R.O.O.M.

Resource Of Open Minds

ANNUAL REPORT

May 2023 - June 2024

Hivos
people unlimited

Performance of an Afrikera Arts Trust dancer at African Crossroads 2022
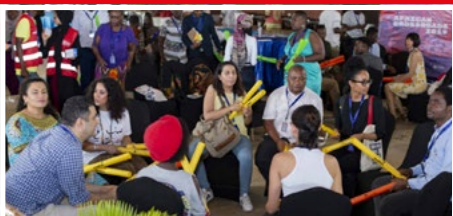
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Zambian Traditional Dancers at African Crossroads in Lusaka, Zambia. November 2023

Executive Summary

Resources of Open Minds (R.O.O.M.) was an ambitious program by Hivos that operated from 2023-24 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, 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 to a lesser extent 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 for 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.

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 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 in Lusaka in 2023.

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 Pan-African Roaming Academy, R.O.O.M. offered fellowships and collaboration grants, all focused on exchange, learning, 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 looked into data extractivism, disinformation, digital colonialism, artificial intelligence and the emerging digital monocultures that circulate increasingly similar graphics and content on social media.

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 Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) funding is coming to an end, the R.O.O.M. Team remains confident about the possibilities to fundraise for R.O.O.M-like programs in the future. In recent years, possibilities for scaling up the program has 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

1. Background

1.1 Program Summary

The Resource of Open Minds second phase (R.O.O.M. 2.0) began in mid-2023 as a follow-up to the initial R.O.O.M. (2017-2022) with support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) at a global level. Like its predecessor program, the new R.O.O.M. 2.0 was scheduled to be implemented from 2023- 2025. It however had a new contractual clause in which Hivos was expected to raise at least 25% of the next annual budget in the first year of implementation. This unfortunately did not happen. So the contract had to be terminated by mutual consent based on given legal and contractual obligations. Activities were however undertaken for the year 2023-May 2024. This report presents a summary of these activities.

On the African continent, democracy and human rights remain under severe pressure, with civic space continuing to shrink in most countries. Free expression through critical content creation and cultural production is an essential condition for open and democratic societies and people to flourish but is too often inhibited by restrictive political and social norms and a lack of sustainable resourcing.

The expansion of access to mobile telephony and the internet on the African continent has enabled new modes of free expression and access to information but has also brought about new challenges, such as growing levels of disinformation and a loss of contextual identity and diversity due to digital mono- cultures fuelled by the dominant digital platforms.

With the support of Sida, Hivos has been supporting young artists, culture and media producers, and creative hubs across East, North and Southern Africa to produce and disseminate critical audio-visual content since 2017 through the Resource of Open Minds (R.O.O.M.) program. Building on a successful first phase and a subsequent extension of the program, it was anticipated that Hivos and SIDA would extend our partnership in a new, second phase described as R.O.O.M. 2.0.

With this renewed collaboration, the primary aim was to work towards the objective of contributing to progressive, diversified and critical dialogue, debate and dissent in African societies over a period of 3 years from January 2023 to December 2025.

We designed R.O.O.M. 2.0 with consolidation and incremental innovation as guiding principles, relying on a set of successful intervention strategies centered around grant-making, capacity building, linking and learning, while introducing new sub-activities based on lessons learned and shifting contextual needs.

This included a new Pan-African Roaming Academy as an experimental space for research, exchange and learning. Collaborating with a diverse range of young makers and creative hubs through these activities, we will work towards the following outcomes:

1. Makers become more consciously independent and self-sufficient

2. Makers create more critical, African cultural, media and intellectual productions

3. Makers reach a wider and more diverse African audience with their cultural and media productions

4. Creative hubs for makers have an increased capacity to promote gender inclusivity, economic class diversity and local accessibility and ownership in facilitating African cultural and media productions.

1.2 Global Contextual Analysis of the R.O.O.M. Program:

In the period of implementation for the year 2023, multiple global events were to have consequences for development aid and directly and indirectly the R.O.O.M. 2.0 program.

Initially, there was the carry-over of the Ukraine-Russia conflict into the year which had already had implementation effects on the program due to changes in donor funding priorities.

There was also a period in which there were several elections in some mainstream European donor countries, including Sweden, that led to more right-wing governments that were more keen on changing their international development policies and focusing more, again on Ukraine and their perceived challenges of immigration.

This also meant that several Western-based international donor agencies and international organizations, Hivos included, had to either wait for the new development policies of their host or major funding governments or change their strategies to suit an increasingly changed donor priority landscape.

Furthermore, within the African context, some conflicts also took place in Suda, Burkina Faso, and Mali which in a majority of cases led to unconstitutional changes in governments and instability in those regions.

Added to this is the Palestine-Israel conflict which also had an impact on international development policies and approaches.

In some regions of the African continent, due to either austerity or El Nino induced climate change, the livelihoods of a majority of people have also been looking bleak.

What is globally clear is that there are new international relations dynamics that are pitting the democratic western countries against Russia and China and these dynamics are changing international development dynamics and funding.

1.3 The State of African Creatives in a Globalised Context.

Many African Creatives and content makers in the year 2023 were faced primarily with three challenges. These are as follows:

a) Sustainability:

Many creatives that the R.O.O.M. 2.0 program interacted with indicated that it is increasingly difficult to sustain their creative initiatives in the current funding environment. This is a development that has led to their loss of editorial and creative independence largely due to donors or investors that have set conditions that may not fit into the criticality of the content that they have creative passion for. This has led many creatives to focus on public relations content as opposed to critical content.

b) Repressive Environments:

Creatives have also highlighted that in North Africa and parts of Southern and Eastern Africa, there are still repressive laws that limit their rights to free expression and criticality. In some cases, there have been particular targeting of creatives that focus on critically important issues such as LGBTQI rights, political and economic rights as well as feminism by repressive governments and in conservative societies.

c) Navigating the Global Content Creation Superpowers and Internet/ Social Media Monopolies:

The emergence of global content aggregation and distribution behemoths such as Netflix, YouTube and Tiktok while giving creatives new opportunities has also meant where their content does not suit these powerful companies, it is rejected. Alternatively, they will be forced to tone down their organic creativity to suit the requirements of the platforms that are most popular and in most cases, populist.

1.4 Intervention Logic of R.O.O.M. 2.0

The Theory of Change of R.O.O.M. 2.0 is built closely on the intervention logic developed and refined during previous phases of the program.

A number of outcomes have been adjusted to reflect lessons learned and the intended focus on a more Pan-African dimension for the future of the program.

1.5 R.O.O.M. Overall Objective

Contribute to progressive, diversified and critical dialogue, debate and dissent in African societies.

1.6 R.O.O.M. Outcomes

1. Makers become more consciously independent and self-sufficient

2. Makers create more critical, African cultural, media and intellectual productions

3. Makers reach a wider and more diverse African audience 25 with their cultural and media productions

4. Creative hubs for makers have an increased capacity to promote gender inclusivity, economic class diversity and local accessibility and ownership in facilitating African cultural and media productions.

1.7 R.O.O.M. Outputs

1. A diverse group of makers completes the training provided by Hivos and its partners.

2. Makers who completed the training have improved skills.

3. Makers have access to an increased number of tools, services and equipment for the development of African cultural and media productions.

4. Coordinators and staff of a diverse group of creative hubs complete training by Hivos and its partners.

5. Coordinators and staff of creative hubs who participated in the training have improved skills.

6. Makers and Coordinators participate in linking, learning and experimentation.

1.8 Target Groups

1.8.1 YOUNG MAKERS:

A new generation of Pan-African makers of audio-visual culture and media productions

- These are between 18 and 35 years old
- Produce critical audio-visual, online cultural, media content
- Produce critical content that challenges and examines repressive norms and tendencies within African societies, that questions the status quo and hegemonic power in society and shows alternative perspectives and points of view.
- Work digitally and across various creative disciplines interdisciplinary
- Preferably active in provincial cities and periphery urban areas
- Preferably from a diverse background (gender, minority etc.)
- Potential to reach large and diverse audiences

1.8.2 CREATIVE HUBS:

Communities and networks of young makers: physical and virtual spaces in which they can safely work, collaborate, and produce critical content.

Our focus:
- Hub communities of critical young makers that challenge and examine the status quo, and hegemonic power in society and show alternative perspectives and viewpoints.
- Diverse communities including LGBTIQ+, feminists and other marginalized groups

1.9 R.O.O.M. Implementation and Activities in 2023-24

The R.O.O.M. 2.0 in 2023-early 2024 was implemented in three Africa regions. Namely East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda), North Africa (Tunisia and Egypt) and Southern Africa Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It was coordinated from the Hub Southern Africa regional

Hivos office.   See the diagram below for clarity on the hierarchy.

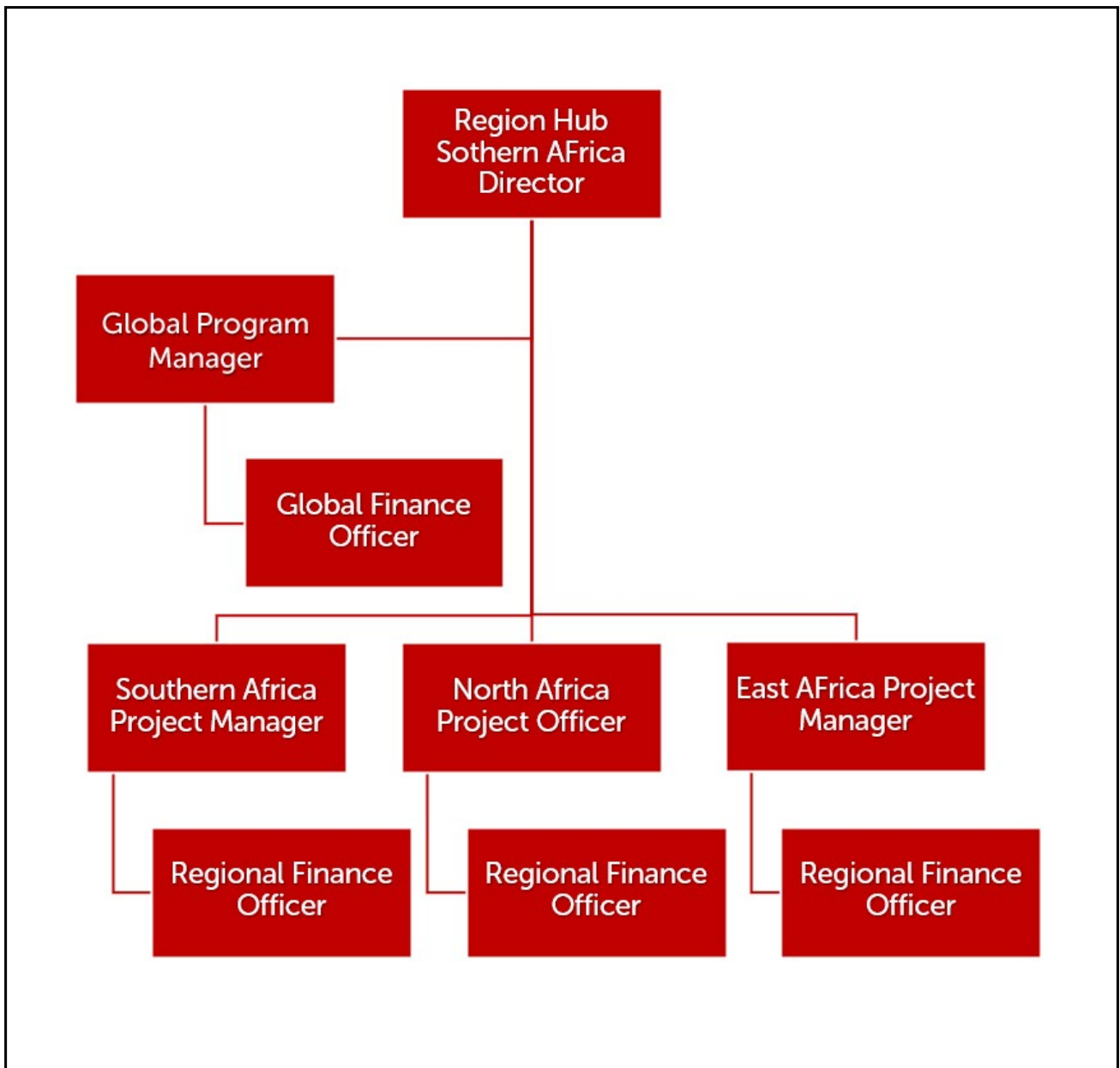 Some regions had a Professional Assistant Role.

Figure 3 R.O.O.M. Program Hierachy

2. General Activities Outline for 2023

2.1 Activity 1: Grant-making

Considering the contextual needs and overall objective of R.O.O.M. 2.0, providing financing through different grant-making instruments remains a crucial tool for the program to contribute to greater independence and self-sufficiency of African makers (Outcome 1). In line with lessons learned during the first phase of R.O.O.M., grant-making will focus on improving the consolidation and continuation of the existing network of partners by providing two types of grants:

Joy Mboya from the Go-Down Art centre, Letters from East Africa

1. **LONG-TERM PAN-AFRICAN CREATIVE CONTENT GRANTS**

In each region (East, North and Southern Africa), R.O.O.M. 2.0 identified and selected creative content partners. These partners will be selected based on their ability to scale and become strong organizations and able to produce critical Pan-African and local content, reach large audiences and support and train other makers.

2. **SHORT-TERM PRODUCTION GRANTS: IN EACH REGION,**

R.O.O.M. 2.0 launched open calls for production grants. Production grants are for makers, collectives and studios to produce new critical content or produce one-off events and activities.

These grants will be awarded for short-term critical audio-visual production, an event or activity that leads to more critical content and larger audiences.

Group discussion during the workshop in Zambia in 2022

2.2 Activity Two: Partner Meetings

R.O.O.M. helped strengthen the core group of partners who receive the Creative Content Grants through a yearly partner meeting and ongoing coaching and mentoring by the regional program managers and financial officers. During the partner meetings, contracted organizations will receive capacity support in operations, finance, fundraising, leadership, wellbeing, holistic security, gender equality diversity and inclusion, criticality, audience reach and intellectual property.

Based on interviews, surveys and partner meetings we determined the need for specific training (for instance on digital security, self-sustainability, archiving etc.) and delivered this tailor-made training to the group of partners.

2.2.1 MAKER WORKSHOPS:

R.O.O.M. 2.0 also worked to build the capacity of the makers who receive short-term production grants through Maker workshops. The workshops focused on

how to strengthen the criticality of their production. In the process of producing work, makers benefit from being offered an opportunity to discuss their work in the context of general trends in society, to learn more about political issues such as geopolitics, neoliberalism, Pan-Africanism, feminism, history, memory and reimagining African Futures and also how to organize research or be offered advice and tools on how to

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2.3 Activity Three: Linking and Learning.

2.3.1 . AFRICAN CROSSROADS ANNUAL MEETUP 2023:

In 2023 R.O.O.M.2.0 organized an annual edition of African Crossroads that will have different Pan-African themes for each year. This last edition was held in Lusaka, Zambia in September 2023.

Some of the anticipated themes that were tackled by the annual meeting of African Crossroads included but were not limited to the following:

• Feminism: Emerging perspectives on African Feminisms and struggles for gender equality

• History, Memory and Perspectives on African Creative Futures

• Climate Change and Climate Justice within the African context

• Surveillance capitalism, internet freedom and censorship on the African continent

2.3.2 AFRICAN CROSSROADS COLLABORATION GRANTS

To increase the impact of collaborations at African Crossroads, we will continue toward collaboration grants. These grants are aimed at peer-to-peer learning between partners as well as supporting the development of cross-regional projects. These grants are specifically aimed at collaborations and learning between makers and other actors such as human rights defenders, social activists or entrepreneurs. Also, collaborations between North Africa and the wider African continent were encouraged to break through barriers that are created because of the limited mobility and exchange programs available, restrictive visa policies and limited transportation options.

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

3. Detailed Activity Overview Per Region.

3.1 Southern Africa

REGIONAL PARTNER'S OVERVIEW:

The 2023-4 phase included the parallel hybrid implementation of two Grant Cycles as follows:

Amplification Grants	Production Grants
EUR 30000	**EUR7500**
September 2023- January/ February 2024 4-5 months (Targeted 7-8 months)	October 2023- January/ February 2024 3-4 months (Targeted 4-6 months)
Registered and Previously audited	Start-ups/ Young/ Youth-led entities
Amplifying previous work or counter-narratives	Producing critical cultural audio-visual content
Competitive Open Call	Competitive Closed Call

Table 1: Grant Type Specifications

Other factors:

- Experience and traceable portfolio in audio-visual content creation

- Collaborations

- Remote, low-income, or marginalized groups

3.1.1 AMPLIFICATION GRANTS:

Two open calls were sent out; the first process was met by system revisions in the grant cycle, as indicated in the revised grant cycle below, leading to the call's re-flight. A 14-day open call for proposals was sent out, closing on 12 June 2023.

3.1.2 PRODUCTION GRANTS

A long listing procedure was carried out to come up with a list of 26 applicants, consisting of the targeted applicants for the competitive closed call. Emails were shared via admin to the targeted applicants invite them to apply for the call. This was followed by a ZOOM Grant Explainer session were the Project Manager shared details about the project to improve the quality of the applications. The grant explainer was, therefore, a capacity-building interactive session to assist production grant applicants (small-sized/ start-ups) in grant writing and budgeting. The call closed on 7 August 2023 followed by the grant opening led by HR, and a selection committee brown paper meeting with the same team.

A total of 17 applicants responded, and the R.O.O.M. selection matrix was adopted based on the criteria specified in the call for proposals.

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

3.2 Southern Africa 2023-4 Partners' Project Summaries

3.2.1 AMPLIFICATION GRANTS

mHub (x Podcast Malawi)- Lilongwe, Malawi

mHub, in collaboration with Podcast Malawi, implemented the re-imagine podcast series, which engaged in alternative discussion perspectives on Malawi's history and critical spheres like governance, gender, mental health and climate. In addition, mHub improved a platform called **Nkhalo.com,** a digital critical content archiving platform.

Alliance for Community Action- Lusaka, Zambia

Digital Ask Project was aligned to the ACA 2023 – 2026 youth and rural-rural focus and created critical content inclusive of rural minorities. The project used local languages, newspapers, and community radios to produce the radio drama series, translate previous productions and comic illustrations that discussed resource management and citizen rights in Zambia.

Simuka Comedy- Harare, Zimbabwe

The "Multiplying Faces, Amplifying Voices" project implemented ParlyEngage, Special Class, and Comedy Roast activities to promote climate action, i.e., mitigating the impact of climate change and adapting to its effects.

Bustop TV- Harare, Zimbabwe

"Transcending the Ballot Box" explored the challenges and importance of transgender inclusion in electoral processes, specifically focusing on the experience of transgender individuals during the August 2023 elections in Zimbabwe.

3.2.2 PRODUCTION GRANTS

Youth Developers Collaboration Theatre-Blantyre, Malawi

The project used inclusive dialogue and understanding among different communities to empower youth to challenge stereotypes around mental health and masculinities. Through workshops, multi-discipline collaboration, and theatre performances, young individuals gained performing arts skills for self-expression, diversity, and creativity, building alternative social values

Colour Culture Arts (x Tabs Production)-Lusaka, Zambia

Color Culture Arts and Tabproduction Studios Ltd collaborated on an animated anthology titled "Twaano," which seeks to provide content that tells Indigenous historical to contemporary stories on mental health awareness. It explored the experiences of three different characters living with autism and anxiety and offered alternative viewpoints of pre-colonial, colonial, and modern Zambia – all encompassed in visually appealing animation and music.

Dzuka Cholinga (x Youth Budget Trailers & Vinci Arts), Lusaka, Zambia

In partnership with Youth Budget Trailers Zambia and Vinci Arts, these organizations empowered young artists on the use of theatre and art as a tool for social change. The project objectives were to increase understanding, influence on democracy and human rights artivism, and overall raise capacity and appreciation through inclusive open perspectives, e.g., to sexual identity.

Shangano Arts Trust, Hwange, Zimbabwe

This project created a platform for dialogue and freedom of expression where marginalized artists through poetry, visual art, storytelling, and short films, partnering with community radio, discussed issues of stigma, discrimination, lack of social inclusion and marginalization in 4 Matabeleland remote districts.

3.3 Capacity Building

Due to the additional fundraising requirement, R.O.O.M. 2.0 prioritized 3 capacity-building activities that targeted the project's and its partners' organizational, financial, and editorial sustainability. The first activity was a mapping study of the stakeholders' environment, looking into areas of opportunities and/or collaboration in the civic rights- free expression continuum. This was followed by a critical lecture series that discussed topical issues of decoloniality, censorship, and AI. Finally, to conclude the implementation phase was the Strategic Planning and Resource Mobilization Workshop.

3.3.1 MAPPING STUDY

The report identified possible funding sources, synergies, and opportunities to strengthen partnerships at the country, regional, and global levels. It also provided some key recommendations that the Hivos R.O.O.M project could consider in the future. It was noted that Hivos is well-positioned to tap into multiple funding sources; building on its track record with the R.O.O.M. project in Southern Africa and packaging already existing content would be key to unlocking the funding sources identified in this study. Among the outputs was a database of high-potential donors with key information for potential creative and cultural projects.

The report outlined the complex ecosystem of financial support for creative and cultural projects, encompassing public, private, and philanthropic funding and investment.

The study also identified potential interface and/or overlap areas and suggested modifications in the scope or focus of the Hivos Southern Africa R.O.O.M project that would allow it to tap non-traditional funding sources.
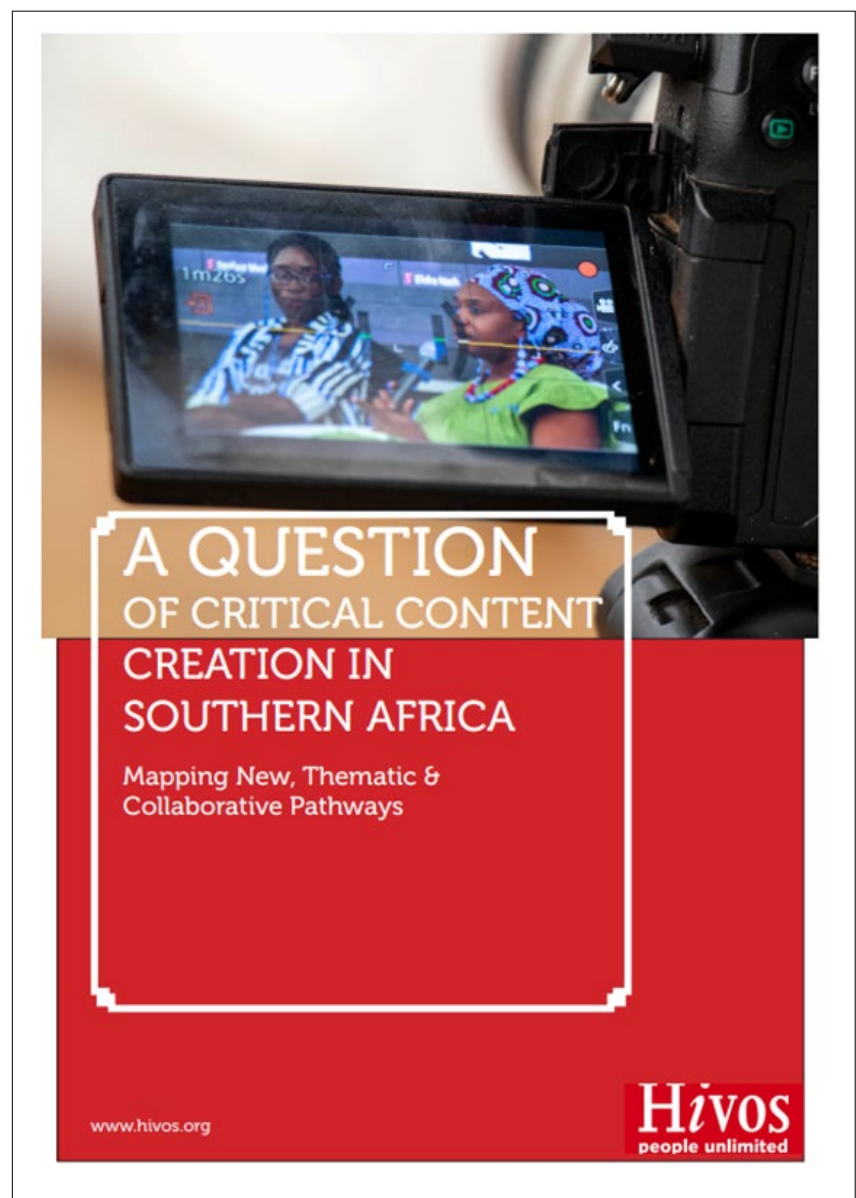

Figure 4: Mapping Study Cover

Key Recommendations

- Aligning the R.O.O.M. Project 2.0 project to mainstream continental, regional, and national processes.

- Continued promotion of professionalizing the creative and cultural sector through workshops and other initiatives that establish environments for learning and exchange.

- Multi-country and Partner Approaches (coalitions) that interest donors that seek to enhance return on investment.

- Providing resource mobilization training to the Hivos R.O.O.M project program managers on the need to engage donors and develop a R.O.O.M project Resource Mobilization Plan.

- Building better evidence of the key role of the creative and cultural sector in the three countries for greater visibility and potential for new investment for the project.

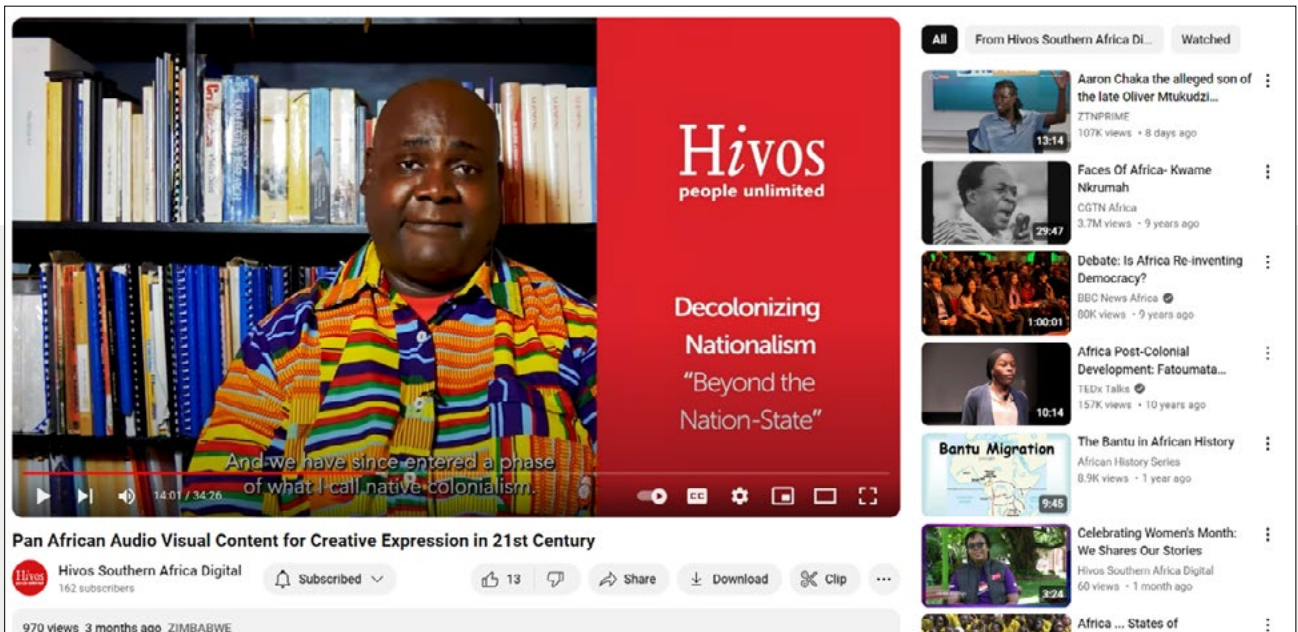## 3.3.2 CRITICAL PAN-AFRICAN COUNTER-NARRATIVES LECTURE SERIES

Figure 5: Criticality Lecture Documentary

Full-length documentary 970 views on YouTube | Trailer 460 views on Facebook | 9- episode Series

The CP-CAN Lecture Series was an academic inquiry on topical Pan-African trends that affect identity, sexuality, history, governance, technology, futurism, and the African social construct. 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.

The series was able to tap into the knowledge of Political analysts and University Professors Dr. Sishuwa Sishuwa and Dr. Alexandra Rusero and award-winning tech

entrepreneur Sam Masikini. This production reached an organic Full-length documentary 970 views on YouTube | Trailer 460 views on Facebook | 9- episode Series

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Sam Masikini. This production reached an organic combined number of over 1 600 views on social media and 60 people through the partner hubs in 4 months.

Notably, the full length documentary now appears among credible sources of information on YouTube to mention BBC News Africa, CGTN Africa, Tedx Talks and African History Series which shows how R.O.O.M. produced content fits among credible critical information platforms.
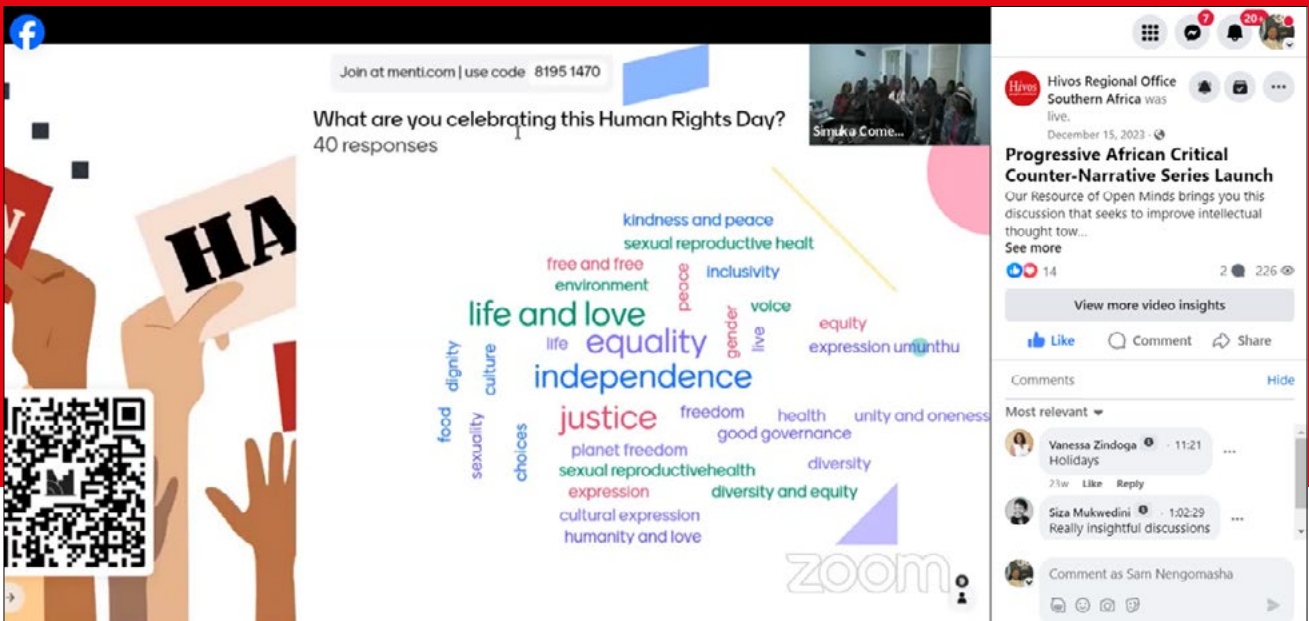

Figure 6: Criticality Lecture Human Rights Day Launch

Human Rights Day Commemorations Launch 226 views on Facebook| 60 live participants joining from 2 Hubs (Simuka Comedy and YDCT)| and Hivos partners joining on ZOOM.

Strategic Planning and Resource Mobilization

Figure 7: Strategic Planning & Resource Mobilization Phased Structure

This activity was developed to address capacity gaps as seen from the partner intake capacity assessments, strengthen partners' internal systems and policies, and provide long-term sustainable continuity in producing critical and cultural content and relatable knowledge and practical skills for organizational growth and Independence.

R.O.O.M. engaged KFM Consultants, experts in organizational development and Financial literacy and sustainability to customize and conduct this 3 weeks long activity. All the R.O.O.M. partners participated in this activity (16 participants) with 3/8 organizations finalizing their strategic and resource mobilization plans during this period. Other outputs from this activity were the Process and Workshop report, The Resource Mobilization Training Guide and Manual, and the Strategic Planning Training Guide and Manual.

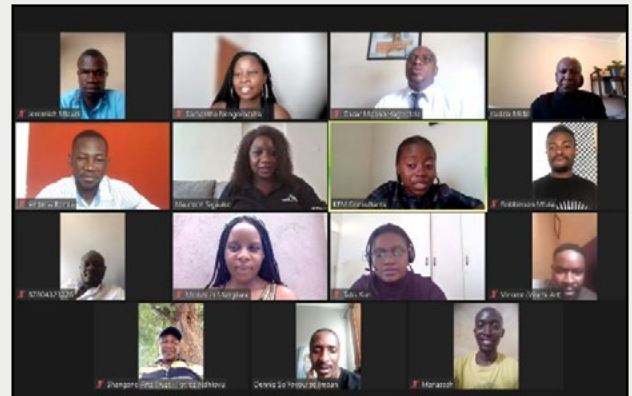*Figure 8: Process and Workshop Report*

Figure 9: ZOOM Training Snip Shot

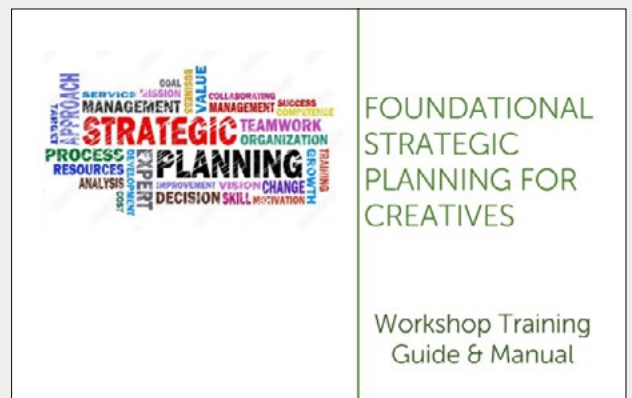*Figure 10: Resource Mobilization Training Guide & Manual*

Figure 11: Strategic Planning for Creatives Training Guide & Manual

3.3.3 PARTNERS' CLOSE OUT MEETING

The regional 2023-4 partners' close-out was held between 21-23 May and attended by 14 representatives from the 8 partners in Harare. The objectives were to measure the impact in relation to the program objectives and indicators, assess the effectiveness of the capacity-building activities and processes carried out, reflect on priorities that may enhance end-of-program reporting, capture the implementing partners' voices, and set a traceable R.O.O.M. record. An activity report capturing the Meeting proceeding was drafted as the activity output. Exit interview videos of the partners were also recorded by the Communications Officer.

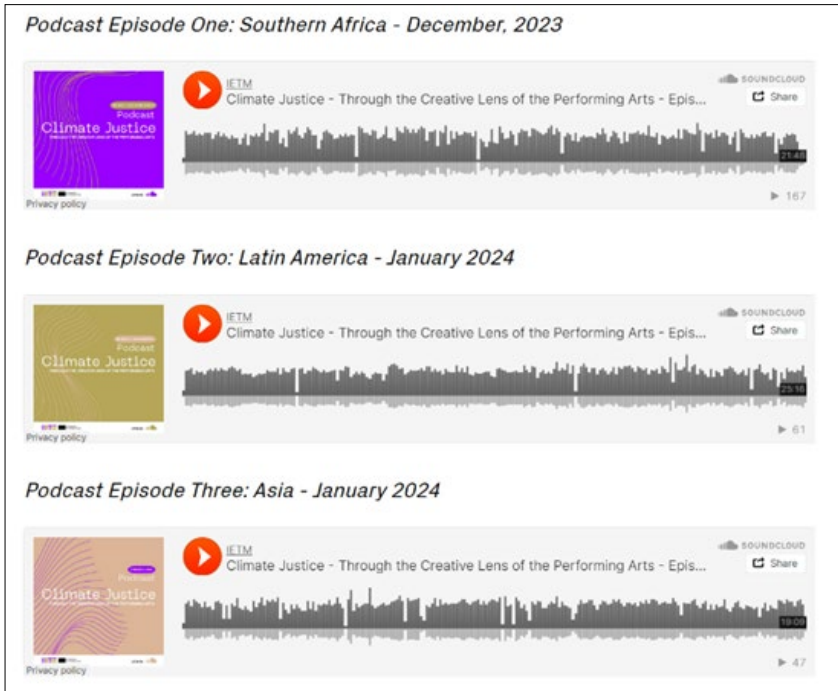*Figure 12: R.O.O.M. Partners Meeting Welcome Dinner*

Figure 13: Nana Zulu, Regional Director's Key Note Address

3.3.4 PROJECT VISIBILITY HIGHLIGHTS

The R.O.O.M. Project Manager was invited to present-through Business Development-based on gender representation. The well-coordinated and heavily attended online activity had over 400 participants, many joining from Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and all other parts of the continent. Plenary questions included the amplification grant applicants asking about the open call. The event was live-streamed on the ANF Facebook Page and YouTube Channel, with one published article on the masterclass.

Figure 14: Africa No Filter Grant Writing Master Class Poster

Podcast Episode One: Southern Africa - December, 2023

Podcast Episode Two: Latin America - January 2024

Podcast Episode Three: Asia - January 2024

R.O.O.M. was invited by IETM, a performing Arts Network based in Belgium, to support global research on Climate Justice and the role of performing Arts. This research was inspired by the Hivos 2022 Research on Climate Justice Artivism and R.O.O.M.'s work in the regional south. The R.O.O.M. and VCA programs came together as a regional unit to offer guidance and support on this matter, leading a focus group discussion that informed the research and the first episode of a three-part podcast series.

Figure 14: Africa No Filter Grant Writing Master Class Poster

Figure 16: Culture Solutions Composing Trust Series

Following this engagement, R.O.O.M. was invited to contribute to the Culture Solutions Composting Trust Podcast Series discussing Cultural relations perspectives

4. East Africa

East Africa undertook a lot activities in a short space of time due to the fact that there was staff departure and a relatively prolonged recruitment process. Hence some of the activities are fewer in between. This is also because the R.O.O.M. program due to the uncertainty of funding had only signed its implementation contract mid 2023 and that did not leave much time for implementation. Given the circumstances, the activities undertaken were well done in their criticality and relevance to the program.

4.1 Program summary information

Project Name	R.O.O.M. II
Donor name	SIDA
Project budget	EUR 294,374
Project period	March 2023-May 2024
Countries covered (list)	Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania
Number of partners	**2023-2024:** 8 Partners **Kenya-** Baruu Collective, Eljay Productions Ltd, Radio Domus, Until Everyone Is Free/ PaliAct, Radio Domus **Uganda-** FOTEA, MCI/Arch Africa **Tanzania-** MEDEA, Chimaba Sanaa Group

Table 2: Program summary information

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT AND OBJECTIVE:

R.O.O.M. provides funding for audio-visual art and media projects that challenge social issues such as LGBTI rights, police corruption, neoliberalism and outmoded gender norms, amongst others. The program organizes training events and creates resources for makers to help them become more independent, critical and sustainable, for example accelerator toolkits for creative hubs.

4.2 Summary of Partners for Collaboration and Amplification Grants

In East Africa R.O.O.M. supported the following number of partners and undertook the following activities:

1. Supporting 8 partners across Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania with Production and Amplification grants

2. Holding one 2-day capacity building design sprint onstrategic use of emerging technologies for 8 2023-2024 partners, 2 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 each partner.

3. Holding one 2-day knowledge exchange event for 8 2023-2024 partners, 4 2020-2022 partners and 1 strategic partner

4.2.1 MEDIA FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ADVOCACY (MEDEA)

Their project 'Jenga Sauti (Build Your Voice' leaned on the influential 'Mchiriku' style of music to produce songs and organise community 'barazas' as a way for citizens to voice their lived experiences, tackle social concerns, address gender issues and generally to bring attention to various societal issues facing citizens. The considerable influence of 'Mchiriku' music on the community, especially in championing freedom of expression and active participation remains remarkably noteworthy. Their work can be found here:-
www.youtube.com/@mediafordevelopmentandadvo5917

4.2.2 FOTEA

With their project 'Circulations', FOTEA worked with participants of their existing programmes i.e Emerging Photographer Mentorship Programme and Stories 4 Change to initiate a series of workshops, training sessions and experiments to investigate new ways to transmit their work into the world. The result was the use of WhatsApp (on mobile devices) as the main medium of dissemination. Here are the results: - Circulations Uganda - A different way of publishing (main website), https://bit.ly/CirculationsUG (WhatsApp chatbot which is designed for small screens and best viewed on mobile devices)

4.2.3 BARUU COLLECTIVE

Vinenavyo (translated to Objects That Speak) -Through captivating audio-visual media and immersive dining experiences, Baruu celebrated and documented the legacy of the Kenyan Coastal culture, showcasing overlooked artifacts and intangible heritage, in a 4-part documentary and photo essay series. They worked on Viungu (pots), Mombasa Oldest Bar and Leso in Mombasa, Lamu doors, Storied fish, Fishing nets and early astronomy fishing techniques in Lamu, Vigango and Mboko in Kilifi, WW1 ruins at Maktau and Sailaita Hills and Kongo Mosque ruins in Kwale. Their work is in post-production and will be available here in the near future. You can however find snippets of their work on their social media platforms:
www.instagram.com/reel/Czi7SyvImYw
www.instagram.com/reel/C0gehC7ojGU/

4.2.4 ELJAY PRODUCTIONS LTD

Dada Next Door was a project that saw a transformative initiative that recognized and celebrated the achievements of female artivists, serving as a resource for future artists and like-minded stakeholders supporting similar approaches. Their work can be found here:
www.youtube.com/@DadaNextDoor

4.2.5 CHIMABA SANAA GROUP

With their 'Tunastahili Podium (TUPO)', Chimaba created a digital platform going by the same name collecting data on issues that affect key stakeholders and the public and secondary sources and organizing them to give solutions and recommendations or create a useful service that attracts key stakeholders. Secondly, encourage users of the digital platform to contribute their views or submit improved data directly to the platform. Thirdly, charge advertising to appear on their webpage or digital platform. Their work can be found here:
#LIVE: UZINDUZI WA JUKWAA LA WASANII LA TUNASTAHILI PODIUM-TUPO (youtube.com)

4.2.6 ARCH AFRICA

Arch Africa used the power of conversation and Afro-optimism to inspire African women to discover who they are and equip them with the knowledge and resources to take practical steps to actualize their full potential. The importance of Afro-optimism cannot be overstated as it highlights notions of technological progress, economic growth, political reform, and confidence in Africa's diverse and vibrant cultures to drive economic growth. This philosophy offers a different narrative in a world where the media often portrays Africa as a place of poverty, conflict, and disease. It showcased the continent's strengths and successes and provides a more balanced and nuanced view of Africa, its people and its aspirations. Here is their work: - https://www.youtube.com/@ArchAfrica to give solutions and recommendations or create a useful service that attracts key stakeholders. Secondly, encourage users of the digital platform to contribute their views or submit improved data directly to the platform. Thirdly, charge advertising to appear on their webpage or digital platform. Their work can be found here:
#LIVE: UZINDUZI WA JUKWAA LA WASANII LA TUNASTAHILI PODIUM-TUPO (youtube.com)

4.2.7 RADIO DOMUS

Voices Unchained was a podcast series that encompassed episodes addressing various dimensions of Kenya's intricate political landscape in 2023. It delved into political structures, citizens' rights, economic empowerment, crisis resilience, peaceful coexistence, recent political events, civic engagement, and diverse perspectives from civil society and religious leaders. Here is their work::
https://www.youtube.com/@radiodomus3755

4.2.8 UNTIL EVERYONE IS FREE (UEIF)

Sisi Wavuja Jasho (We workers) is a project that sought to trace the history of workers' movements in Kenya, from the (Central Police Station/Norfolk Massacre, when police violently repressed a demonstration by Mary Nyanjiru) to the militant multi-racial unions headed by Makhan Singh and Fred Kubai, to the earliest general strikes that ground the colonial economy to a halt, to the co-optation of unions under Presidents Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Arap Moi. Their revolutionary podcast can be found on all podcasting platforms by the title 'Until Everyone Is Free'.

Here is a YouTube link to start you off:
www.youtube.com/@untileverypod

4.3 Key Lessons for East Africa:

1. Creating an enabling environment for partners to explore and experiment with their projects within the confines of the approved workplan and budget.

2. Regular capacity strengthening at a level that is easily understandable by the partners in terms of language especially

3. Foreseeing risks and co-creating (together with partners) mitigating measures especially where budgets and programmatic constraints are present.

4. Updated understanding of the creative industry at any given point to better define/redefine the program so as to cater better to the needs of creatives.

Zenji Boy, the brainchild behind: 'Taarap'. from Stone Town Records Zanzibar.

5. North Africa-Tunisia

In North Africa, R.O.O.M. 2.0 only managed to implement in Tunisia. The following activities were undertaken and some of the partners profiles and activities are outlined below.

5.1 R.O.O.M. II Partners' overview

THE LINA BEN MHENNI ASSOCIATION:

Established in 2021, the Lina Ben Mhenni Association was founded by the family and comrades of Lina Ben Mhenni, the late Tunisian activist, blogger and revolutionary, to carry on her work and her vision. The organization's most prominent work revolves around its Feminist School which provides artistic, activist, and academic knowledge for youth, particularly women and activists. The school is focusing on issues related to social norms such as racism, sexism, gender-based violence, classism, and other forms of discrimination.

DANCERS CITIZENS SOUTH:

Dancers Citizens South (DCS) emerged as a progressive youth movement and was established as an independent, non-profit association on May 31, 2015. In its work, DCS focuses on creating an effective model for the promotion of joint action and cultural solidarity among active actors operating in cities and governorates other than Tunis. Moreover, the organization aims mainly at promoting the right of marginalized communities, suffering from challenges and obstacles brought about by centralization, to access creative cultural and artistic practices, while emphasizing their intersection with human rights, community, heritage, gender, educational and environmental work, and clarifying the way in which culture and arts can positively contribute to developing societies.

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

DAMJ, THE TUNISIAN ASSOCIATION FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY:

Damj, the Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, that was created in 2011 by a group of young activists. Through its work, Damj seeks that individuals thrive and flourish in a community that integrates into a diverse, just, and equal society where rights and freedoms are enjoyed. The organization's mission is to work toward inclusion by celebrating the individual, strengthening the community, and promoting its integration into society.

COLLECTIF CRÉATIF:

The Collectif Créatif traces its origins to a community whose lives repeatedly intersected in various spaces within the Medina of Tunis. Against Tunisia's post-revolutionary sociocultural renaissance, the Medina was an ideal canvas for nurturing encounters that would later yield profound consequences. Fuelled by the necessity to formalise and structure these dynamics while upholding a commitment to freedom of action and participatory governance, this community coalesced around a legally registered association in 2016, laying the foundation for collaborative endeavours. Le Collectif Créatif's core mission revolves around the development of emerging creative professions, particularly in the realms of design, ecology, visual arts, and digital arts. This mission is driven by a dual purpose: fostering social cohesion within the local community while promoting social diversity and embracing the richness of various perspectives.

5.1 R.O.O.M. II Partners' overview

H.O.B - Home On borders: stories of diversity and resilience in Africa, work by the Lina Ben Mhenni Association

The Home on Borders (H.O.B) Community Podcast stands as a pioneering endeavour that has brought together Tunisian and Sub-Saharan female artists, aged between 18 and 35, residing in Tunisia. This initiative, rooted in the ethos of challenging social norms, sought to provide participants with essential skills in media for the purpose of podcast production.

OVERVIEW OF THE H.O.B - HOME ON BORDERS ACTIVITIES:

o   **Training for podcast and web radio hosting:**

Following a dynamic six-day training program, the project successfully trained 12 participants, encompassing artists and activists, in podcast scripting, interviewing techniques, and editing software. The project adapted its original plan from live radio sessions to producing seven impactful podcasts, each delving into various aspects of education, culture, and activism.

o   **Home On Boarders: The Community and the podcasts' stories**

A significant outcome of the project is the establishment of the H.O.B Community, a dedicated network for advocacy, education, and community discussions. This network serves as a hub for the distribution of the produced podcasts, ensuring a broader reach and fostering ongoing dialogue within pan-African communities. The H.O.B platform evolved into a community and a YouTube channel of communication, set to further serve its beneficiaries.

During the training, participants went through a lot of discussions and brainstorming about the subjects of their podcasts. Every participant had the chance to think about a concept related to the themes proposed by the project; education, art, culture and human rights. The discussions were mostly about identity and personal expressions within human rights issues in Africa, hence the personal and real aspect of the podcasts created under the project.

7 podcasts saw the light and were the fruit of collaboration between participants with some of the podcasts being created by 2 people in some cases. Participants received training in Radio live animation where they were invited to write their script and rehearsal for the show. The training lasted one day and a half and was the strong moment of union because participants had to communicate in groups to set up the script of the show and divide roles during the 2 hours of live.

o   **Home On boarders: The event and the distribution**

On Saturday the 24th of February, Home On Borders organised a public event where participants animated a live radio show to present their podcasts. The event took place in Inkyfada, independent media, who is the organization's partner in technical training and hosting the activities and the launching event in Tunis with the presence of young people coming from Tunisia and from other African countries.

In the closing event, participants and the team presented the H.O.B project, showcased the training process, and fostered connections within communities. This event aimed to highlight the significance of the initiative and strengthen bonds for continued engagement.

o **4000 Km Untitled, a R.O.O.M. II project by Dancers Citizens South**

The 4000 Km Untitled project is fundamentally based on creating a common ground among cultural actors, artists, and researchers in southern Tunisia to collaboratively support the field of arts and culture in serving vulnerable communities. Based on field research and academic analysis, followed by a collective production phase involving five artists in performing and visual arts, a performance was created and showcased in both Gabes and in Tunis.
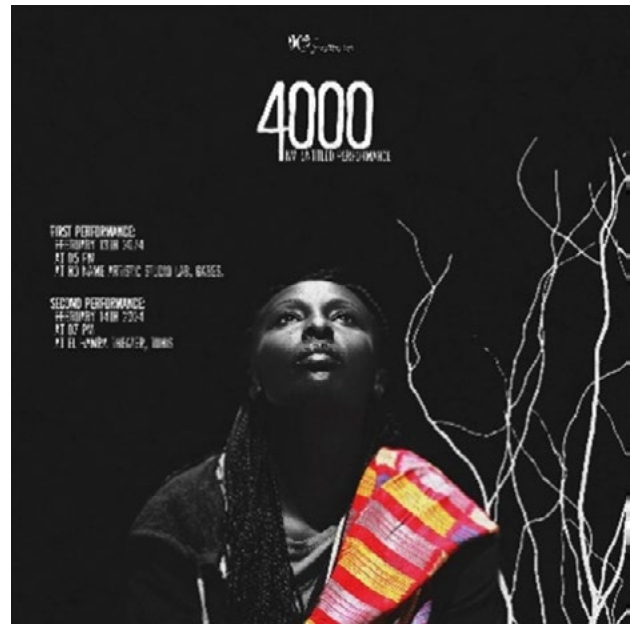
OVERVIEW OF THE H.O.B - HOME ON BORDERS ACTIVITIES:

o **Implementation of a 15-day artistic bootcamp in the city of Gabes**

The immersive artistic bootcamp project, titled **"4000 Km untitled - 4000 كلم بدون عنوان"** took place from February 5th to 12th, 2024, at the No Name Artistic Studio Lab. It involved 6 artists; 2 musicians, 1 choreographer, 1 scenographer, 1 visual/light artist, and an artistic director. The project spanned 13 days (and 2 days for the performances), during which time was divided into preparing artistic creations, conducting podcasts, interviews, meetings with a sociologist, and sharing the sociologist's study findings.

DCS implemented a marketing and promotion strategy for the art bootcamp to engage the audience through a diverse range of content. This involved sharing insights into the bootcamp's theme, introducing the participating artists, posting interviews, and providing regular updates on the creation process of the performance, including photos, stories, and after movies. The ultimate goal was to offer a comprehensive and wholesome experience to our audience.t, participants and the team presented the H.O.B project, showcased the training process, and fostered connections within communities. This event aimed to highlight the significance of the initiative and strengthen bonds for continued engagement.

o **Conduction of a research study on the role of art in addressing societal issues**

A sociological study was conducted to investigate the challenges confronting immigrants in Tunisia, particularly in the southern region, as well as key challenges they face from their countries of origin before arriving in Tunisia. The study aimed to collect data on encountered challenges, contributions made, and opportunities for policy enhancement. Through rigorous analysis and field research, DCS completed 101 surveys, comprising 90 male and 11 female respondents from 16 countries.

o **The first preview show in the city of Gabes, the second show in Tunis**

The artistic journey reached its peak with two showings of **"4000 Km untitled - 4000 كلم بدون عنوان"** The first preview occurred at the No Name Artistic Studio Lab in Gabes on February 13th, 2024, captivating an audience of 40 individuals with its profound emotional impact. A second performance followed at the El Hamra theater in Tunis on February 14th, 2024, drawing an audience of about 50 attendees. The performance's depth resonated deeply, leaving a lasting impression and cultivating empathy among those present.

o **Implementation of discussion sessions on the outcomes of the artistic bootcamp and study with the public and stakeholders**

It was planned to facilitate interactive discussion sessions with the audience after each performance. However, upon further consideration, and due to the reactions of the audience after the performances, it became apparent that the sociopolitical context surrounding the project was marked by significant instability and sensitivity. Consequently, in consultation with our sociologist and the participating artists, it was collectively decided to forego the open discussion format due to concerns regarding the safety and well-being of both participants and facilitators.

5.3 Overview of The Elysian – FemTopia activities:

THE ELYSIAN - FEMTOPIA: TRAINING YOUNG PEOPLE AND BREAKING STERETOTYPES, A R.O.O.M. II PROJECT BY DAMJ

Buidling on the Elysian project, Damj partnered with the Zanoobya association and organized workshops on subjects such dramaturgy and writing, costume sketches with a circular design approach, initiation to graphic design, and interactive sessions encompassing the entire creative process to benefit young people. These workshops lead up to a mini-documentary, showcasing the talents in each specialty, offering a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the artistic journey with 14 participants. Beyond the humorous facade of the mini doc, lie profound reflections on crucial subjects such as sexual and reproductive health education, pleasure, body perception, the pornography industry, the issue of gender, and asexuality. Moreover, it explores the concept of laughter, its origin, commercialization, and the dichotomy of comedy as either transgressive or complicit with power.

o   **Training participants:**

14 participants were selected and trained, each contributing to the diverse tapestry of artistic exploration, ensuring a rich blend of perspectives to explore themes such as sexual and reproductive health education, pleasure, and body perception. Experts conducted a series of interactive workshops empowering 14 beneficiaries on the following subjects: inclusive dramaturgical skills, promoting diverse narratives and challenging stereotypes, costume sketching and visual storytelling, encouraging participants to explore non-normative gender expressions and emphasizing sustainable practices with zero-waste materials.

FEMTOPIA

" A 3-DAY BOOTCAMP ABOUT INCLUSIVE DRAMATURGY, VISUAL STORYTELLING AND COSTUME SKETCHING "
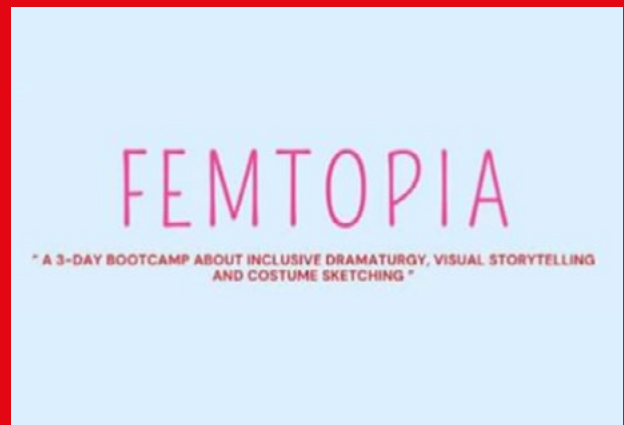
o   **Screening event:**

On February 19th, an exclusive screening was held at El Teatro, bringing together representatives from NGOs, and civil society. The event began with insightful speeches that reflected on the workshop process, offering an overview of the project's objectives and impact. This provided a platform for participants to share their experiences.The screening fostered diverse discussions and debates sparked by the documentary, delving into topics that challenge societal norms. It served as a catalyst for conversations about inclusivity, the right to bodily autonomy, sexual health education, privacy, and the emancipatory potential of artistic expression. The interactive debate engaged the audience, encouraging reflection and dialogue on pressing social issues.

5.4 Digital Campaign, Security Strategy, and Algorithm Optimization:

In conjunction with the screening event, a strategic digital campaign was launched to foster online interactions and increase accessibility to the documentary. Furthermore, this strategy also played a crucial role in optimizing the Instagram algorithm. The emphasis on comments and interactions generated through the private distribution of the documentary link helped boost engagement metrics, signaling to the algorithm that the content was valuable and worthy of increased visibility. As a result, the documentary content gained prominence on users' feeds, reaching a wider audience and amplifying the project's message of inclusivity and social change.

To further expand the reach of the documentary, extracts with a duration of one minute were published on TikTok and Instagram. This strategic decision leveraged the popularity of these platforms among younger audiences and allowed for quick consumption of impactful content. The short-form videos served as teasers, enticing viewers to engage with the full documentary, thus driving traffic and engagement across multiple digital channels.

5.5 C.I.R.C.L.E, Climate Initiative for Resilience, Creativity & Learning, a R.O.O.M. II project by Collectif Créatif

The "C.I.R.C.L.E - Climate Initiative for Resilience, Creativity, Learning, and Empowerment" project, funded by Hivos, has progressed with a focus on holistic learning experiences and creative expression. The 6-week intensive program encompasses storytelling, climate education, and artistic collaboration, culminating in a transformative physical event. Participants, hailing from diverse academic backgrounds, formed peer groups and selected their projects, whether podcasts to be developed into series or sound installations, irrespective of their individual areas of expertise. The program culminated in a public event where the culmination of the 'C.I.R.C.L.E' efforts was showcased through the presentation of several podcasts and sound installations.content was valuable and worthy of increased visibility. As a result, the documentary content gained prominence on users' feeds, reaching a wider audience and amplifying the project's message of inclusivity and social change.

Overview of the C.I.R.C.L.E activities

Training for podcast and web radio hosting:

From January 21 to 25, 2024, the team meticulously finalized the participant selection process and prepared for the upcoming program. Given that the primary skills necessary for this program, such as crafting narratives through verbal messages and sound design for narrative enhancement, require specialized expertise, the organization opted to engage two trainers.

5.4 Capacity Building (Tunisia)

5.6.1 STORYTELLING TRAINING AND CLIMATE CHANGE INTRODUCTION:

Commencing on January 27, 2024, the program unfolded with a focus on storytelling techniques and in-depth discussions on climate justice. Each session, spanning 6 hours, aimed to develop an understanding of effective storytelling while fostering creativity.

5.6.2 CLIMATE CHANGE AND JUSTICE EXPLORATION:

On January 28, 2024, the narrative continued with further exploration of storytelling intricately woven into the fabric of climate justice. Sessions, also lasting 6 hours, provided participants with a comprehensive understanding of climate change impacts and justice issues. Peer-reviewed script drafts emerged, highlighting the intersection of climate and social justice.

5.6.3 ART INTRODUCTION AND SCRIPT PEER REVIEW

On January 29, 2024, participants witnessed an exploration of art practices alongside a peer review of script drafts. During these 3-hour sessions, participants not only acquired a basic background in art but also activated peer learning mechanisms.

5.6.4 FINAL SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT AND PODCAST PRODUCTION TRAINING:

Concluding the program's initial weeks on February 3, 2024, the focus shifted to final script development and podcast production training. Each 6-hour session aimed to activate peer learning mechanisms while providing participants with initial training on podcast production and sound design tools. The tangible expected outputs are finalized scripts and practical training, laying the foundation for impactful podcasts on climate resilience and justice.
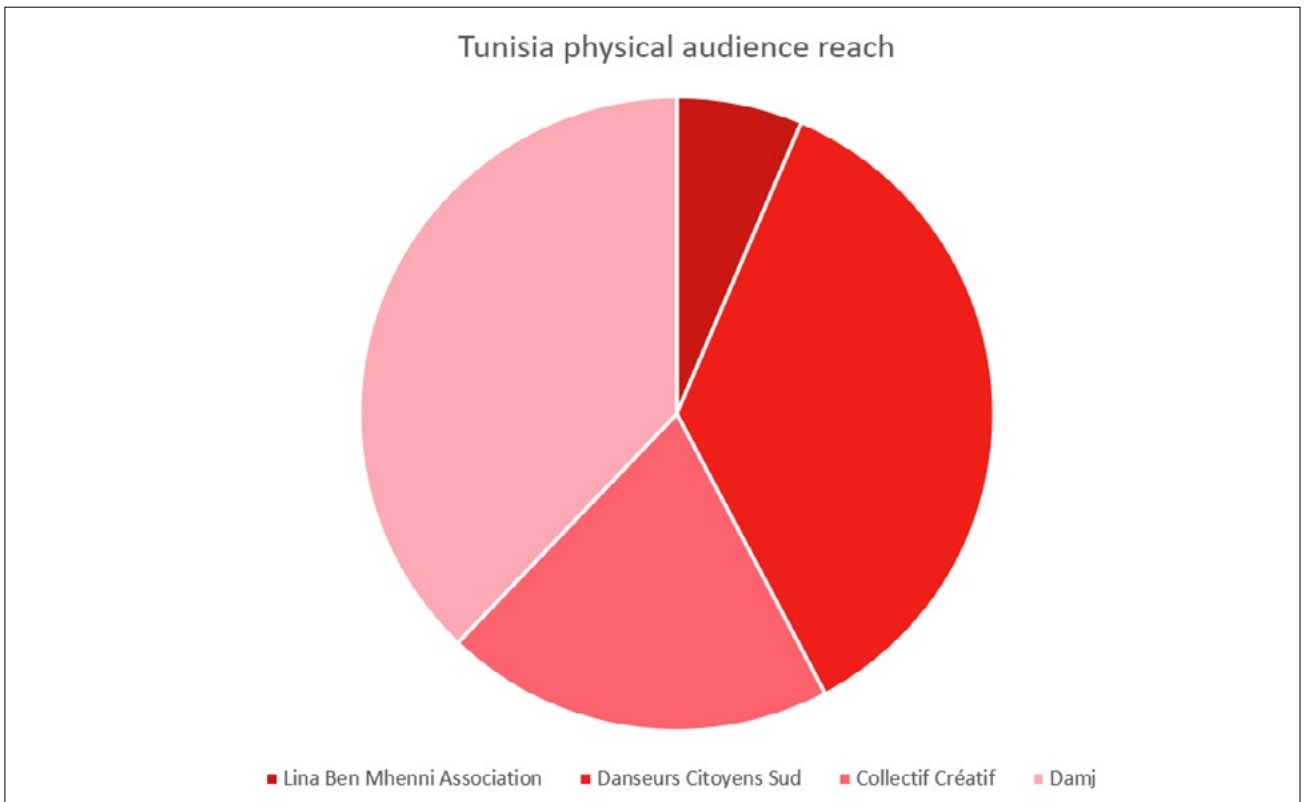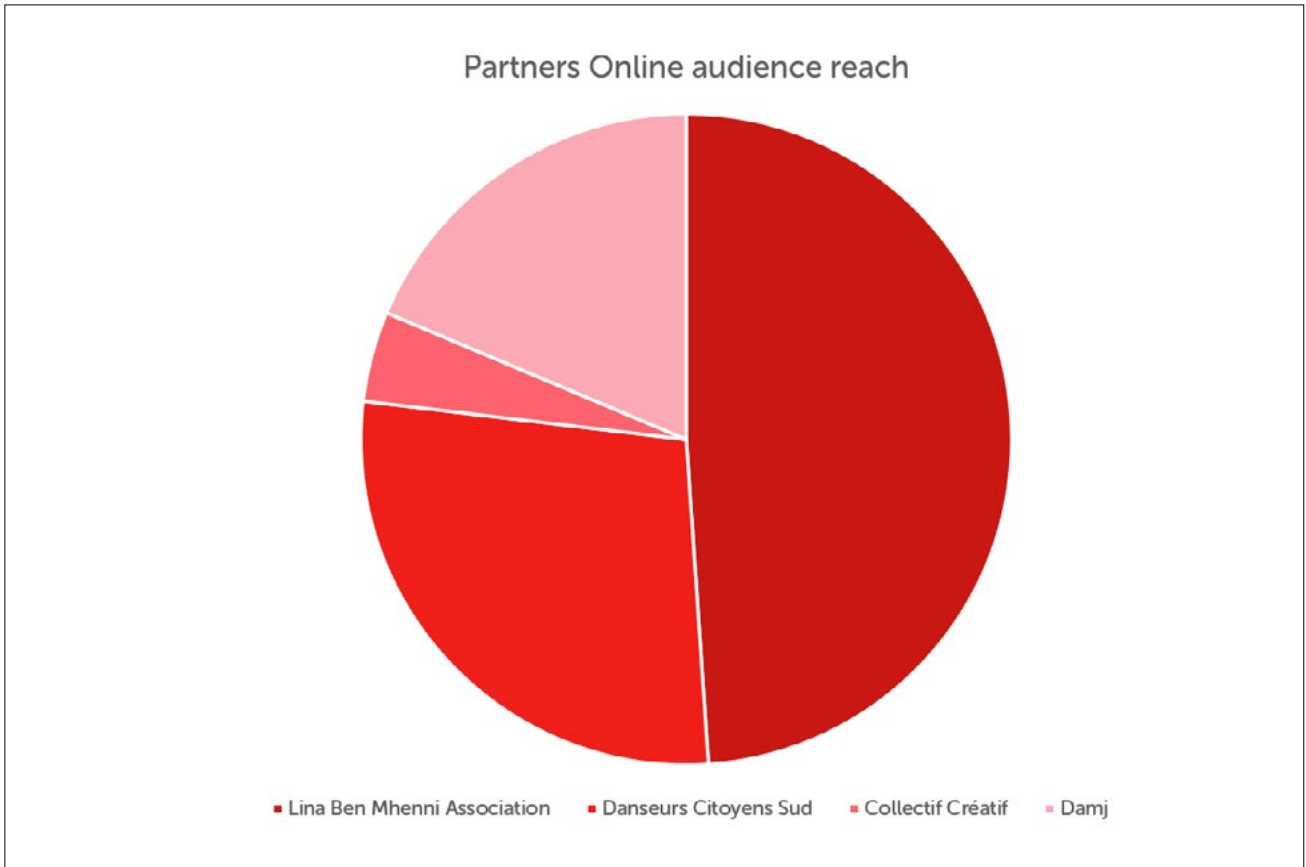
5.6.5 PRACTICAL AND SOUND INSTALLATION PRODUCTION INITIATION:

On February 4th, a special setup of the space was arranged to prepare for the sound design training, with workstations and PCs set up in the patio. The session began with a theoretical introduction to sound, followed by exploring its use in artistic approaches through examples of works.

o   **Screening event:**

Partners Online audience reach

■ Lina Ben Mhenni Association   ■ Danseurs Citoyens Sud   ■ Collectif Créatif   ■ Damj

Tunisia physical audience reach

■ Lina Ben Mhenni Association   ■ Danseurs Citoyens Sud   ■ Collectif Créatif   ■ Damj

6. Linking and Learning

6.1 African Crossroads

6.1.1 REGRANTING: COLLABORATION GRANTS.

The regranting activity aimed to empower creatives and innovators from North Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa by providing them with the financial resources to support their projects. Why collaboration grants? these grants are aimed at supporting peer-to-peer cross learning and skill exchange targeting organizations, individuals, multidisciplinary hubs and collectives from North Africa, East Africa and Southern African.

The total amount for the regranting 2023 regranting cycle was **EUR 75,000** offering a maximum grant amount of **EUR25,000** per one regional collaboration. This approach supported grassroots initiatives aligned with African Crossroads' thematic priorities, promoting local ownership and encouraging the development of homegrown solutions.

Through a competitive selection process, we awarded three grants to projects that demonstrated significant impact potential in creativity, technology and environmental awareness and sustainability. Out of a pool of 160 applications, the regranting process was conducted in an inclusive and transparent manner ensuring that diverse voices and ideas were represented.

6.1.2 IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

ORGANIZATION: BAREFEET THEATRE (ZAMBIA)

Collaborating with: Sandra Suubi (Uganda)

Barefeet Theatre is a cultural movement founded in Zambia in 2006. A group of young Zambian artists, many former street children, and Irish artists who met by chance, and began to collaborate creatively together, eventually delivering theatre workshops which sought to empower and protect vulnerable children living on the streets of Lusaka.

Sandra Suubi Sandra Suubi is a socially conscious visual activist, whose multimedia physical and sonic sculptural works are a response to her observation, study and experience of popular visual culture and social practices.

Project Focus

The project focus was to increase awareness about the importance of climate action, particularly targeting young individuals from low-income communities. It aimed to showcase the advantages of a circular economy, promote responsible consumption, and inspire transformative actions. By engaging and empowering youth—often underestimated as agents of change—the project challenged societal norms. It highlighted the role of art in driving conversations and raising awareness about climate justice, presenting an alternative to traditional approaches.

Impact and achievements

The project achieved measurable direct impact by training 45 young participants, significantly shaping their attitudes and behaviours towards environmental sustainability. The increased awareness of the environmental impact of waste materials has instilled a strong commitment among these youths and communities to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Additionally, a song was produced to address environmental sustainability, behavioural change individual action. Led by Sandra Suubi supported by Komora from Kenya and Zambian artist James Sakala, the production also featured young project participants who used their newfound knowledge of climate change to contribute verses to the song. To date the song has garnered 205 views on YouTube.

Links to organization:
barefeettheatre.org

Links to production:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQTtV6eVxsQ

COLLABORATING WITH: DOROVEE (MALAWI)

Project Focus

TThe project "Tech meets unconventional fashion" aimed to create a stop-motion animation focusing on new narratives, Pan-Africanism, and promoting eco-friendly fashion advocacy motion animation focusing on new narratives, Pan-Africanism, and promoting eco-friendly fashion advocacy. It sought to blend futuristic digital creative aspects with traditional elements, fostering collaboration between technology and traditional art forms to promote inclusivity and innovation.

Impact and achievements

The partnership between Matamba Film Labs and Dorovee Hub had a significant impact on the participants, including the training of six young women in new media technology and fashion design. Their creative work was acknowledged by notable stop-motion experts such as Lyndon Barrios Snr, who encouraged them to submit their projects to an American animation festival. This recognition not only boosted their confidence but also sparked a deeper exploration of cut-out stop-motion animation within their projects.

Additionally, Dorovee Hub saw benefits from the collaboration as they ventured into new areas like set design for animation and linear films within their region. The project's success allowed them to establish the Dorovee Hub space, leading to an increase in orders and overall growth in their endeavours.

Links to organization:
matambafilmlabs.com

Links to production:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBhMFydh04A

6.1.4 ORGANIZATION: ICEALEX FOUNDATION (EGYPT)

COLLABORATING WITH: TUNISIA FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT (TUNISIA)

Project focus: The project focused on exploring the intersectionality of different sectors within El Kef's artistic community through a documentary. Despite encountering climate-related challenges, the artists in this community persist in preserving and celebrating their local culture. This underscores the significance of cultural resilience alongside environmental initiatives, demonstrating how communities can evolve their identities amidst changing circumstances. The documentary's objective is to delve into their collective history, spanning from ancient eras to present-day struggles encountered by the food and agriculture sectors due to climate change impact.

Links to organization:
icealex.com

Links to production:
Hivos Documentary

6.2 Pan-African Roaming Academy Research Fellowship

The Pan-African Roaming Academy Research Fellowships (PARA) were designed to cultivate African academic intellectual thought through analytical research and contribute to a nuanced understanding of the continent and impact of on how people perceive contemporary African realities. The activity included mentorship, training sessions and networking opportunities, enabling fellows to develop their skills, expand their networks, and collaborate on projects that address pressing issues within their communities. The fellowship initiative not only aimed to build capacity but also to create a cohort of thinkers dedicated to the vision of African Crossroads.

Impact and Outcomes

The fellowship's impact extends beyond academic scope, the Fellowship successfully gravitated towards influencing historical cultural preservation, policy reform efforts and community empowerment initiatives, thereby reinforcing the vision of African Crossroads to promote self-determined growth and progress.
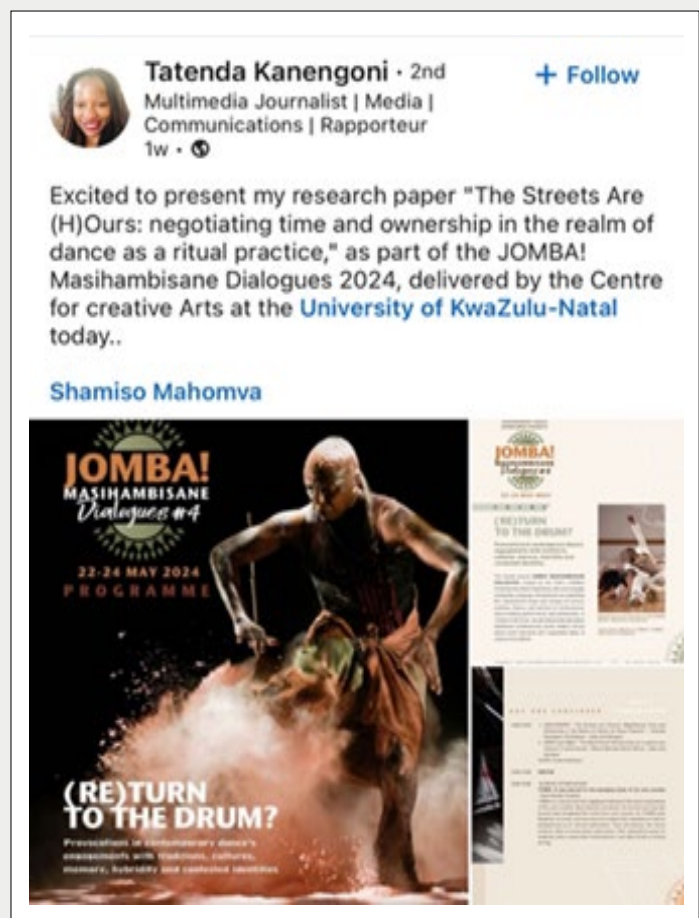
Case Study 1:

A research fellow from the creative arts sector conducted an in-depth study on the cultural significance and evolution of traditional dance practices in Zimbabwe, with a focus on dance as a ritual. The research involved informant interviews in the rural communities of Mutoko and Nyamapanda, along with face-to-face interviews in Harare.

Impact

The fellow's research paper, "The Streets Are (H) ours," was selected for presentation by the Centre for Creative Arts at the University of Kwazulu Natal, highlighting the study's academic contribution. This research found that artistic translation has challenged the way traditional dance practices are delivered and perceived.

The study underscored the importance of cultural revival initiatives and the pivotal role of artists in preserving and raising awareness about traditional dance forms. This research exemplifies the significant impact that focused studies in the creative arts can have on uncovering and promoting cultural heritage. The fellow's work is not only advancing academic discourse but also played a crucial role in conscientise society and navigating contemporary narratives.

Case Study 2:

A research fellow conducted ground-breaking research to explore barriers and opportunities for placemaking in Lilongwe City and urban Malawi within the context of the Pan African Agenda. The study identified significant challenges, such as the lack of cultural infrastructure stifling creative industries and socioeconomic disparities limiting access to resources for marginalized communities.

Impact

The research yielded two impactful outcomes: firstly, the creation of an MOU between the Lilongwe City Council and Lilongwe's citizens, facilitated by the Lilongwe City Green Guardians and secondly, the development of a City Center Rejuvenation Project Playbook by the Reseacher's #Re-Imagine Lilongwe Initiative. These tangible results demonstrate a push for policy reforms and collaborative efforts in driving Lilongwe City's development forward, while also fostering knowledge exchange with other cities across Africa.

Through the Pan-African Roaming Academy Research we managed to empower and capacitate 10 research fellows from North East, West and Southern Africa. These achievements not only showcase their dedication but also highlight their newfound capabilities in driving policy reforms and collaborative actions reflecting the successful implementation of research-derived activity.

3. Resource Mobilization

One of the key activities undertaken was resource mobilization aimed at diversifying funding sources to ensure the project's sustainability and growth. The team developed compelling pitch documents and proactively engaged with Mozilla Foundation, the US Embassy in Zimbabwe, Localization Lab British Council in Zimbabwe, GIZ, AFRIXEM Bank. These efforts were part of a broader strategy to secure financial support, establish local partnerships and obtain corporate sponsorships.

Although immediate support from the approached organizations was not secured, the activity was successful in laying the groundwork for future engagements. Following these efforts we have developed a stakeholder database of potential funders, which will be invaluable in the next phase of the project. This proactive approach to resource mobilization highlights African Crossroads' commitment to sustainability and strategic growth, ensuring that the project can continue to thrive and expand its impact.

6.3 Own Implementation - Linking, Learning and Networking

PATHS TO RENEWAL EVENT IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA NOVEMBER 2023

The African Crossroads event under the theme "Paths to Renewal" event held in Lusaka, Zambia. This gathering brought together participants from across the continent to share ideas, showcase their work and collaborate on new initiatives. The event featured a series of workshops, panel discussions and interactive sessions focused on the project's thematic priorities, including African Futurism, climate resilience, historical reflection, gender equality, AI integration into African markets and practices and cultural collaboration.

Event objectives:

Objective 1: Showcasing and exhibitions

To allow for participants to experience, exhibit and showcase a wide array of artistic expressions and cultural heritage, fostering a deeper appreciation for the community.

Objective 2: Knowledge exchange

To provide a platform for discussions that facilitate the exchange of knowledge and innovative ideas, enhancing the community's understanding of these critical issues on the continent (refer to thematic priorities).

North Africa
Egypt
Sudan

East Africa
Kenya
Tanzania
Uganda

West Africa
Nigeria
Cameroon

Southern Africa
Eswatini
Malawi
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Impact:

The event provided a platform for cross-cultural exchange and networking, which strengthened the bonds within the African Crossroads community. Participants formed new connections, collaborated on future projects and shared best practices, promoting a spirit of cooperation and collective problem-solving. Post the event extensive networking and resource sharing among participants continues to grow.

Figure 17: Countries represented at the Annual Showcasing Event Lusaka, Zambia (2023)

number of attendees
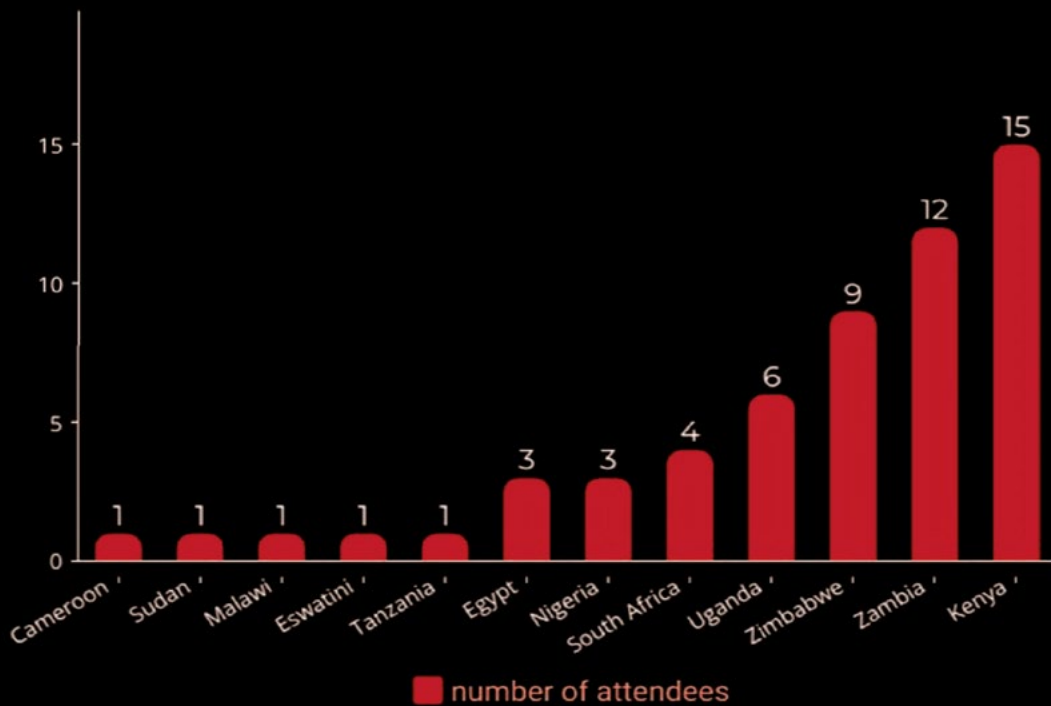
- Quantitatively African Crossroads provided key linking and learning events for its members. In these programmes they got to share ideas on Pan African creativity, exchange knowledge on their regional and country contexts through fellowships. They also produced content that raised their own creative profiles be it in country or in their regions.

- Successfully hosted the Showcasing event, attracting 57 participants from 12 Countries.

- Launched the Pan- African Roaming Academy Research Fellowship supporting 10 researchers who produced immersive narratives.

- Increased participant engagement by 30% compared to 2023.

- Supported 3 new media digital storytelling projects.

7. Challenges, Results, and Outcomes for the Year 2023-24.

7.1 Challenges

7.1.2 GRANTMAKING AND CHALLENGES OF TIME

In relation to the year under review, the fact that the R.O.O.M. 2.0 program managed to undertake agreed to activities in a short period of time due to delays in fund disbursements.

These activities were to the greater extent around Grantmaking with at least 21 amplification and production grants given to makers for sustainability and capacity building.

So the short grant cycle affected implementation for our partners.

7.1.3 STAFF TURNOVERS AND NORTH AFRICA CHALLENGES.

Due to the uncertainty of the continuation of funding of the R.O.O.M. program we had staff turnovers largely in East Africa and partly North Africa.

In some regions such as north Africa the carrying our of these activities was delayed due to staff turnovers after funding had been suspended hence there was for example no implementation in Egypt and only production grantmaking in Tunisia for North Africa .

The same can also be said for East Africa where implementation on grantmaking was also delayed due to staff changes and therefore less time in the year to process grants procedurally and implement capacity building or own implementation activities such as African Crossroads.

7.1.4 FUNDRAISING CHALLENGES

Due to the fundraising requirement on the part of Hivos of 25% for the second year of implementation, the donor environment proved to be difficult to implement the program. While fervent efforts were made to try and ensure that we engaged donors through our Business Development Unit, unfortunately we were unable to raise the adequate matching funds with other donors.

7.2 Key Results and Outputs.

7.2.1

As had been outlined in the 2023-24 workplan, the key activities were on grantmaking, capacity building and linking and learning. As outlined in the detailed summaries for the regions above, the grant making was largely a success against the run of implementation time.

The same can also be said for capacity building as a number of workshops on financial sustainability, criticality, free expression and collaborations were held as outlined in the regional reports above as well as the summary of African Crossroads.

7.2.2. KEY CHALLENGES

The major key challenges were the gaps in the funding period and the uncertainty of the program through the year 2023. And also the challenge of the required 25% fundraising in and of itself within the stipulated period before any second disbursement could be made. This was also compounded by the fact of changes to SIDA's international development strategy in which funding priorities have shifted from R.O.O.M. 2.0 focus areas.

8. Conclusion

8.1

It is imperative that at the closure of the financial year for R.O.O.M. 2023-May 2024, key lessons be drawn both in relation to implementation and also forecasting. A clear lesson that emerged is the need for the R.O.O.M. program to keep track of global events and their impact on donor funding dynamics as well as funding priorities. The two pauses in funding also meant that R.O.O.M. needed alternative and collaborative sources of funding.

8.2

Another key lesson was that fundraising strategies on a global scale are much harder to undertake within a context in which there is greater localised ownership by region or country of freedom of expression and other related programs/projects.

8.3

In the course of the implementation of the programme, we also learnt importance of understanding the capacity needs of creatives and working on enhancing these. These included both programmatic and financial caapapcity needs. That is why the R.O.O.M. program had both finance and program staff in each region.

There were also implementation lessons around emerging themes of African creatives such as Artificial Intelligence and its impact on the future of authentic free expression on the continent and its impact on languages.

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