

ODS GREATER IMPACT

WITNESS CAMERAS EVERYWHERE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present report is the evaluation of the Cameras Everywhere initiative, funded by SIDA and implemented by WITNESS. The evaluation, based on desk research and key informant interviews, was conducted between March and June 2019.

Relevance

The evaluation found that the work done under the initiative is highly relevant for the communities WITNESS works with, for partner organisations and for technology and international justice stakeholders. The diversity of the activities carried out under the initiative brings a clear added value in the broader field of digital citizen advocacy and human rights. The primary added value of WITNESS has been identified in the in-depth guidance it provides to activists and to people in the field. In addition, WITNESS is currently advocating with tech companies aimed at influencing systems and technologies by bringing the perspectives and priorities of human rights defenders and activists. Its work with technology companies also aims to encourage them to think in terms of alternative scenarios wherein their platforms have negative implications for HRDs. This is relevant for the companies as few other organisations bring HRD angles in a form that is concrete and applicable to their use of working. In engaging international justice stakeholders, WITNESS' approach has also proved relevant, especially in the creation and conservation of evidence as well as the promotion of norms for the adoption of civic media as evidence.

Over the course of the 5 years of implementation, the organisation has been able to adapt to a fast changing context and to move from a more bilateral partnerships model to a model centered on supporting networks: WITNESS has an increasing role as a connector in different ecosystems of organisations and individuals. This connector role is fundamental in making WITNESS, despite its limited size, a relevant actor in all the countries where it engages with partners or through partners.

WITNESS' understanding of the main trends that affect people in the field has not changed significantly over the 5 years of the grant. However, the organisation has not compiled a list assumptions related to their theory of change or its model of intervention. The absence of a set of agreed-upon assumptions may hinder its ability to periodically evaluate the ways in which WITNESS contributes to change.

Effectiveness and Impact

WITNESS made strong progress towards all the objectives stated in the results framework. WITNESS materials and guidance could have contributed to an increased capacity of citizens to become activists and use video effectively to hold institutions accountable, together with a global rise in connectivity and the relevance of mobile technology to political protest in different contexts.

WITNESS' trainings led to distinct and visible outcomes, especially in the increase of the quality of videos produced in the contexts where training or other types of hands-on engagement was part of the work of WITNESS and partners. Safety and security behaviours increase in partners who have taken part in

trainings, especially their capacity to reflect on and manage risks. Videos shot by WITNESS partners supported by training and guidance, have been used in advocacy actions with the UN Human Rights Council, local and national governments (e.g Malaysia, Guinea) and in national and international judicial proceedings (e.g the DRC). Finally, trainings brought together activists from across each region working on similar issues, offering an important venue for networking. Stronger video skills have increased the ability of several community-based actors to participate in judicial proceedings or provide evidence for human rights reporting by UN bodies. A few landmark cases to which WITNESS contributed took place at the international level, while several other examples (e.g. in the field of land rights) were connected to national justice systems.

WITNESS Tech Advocacy work led to changes that enable a greater number of people to use tech platforms more safely: The organisation worked closely with YouTube to remediate a large-scale takedown of Syrian activists' videos, which were labelled "extremist", and helped in the production of YouTube guidelines on managing content in the view of context, which may also contribute to keeping citizen videos online. The development of a blurring tool to increase security and safety of online media has also been an important landmark of the grant period under review. WITNESS is contributing to the creation of a digital environment that is supportive of human rights by engaging with international policymakers around digital human rights. These long-term relationships also enable WITNESS and its partners to be agile in their advocacy when opportunities arise and have a greater impact.

Growth

The analysis found that WITNESS has significantly increased its outreach by sharing training resources and media content, leveraging social media and with the decentralisation of knowledge and skills sharing. A key enabler of this growth has been the shift in WITNESS' approach from in-depth collaboration on single campaigns towards more focus towards a holistic approach, that includes staff based in the regions and focus on the connector role within ecosystem of activists.

The adaptation and translation of WITNESS material is also a key enabler of growth: in some cases, WITNESS materials reached communities that are extremely hard to access. Several interviewees highlighted how WITNESS guidance has been used and shared in their daily work. In addition, independent adaptations of WITNESS materials have been made by third organisations without WITNESS intervention.

Learning and sharing is a central practice at WITNESS, and happens at all levels of the organisation. Knowledge is brought from the field to the global level thanks to the regionalisation of WITNESS' infrastructure. At the same time, WITNESS is learning from the field, for instance in integrating its knowledge of security issues in different contexts and developing new strategies to cope with those issues in its trainings.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The recommended changes are not only related with the initiative, but rather to the work of the organisation as a whole. Our recommendations cover the following areas:

- **Organisational capacity strengthening:** WITNESS should build partnerships that could support the overall capacity strengthening of partners in the ground, as well as strengthen the monitoring, evaluation and learning functions.
- In view of growth and to **increase WITNESS resilience**, the organisation should strengthen its regional structures (by bringing external consultants in, as part of the team and by further resource the regional teams), its core teams (such as the Video As Evidence one) and create strategy and structures for partnerships.