



# R.O.O.M.

Resource Of Open Minds

**FINAL SYNTHESIS  
REPORT**

June 2017 - June 2024

**Hivos**  
people unlimited



*Barefeet Theatre,  
One of R.O.O.M partners*

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*Performance part of "4000 km untitled" that took place at El Hamra Theater in Tunisia*



# Executive Summary

Resources of Open Minds (R.O.O.M.) was an ambitious program by Hivos that operated from 2017 to 2024, first as R.O.O.M. and then as R.O.O.M. 2.0. The program's main objective was to foster new and counter-hegemonic narratives from a young generation of makers, and thereby contributing to more diverse dialogue, debate, and dissent in societies where public space is shrinking.

In seven African countries—Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, and Egypt (and to a lesser extent in Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia)—the R.O.O.M. program provided grants and capacity support to makers, musicians, creative hubs, creative agencies, artists and other audiovisual producers. This support enabled them to create critical works, freely express their views on social issues and injustices, and share their content in various contexts. They are voices of freedom offering critical and sometimes provocative narratives through art forms like music, film, photography, graffiti, gaming and virtual reality.

The program's impact can be summarized by its success in building an ecosystem in these countries for young audiovisual producers whose narratives challenge the status quo. As the external evaluators concluded: "the program successfully facilitated a space for dialogue, debate, and dissent, particularly through new, traditionally unheard voices."

Hivos played a wide range of roles within the R.O.O.M. program. These included building capacity in various areas of need, forming new and inspiring global partnerships and connections, stimulating research,

learning and academic reflection, and managing the crucial grant-giving mechanism.

In this executive summary, we highlight a few key achievements of R.O.O.M.:

## 1. Grantmaking, with Amplification Grants and Production Grants

R.O.O.M. served as a crucial first funder for small initiatives that, with our initial grant and capacity support, managed to grow substantially. For example, R.O.O.M. significantly contributed to the success of initiatives such as Bustop TV, The Women's History Museum of Zambia, and Mfalme Productions. Hivos was often the first funder of these initiatives, which have since grown into professional creative organizations reaching millions of people. Notably, the program succeeded in supporting unusual initiatives that do not fit the mold of typical, well-oiled Southern NGO machinery. In total, R.O.O.M. provided 159 grants to strengthen the resilience and self-sustainability of our partners. With the program's support, approximately 342 critical audiovisual productions—including films, podcast series, smartphone documentaries, music albums, books, and animations—were directly created.

## 2. Capacity Building for Creative Hubs and Makers

Through various training programs, mentoring, and toolkits, R.O.O.M. successfully supported many of its partners in becoming more editorially independent, enabling them to produce more critical cultural and

media content without external influence. Additionally, our capacity-building efforts contributed to increasing and diversifying the income streams of our partners. Examples of best practices include our “New Ways of Working” training, implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, which focused on the role of history and memory in critical content production on the African continent. Another example is “The Creative Hub Leaders Toolkit,” developed in collaboration with the British Council and Nesta, along with our toolkits on intellectual property and financial management for creatives. These resources significantly helped creatives become more financially resilient and professional, both globally and locally.

### 3. Collaboration and Amplification

One of the major achievements of the R.O.O.M. program is our role in significantly amplifying the voices and creating large audiences through our production and amplification grants. For instance, Bustop TV, a youth-run satire house in Harare, had only a few followers at the start of the R.O.O.M. program but has grown to over 404,000 followers on YouTube by 2024. Another major success of the program was African Crossroads, which increased pan-African audiences, distribution, and collaborations. The first festival took place in 2018 in Marrakech, Morocco, followed by events in Mombasa, Kenya, in 2019, online in 2020 and 2021, in Harare in 2022, and in Lusaka in 2023. The community grew considerably over the years, from around 3,000 followers in early 2019 to 95,000 in 2024. The African Crossroads WhatsApp group remains active daily to this day. A unique aspect of African Crossroads was its ability to transcend the silo-thinking often present in the global development sector by bringing together academics, musicians, entrepreneurs, artists, and activists to create strong new communities across disciplines and geographies.

### 4. Experimentation and Learning

A unique accomplishment of the R.O.O.M. program was the wealth of opportunities it provided for learning and experimentation. Through our Roaming Academy, R.O.O.M. offered a total of 39 fellowships and 34 collaboration grants, all focused on exchange, education, and experimentation. Throughout the Roaming Academy program, we explored the latest technological trends and their impact on the cultural and creative sectors, as well

as the role of Pan-Africanism in the 21st century. For instance, we investigated data extractivism, disinformation, digital colonialism, artificial intelligence and the emerging digital monocultures that circulate increasingly similar graphics and content on social media. Additionally, the program produced several publications, including the book “Forces of Art” (Valiz), developed in collaboration with the Prince Claus Fund and the European Culture Foundation, and the book “Vertical Atlas” with Artez Press.

The R.O.O.M. team also encountered challenges during the program’s implementation and gained valuable insights, which are detailed in this final synthesis report. A significant challenge was the team’s rushed decentralization, coupled with the evolving ways of working at Hivos, slow hiring processes, the rising compliance and control demands for local partners, changing donor priorities and the insecure funding situation. The R.O.O.M. team particularly struggled to find a balance between allowing its creative partners to freely develop new and exciting work while ensuring compliance with Hivos’ financial and operational requirements and the changing donor landscape.

For future programs targeting cultural and creative actors, the R.O.O.M. team recommends adopting flexible, tailored, and responsive approaches that are specifically tailored to the sector. Furthermore, to enhance critical thinking among a new generation of audio-visual content creators, we emphasize the importance of engaging with history and memory. By critically investigating historical roots, we are challenged to think about our futures in radically different ways. Finally, we would like to emphasize the importance of creating space for experimentation, imagination, and Pan-African collaboration.

As the Sida funding is coming to an end, the R.O.O.M. Team remains confident about the possibility of fundraising for R.O.O.M.-like programs in the future. In recent years, possibilities for scaling up the program have been investigated. R.O.O.M. conducted an extensive [Feasibility Study in Latin America](#), which offers several recommendations for the possibilities in that part of the world. We firmly believe that unconventional and creative initiatives are crucial for expanding civic space and freedom of expression in any society.

### The R.O.O.M. Team





*Zenji Boy of Taarap': from Stone Town Records performing in Zanzibar*





# Introduction

In 2017, The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Hivos started their strategic cooperation with the shared belief that freedom of expression is a basic requirement for maintaining democracy and open societies where citizens stay informed, express opinions, and participate actively in public life.

The Resource of Open Minds (R.O.O.M.) program was launched to expand civic space in new and innovative ways. The program provided grant and capacity support to artists, and audiovisual producers, to create critical work and freely express their views on social issues and injustice and share this content in different contexts. They are voices of freedom offering critical and sometimes provocative narratives through art forms like music, film, photography, graffiti, gaming, and virtual reality.

This synthesis report is R.O.O.M.'s final publication. It reviews the program's 7 years of operational experience and learning (June 2017 - June 2024) and uses this as

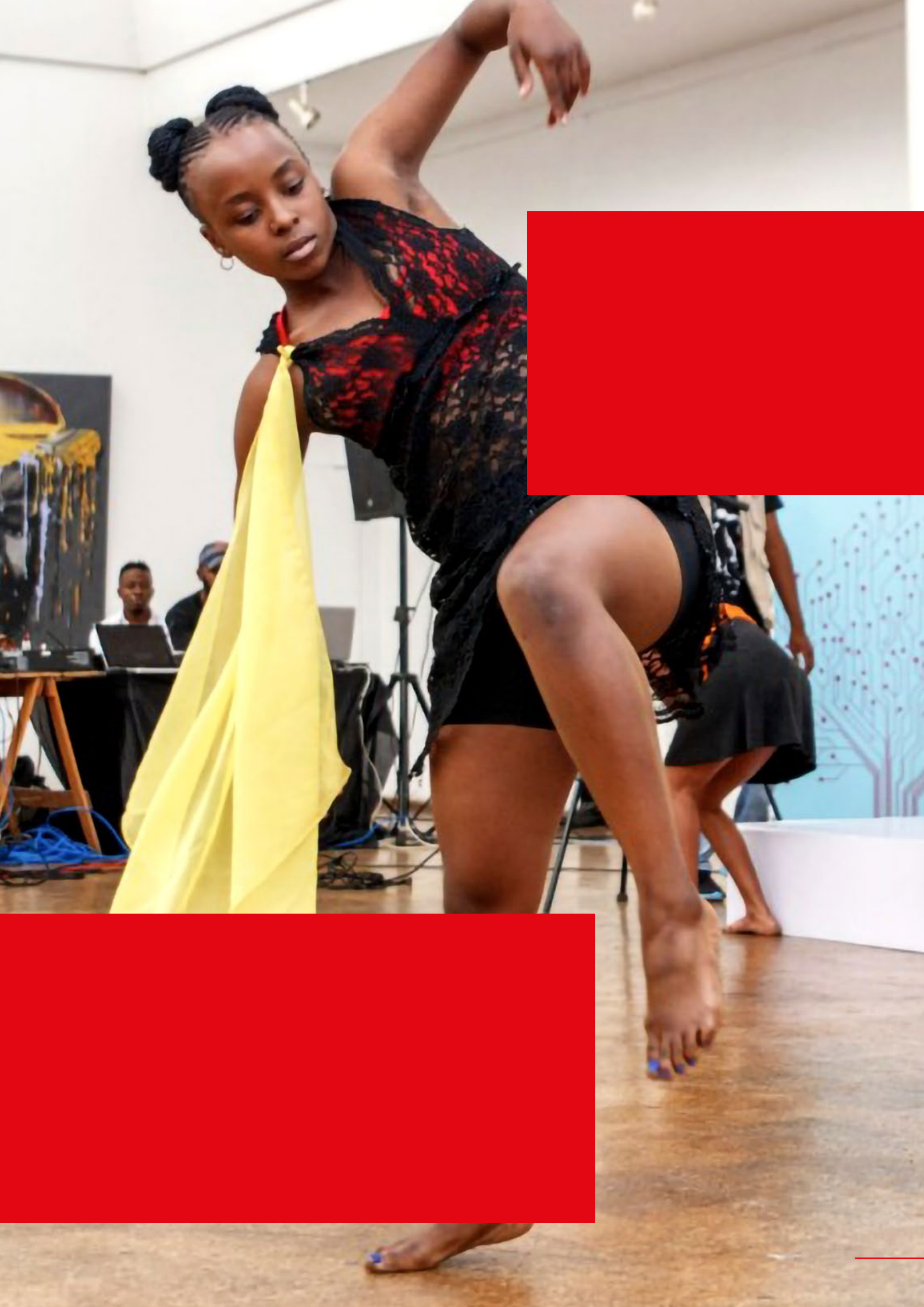
a lens to revisit and assess the key results and expectations about the role of critical content creators for the expansion of civic space in 7 countries: Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe (and to a lesser extent in Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia)

This report thus combines both the first phase of ROOM (2017-2019), the extension (2020-2022), and the R.O.O.M. 2.0, which was supposed to be implemented from 2023 to 2025 but was terminated in early 2024 because 25% required co-funding was not realized.

In the first chapter of this report, we will discuss what R.O.O.M. and then R.O.O.M. 2.0 were set out to do and its Theory of Change, in the second chapter we will look at the major results and activities of the program from its inception in June 2017 and its closure in June 2024. In the third chapter, we provide some of the lessons learned from the R.O.O.M. team and synthesize some main learnings from the program in the form of 3 final key messages of the program to Sida.

*Zambian Traditional Dancers  
at African Crossroads in  
Lusaka November 2023*





**CHAPTER 1**

# What did R.O.O.M. set out to do?

R.O.O.M. was launched in 2017 to address the shrinking civic space, the suppression of free expression, and the rising repression of young and critical artists, musicians, writers, bloggers, performers, and hacktivists, specifically in the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Africa, and Southern Africa.

In the original proposal to Sida in 2017, Hivos advocated for the launch of a program grounded in a Theory of Change aimed at expanding civic space. Unlike most existing programs at the time, which were defensive and focused on mitigating the harm caused by the closing of civic space, our original proposal emphasized proactive expansion. We proposed to Sida to support critical makers of audiovisual productions and advocated to Sida to support more fluid forms of youth and civic activism.

Because Hivos had a history of looking beyond traditional CSOs and supporting 'unusual suspects' who can reach larger sections of society, and shift norms and narratives, we were keen to develop new strategies and approaches to not only respond to the closing of civic space and defend it, but to increase and even celebrate civic space, and build its resilience for the future. We saw that interventions were needed to support a new generation to express themselves and to build their resilience to remain critical and independent, to build transnational solidarity, and help to challenge damaging populist and conservative narratives.

As a result of increasing repression, we have witnessed that during the program, international funders have put less emphasis on the expansion of civic space over an increasing focus on its defense (e.g. regulatory approach, monitoring, safety and security, and countering disinformation). A recent [report](#) by the [Funders Initiative for Civil Society](#) (FICS) underlines this. The report mentions how funders' global responses to the shrinking of civic space have predominantly been defensive in nature. For example, most funders have prioritized the resourcing pushback against stricter laws or supporting a (digital) safety and security approach to protect the traditional CSO community. According to FICS, very limited funding is going to the expansion of civic space. Besides that, little funding is going to informal groups and non-traditional movements and new forms of youth activism that aim to transform and reform civic space in new ways. According to FISC:

**"We need to drastically step up our work at the transformative level and resource narratives, movement-building and culture change. So far, philanthropy's support for work at this level has been weak."**

Between 2017 and 2020, Hivos implemented the first phase of the R.O.O.M. program. This phase was subsequently extended to 2022 and evaluated by [NIRAS](#) in 2021. The external evaluators concluded that the program been found

*“to be relevant in all ways: first and foremost through its unique contribution to urgently needed dissenting voices and debate in democracy and freedom of expression constrained realities; by supporting new, young makers uplift underrepresented voices; by having a flexible and adaptable approach to programming in a reality where frequent re-orientations are needed; and, in general, in view of its understanding and way of operating within the highly complex, tense and risky environment.”*

*African Crossroads 2019 attendees improvising music and dance movements between two sessions, in Mombasa*

The external evaluators specifically highlighted R.O.O.M.'s ability to collaborate with a new movement of young critical makers, extending beyond traditional CSOs and unconventional actors to expand civic space. They commended R.O.O.M. for The external evaluators specifically highlighted R.O.O.M.'s ability to collaborate with a new movement of young critical makers, extending beyond traditional CSOs and unconventional actors to expand civic space. They commended R.O.O.M. for successfully working with a network of partners, most of whom do not function as the “typical, well-oiled Southern NGO machinery”.

One of the main recommendations of the evaluators was to **“deepen and consolidate what is already being done in the program, as it is found that it is very important not**

**to squeeze the unique other into the mold of most.”**

The evaluators stated: **“A continued funding of the R.O.O.M. program is a firm recommendation based on the mid-term evaluation of the R.O.O.M. program – for at least another two 3-year cycles - allowing for a further consolidation of the ongoing work”.**

Around the same time as the external mid-term evaluation, Hivos started the implementation of its new The Strategic Compass 2021-2024, intending to restructure the organization and decentralize all program management and implementation from the Global Office to its regional hubs. One of the motivations behind this reorganization was the need to redistribute power and transfer decision-making of programs to the regional offices by 2025. In 2021, in line with the Strategic Compass, R.O.O.M. started its own decentralization and transition process during which the global

program management was handed over from the office in The Hague to the Hub Southern Africa in Harare.

Building on the recommendations from the external evaluators to consolidate and deepen the program, Hivos proposed to Sida to extend its strategic partnership in a new, second phase described as R.O.O.M. 2.0 for the period 2023 - 2025. Local ownership was a defining principle for this next phase of the program, with implementation and management now fully focused on and based in the regional hubs, in line with the new Hivos Strategic Compass.

One of the primary distinctions was that R.O.O.M. 2.0 adopted a more Pan-African perspective. This involved a particular focus on African history, memory, and the present and future of free expression on the continent in varying critical forms. By Pan-Africanism, we referred to the exchange of critical thoughts on key African issues, particularly those



addressing narratives that restrict young Africans' ability to freely express themselves today. Additionally, the Pan-African approach referred to the intention of the program to reach the wider continent beyond the regional hubs, with our activities, particularly through African Crossroads and the Pan-African Roaming Academy.

R.O.O.M. 2.0 began implementation in March 2023, following a few initial months of delay. After eight months of operation, in December 2023, it was decided to close the program, due to Hivos inability to secure the 25% required co-funding for the next phase. R.O.O.M. officially ceased operations in May 2024.

## Changes in funding priorities

The war between Russia and Ukraine increased focus on migration to Europe, and the rise of the radical right in mainstream European politics has shifted funding priorities in the last two years, impacting international programs with a focus on free expression.

The R.O.O.M. program faced challenges in early 2022 due to shifts in Swedish government priorities. The development budget was redirected to curb and control

migration towards Europe. As a result, between April and July 2022, R.O.O.M. faced uncertainty in its operations, because of the risk that its funding would be redirected to support Ukrainian refugees in Sweden.

Additionally, other donors made similar shifts in their funding priorities and underwent intense reorganization or strategic reviews, such as the Open Society Foundations. Moreover, during the scope of the program, we realized that an increasing number of funders have shifted their fundraising priorities toward a more Eurocentric focus or looking through the lens of the "Democratic West" versus Russia/China.

In this context of changing funding priorities and geopolitics, the R.O.O.M. team has found it hard to find progressive donors for the program and hence was unable to secure the required co-funding of Sida for the next phase of the program.

## State of Freedom of Expression

During the scope of the program, the state of freedom of expression has deteriorated in many of the targeted countries. According to [CIVICUS](#), civil society is now under severe attack in 118 of 198 countries and territories and almost a third of the world's population now lives in countries with closed civic space. In 2024 this is the highest percentage since 2018, when CIVICUS began systematically tracking civic space conditions around the world.

Government prosecutions of musicians, artists, and other content creators have increased over the last years in countries including Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe and several countries in the MENA region, as those in power use anti-terrorism legislation and other restrictions to curb free expression. Large tech platforms and telecom companies are also increasingly proactive – or legally obliged – to police their users' activities for "security threats". Both targeted and mass surveillance create a chilling effect, raising the level of risk for anyone engaged in challenging power. Enormous time, energy and resources are taken away from activism and social change and directed toward self-defense. (as described by [FICS](#))

Moreover, the internet is increasingly controlled by a small number of large companies, who by controlling the public space for dialogue and debate, exert enormous influence over the functioning of democracies and hold the key to the last remaining sites for free expression in many authoritarian states. The rise of global content gatekeepers like Netflix, YouTube, and TikTok offers

creatives new opportunities, but it also means their content can be rejected if it doesn't align with these powerful companies' standards. Alternatively, creators may feel compelled to conform their organic creativity to fit the platforms' requirements, which are often shaped by sensationalism, polarization and populism. Essentially, the gatekeeping platforms determine who has the right to speak and connect.

## Our Theory of Change

The overall objective of the R.O.O.M. and R.O.O.M. 2.0 program has been to strengthen young makers in their

contributions to the diversification of dialogue, debate and dissent in society. Diversity was reflected in a variety of makers, mediums, content, channels and audiences.

The underlying assumption of this overall objective was that the structural problems of the shrinking of civic space will not be effective without strengthening human agency; a public space filled with progressive voices that challenge taboos in society and open new worlds by providing alternative points of view.

Through their critical cultural and media productions young makers question and critically examine the hegemonic forces in society. In this way, the novel dialogues and debates created by these makers provide a counterforce to the shrinking civic space and its negative effects on freedom of expression.

On an outcome level, R.O.O.M. aimed to have more self-sufficient and independent makers by 2024, to support makers to create more critical cultural and media productions, to support makers to reach a wider and more diverse audience with their cultural and media productions and to support creative hubs to increase their capacity to facilitate the cultural and media productions of makers. See a short overview of the original R.O.O.M. Theory of Change below:

Sphere of Control		Sphere of Influence	Sphere of Interest
Key Activities	Key Outputs	Key Outcomes	Impact
R.O.O.M. implements the following activities	R.O.O.M. provides its target group with access to:	R.O.O.M. expects to see target group use:	R.O.O.M. hopes to contribute to:
<p>Providing grants and other funding</p> <p>Capacity building</p> <p>Collaboration knowledge sharing</p> <p>Experimentation and learning</p>	<p>Makers have access to an increased number of tools, services and equipment for the development of cultural and media productions.</p> <p>A diverse group of makers completes the training by Hivos and its partners.</p> <p>Makers that completed the training have improved skills.</p> <p>Coordinators and staff of a diverse group of creative hubs complete training by Hivos and its partners.</p> <p>Coordinators and staff of creative hubs that participated in the training have improved skills.</p>	<p>Makers become more self-sufficient.</p> <p>Makers become more independent.</p> <p>Makers create more critical cultural and media productions.</p> <p>Makers reach a wider and more diverse audience with their cultural and media productions.</p> <p>Creative hubs have an increased capacity to facilitate the cultural and media productions of makers.</p>	<p>Diversification of dialogue, debate, and dissent in society</p>

**CHAPTER 2**

# The Major Results of the Program



*Workshop in Cairo by  
Medrar and Makouk*

Throughout the R.O.O.M. and R.O.O.M. 2.0 programs, major results on the outcome and output level were continually harvested from the granting, capacity building and linking, and learning activities. Also, a [mid-term external evaluation](#) was conducted by NIRAS in 2021. Each narrative report,

along with the annexed results framework, as well as the mid-term evaluation offers a comprehensive overview of the program's major outcomes in both quantitative and qualitative terms. This report provides only a short synthesis of the highlights of these reports and external evaluations.



*Our Future of African Cities event 2017  
in Cairo, Egypt*

## Result 1: Makers have become more self-sufficient.

The first significant achievement of the program is its success in helping makers secure additional financial resources to develop critical cultural and media productions.

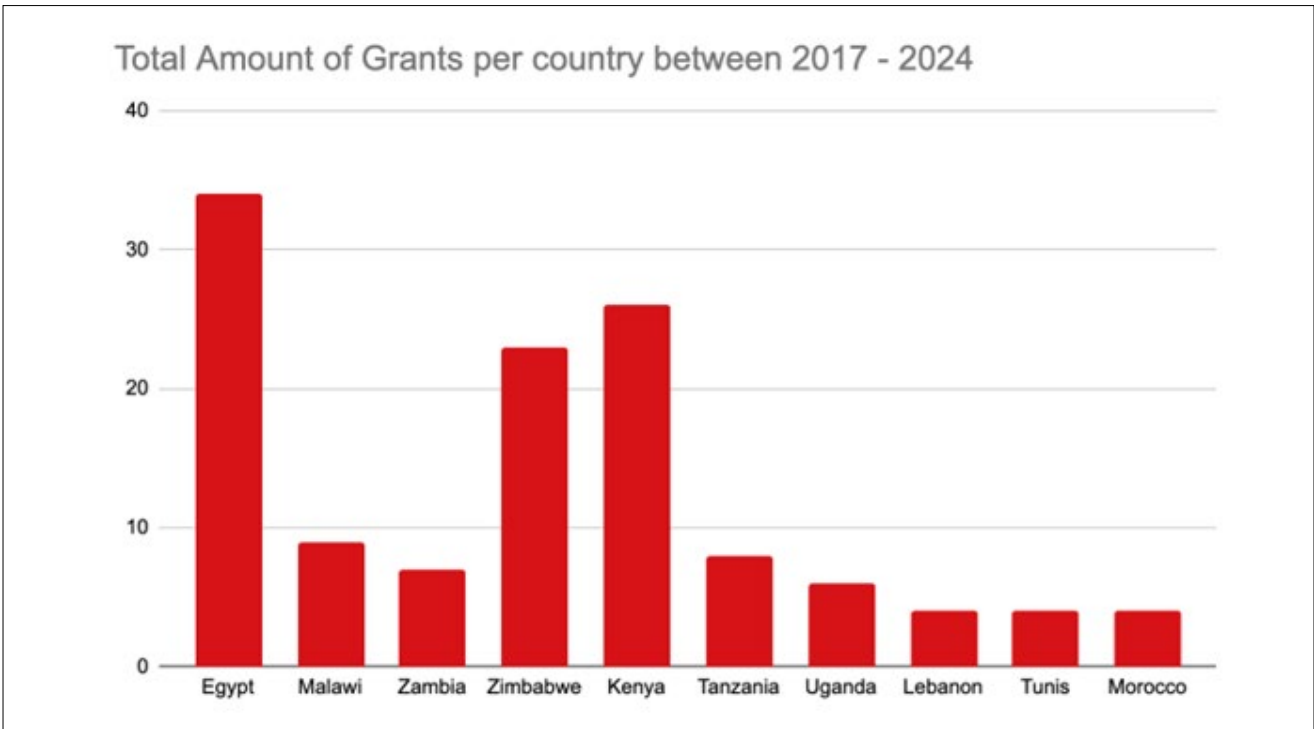
Throughout the years, R.O.O.M. supported its partners to increase and diversify its income streams. Our goal was to reduce their reliance on income from just one source such as commercial clients or NGO assignments, enabling them to focus on personal, critical cultural and media productions.

We have achieved this by substantially investing in training and resources to help partners generate more diverse income streams. Already in 2017 and 2018, we organized several workshops to help partners build a sustainable organization through proper financial management. We also hosted a large event in 2017 in Cairo Egypt together with [Afrilabs](#) on the role of income strategies, technology and cultural entrepreneurship called the “Future of African Cities”

After the pandemic, in 2021 and 2022, we continued supporting our partners in becoming more self-sufficient through physical or hybrid events. We developed a [Financial Management and Sustainability Toolkit](#) for Creatives in East Africa and in 2022, together with the [National Arts Council of Zambia](#), we organized a workshop to help creatives, artists and lobbyists think of new critical ideas for the sustainability of the arts in Zambia. Moreover, we produced the Creatives and Money Matters Research report, Financial Sustainability for Creatives Capacity Building Workshop report and Training Guide, and the Art of Money for Creatives Toolkit.

Between 2017 and 2024, R.O.O.M. provided in total of 159 grants to strengthen the resilience and self-sustainability of our partners. These grants ranged from production to collaboration and amplification grants to the COVID-19 resilience grants.





During the program, we learned that financially, short-term funding of production, even core costs, does not render an initiative self-sustainable. Therefore, from 2020 onwards, we decided to focus on a smaller cohort of partners and provide them with longer-term core funding to build their capacity. During interviews, partners stressed that during the period of funding, it has been a luxury to be able to focus on their creative production work. It was especially emphasized that equipment purchases, specifically of digital editing and recording devices, have played a role in building self-sufficiency

**Total Amount of Grants between 2017 - 2024**

<b>Egypt</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Malawi</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Zambia</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Kenya</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Tanzania</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Uganda</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Lebanon</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Tunis</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Morocco</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Resilience and collaboration grants</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Total Grants</b>	<b>159</b>



*Financial Sustainability Toolkit produced in Nairobi*

For example R.O.O.M. was the first supporter of initiatives such as [Bustop TV](#), [The Women’s History Museum of Zambia](#), [Mfalme Productions](#) and [Megraya](#). After our initial investment, these initiatives managed to grow substantially and raise additional funding, despite the challenging context. Now some of these initiatives have become large organizations reaching millions of people with their content. In total for 30% of our grantees, Hivos was the first international organization to provide financial support.

Despite our intervention, over the years we also observed that makers have also become more dependent on incomes from grants from NGOs. For example, the dependence on grant funding increased to 49% during the pandemic, while at the start of the program, this was 18%



*Group discussion during the workshop in Zambia in 2022*

## Result 2: Makers become more independent.

The second main achievement of the R.O.O.M. program is that we successfully supported makers in becoming more editorially independent, enabling them to produce more cultural and media content without external influence. Previous interviews with partners concluded that makers supported by the program felt often freer to independently express whatever ideas they have with their work.

Through our interventions, makers became less influenced by external parties such as the private sector, the state and family/social community, or commissioning NGOs. Partners became freer to express their ideas with their work. The underlying assumptions of the program were that if makers

were more independent, a substantial number of them would create more critical cultural and media productions.

Between 2017 and 2019, we implemented various workshops in the Middle East and North Africa, focused on self-publishing, independent digital content and archiving. Self-publishing is one way of avoiding external influence and retaining editorial independence. During these workshops, tech developers, research journalists and artists explored independent dissemination and distribution possibilities. The participants discussed the political dimensions of 'independent publishing'.

Other workshops focused more on the technical dimension of publishing platforms. The workshops aimed to find ways of countering the dominance of mainstream publishing companies as well as commercial cloud platforms. For example, commercial publishing companies from the Gulf censor or don't publish critical works. Over the years,

several of our partners have utilized self-publishing to produce their works. One of the success stories is our partner [Waraq Collective](#) which worked with its members in printing techniques to create their own publications in the Arab region.

*Our Future of African Cities event 2017 in Cairo, Egypt*



Another highlight was in December 2018, when we organized our first [event](#) to discuss African independent content and the internet in Nairobi, Kenya. The event focused on two aspects of online content created in Africa: 1) how policies from states and platforms influence what content goes online, and 2) how more African content (instead of Western content) can be generated and consumed by Africans. The event generated various discussions, specifically on the role that governments, cloud platforms and corporations play in controlling and manipulating African content.

Another highlight was the two-day [Regional Makers Summit Critical Content](#) Creation training workshop in Harare, Zimbabwe. 60 Creative content creators from three different countries in Southern Africa had the opportunity to meet, learn and share experiences concerning independent content creation in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia.

In previous interviews, many partners mentioned that after completing a project, they experienced less external influence on their content

than before. For example, in an interview with Kenyan partner Mfalme Productions, the founders credited the extra income from R.O.O.M. with enabling the production house to be "less dependent on distributors who decide their content". Apart from one category, the family and social community remain a space throughout the 7 years of the program where makers perceive pressure and limitations on their work.

The impact of the program on independence is also exemplified in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, where our grant

helped The Center for Innovation and Technology (CITE) to grow its audience. They got the resources to commission work from artists at a time when livelihoods had been drastically reduced overnight. CITE became the go-to page because the content was scarce (news as well as entertainment) elsewhere.

Editorial independence has also given confidence among marginalized creatives. A participant from the

Eastern African Partner Meeting underscored it: "With the R.O.O.M. funding I am independent to be who I am: woman, part of LGBTQI+ and a filmmaker! It gives such an incredible feeling of freedom!".

Also, the external evaluators NIRAS underscored the success of R.O.O.M. in supporting its partners in becoming more editorially and artistically independent. They wrote in 2021: "We have found a team doing what

no one else does. Through interviews with other organizations and funders, we have found that most others focus on the creative economy perspective in supporting (young) artists and creators with a strong focus on financial sustainability. R.O.O.M., providing the multitude of facilitation mechanisms and strategies, was regarded by all makers that the team met, to be unique and important."



*Regional Makers Summit  
Zimbabwe, 2019*

## Result 3: Makers create more critical cultural and media productions.

A third major achievement of R.O.O.M. is the support we provided to our partners in increasing the amount of critical work. While contextual developments such as the COVID-19 pandemic, financial crises as well as increased repression challenged the output of critical content, almost all our partners across regions stated in interviews that they had produced more critical content upon receiving funding from R.O.O.M.

Between 2017 and 2024, approximately 342 Critical productions have been directly created with the support of R.O.O.M. and R.O.O.M. 2.0. Productions included documentaries, feature films, podcast series, artworks, animations, music pieces and books. Topics ranged from confronting censorship, promoting feminism, fighting neoliberalism, questioning national identity and tribalism, supporting the political participation of youth and opposing discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS, advocating for LGBTI+ rights questioning colonial legacy and fighting police corruption.

During the scope of the program, we learned to pay more attention to the important role of history and memory in accelerating critical content production. Between 2020 and 2021 amid the Pandemic we organized our



The unique “Letters to Creatives” videos, produced by R.O.O.M about Critical

“[The New Ways of Working](#)” activities which specifically focused on the role of history and memory in critical content production on the African continent. Some of the activities linked up older and younger creatives to keep the culture of criticality alive across generations. R.O.O.M. produced a series of videos about criticality called “Letters to Creatives”. The amazing video productions can still be watched [here](#).

In 2022, R.O.O.M. hosted the forum titled “[Traditional Beer, Mbira and Cultural Criticality: A Zimbabwean Story](#)” which explored theory on past practices and their

influence on society, modern critical art, and the media. The activity cultivated the power of history and memory using an academic perspective on cultural practices in Southern Africa. This was achieved by critically reflecting on the practices of traditional beer as a symbol of social cohesion and music, particularly Mbira, through a forum of academics, creatives, experts, and artists. In 2023, as part of R.O.O.M. 2.0, [the Critical Pan-African Counter-Narratives Lecture Series](#) was launched. The underlying objective was to engage critical and informed professionals to comment on these social issues and encourage content creators to generate and preserve local narratives that drive regional development and unity.



*Pan African Audio Visual Content for Creative Expression in 21st Century, Hivos, YouTube*

During the scope of the program, it became clear that critical content is fueled by a diverse set of makers. Including women and marginalized voices results in more critical content. Partners have demonstrated awareness of this and included more underrepresented voices and younger makers as well. Among these, the Women’s History Museum of Zambia remains a trailblazer in this regard. Their focus on female leaders in their animation series *Leading Ladies Zambia* creates an awareness of women’s contributions and important place in history.



*Samba Yonga, co-founder of the Women's History*

Samba Yonga, the co-founder of the museum says in one of our [videos](#): “The Women’s History Museum of Zambia is used by a lot of people as a tool for discussion, which is demonstrated by the series’ popularity”. Overall interest and engagement were incredibly high, with a few episodes reaching over 90,000 viewers. The museum’s work was picked up by the BBC, and even Netflix reached out to see if they were thinking about developing a long-form version of the series. But that doesn’t deter Yonga from her mission: “Ultimately, the goal is to get that Indigenous knowledge into the school curriculums.”



*African Crossroads Timeline*

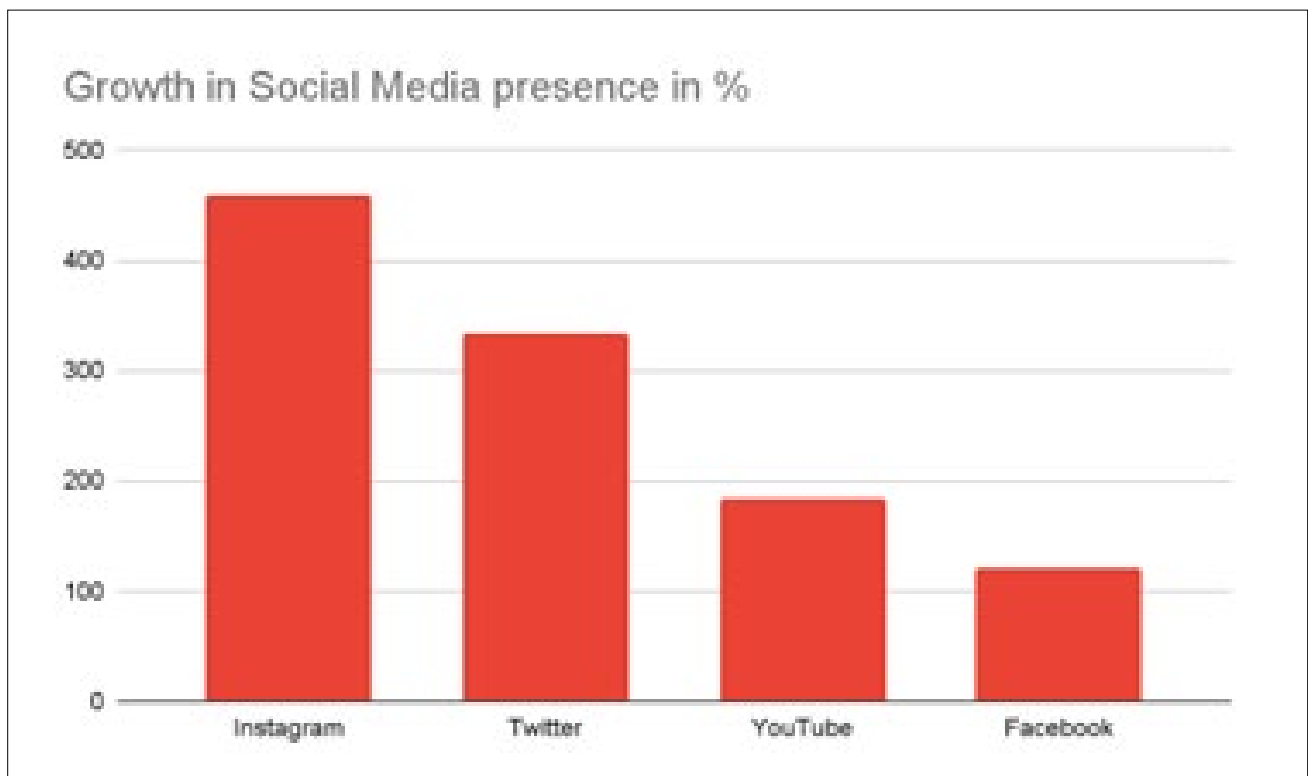
Many partners of R.O.O.M. demonstrate a high level of awareness around the importance of providing space for new, young and underrepresented voices such as content creators in low-income areas, provincial cities and periphery-urban areas and creators from minority groups such as LGBTI+. This may be because the partners themselves are or have been in the same situation themselves - like the queer filmmaker producing a film about queer women living in a refugee camp, or a music producer supporting poor aspiring musicians to get the music out for free, or governance programs’ in poor neighborhoods, working with local youths to express what they are missing out on as advocacy messages in community murals. The Mid-term evaluators wrote: “The support played by R.O.O.M. to some of the most marginalized makers was strongly expressed by the sentiment “Hivos has our back”

## Result 4: Makers reach a wider and more diverse audience with their cultural and media productions

The fourth major achievement of the program is that many of our partners showed a large increase in the number of viewers of the critical content. During the program we measured the audience reach by counting the online visits, public social media metrics, page views and attendance sheets.

All makers supported through the program stated in interviews that they produced more productions, both in quantity, improved quality and deeper criticality than before becoming R.O.O.M. partners. The most popular platforms to distribute content throughout the program scope remained 1) Facebook 2) Instagram 3) YouTube 4) WhatsApp groups 5) Websites 6) Online Radio and 7) Online TV. From the analysis of social media data compared to baseline data the R.O.O.M. program saw that almost all partners are growing their social media audiences, with growth as large as 460% on Instagram, 334% on Twitter, 183% on YouTube and 121% on Facebook. The diversity of groups represented in the audiences, however, was difficult to assess by makers.

In [Marrakesh](#), 100 participants from across the continent came together to learn and exchange knowledge under the theme of the fourth industrial revolution. More than 40 round tables and workshops were held. The focus of 2019 in Mombasa was on the rapid growth and transformation of African cities. With 175 participants and curators from over 35 countries from across the continent, the event was bigger and more diverse than the first edition.



In 2020 African Crossroads took part online and in hybrid forms, with over 163 participants attending physically in 2020 and more than 2000 people attending online. In 2020, the event took place in multiple locations at once: Lusaka, Tunis, Harare, Lagos, Lilongwe and Mombasa.

One of the highlights of the online Crossroads was the performance of renowned Zimbabwean musician Thomas Mapfumo. Mapfumo performed liberation classics mostly drawn from the 1970s and 1980s, This created a unique cross-generational experience. The video we produced

of this [concert has 14k views](#) on YouTube. Alongside this, Thomas also gave a wide-ranging interview on music and politics for Crossroads.

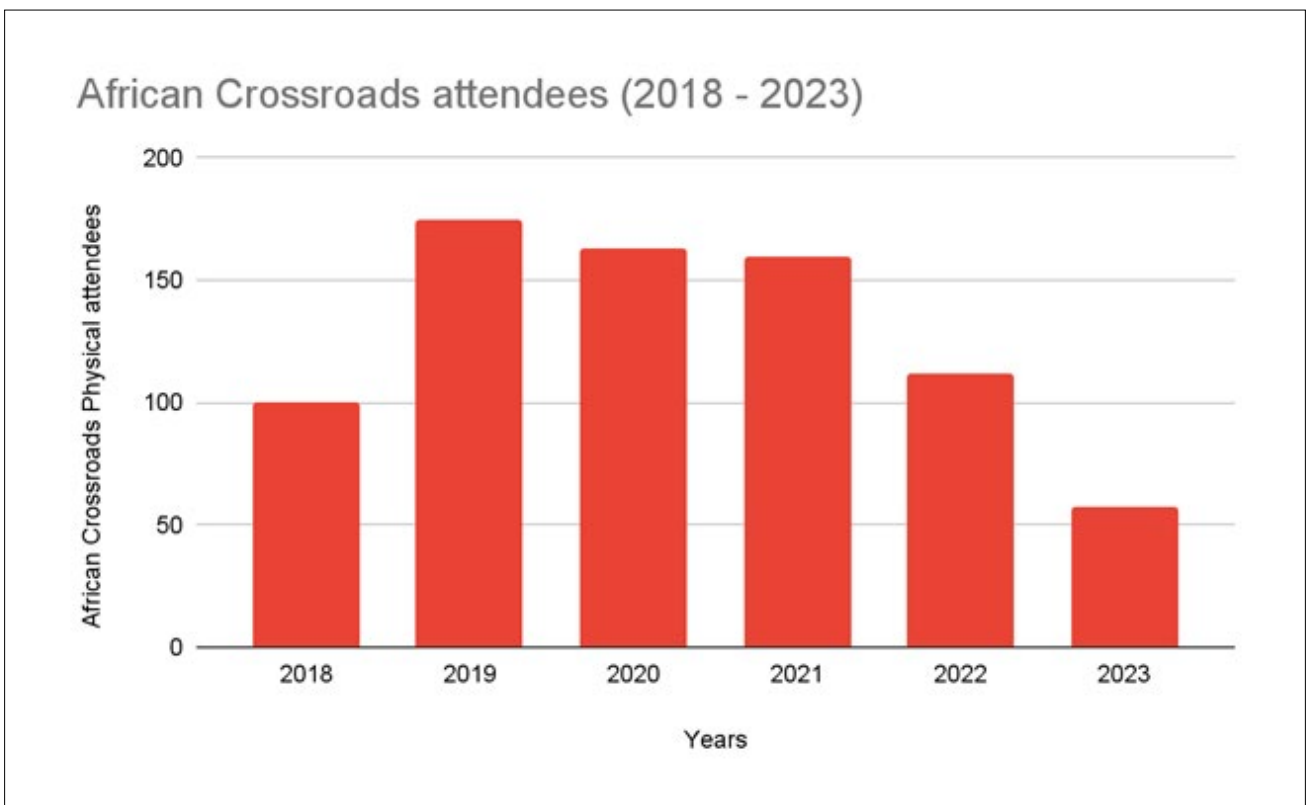
The editions of African Crossroads in 2021 experimented with new forms



*African Crossroads 2018  
in Marrakesh*

of conversations, adding voices to the key issue of Climate Justice. A good example of this is the video "[Reclamations of Land and Seed](#)" by [hFACTOR Collective](#) and [Bubblegum Club](#) and the [Ecoexistence Manifesto](#). In 2021, in total 160 participants attended and in 2022. African Crossroads

2022 edition was titled the [DALADALA](#) edition, a reference to the term used for minibuses in Tanzania. The creative way these dala dala minibuses are designed connects clearly to the African Crossroads community. In total 112 participants attended.





In 2023, as part of R.O.O.M. 2.0, we launched the [Pan-African Roaming Academy \(PARA\) Fellowships](#) – which were designed to cultivate African academic intellectual thought through analytical research, contribute to a nuanced understanding of the continent, and influence how people perceive contemporary African realities. African Crossroads produced a wealth of other content, such as a [music album](#) produced by the participants which is still accessible on [Spotify](#). The final African Crossroads festival in 2023 took place in Lusaka, Zambia under the theme “[Paths to Renewal](#)”. The event featured a series of workshops, panel discussions and interactive sessions including Pan-Africanism and African Futurism. In total 57 participants attended.

The online presence grew considerably over the years. For instance, the Facebook page grew considerably from around 3000 followers early in 2019 to 5400 after the event. Between 2022 and 2024 the Facebook page grew to over 19.000 followers. Facebook videos reached on average 95,000 people and the African Crossroads WhatsApp group stayed active with almost daily posts during 6 years of African Crossroads!

R.O.O.M. partners significantly increased their audiences. For example, [Bustop TV](#), a youth-run media house in Harare that R.O.O.M. supported in its early stage produces online satirical sketches its members produce. Using humor as a tool in their newscasts, they reflect critically on political and social matters affecting

Zimbabwean society such as the rise of prices and shortage of basic goods. While Bustop TV had only a few followers at the start of R.O.O.M., it now has over 404k followers in 2024. Over the years, Bustop TV was also featured in international media such as CNN and Al Jazeera, reaching thousands of people.

Another example is Mfalme Productions – an animation studio that focuses on politics, corruption and social integration in Kenya – which R.O.O.M. supported with a first grant in its foundational year. While in the first years of the program, Mfalme had only a few subscribers, in 2024 the studio has over 159k YouTube followers. R.O.O.M. played a significant role in the success of this initiative.



*African Crossroads 2019 attendees improvising music and dance movements between two sessions, in Mombasa*

## Result 5: Creative hubs have an increased capacity and makers participate in activities that stimulate learning and experimentation

A final big achievement of R.O.O.M. is the role it played in setting up learning communities, creative hubs and spaces that increase the room for free experimentation among our partners.



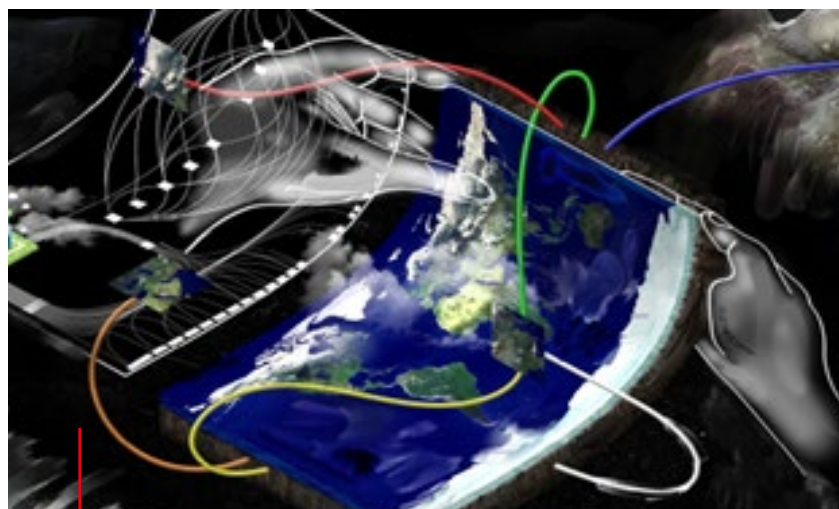
In 2018 we started with the development of the [creative hub leaders learning toolkit](#) with the British Council and Nesta. The toolkit helps creative hubs to become more financially resilient and professional both globally and at a local level. Together with the British Council, we implemented over 14 face-to-face learning experiences with creative hubs based on this toolkit.

R.O.O.M. developed various other publications that reflect our focus on learning and experimentation. An example is the research trajectory we did with a group of artists and academics from around the world and the Prince Claus Fund and the European Culture Foundation, called Forces of Art. The research findings have been compiled in a series of essays that explore how art and cultural activities



affect and interact with communities. [Forces of Art – Perspectives from a Changing World](#) challenges many assumptions about cultural expression with a nuanced, multilayered, polyvocal analysis of ways that cultural practice shapes societies.

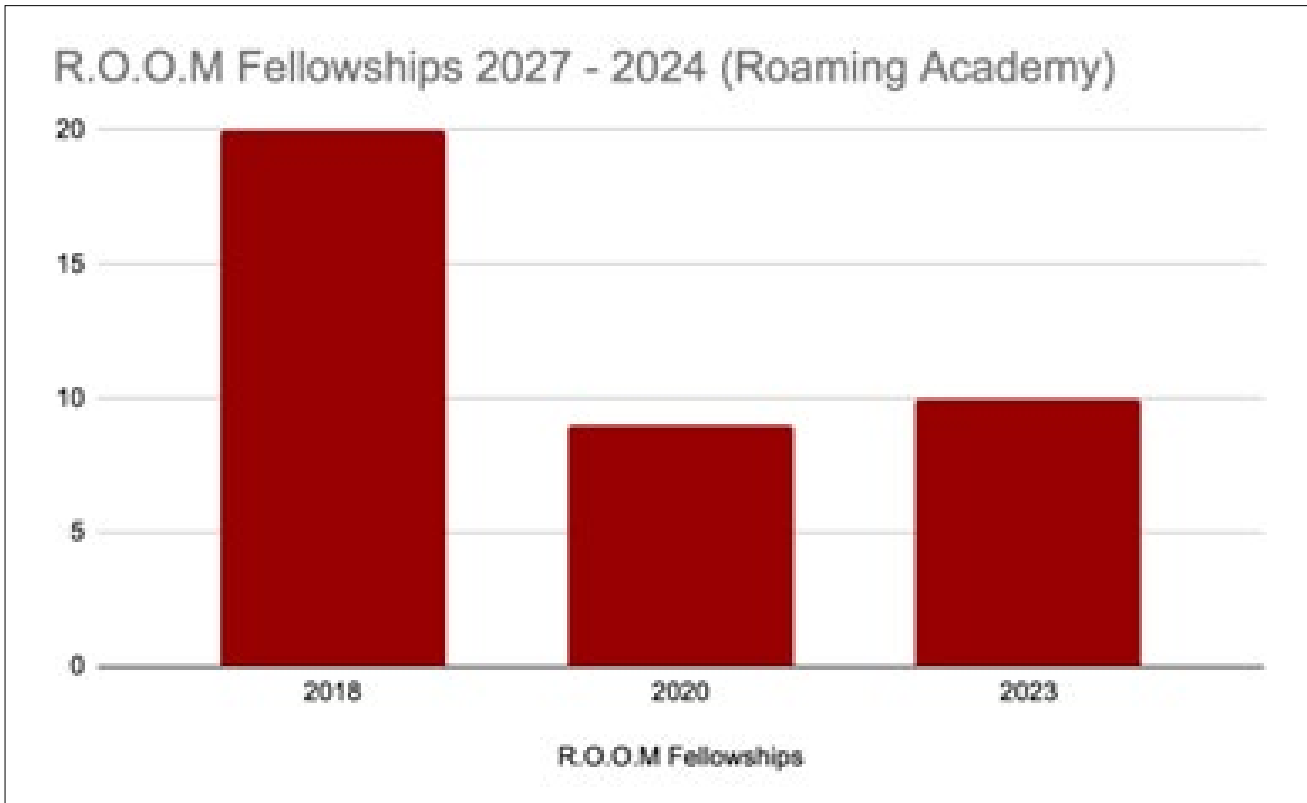
Furthermore, our [Digital Earth](#) fellowship program emphasizes research, learning and experimentation with the latest technological trends such as the increasing dominance of Artificial Intelligence. The program consisted of two cycles of 6 to 9-month fellowship for artists, allowing them to research, reflect on and experiment with how technological developments are impacting the African continent, its relationship with Asia and big tech companies like Facebook and Google in Europe and North America.



Vertical Atlas Image

The mid-term evaluators noted:

**“While there are more programs that aim to support makers, we believe that there are very few programs that offer the time, room and financial support to makers in Africa to carry out research and reflect on global trends and developments that are impacting their artistic practice.”**




*Siti and the Band, Stone Town Records Zanzibar. one of R.O.O.M partners*

In 2022, we launched the [Vertical Atlas](#) publication. The book was produced with some of the fellows of the Digital Earth cohort. The book includes many of the works produced by our fellows. Some of the outcomes were even later displayed in renowned museums such as the Centre Pompidou. Finally, we published an online interview series, called [“Counter the Digital Monoculture”](#) with a focus on the role of AI in critical content creation.



# Timeline Key Activities of R.O.O.M. and R.O.O.M. 2.0

Date	Activity
<b>June 2017</b>	Kick-off meeting in Nairobi, Kenya 
<b>July - September 2017</b>	Mapping, Scouting and Baseline Surveys

**October 2017**

First Open Call Launched: Audio-Visual Content in 21st Century Africa in French, Arabic and English (more than 600 proposals received)



**November 2017**

Launch 1st Pan-African Collaboration Grants

**March 2018**

R.O.O.M. awarded its first 62 grants to its partners

**April 2018**

Start of Capacity Building Trajectory: Workshops and Gatherings for Partners in Financial resilience, content creation, legal and security, archiving and IP



May 2018

Start development of the Creative Hub Training wToolkit with the British Council



June 2018



Launch Forces of Art Research Trajectory with Prince Claus Fund and European Culture Foundation






October 2018



Launch Fellowships Program of the Roaming Academy: Digital Earth








<p><b>November 2018</b></p>	<p>Secured co-funding of RVO for MENA (1,1 mln EUR)</p> 
<p><b>December 2018</b></p>	<p>African Crossroads 1 - The Fourth Industrial Revolution in Marrakesh</p> 
<p><b>January 2019</b></p>	<p>Launch Second Grantmaking Cycle</p>
<p><b>March 2019</b></p>	<p>Launch 2nd Pan-African Collaboration Grants</p>
<p><b>May - June 2019</b></p>	<p>Workshops on Archiving and Independent Publishing and Critical Content</p>



<b>April - November 2019</b>	Digital Earth Knowledge Studios
<b>September 2019</b>	Maker Summit in Zimbabwe 
<b>November 2019</b>	African Crossroads 2 - <a href="#">Sense the City in Mombasa</a> 
<b>March 2020</b>	Launch of 3rd Pan-African Collaboration Grants
<b>May 2020</b>	Launch Creative Hub Leaders Toolkit
<b>September 2020 - May 2021</b>	Digital Earth Fellowship Program Round 2 

<p><b>November 2020</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Book Launch Forces of Art</a></p> <p>The key note lecture by Heba Amin can be watched below:</p> 
<p><b>December 2020</b></p>	<p>African Crossroads 3 - <a href="#">Reimagining the Pan-African Dream</a></p>
<p><b>December 2020</b></p>	<p>R.O.O.M. awarded 104 contracts to its partners</p>
<p><b>April 2021</b></p>	<p>Start Decentralization of R.O.O.M. in line with Hivos Strategic Compass. R.O.O.M. Managed from Hub Southern Africa</p>
<p><b>May 2021</b></p>	<p>Mid-Term Evaluation R.O.O.M. conducted by NIRAS</p>  <p>Mid-term Evaluation of the Hivos Project: "R.O.O.M - Freedom of Expression in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"</p>

<b>September 2021</b>	Launch <a href="#">Letters to Creatives Video series</a>    
<b>October 2021</b>	African Crossroads 4 Ecoexistence  
<b>March 2022</b>	Launch publication: <a href="#">Counter The Digital Monoculture</a>
<b>May 2022</b>	Launch Toolkits in Eastern Africa: Intellectual Property, Financial Management, Digital Technologies

<b>September 2022</b>	<p>Launch: <a href="#">Traditional Beer, Mbira and Cultural Criticality: A Zimbabwean Story</a></p> 
<b>October 2022</b>	African Crossroads 5 #BuildingTheBlueprint
<b>October 2022</b>	<p>Book Launch Vertical Atlas</p> 
<b>December 2022</b>	Closing of R.O.O.M. Program
<b>March 2023</b>	Launch follow-up phase: R.O.O.M. 2.0
<b>May 2023</b>	Launch of the Pan- African Roaming Academy Research Fellowship supporting 10 researchers

October 2023

African Crossroads 6: Paths to Renewal



March 2024

[Progressive African Counter Narratives series](#) was launched

May 2024

R.O.O.M. awarded a total of 159 grants to its partners. Organization of close-out meetings with the partners



May 2024

Closing of the R.O.O.M. Program





AFRICAN  
CROSSROADS  
2023  
PATHS  
TO REALITY

BY AUTHENTICITY

**CHAPTER 3**

# Lessons Learned

Over the years, the R.O.O.M. team gathered various insights, while implementing the program. A comprehensive list of lessons learned from each year can be found in each annual workplan submitted to Sida. This final report summarizes some of the major lessons learned of the program between 2017 and 2024.

## Flexibility and Long-term grants

One of our main lessons learned throughout the 7 years of R.O.O.M. and R.O.O.M. 2.0, is the importance of providing flexible long-term grants to partners and being adaptive to changing situations on the ground. During the program, we witnessed significant political changes and economic upheaval in our targeted countries that greatly impacted the work of our partners. These events included the '17 October revolution in Lebanon, the arrest of Bobi Wine and the post-election crackdown in Uganda, the removal of Robert Mugabe as president in Zimbabwe, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lebanese liquidity crisis and harbor explosion, the war on Gaza, and the currency crisis in Egypt.

These developments required R.O.O.M. to maintain operational and financial flexibility in its grantmaking approach, financial control, grant cycles and reporting requirements for its partners. Often, tailored solutions were necessary to continue operations. Additionally, R.O.O.M. worked with partners that were not typical Southern NGOs, but instead initiatives operating under hybrid entities such as

media organizations, cultural associations, creative coops, digital platforms or creative consultancies.

A lesson learned is to acknowledge that partners are not homogenous and constitute a large variety of formations in terms of intent, composition, capacity, legal entity and ways of working within their local context. To make impact, it is essential to keep operational flexibility and avoid the NGO-nization of these initiatives by imposing standardized financial and administrative requirements, so they comply with often homogenized notions of civil society, traditional media and activism.

It has been crucial to adjust our working methods to meet the needs of our partners and their preferred funding cycle timelines. For instance, six-month grants are too short. Critical makers need time for planning and flexibility to make a real impact.

## History and Memory

During the program, one of the major lessons learned was the importance of history and memory for critical content creation among the young generation on the African continent. History and memory are important because therein lie gems of heritage that creatives can

reappropriate, remix, refresh, redefine, and reinvent. By critically investigating historical roots, we are challenged to think about our futures in radically different ways.

The sci-fi writer, Octavia Butler calls this practice: histofuturism, it merges the work of historians and Futurists for radical imagination. She writes: "Creating through a lens of histofuturism requires a keen sense of the past and present, the social, environmental, and political factors that have gotten us to where we are, and what it might mean for the future, real or imagined. When we're presented with an alternative world, it's difficult to capture the complex processes that get us there. We can arrive at a utopia, dystopia, or something in between without a clear sense of the systems and movements that got us there. But what if we were able to create another world and learn from the organizers who made it happen?"

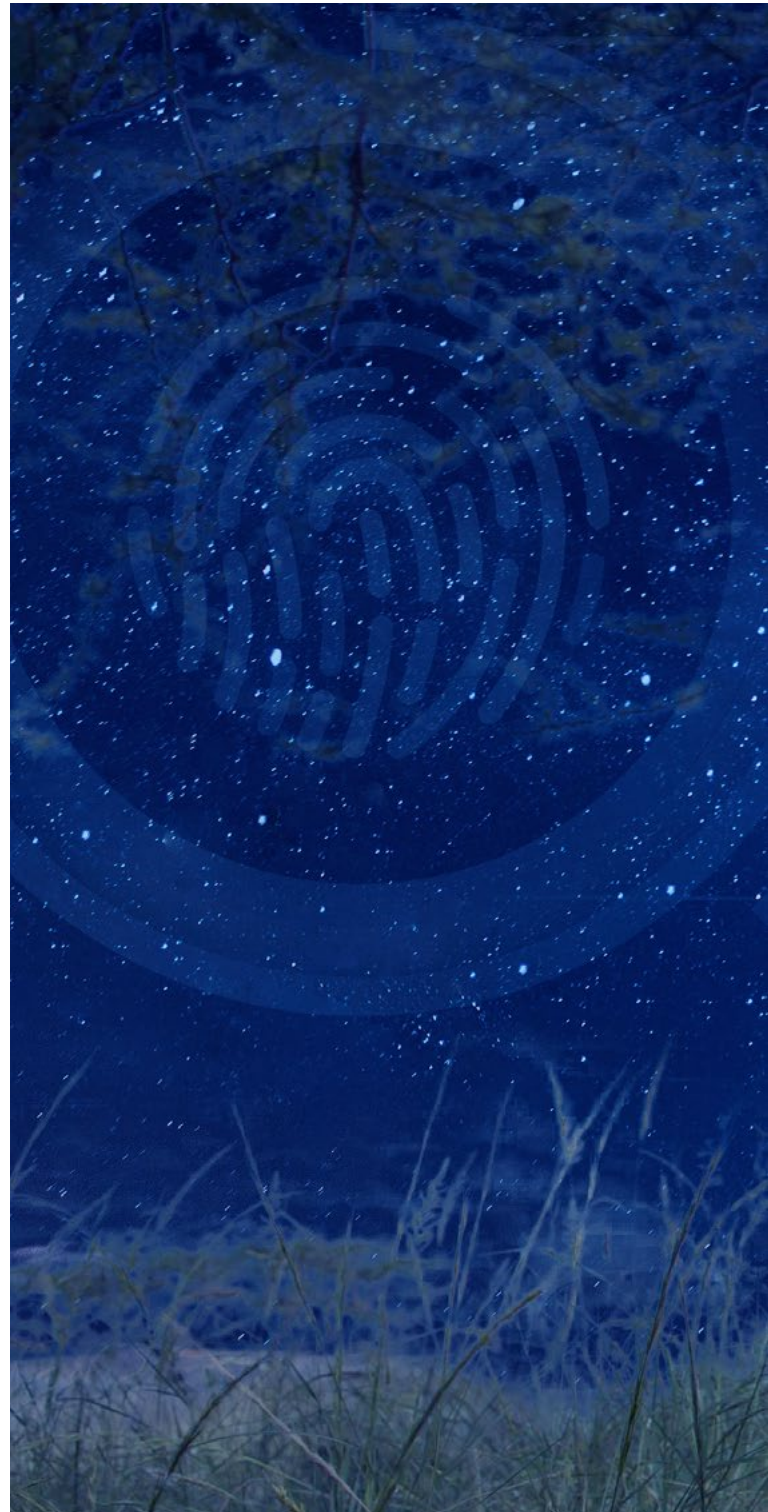
The R.O.O.M. team believes that it remains crucial to support young audio-visual content creators to adopt a histofuturist approach to content creation. This approach will fill public spaces with critical voices that challenge taboos and open new worlds by providing alternative points of view. We have learned that critical narratives, rooted in history and memory, provide an excellent counterforce to conservative and populist narratives and the shrinking of civic space and its negative effects on freedom of expression.

## Digital transition

Over the seven years of R.O.O.M., content platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Netflix, and Spotify have become increasingly crucial for content creators to reach large audiences in Africa, where most people consume content on their mobile phones. However, during the implementation, we learned that there is a limited understanding among audio-visual content creators about the role and dangers of technological developments such as data extractivism, digital colonialism, and the role of artificial intelligence in creating digital monocultures of increasingly similar graphics and content.

Issues around internet freedom, digital security, the digital divide and artificial intelligence remain often in the domain of techies and activists, while creatives are largely absent from these discussions. Also, most support by international funders either focuses on journalism and countering disinformation or digital security and protection. Very few programs target the young makers who publish widely watched TikTok videos, cartoons, music clips or animations to discuss how rapid technological changes influence their work both positively and negatively.

During the program, we learned that there is an urgent need to dive deeper into the role of monopolizing entertainment platforms in changing digital narratives from the perspective of content creators from the "Global South". Currently, most research has been done in and from Europe and North America and limited learning includes makers and the perspectives of online content creators from Africa.









## CHAPTER 4

# Three Key Messages to Sida

To conclude this synthesis report, which marks the end of the R.O.O.M. program, we have three key messages for Sida for the future. These messages are based on the experience of the R.O.O.M. implementing team between 2017 and 2024.

## Message 1: Keep supporting the Next Generation of Critical Makers in Africa

Our first message to Sida is a plea to keep supporting the next generation of critical makers in Africa. While many funders support independent media, counter disinformation, and promote internet freedom, Sida is among the few funders that also prioritize the support to informal actors and more fluid forms of citizen and creative action.

We believe that these unusual, informal, creative and fluid initiatives play a crucial role in maintaining civic space and freedom of expression in many repressive societies. Many of R.O.O.M.'s partners exemplify these new forms of youth, creative, and civic activism. Through music, streaming, photography or smartphone documentaries, makers offer

dissenting voices and provocative narratives that challenge mainstream perspectives propagated by governments, conservative media, and the private sector. Across the continent, young creatives are renouncing the age-old labels, clichés, and stereotypes placed upon them and reaching large young audiences. They are forming new identities based on their definitions, interests, pre-colonial knowledge, passions and aspirations.

While funding for R.O.O.M. stops and the program is closing, we call upon Sida to keep an eye on these non-formal, creative and spontaneous networks of organizations, often facilitated by social media and mobile telephone. There still is a big need for responsive funding to support those creative and critical networks.

The sociologist Damon Centola emphasizes the importance of this strategy for change in his book "[Change](#)". According to him the key drivers of social change are often not influential individuals at the frontlines but instead interlinked networks of social networks of peers. These networks create what Centola calls "complex contagions," where change occurs through the reinforcement of new behaviors by multiple social contacts. These hubs and networks bring together diverse groups, fostering connections across different social circles. Think about the hubs in R.O.O.M., where different circles of technologists, creatives, artists, and activists converge. According to Centola, these places are proven to be the main drivers for

social change, from the Arab Spring to Black Lives Matter. Based on various large-scale social experiments Centola concludes: "When the size of the minority committed to social change reaches just 25% of the group, it is consistently able to establish a new norm in the larger group."

We hope that Sida will continue to direct its programs and partnerships toward the creative hubs and networks of future critical makers. While strategies for safeguarding and defending frontline activists are important, it is equally crucial to engage with creative hubs, digital platforms and fresh communities of the next generation. The radical social impact of these social networks is underscored by the scientific research of Centola.

With the conclusion of R.O.O.M., a crucial source of funding for these networks and hubs of young makers will cease to exist in countries such as Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, and Egypt. There lies a responsibility with Sida and other progressive donors to provide resources to this important and often overlooked group in other ways.

## Message 2: Keep being flexible and responsive in terms of compliance requirements

As mentioned before, during the scope of the program, the R.O.O.M. team often struggled to find a balance between supporting its creative partners and the top-down financial and reporting requirements that are increasingly demanded from us. We thank Sida for its responsive and flexible approach and for always being understanding and supportive of its reporting, monitoring and audit requirements. It was greatly appreciated that Sida allowed us to implement tailored solutions during the various crises we were facing, for example during the liquidity crisis in Lebanon or Egypt, with its complicated NGO-laws. This support helped us to be adaptive to the often changing political and economic situation on the ground.

Nonetheless, over the last years and through pressure from other donors, Hivos has unfortunately stringent and

centralized its internal compliance procedures for project management and monitoring of partners. Already in its annual report of 2018, the R.O.O.M. team wrote that the main challenge for the successful implementation of the program was "finding a balance between allowing groups of content creators to freely develop new and exciting work and making sure they comply with the minimal financial and operational reporting requirements required internally in Hivos."

Throughout the program's duration, we have noticed an increasing trend toward financialization, measurement, compliance and control of local groups and CSOs. While we understand that taxpayers in the Global North have the right to expect that funds are used in the way that most effectively yields positive results, we are also concerned about how this philosophy reduces activists, youth and creatives in the Global South to service providers who must efficiently implement predetermined outcomes for overseas donors.

Our message to Sida is to keep its caution against international development programs that are less accountable to local communities and more oriented towards meeting criteria and interests set by the funders/iNGOs who oversee the "performance" of local actors. Despite all that grandstanding on local ownership, the global development financing system has largely blocked (or at least not facilitated) the idea of local ownership. We have witnessed how major donors have consistently moved away from core funding towards projects and activity-based or result-based funding with an increasingly more corporate approach. Moreover, most donors have been demanding higher compliance requirements from local groups and making them further stringent. The result is that creative, fluid and informal movements are unable to meet the expanding demands for planning and control and will become increasingly marginalized as they are unable to secure funding.

Finally, we believe that donors and INGOs should be careful in influencing makers and creatives to communicate the donors' content agendas. For example, in so-called recent "narrative change" programs, creatives receive grants based solely on their ability to align their content with the influencing agendas of donors, rather than being supported for their independence and criticality. We believe it is of uttermost importance to support young makers on the African continent to express themselves about what they perceive as most relevant and critical within their context, and not what best fits the "narrative-change" of overseas donors. This is what freedom of expression is really about!

## Message 3: Keep a focus on trans-local and transdisciplinary cooperation

An important element of the R.O.O.M. philosophy was to work at the crossroads of disciplines, geographies and ideas.

The impact of initiatives such as African Crossroads was in its ability to transcend the silo-thinking often present in the global development sector by bringing together academics, musicians, entrepreneurs, artists and activists and creating strong new communities across disciplines and geographies. Our mission was to transcend silos and geographies and often old colonial boundaries between North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa.

In a world that is increasingly fortified and fragmented, we call upon Sida to keep investing in trans-local, transnational and transdisciplinary cooperation. With the increasing global polarization, the war in Gaza, the war in Ukraine, and the wars and conflicts on the African continent such as in Sudan, Burkina Faso and Mali, trans-local cooperation is more than ever crucial for our collective planetary future.

*Day 1 at the African Crossroads 2019 in  
Mombasa, Kenya*



# Thank You

We would like to acknowledge the entire team who worked tirelessly on and contributed to the creation and implementation of the R.O.O.M. program over the years.



R.O.O.M. team at the kick-off meeting in 2017



R.O.O.M. team meeting in South Africa 2018



R.O.O.M. team meeting in Zimbabwe 2022

The R.O.O.M. team consisted of a group of people with a diversity of backgrounds outside the usual development professionals, including art historians, bloggers, digital activists, bankers and painters. After their time at R.O.O.M., some transitioned to different careers. Some pursued contemporary art or music management, others started building their own coffee machines, and some started working for Big Tech platforms or continued their activism in local movements.

We also would like to express our deep gratitude for the Sida staff, who have always trusted and supported us: Elsa Helin and Peeter Kaaman.



R.O.O.M team meeting in Zimbabwe in 2022

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