



WITNESS uses video and online technologies to open the eyes of the world to human rights violations

In July 2007, WITNESS launched its first annual Video Advocacy Institute (VAI). The VAI trains innovative human rights advocates and organizations from around the world to successfully integrate video advocacy into their social change campaigns. The inaugural VAI was held in association with Concordia University's Communication Studies Program and Documentary Centre in Montreal, Canada, to great success, with an average evaluation mark of 4.68/5 from the participants. Over 300 applications were received from 74 countries in a 6 week period, with 34 participants selected. The VAI is designed for staff members from nonprofit and nongovernmental human rights organizations or social justice organizations as well as individual activists with a record of successful collaboration with human rights organizations and experience working in the field. Participants are selected on the basis of a global call-for-applications coordinated with key allies, and from outreach to participants in our other video advocacy trainings to date. VAI participants learn key strategic and basic storytelling/technical skills, refine a plan to integrate video into their social change work, and share experiences with practitioners and co-learners from around the world. Over the course of the two week-long VAI, our approach is intensive and practical, with a focus on experiential learning from skills exercises, dialogue, and reflection on case studies. As a prerequisite for participation in the VAI, participants are required to bring a video advocacy project to the Institute for development, and plan to implement this project following the VAI.