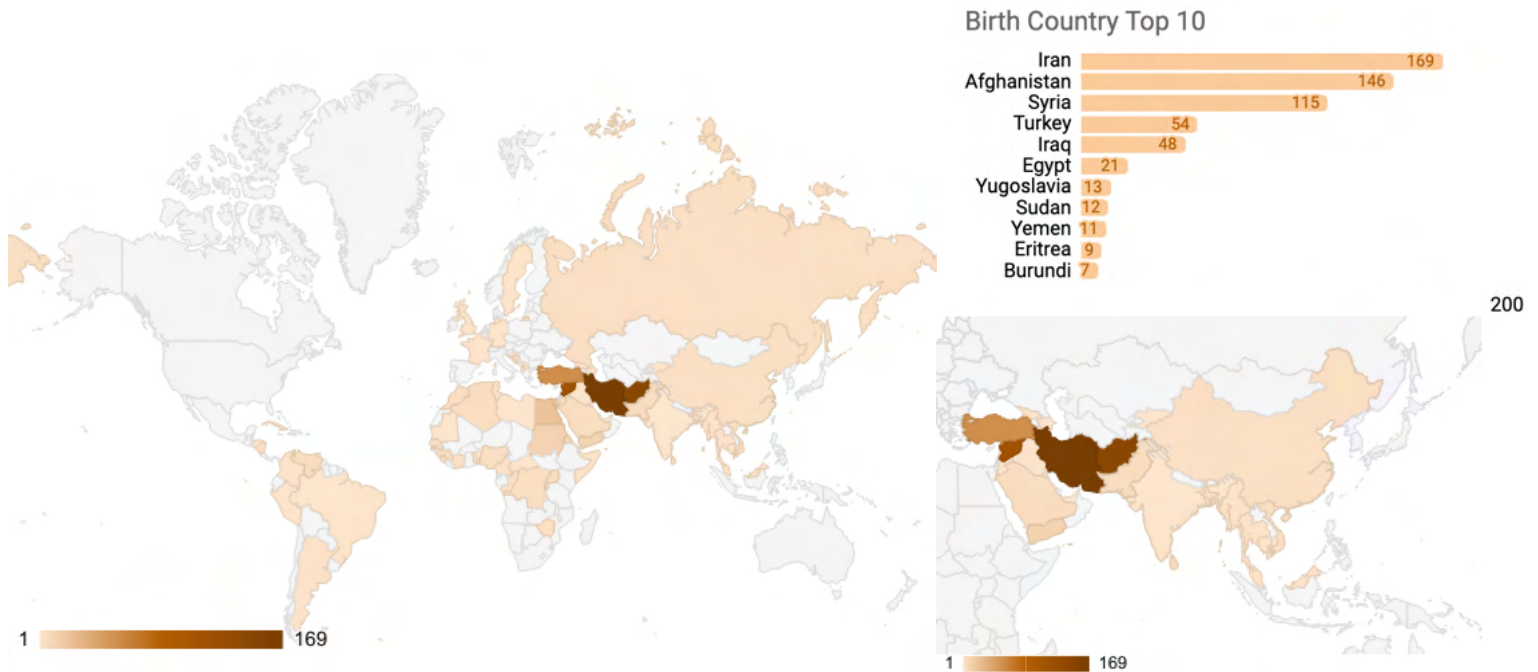
More male (60.9%) than female (37.8%) stories are represented in *1000 Dreams*, however, this number is quite similar to the European refugee population which is on average 58% male and 42% female ([UNHCR data](#) - current numbers). Additionally, *1000 Dreams* includes several stories from refugees who do not identify on the cis-gender binary. Creating a safe space for LGBTQI+ identify refugees to feel represented was important to the project.

Most refugees represented in *1000 Dreams* are in the 18-34 age range, followed by 35-64 year-olds. Very few minors and seniors were interviewed. UNHCR data indicated that minors represent 38% of refugees in Europe. This is partly due to the demographic of the Storytellers as well as the difficulty to access and gain consent for minors to be interviewed.



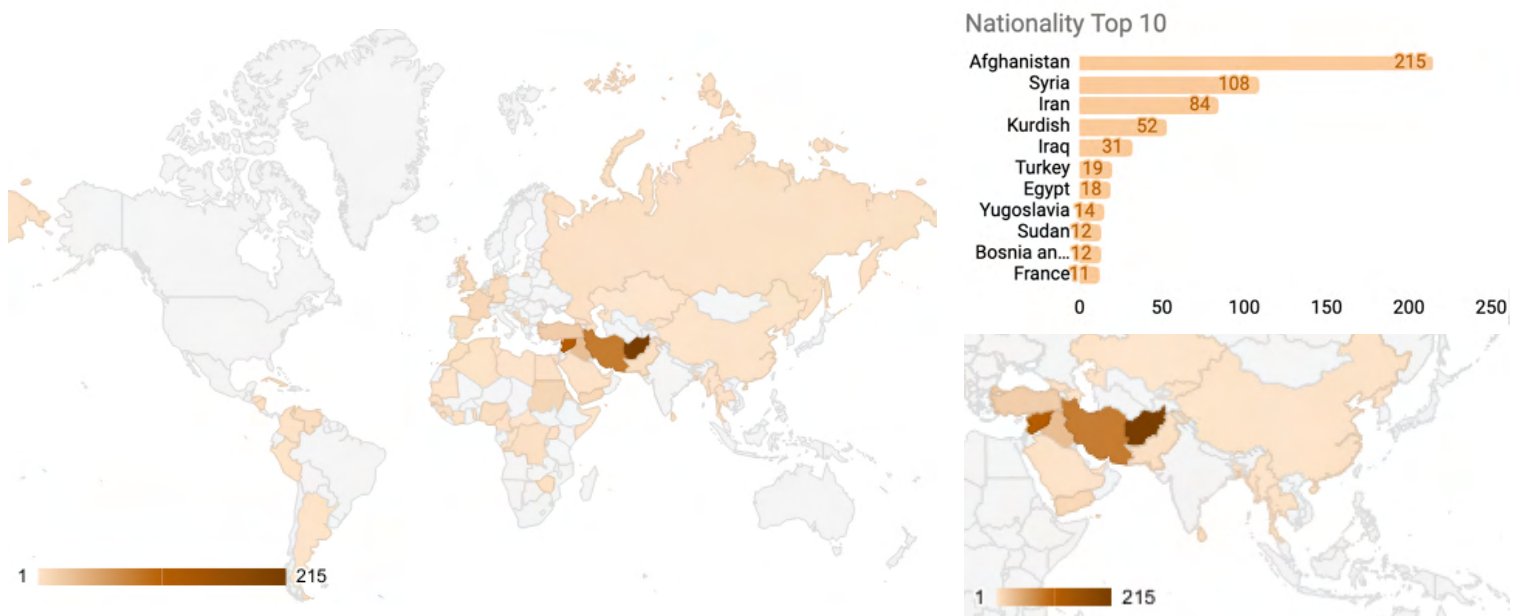
Birth Country

Stories shared with *1000 Dreams* represent 77 countries globally with 55% of refugees born in Iran, Afghanistan, and Syria. This number reflects both the background of *1000 Dreams* storytellers as well as the demographics in and entering Europe at this time.



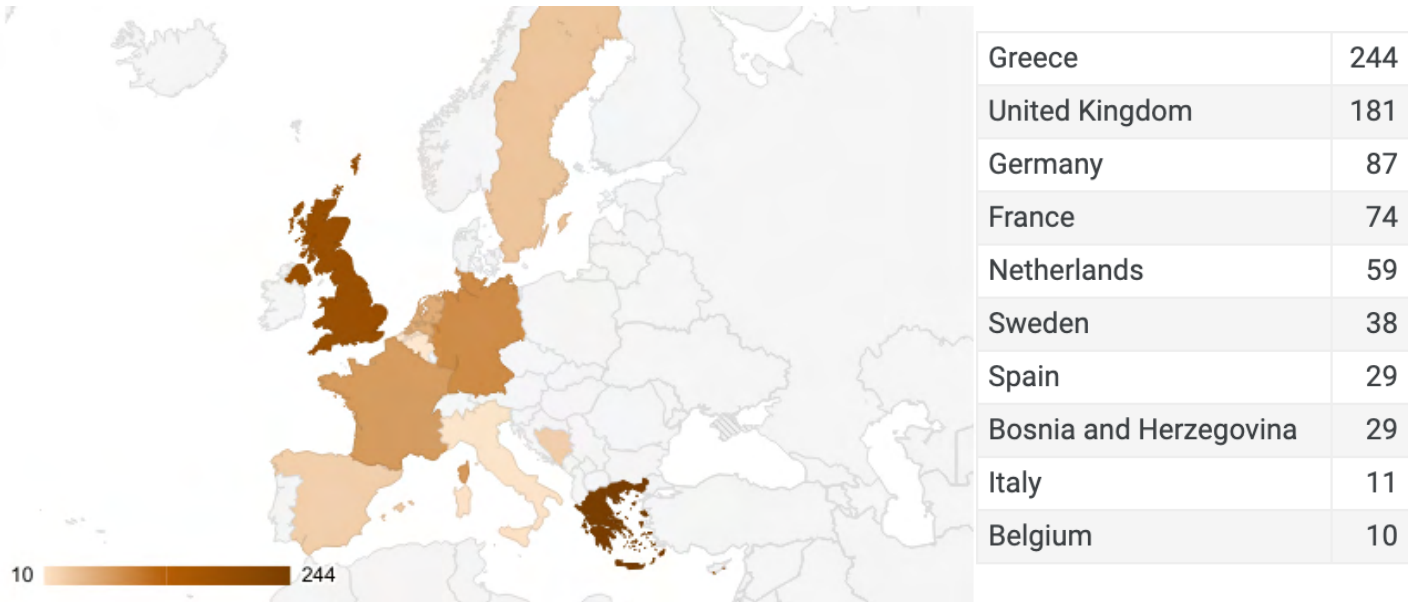
Nationalities

Witness Change recorded both Birth Country and nationality as in many instances refugees do not identify with the country in which they are born. Many Afghans, for example, are born in Iran, but are not either legally or culturally, Iranian. A similar story is true for people from countries not legally recognized by the United Nations (Kurds and Palestinians for example). Stories shared with the project are from people of 76 nationalities with three nationalities, Afghan, Syrian, and Iranian, representing more than half of the stories collected (53%).



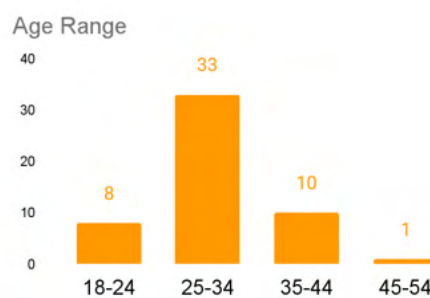
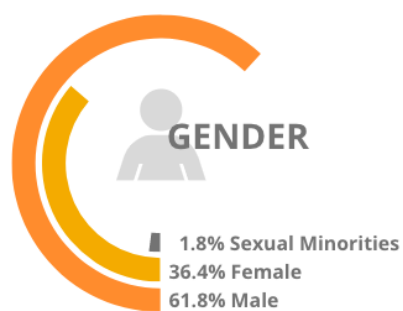
Host Countries

Stories came from the 12 countries where *1000 Dreams* storytellers live (or were staying at the time they conducted their interviews). In recruiting storytellers, achieving a diverse representation of European countries was important. Greece and the United Kingdom, the two locations with in-person workshops, represent the greatest number of stories.



WORKSHOPS

Through the *1000 Dreams* workshops, a team of 54 refugee storytellers was created to collect stories for the project. The workshop participants came from diverse backgrounds, gender identities, skill levels, and current locations. A conscious effort was made in recruiting to ensure a wide spectrum of groups was represented in the selecting of storytellers (workshop participants) as illustrated below.



Host Country	#
United Kingdom	17
Greece	11
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8
Sweden	4
Germany	4
France	3
Netherlands	2
Italy	2
Spain	1
Ireland	1

Country of Origin	#	Country of Origin ▲	#
Syria	9	Azerbaijan	1
Afghanistan	8	Bangladesh	1
Iraq	5	Benin	1
Egypt	5	Cameroon	1
Iran	4	Ivory Coast	1
Turkey	3	Kurdish	1
Eritrea	2	North Korea	1
Sudan	1	Serbia	1
Sri Lanka	1	Sierra Leone	1

Working with people “on the move” created new challenges in documenting refugee narratives, but the rewards were also significant. Due to the transitory nature of this group, storytellers had significantly lower access to computers, internet data, and secure locations to produce work, often having to navigate strict camp rules around photography and interview work. Additionally, they had to deal with the stress and uncertainty of the migration experience. *Witness Change* developed new systems as the workshop was occurring to accommodate the unique challenges the storytellers faced. These problems never proved impossible to solve and, with the support of local organizations, a powerful body of work has been created (and is still being created).

Our funding partner, Heinrich Boell, has been extremely happy with the project, despite all the challenges. They described it as one of the highlights of their year and as really meaningful work:

“What I probably like most about *1000 Dreams*, is the holistic approach: People with a refugee experience are trained and equipped with a tool, which not only allows them to collect stories of fellow refugees, but which also offers a way to express themselves and which even creates actual work and income opportunities. At the same time, everyone who gets to see the *1000 Dreams* portraits and stories is offered a sense of the individual story behind every so called “refugee” – which allows for a human perspective to an otherwise mostly mis- and underrepresented group. Another rather unique aspect of *1000 Dreams* is the sensitivity to gender issues. As Heinrich Böll Foundation we often have to invest much time and resources into explaining our approach to gender and making sure, that joint projects are implemented in a gender sensitive way. Even if organisations on paper do commit to certain ideas, in practice we often still have to make the point. Seeing and experiencing “in the field” how for Witness Change gender sensitivity is equally important was such a great experience. Generally it was great to be able to attend parts of the workshop in Sarajevo and to witness how Witness Change work with the participants. Having seen many different workshops and trainings offered to migrants and refugees over the years, I was particularly fond of the level of respect and empathy both trainers maintained. While being professional, yet human and approachable, they allowed for a dignified learning atmosphere for the participants, which – given the recent trauma many of them might have experienced – cannot be stressed enough.” Neda Noraie-Kia - Head of Migration Policy Europe, Heinrich Boell Foundation

Partnering with Heinrich Boell has led to impressive outcomes in the use of *1000 Dreams* stories for advocacy and they continue to support developing new ways to reach institutions of influence.

TESTIMONIALS

One of the most rewarding aspects of the project was hearing the impact of these stories on everyone who touches them. From the storytellers to translators to followers on social media. The reactions and insights have been powerful:

" I think it's important for refugees to tell the stories of other refugees because, being a refugee, or an exile, gives you an access to a wide range of people who are in the same situation. And these people might not be accessed by academics or journalists." - ElSayed, 1000 Dreams Storyteller

" The audio is so touching, barely holding my tears while checking. The audio of Dema Aktaa and this one [Omar Elfatairy] were so touching that it made me feel like I'm translating emotions not words. The interviewer did an amazing job. Actually those audios inspired me to paint something about immigration. "
- Omnia, Arabic Translator

" "Thank you for bringing humanity and awareness, for letting the light shine on beautiful people and some horrendous situations. You're doing important work!"
" - @swampmallow, Instagram

"Usually I feel shy to write but can you thank [Witness Change] again for me. cuz the project has helped me out so much from the start, not just financially, but especially mentally from dark times and places out. I appreciate it always. Greetings" - Baxi, 1000 Dreams Storyteller

STORYTELLING AND MENTORING

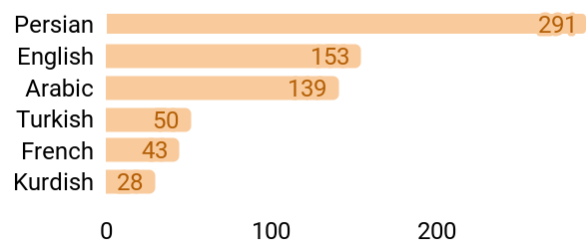
Robin Hammond continued to provide mentorship to 1000 Dreams Storytellers on how they might improve the quality of their work and create portraits in line with the style of the project. A very positive response has been received from participants when asked for feedback. Participants have engaged well with the mentorship aspect of this program and for almost all of them, the quality of their portraits has improved significantly.

Additionally, several storytellers have come to *Witness Change* staff for mentorship and support in other storytelling projects. *Witness Change* has provided story feedback, photo editing, grant writing advice and publication introductions to support 1000 Dreams storytellers grow in their work.

Transcriptions and Translations



Languages Top 5



All *1000 Dreams* stories begin as audio recordings of the interviews conducted by the storytellers. A network of translators and transcribers help to transform audio recordings into English language texts. With the exception of English, all interviews need to be translated before being sent for editing.

The in-house translations team at *Witness Change* is mostly volunteer-based. Due to a fall-off of volunteers and delayed output from translations, a decision was made to assign a small budget to translations. This decision also made it easier to get translators for certain languages like Kirundi, Farsi and Arabic which were difficult to source without a budget.

Contractors were recruited for the translations. These were a mix of professional translators and native language speakers. An effective and reliable translation infrastructure has been set up to make the management of translations easier for the core team.

Witness Change has begun a partnership with *Just: Access*, a UK-based transcription company for providing pro-bono translation services. They have taken up almost all of the English transcription work and are also looking at other languages for future translation.

The *Witness Change* translation team consists of Translation Managers who assign volunteers to different tasks and review their work. As some of the translators are not professional, most of the translations are double-checked before they are sent to the storyteller for a final check and then it goes to the editing team. A team of around 50 transcriber/translator volunteers and contractors have worked on *1000 Dreams* interviews so far.

Once a budget was set and the paid translators started work, we have had a comparative increase in translations. 88 translations have been completed in 2022.

Story Edits

Each story collected by a *1000 Dreams* Storyteller is edited to 1000 characters. Reducing a several-page interview to just a paragraph is a challenging task. *Witness Change* recruited and retained a group of volunteers, mostly professional writers or editors, to create testimony summaries that capture their experiences. This process cannot begin until after the complete translation and safeguarding steps are completed. Due to translation challenges in the first half of 2022, the editing team had fewer stories available. However, after successfully revamping the translations process, editors began producing completed stories and 22 were completed in the last three months of 2022 alone.

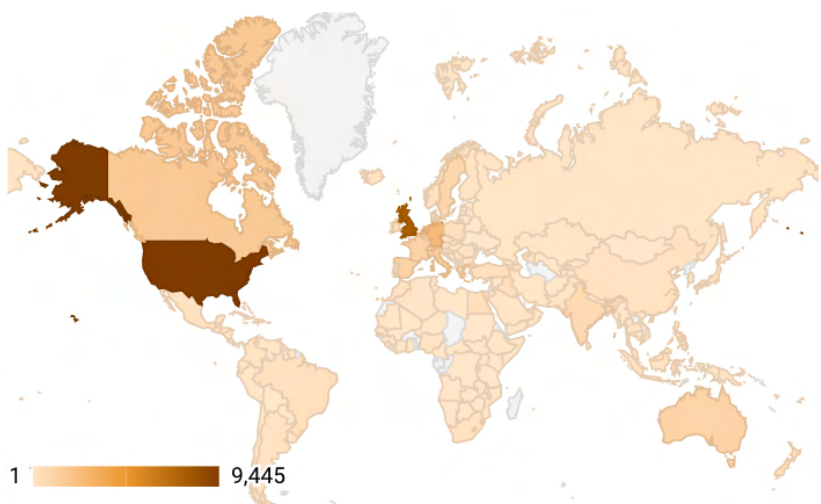
Website

Number of Users since the launch

35,299

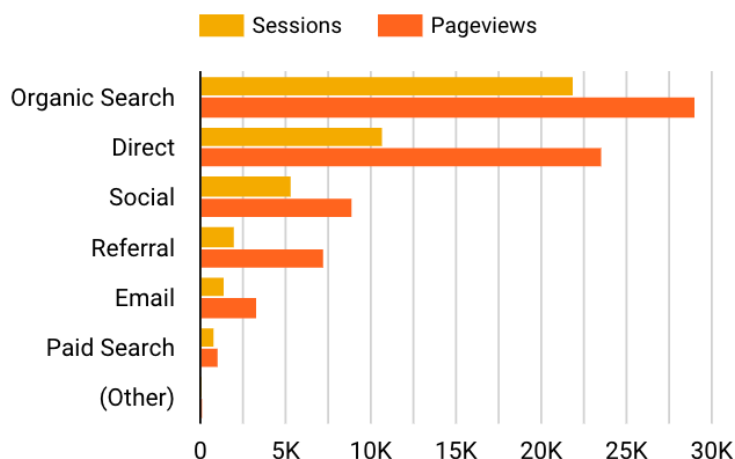
Since its launch (18 Jun 21), 35'299 users have accessed the site - an average of 1'908 users a month.

The majority of website users come from Europe, reflecting where the *1000 Dreams* stories have been collected. The second-highest number of visitors is from the Americas.

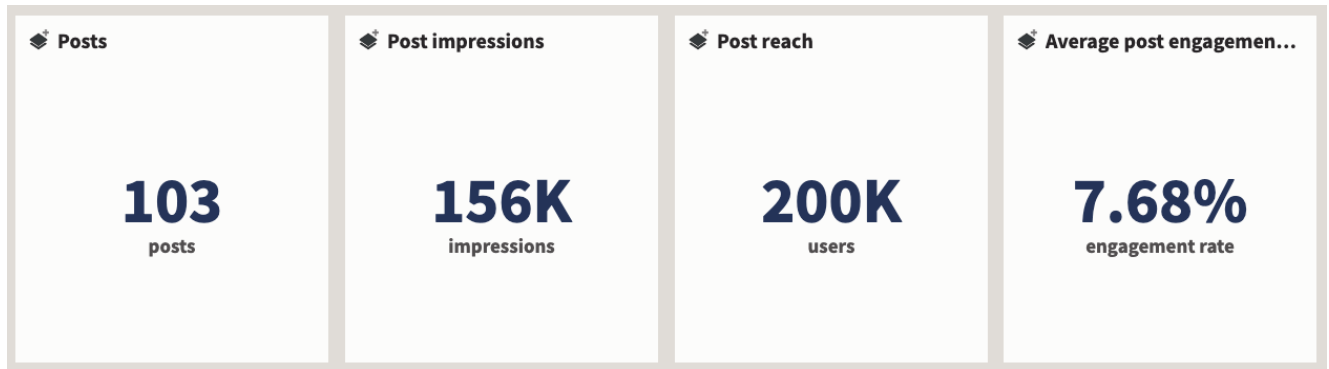


Continent	Sessions ▾
Europe	22,965
Americas	12,416
Asia	4,262
Oceania	1,431
Africa	1,206

Organic Search spiked due to the Netflix documentary made about the Mardini sisters (Syrian's swimmers) as we have the story of Sarah Mardini on *1000 Dreams*. Apart from this exception, the majority of web traffic is from people coming directly to the website domain (this includes visitors from Instagram). As Instagram is *Witness Change's* primary channel, it is understandable that web traffic would be the greatest source for site visits. The second highest source comes from other Social Media Platforms (Instagram excluded) with Facebook representing 51% and Twitter 30%.



Social Media



On the *1000 Dreams* dedicated Instagram account, 103 posts were made in 2022. These posts reached 200,000 accounts and an engagement rate of 7.68%. This number is considered a very high engagement rate, with average brand engagement between 1-3%. *1000 Dreams* is still *Witness Change*'s smallest project by number of followers, but it continues to represent the project with the highest level of engagement.

Exhibitions/events

The two exhibitions organized by Heinrich Boell represented two very different target audiences, subject matter experts and general public, both exhibitions were well received among the expected audiences. Additionally, the exhibitions were seen by other Heinrich Boell sections inspiring new exhibitions in 2023. Exhibitions and events like these can help ensure the project reaches new audiences of influence.



In My World

Project purpose

Mental health issues will affect one in four of us in our lifetime. The impacts of this on millions of people are shocking. Mental health problems cause more disease and death than any other illness – more than cardiovascular disease or cancer. The problem impacts the social, economic, and public health of communities across the globe. Yet mental health is not a global priority in action, funding, or policy. Adequate mental health care must be both a moral imperative and a fundamental human right.

Two things stand in the way of tackling mental health challenges:

- **Stigma.** We must address discrimination because it prevents people from seeking the help they need and receiving support in their communities, and it stops mental health from being a global health policy priority.
- **Action.** Members of the global community must act on their commitments. Mental health needs to be a global development priority, as outlined by the World Health Organisation, and member states must be compelled to deliver on the Mental Health Action Plan.

In My World is a bold campaign that uses a visual storytelling approach to highlight these challenges. We created this project to give people living with mental health issues, psychosocial and intellectual disabilities the chance to be seen, heard, and valued. We travel to countries around the world, telling stories about the different circumstances and environments that impact people's mental health. By giving everyone a platform to tell their story, we break the silence and challenge the stigma that shrouds mental health.

Activity summary

Witness Change again supported Mental Health Advocacy Foundation (MHAF) Ghana, a grassroots service provider in northern Ghana. With the support of Robin Hammond, MHAF founder, Stephen Asante presented his work and secured sustaining financial support from the accounting firm Allen & Overy. The funding MHAF received allowed Stephen to travel to remote areas, freeing people with mental health issues from chains, sending them for psychiatric assessment, and purchasing medications. Additionally, to combat poverty and malnutrition, MHAF purchased clothing, food and other essential items to help people with their recovery. For many of its beneficiaries, MHAF continues to provide medical and psychiatric support as well as working with them to develop income-generating activities such as farming or trading. In 2022 MHAF helped 50 people, freed 12 from chains and educated more than 2000 Ghanaians about mental health.

1000 Dreams remained the primary focus of *In My World* in 2022 was the *1000 Dreams* project (see above for a description of this project). *In My World* has been used to highlight that work and increase its reach.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Outside of *1000 Dreams*, *In My World* continued sharing its legacy content, drawing attention to the stories *Witness Change* holds important. *In My World*'s stories on Dementia and Shackling had particular success reaching new audiences and drawing a strong response. During the sharing of the dementia and shackling social media campaigns, *In My World* saw its engagement rate increase by more than 20% and the *In My World* profile reach nearly 300,000 people in the two months the campaigns ran.

1000 Dreams

As the *1000 Dreams* campaign is a spin-off of the *In My World* campaign, stories from *1000 Dreams* continued to be shared on the *In My World* Instagram account.

1000 Dreams Storyteller Project

In My World shared a project by *1000 Dreams* storyteller, Mirza Durakovic. Baume au Diplome, his project, shared personal testimonies of French students' struggles with mental health. The stories were also exhibited in common spaces at universities in Paris to help the stories engage with students. William Lounsbury provided coaching and guidance to Mirza on his project.

SPONSORSHIP

Mental Health Advocacy Foundation

Allen & Overy, a multinational legal firm, provided a donation of \$30,000 to the Mental Health Advocacy Foundation (the organization Robin Hammond worked in northern Ghana in 2019). The donation will allow Mental Health Advocacy Foundation to support more Ghanaians living with mental health issues.

Project evaluation

SOCIAL MEDIA

Despite *In My World* receiving a reduced focus, the campaign has retained its audience and shared new stories. Supporting Mirza Durakovic, the photographer who participated in a *1000 Dreams* workshop, to share their project with a wider audience helped further our mission of sharing stories of mental health issues, psychosocial and intellectual disabilities.

On the *In My World* Instagram account, 93 posts were made in 2022. These posts reached 845,000 and an engagement rate of 4.34%. This number is considered a very high engagement rate, with average brand engagement between 1-3%. The posts about chaining and dementia garnered more engagement as well as reach this year.



Comment on a post about dementia (Instagram):

"Thank you. And for the many stories you post to make people aware of mental illnesses. His dementia taught me to be patient and love him more than ever. Listening non judgmentally is powerful. I'll give a donation by the end of the year" (talking about their dad's death who had dementia)
@photosbyrose

"Wow, this is a great insight into their world! Thanks for sharing. It'll help me change my perspective on how to work with people with dementia. Sounds like they've gone back to living their best life, and the present old age is less of a concern for them! It might be a relief for their surviving loved ones, although it's hard because they often stop recognising their loved ones"
@inka_the_cat

WEBSITE

The *In My World* website continues to be maintained and updated with new stories submitted by our online followers.

CONTACT / NETWORK

Allen & Overy (A&O) donated to support Mental Health Advocacy Foundation (MHAF). *Witness Change* facilitated this donation by acting as fiscal sponsor, providing documentation for A&O due diligence, and guiding MHAF through the process. There is further potential for MHAF to receive more financial support from A&O. Reporting to A&O on how this donation was spent is scheduled to take place in January 2022.



WHERE LOVE IS ILLEGAL



Where Love Is Illegal

Project purpose

At least 69 countries have laws criminalizing same-sex relations between consenting adults. In addition, at least nine countries have laws criminalizing transgender and gender nonconforming people. In these countries, people who love each other, or do not conform to conservative definitions of gender identity, must live secret lives. Discrimination and hatred are not limited to countries that outlaw love. Worldwide, violence and prejudice against the LGBTQI+ community are rampant, targeting those who simply wish to live openly, as themselves.

Since 2015, *Where Love is Illegal* has shared LGBTQI+ stories of discrimination and survival.

The team behind the campaign believes that stories have the ability to connect people, transform opinions, open minds, and change policies. The project fights intolerance and pushes for increased acceptance through social media campaigns, international exhibitions, and donations to, and collaboration with, grassroots organizations working where persecution is rampant.

The original production of *Where Love Is Illegal* was led by photographer Robin Hammond. Through his non-profit organization *Witness Change*, the project documented personal testimonies of survival from LGBTQI+ communities around the world. Those who were photographed as part of this global storytelling campaign chose how they wanted to pose, what they wanted to wear and how to present themselves. They all hand-wrote their stories and letters to be shared with the world.

In addition to the work of Robin Hammond, followers of *Where Love Illegal* have been invited to share their own stories on the project's social media accounts.

In 2022, thanks to the generous support of Vans Europe, *Where Love is Illegal* was able to expand the professional storytelling aspect of the campaign to include three new photographers. *Witness Change* proposed this next chapter of the campaign because stories of marginalized communities are often told by outsiders rather than people with similar lived experiences. The *Where Love Is Illegal Fellowship* was created because *who* authors stories matters - especially when it comes to stories of traditionally excluded groups.

The fellowship supported three queer photographers to create original work and record testimonies about queer experiences close to them. It ensures LGBTQI+ identifying photographers have the opportunity to contribute to the narratives that define queer communities.

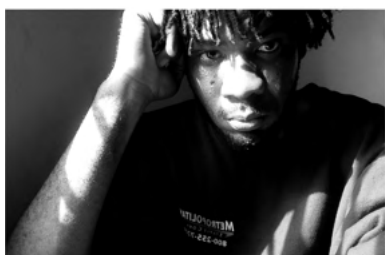
Activity summary

Fellowship

The WLII Fellowship provided financial support and exposure for queer storytellers in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA), and to amplify marginalized LGBTQI+ stories. The fellows were chosen from 165 applicants from across EMEA. Applications were judged based on the strength of their project pitch and of their portfolio. Three grants were awarded; two of \$2.5k and one of \$5k. The Fellows and the stories they documented are:



Camille Farrah Lenain is a French-Algerian documentary and portrait photographer who grew up in Paris, studied Photography at l'ESA in Brussels and at ICP in New York City (virtual). She relocated to New Orleans in 2013, where she teaches photography at Tulane University and develops long-term projects with a focus on empathetic portraiture, exploring the notions of representation, collective memory and plural identities. Camille works between France and Louisiana. *She documented stories of LGBTQI+ French folks with a Muslim background.*



Kwasi Darko is a Ghanaian photographer and multimedia artist interested in weaving positive narratives for underrepresented communities and investigating the opportunities that digital spaces and systems hold for them. *He documented stories of LGBTQI+ Ghanaians expressing their identity with joy.*



Anton Shebetko is a Ukrainian artist and photographer from Kyiv. He currently lives in Amsterdam. He works closely with LGBTQ + topics, themes of memory, loss of identity, plurality of history, and the role that photography can play in revealing these stories. His extensive research is devoted to the forgotten queer history of Ukraine. His range of projects varies from installations and interventions dedicated to old cruising spots and underground gay resorts in Crimea to topics such as Ukrainian LGBTQ + soldiers. *He documented stories of LGBTQI+ Ukrainians who had left their country because of war.*

In addition to supporting these artists to create original work, it was vital that the work was shared widely. With this in mind, *Witness Change* engaged in several strategies to achieve reach. Using *Witness Change* run social media accounts, and those of partners, the work created by the Fellow's reached an audience not previously accessible to them. Through exhibitions and talks they were able to present their work, on their own terms. And their work continues to have life beyond the Fellowship, being exhibited in Europe, including one project being featured in one of the continent's premier photography museums.

STORIES

Where Love is Illegal Fellowship produced 21 new personal testimonies from people in Ghana, France, and the Ukrainian diaspora. The work, created by the three *Where Love is Illegal* Fellows brought new personal stories to *Where Love is Illegal*, documented by storytellers with similar lived experiences to the people they met. The result is an intimate portrait of a queer community not often seen.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Where Love Is Illegal (WLI) continued its mission of sharing LGBTQI+ stories with a far-reaching audience. Legacy stories as well as those from the WLI audience, as well as leading a campaign to find the three winners of the *Where Love is Illegal* Fellowship provided content to share. In addition to selecting the three Fellows, a database of queer photographers was created.

During Pride Month (June 2022) *Witness Change* shared work created by Fellows - 21 new personal testimonies from people in Ghana, France, and the Ukrainian diaspora. These stories were shared across 50+ social media posts on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. The reach of these social media posts is in excess of 1,000,000 people around the world.

In the fall of 2022, *Witness Change* launched a Tik Tok account sharing video content from past *Witness Change* projects. A video of Walid and Abdessattar, a gay couple from Tunisia, shared in September was watched by more than 145k times.



Exhibition: Vans - Covent Garden, UK

PARTNERSHIP

The Fellowship was possible thanks to the support of Vans, who for the second year, awarded *Witness Change* a grant to support *Where Love is Illegal*. In addition to Vans supporting *Witness Change* financially through their Pride campaign, Vans amplified *Where Love is Illegal* stories through several initiatives. These included:

- **Store displays:** Inside Vans EMEA (Europe, Middle East & Africa) stores during pride, information about *Where Love Is Illegal* and the Fellowship was on display. Additionally, in the UK, France, Netherlands & Germany, special window displays featuring the Fellow's work were used in Vans stores.
- **Covent Garden Exhibition:** The London Flagship store, Vans Covent Garden, featured an exhibition of the Fellow's work funded by *Witness Change* as well as some of the original *Where Love is Illegal* work. The show ran during the month of Pride.
- **Workshops:** *Witness Change* ran three workshops inside the Covent Garden location during Pride month. The workshops were free to attend and focused on how to use portraiture for visual storytelling.
- **Vans Family:** Through the Vans Family platform, individuals had the opportunity to donate 'points' to *Where Love is Illegal*. The *Where Love is Illegal* campaign received the maximum donation, 10,000EUR, further supporting the continuation of the campaign.
- **MQBMBQ (My Queer Blackness, My Black Queerness):** On Trans Day of Visibility *Witness Change* partnered with MQBMBQ - a platform that explores the experiences of Black Queer people through all forms of art to amplify black trans voices.



Exhibition: Vans - Covent Garden, UK

WORKSHOPS



Workshop: Vans - Covent Garden, UK

Three workshops took place during the month of June (Pride in London) in the exhibition space of Vans Covent Garden, London. The workshop taught participants portrait photography in storytelling through a lecture, field practice and review with *Witness Change* staff. More than 40 people attended the workshops of varying skill levels (from beginning amateurs to working professionals). After promotion began (following the first workshop), the available 20 spots per workshop were booked within hours and a waitlist had to be created to cater to the very high level of interest. Feedback was extremely positive. One unintended consequence of the workshop was fostering greater connections among photographers working in London. A notable example of this was a queer-identifying photographer who participated in the second London workshop has now worked with *Witness Change* staff to create a database of up-and-coming LGBTQI+ identifying photographers working in the UK. *Witness Change* contributed by sharing their *Where Love is Illegal* database with the student.

"I had a great time. One of the most engaging workshops I've been to. And it's free! Haha. Thanks for organising it."

Aisha, workshop participant

PUBLICATIONS

In October, the *Where Love is Illegal* book was released by publisher Edition Bessard. The book compiles 80 stories documented by Robin Hammond in the eight years since the campaign began. The book has the potential to be another platform for engagement in addition to the *Where Love Is Illegal* website and social media accounts. The latter platforms allow the work to be shared for free - which is important - but these engagements can be fleeting. An expensive, beautifully designed coffee table photo book allows for much deeper involvement in the stories, which hopefully leads to a greater connection to the people whose stories are shared, and to *Witness Change*. In addition to this, *Witness Change* is exploring (with one of the advisory board members) how we might provide copies of the book to people who could be supporters of *Witness Change*, or who we believe may be influenced by the work of *Where Love Is Illegal*.

PR done by Vans saw their support of *Where Love is Illegal* mentioned in publications such as Vogue, Vanity Fair, GQ, PinkNews, Glamour, Esquire and Perfect.

EXHIBITIONS/EVENTS



Exhibition: Festival des Libertés

In October, *Where Love is Illegal* was displayed as part of the Festival des Libertés in Brussels, Belgium.

In June, a student at the African Leadership University in Kigali, Rwanda hosted an exhibition of *Where Love is Illegal* for the student body. *Witness Change* provided advice and images, but the exhibit was organized entirely by the student. *Witness Change* waived its standard exhibition fee in order to support grassroots activism.



Exhibition: African Leadership University

For the month of June, the work of the *Where Love is Illegal Fellowship* was on display in the Vans store located in Covent Garden, London. In creating this exhibit, Vans, along with their local production team, allowed the Fellows to design their own exhibition. A unique experience for an artist, this was one more example of the Fellows retaining control of their storytelling process. While the Covent Garden exhibition was the culmination of the Fellowship, two of the grantees, Anton & Camille both had the work they created from winning the fellowship exhibited later in the year.

June 2022 - DJINN: Camille Lenain's series on queer folks with a Muslim background in France was displayed in Marseille 3013, a cultural and exhibition space in central Marseille for art that challenges traditional views. The exhibition brought together stories she has collected over several years and included the portraits made as part of the Fellowship.



Exhibition: To Know Us Better (Anton Shebetko)

August 2022 - To Know Us Better: During Pride Month Amsterdam (August) Anton Shebetko's work on Ukrainians, who have left their country because of war, was shown at Foam Amsterdam. The images on display were made through the support of the *Where Love is Illegal Fellowship*. Foam Amsterdam is one of the premier international photography museums. This work displayed in Foam is a major achievement.

September 2022 - Habibi: Six images from Camille Lenain's project are featured in the group exhibition *Habibi, les révolutions de l'amour* at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris. The group show features art about LGBTQI+ in the Arab world.

Project evaluation

Where Love Is Illegal Fellowship

The Fellowship was completed with 21 powerful new stories of the queer experience shared with a global audience. The Fellowship stories reached millions of people worldwide through multiple different story-sharing avenues and a new network of queer artists was established. As this was the first grant/fellowship awarded by *Witness Change*, some challenges did arise. However, these were largely growing pains and the Fellowship itself was extremely successful.

For future grants, a longer production time, with built-in buffers, for grantees and more structured communication throughout the timeline would make the process smoother and easier to coordinate for all parties.

The work continues to have a life beyond the completion of the Fellowship, the artists are continuing to share their work with the world through new exhibitions and publications and, based on the success of this new work, more opportunities are opening for future *Where Love is Illegal Fellowships*.

Not only can *Where Love is Illegal* say it has shared new stories and reached new audiences, but a new community of queer photographers has been identified through the Fellowship process. A group that will continue to bring the unheard stories of queer people to a global stage, with whatever support *Witness Change* can give them.

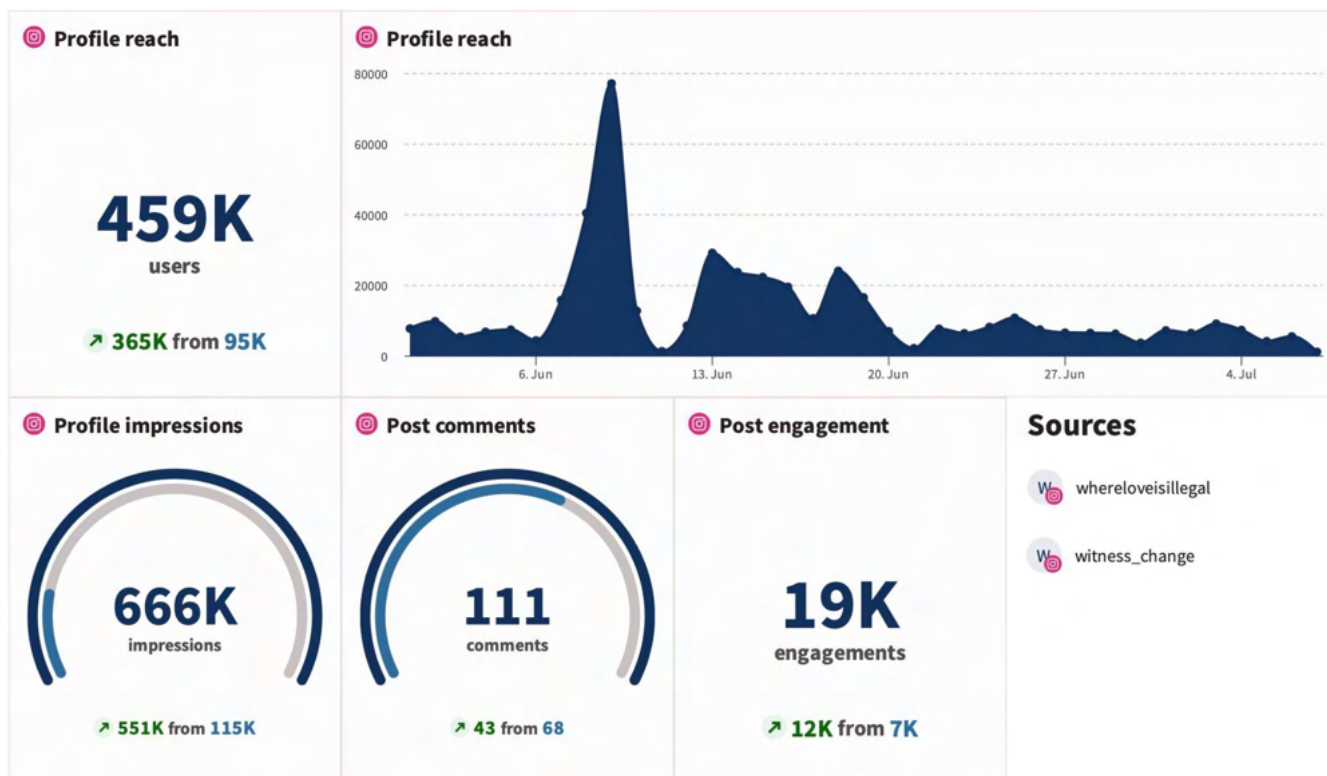
SOCIAL MEDIA

With the *Where Love is Illegal* Fellowship, the organic social media reach and engagement on *Witness Change* channels (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) was extremely high.

On *Witness Change* platforms alone, Fellowship posts reached more than 450,000, greater than the total followers on all *Witness Change* accounts. This indicates a very high reach for posts that were almost exclusively shared organically.

On the *Where Love Is Illegal* dedicated Instagram account, 177 posts were made in 2022. These posts reached 1.7 million and the average post engagement rate on Fellowship content was 7.06%, a rate considered 'very high' for Instagram. With the launch of the Tiktok account, the WLII video from Tunisia about Walid and Abdessattar was viewed more than 145k times, making it the most successful video post on a *Witness Change* channel.

While *Witness Change* does not have access to partner accounts to collect analytics, it is safe to assume that their reach was large. Vans_europe has 1.1 million followers on Instagram and shared four posts during Pride month. In addition to this wide reach, an account like Vans likely reaches a different demographic than *Witness Change*, exposing these stories to a new audience. This is significant as the goal of *Where Love is Illegal* is not simply to share queer stories, but to share queer stories with audiences who would rarely encounter them. A platform such as Vans exposes this work to an audience likely to be unfamiliar with the experience of LGBTQI+ identifying Ukrainians, Ghanaians, and French people with a Muslim background.



Brand awareness Report

Comparison between Jun 01 - Jul 07, 2022 and May 01 - May 31, 2022

WEBSITE

The *Where Love is Illegal* website continues to be maintained and updated with new stories.

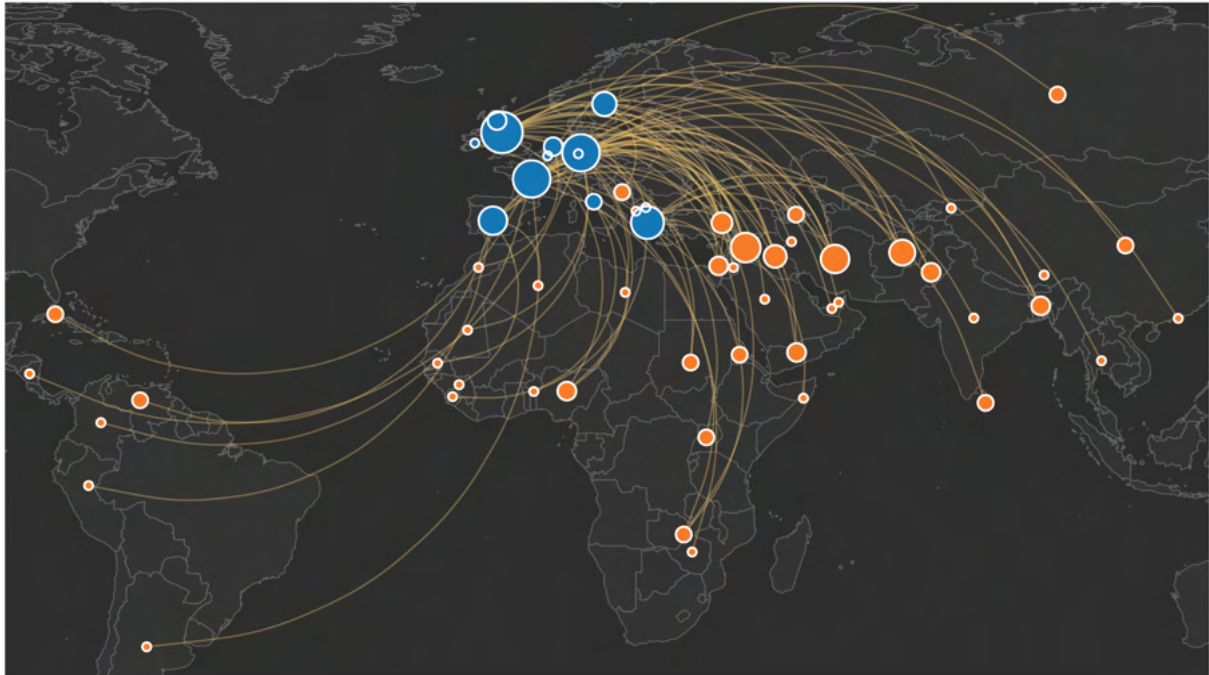
CONTACT / NETWORK

Vans: They were the largest new partner to *Where Love is Illegal* this year. Their support; financially, online, and in physical locations increased the visibility of the *Where Love is Illegal* project.

FUNDING

The donation provided by Vans funded the continuation of the *Where Love is Illegal* project ensuring the campaign could be maintained in the following year.

Research and Projects Evaluation



1000 Dreams Instagram Engagement Report - Global distribution of 1000 Dreams refugee narratives. Yellow vectors connecting nodes show linkages between countries that refugees fled from (orange nodes) and fled to (blue nodes). Node size is scaled by the number of connections.

The Research Department completed two important reports in 2022 on the *1000 Dreams* campaign. Both reports were reviewed by Research Department head, Samantha Chiu.

1000 Dreams Endline Report

The [1000 Dreams Endline Report](#) was written by volunteer, Alexandra Simon and is will be finalized soon. The report took pre- workshop surveys with workshop participants and compared them to follow-up surveys completed one to two year following their training. The aim of these surveys was to look at the effectiveness and impact of the *1000 Dreams* training workshops. While the full report reveals greater detail and insights, the surveys prove our hypothesis that *Witness Change's* program created positive impacts on those who participated. The largest take away shows evidence of increased skills gained through the workshop and an increase in perception of storytelling as a tool for social change.

1000 Dreams Instagram Engagement Report

The [1000 Dreams Instagram Engagement Report](#) was written by volunteer, Stephen Cook. The report looks at the first year of the *1000 Dreams* Instagram account taking analytical data and sentiment analysis to test the effectiveness of the campaign and to make recommendations on how to improve engagement and reach. The report confirmed that the presented version of *1000 Dreams* reflected the diversity of stories collected (age, gender, sexual orientation, geographical background, etc) as well as tracking a decrease in engagement as posting became less frequent. The report goes on to recommend greater sharing of images featuring children or families as they show a significant increase in reach over other 1000 Dream stories.

Future of Witness Change

2022 saw a focused effort to improve the internal functioning of *Witness Change*. New systems were implemented that helped the team become more efficient and more focused on ensuring that the storytelling in which *Witness Change* excels, has an impact on the communities who share their stories.

In 2023, *Witness Change* will continue all three of its projects:

1000 Dreams will continue its mission of sharing refugee voices, with new exhibitions and workshops planned in the coming year. The stories will be used to engage with civic groups and support the advocacy of our partner, the Heinrich Boell Foundation.

Where Love is Illegal will bring the LGBTQI+ voices shared with the campaign to a global audience in an exciting new initiative. Partnering with grassroots organizations, the stories will be exhibited around the world, creating a global exhibition of queer voices in 2023. *Witness Change* will provide, free of charge, the exhibition material to these organizations and will encourage the use of the stories in their advocacy and promote their participation.

Witness Change will focus again on mental health experiences with its new project documenting the lives of teens in the US. *Witness Change* is dedicated to working with marginalized groups to make a positive impact on their lives through storytelling. The impact will continue to be the main focus of all campaigns and, by continuing systems established in 2022, the important stories they tell will help their communities improve.