WMF's New Global South Strategy

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Wikimania 2013, Hong Kong

(note: this version has more text than the slides presented in Hong Kong, to convey much that was said aloud but not written.)
Agenda

- The term "The Global South"
- The need
- The challenge
- What's been done? (examples and comments)
- What has been learned?
- So now what, from WMF?
The Need

● Contributing to Wikipedia is meaningful, empowering, and as important as participating in academic discourse
● When GS editorship is very low, we are missing important voices, with different contexts, knowledge maps, hierarchies and categories
● The paucity of GS editors necessarily results in subtle systemic bias
● [[w:Wikipedia:There is a deadline]]
The Challenge: numbers [1 of 2]

- **Active editors in the GS**: 15.6K of ~75K (21%)
- % of edits originating in the GS: 20%
- % of views in the GS: 25%
  - % of world population in the GS: 81.6%
- Total population reached a month: ~500M, out of 7.1B == ~7%

Robust! :(
The Challenge: numbers [2 of 2]

- **Grants to the GS**: ~8.5% of grant dollars, avg. grant size: $13,500
- In FY 2012-13, WMF gave $5.4M in grants, to 90 grantees. $470K were given in GS.
- In FY 2012-13, WMF made 29 grants to 20 different affiliate organizations, totaling US$5.04M. Grants ranged from US$4K to US$1.8M. Only ~US$227K went to five chapters in the Global South.
The Challenge: factors [1 of 2]

● **Access to the network** (IN: 13%, ID: 15%, BR: 50%)
● Access to materials, e.g. secondary literature,
● **Language(s) --**
  ○ indigenous vs. colonial: *diglossia*, prestige
  ○ language of higher education; encyclopedic prose vocabulary
  ○ lost causes: language preservationism (a noble cause in itself) is repeatedly conflated with free knowledge. (Wikisource and Wiktionary are worthwhile in *any* language, though!)
The Challenge: factors [2 of 2]

- Spare time, spare money -- Wikipedia is generally a middle-class hobby
- Cultures - volunteerism limited to classic charity in some regions
- Political, legal, financial - limitations on expression, assembly, foreign currency, etc.
What's been done? [1 of 5]

- Technology ([language support](#) -- WMF)
  - in some GS languages software limitations account for much of the lag in community development
- "Catalyst" teams' work (WMF -- India, Brazil)
  - India Programs attempted multiple programs in multiple language communities. Mixed results and significant friction. Now transitioned to grant-funded [Access to Knowledge](#) (A2K) program by CIS.
  - The Brazil Catalyst team has focused on community facilitation, [Wikipedia Education Program](#) deployment, and [data analytics](#). It is in the process of transitioning to a grant to a Brazilian non-profit as well.
What's been done? [2 of 5]

- **Chapters' work (GS, generally with WMF grants)**
  - Like Global North chapters: general outreach, editing workshops, *Wiki Loves Monuments*; partnerships have been significantly harder to secure than in GN
  - challenges of retention, momentum, size and sustained morale of active volunteer group

- **Chapters' work (Global North)**
  - Offline distribution -- Mali (WMFR and WMCH), D.R. Congo (WMFR)
  - Writing competitions (e.g. WMFR on Bahasa Indonesia Wikipedia)
  - *Afripédia* (WMFR) -- combined infrastructure purchase with training and offline distribution
  - Challenges of scalability and RoI; some work may seem too interventionist.
What's been done? [3 of 5]

- **lettera27's/Africa Centre's WikiAfrica** work
  - consultant work with African cultural institutions on content donations
  - Training of "Wikipedians in Residence" (unusually, for *non-Wikipedians*)
  - **Significant content on Africa generated**
  - What is the size of the investment?

- **Open Society Foundation's work**
  - **paid consultants** and infrastructure investments, attempting to seed communities, mostly in central **Asia**
  - Good result in revitalizing Kazakh Wikipedia; fate after disengagement still unknown
  - What is the size of the investment?
What's been done? [4 of 5]

- **Offline deployments** (chapters (see above), OLPC, Kenya (local volunteers), RACHEL, Camara, SOS)
  - obviously impactful, *when used*. Takes logistics *and* training in person. Challenging ROI.

- **Wikipedia Zero** (WMF)
  - free (no data cost) access to Wikipedia for (potentially) hundreds of millions of people in the GS
  - a challenge to encourage actual use
What's been done? [5 of 5]

● Content Injections -- a sponsor funds a deliberate creation of content by non-Wikimedians to be contributed to the projects
  ○ Generally: impact is low; quality mediocre; community not happy (e.g. Tamil, Bengali; Arabic)

● Competitions (e.g. The Wikipedia Challenge in Kiswahili and Setswana)
  ○ successful in engaging students *during* competition. However, seems to be *zero retention* of editors, i.e. was a failure in the stated goal of seeding an editing community.
What has been learned? [1 of 2]

The *sine qua non* of most programs is a core of self-motivating active editors.

This is related to work such as the Wikipedia Challenges, content injections, paid content, paid training. This core cannot be greenhouse-grown.
What has been learned? [2 of 2]

- Single-session, general-audience outreach has negligible impact. (not only in the GS!)
- WMF employees operating "on the ground" too complicated and not effective enough.
- **Sustained** attention to local communities yields actionable plans. (IN/BR)
- Wikipedia Zero is effective, high ROI. Still a challenge to get people to use the available resource.
- Our (technologically imperfect) **offline** offering is not enough. Distribution is key.
So now what? [1 of 3]

- No WMF contractors on the ground any more; Only partners and grantees.
- *Caution* about active investment where no active community. (Still possible!)
- Our primary formula: **Growth** happens when community *and* outside resources come together
So now what? [2 of 3]

- New focus countries (list follows) for **proactive** WMF engagement, selected on the basis of: population, internet penetration, **size of active editing community**, language status, openness to collaboration with WMF, and past work. These are **high-potential communities that can benefit from external resources**.

- WMF **remains** eager to **reactively** support initiatives **everywhere** in the world via its various **grants programs**, advice and networking.
So now what? [3 of 3]

- The focus areas make for a mixed pilot:
  - some are with chapters, some without;
  - some with very active community, some less;
  - some share a Wikipedia with other countries, some don't.

- We hope to learn much for the larger questions facing the movement.
The Focus Areas and Languages

- India (English, Indic languages)
- Brazil (Portuguese)
- Philippines (English, Tagalog, Cebuano?)
- Argentina (Spanish)
- Mexico (Spanish)
- Indonesia* (Bahasa, English)
- Turkey* (Turkish)
- Egypt* (Modern Standard Arabic)
- Vietnam* (Vietnamese)

* we hope to be able to engage with the community in these countries; conversations are underway as of August 2013, and we hope they would yield actionable plans.
A sketch of next steps  [1 of 2]

- **India** -- monitor and support efforts by both grantees: WMIN and CIS.
- **Brazil** -- transition WMF team to Açao Educativa (grantee); work with for community-founded APR-CCL group
- **Mexico** -- with WMMX, focus on educational partnerships; capacity building toward staff
- **Argentina** -- with WMAR, focus on communications, capacity building for partnerships, support creation of strategic plan
A sketch of next steps [2 of 2]

- **Turkey** -- strategize with community; possibly roll out Wikipedia Education Program
- **Philippines** -- with WMPH, strat. w/ community; solidify core of act. eds. interested in off-wiki work
- **Egypt** -- connect with Arabic-language global initiatives; offline Wikipedia distribution; strategize with community
- **Indonesia** -- with WMID, strategize with community; learn from and build on existing initiatives
- **Vietnam** -- strategize with community; focus on image acquisition?
Questions?

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