



2023 **AFRICA'S VOICES**

ANNUAL REPORT

A DECADE OF AMPLIFYING CITIZENS'
VOICES IN AFRICA



Reflections from our Chairperson

Africa's Voices has had another successful year against a difficult background of drought, and political uncertainty across the region. We have contributed to the planning and execution of initiatives by respected national and international development institutions. Our ability to provide a sophisticated analysis of the views and needs of hard to reach individuals within the communities in East Africa, is valued by our partners, several of whom we have worked with over many years.

Our work in the past year with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), World Bank, European Union (EU), World University Services of Canada (WUSC), Uraia Trust, Porticus Foundation and funding from Luminate Foundation indicates a range of those who have valued the insights we can give each in creating accurate social programs. We believe this has helped in state building particularly for the Somali people and devolution and decentralisation work in both Kenya and Somalia respectfully. We have persevered with issues in refugee camps and with internally displaced persons (IDPs). We have also helped highlight solutions for growing climate change concerns.

This is achieved by a highly respected team of individuals, based in Nairobi, ably led by our Chief Executive, Samuel Kimeu. They apply methods developed at Cambridge University, modified by the experience and lessons of the last decade. They benefit from the growing understanding by major donors of the need to listen with humility to poor people and analyse social data we create when devising effective solutions.

Africa's Voices works on a very small capital base. While our counterparties usually cover our direct costs, it is proving hard to recover the majority of inevitable overheads. Thus we shall continue to need to find sources of core funding in the coming years.

We are seeking to emphasise the local nature of our approach by operating more through a Kenyan subsidiary, Africa's Voices Amplified (AVA) through which most new contracts will be run. We have bolstered this shift with some new, greatly respected board members from East Africa whose presence underlies our determination to ensure strategic guidance from the region.

Sadly my time has come to retire from our board on consideration of age and length of service. It is a sign of confidence in the path we are on, that Sir David Green has agreed to succeed me. He comes from a distinguished career, including time as CEO of VSO followed by leadership of the British Council. Together with Samuel AVF and AVA have a great leadership team. They share the vision for a special role that we can play. I shall continue to watch from the sidelines with hope that the services we can provide can in due time have ever wider use across the Continent.

Simon Cairns

Co-Founder and Chairperson, Board of Trustees



Letter from our Executive Director

As we reflect on the transformative events of 2023, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude and hope. The year has been a testament to the resilience, creativity, and commitment of individuals and communities across the territories we have worked. This report encapsulates our collective efforts, achievements, and aspirations.

At Africa's Voices, we believe in the transformative power of conversation. Our mission revolves around facilitating meaningful dialogue and leveraging insights gathered to advocate for positive change in various sectors, including governance, climate change adaptation and social policy. This year, we have witnessed firsthand the impact of our innovative approaches in harnessing the voices of ordinary citizens to create pathways towards informed decision-making and community empowerment.



Samuel Kimeu
Executive Director

In 2023, we heard from over forty thousand individuals across multiple regions and demographics, who sent over 180,000 messages on different issues. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion guided our efforts to ensure that marginalised voices, particularly women, youth and those living with disabilities, were at the forefront of our initiatives. Through participatory methodologies, we have created platforms that allow people to express their views, aspirations and concerns, ensuring their inputs, if heard by decision-makers, directly influence policies affecting their lives.

Collaboration is a core tenet of our work. We worked in partnerships with various stakeholders, including governmental agencies, non-profit organisations, academic institutions, community organisations, faith-based initiatives and multilateral organisations.

In addition to our work in governance, we initiated new projects focused on climate change and sustainability. Recognising that environmental challenges disproportionately affect vulnerable communities, we facilitated dialogue around environmental sustainability, smart agricultural practices, and climate adaptation strategies. The feedback and local solutions we received will be invaluable in informing future initiatives in this area.

As we look to the future, there are certainly challenges that lie ahead. The socio-political landscape is fraught with complexity, and the path towards social inclusion and equality is often obstructed. However, the experiences of 2023 have fortified our resolve and refined our strategies.

The stories you will read within this report are not just statistics, they are testimonies of resilience, courage, and hope. They remind us of our shared humanity and the unyielding spirit of the African people. As we continue our journey in 2024 and beyond, we are committed to listening, learning, and amplifying these voices, turning dialogue into action, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated staff team, partners, and the communities we serve. Your unwavering commitment and collaboration are the driving forces behind our mission. Together, let us continue to empower voices across Africa and forge a brighter future for all.

About Africa's Voices

Africa's Voices helps decision makers - humanitarians, development agencies, governments and other service-providers - design programmes that are grounded in people's everyday realities.

Africa's Voices believes that if citizens are better heard by decision makers, they will access more timely, relevant, and valuable services. Yet, many initiatives often fall short because the wishes and priorities of citizens are not sufficiently understood and used to inform decisions made on their behalf. Africa's Voices tackles this through unique solutions that enable bottom-up, citizen-driven decision-making.

Our social behaviour change communication approach is a valuable tool in unravelling social norms that underpin harmful practices, determining key drivers of social and behaviour change and tracking the shift in beliefs over time. In the media-enabled discursive spaces we curate, negative views can be contested by the public itself and positive attitudes for social change can be made visible.

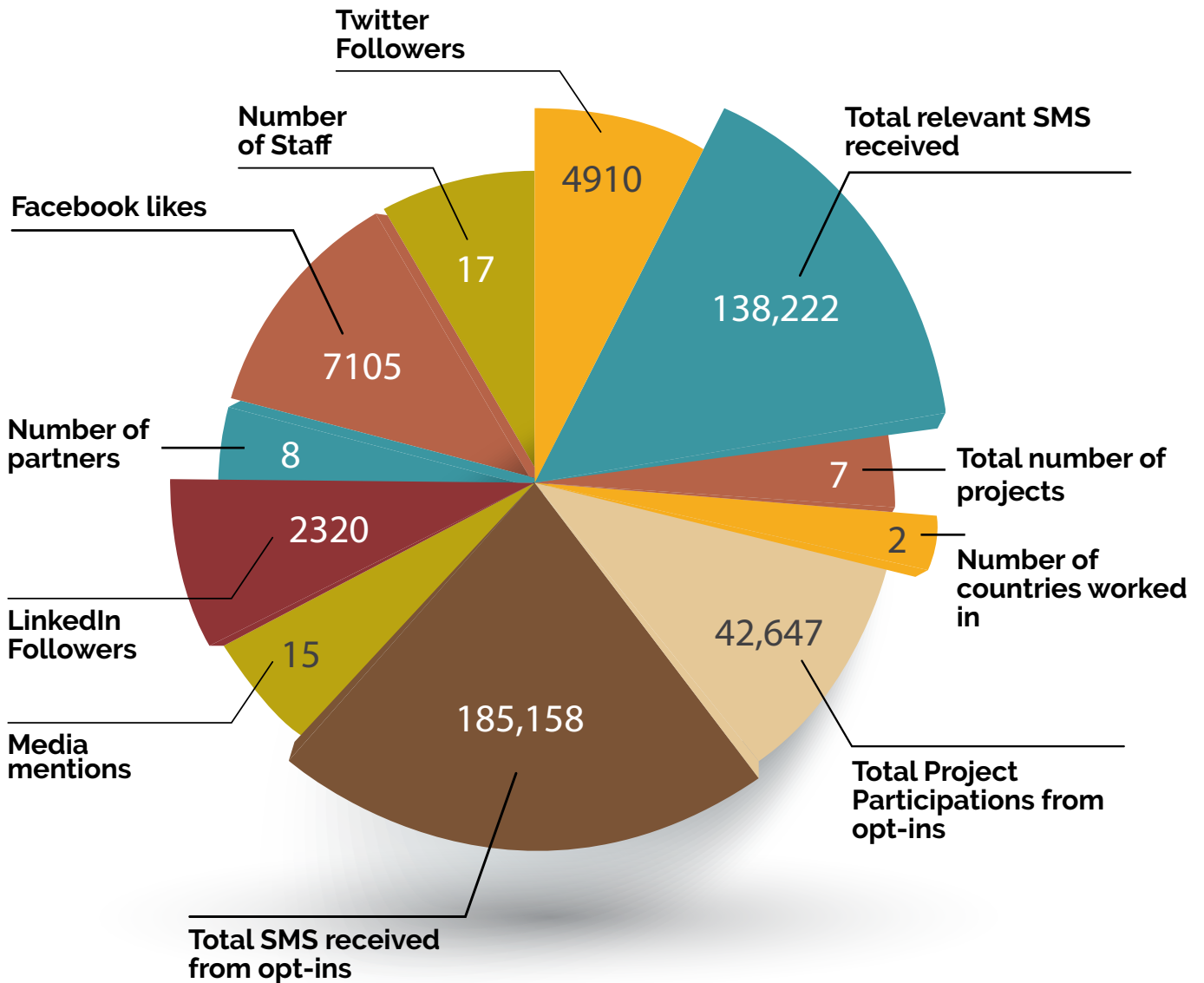
We're dedicated to socially-conscious methods that aim to empower, respect and transform: to engage with rather than extract from citizens.

Africa's Voices curates vibrant and inclusive public discussions through digital channels and interactive media that let citizens share their voices on their own terms and in their own language.

We use innovative social research design to turn citizen engagement into robust evidence and actionable insights. We also use novel technology to support human interpretation of complex conversational data in order to understand large-scale discussions in local and often low resource languages. We are a UK registered charity, spun-out of cutting-edge research at the Centre of Governance and Human Rights at the University of Cambridge. We are based in Nairobi, Kenya and Cambridge, United Kingdom.



2023 in numbers



Thematic area 1

Governance and Accountability

In the heart of our mission lies the commitment to transform the landscape of governance and accountability across African nations. Through our Governance & Accountability (G&A) programme, we strive to revolutionise how citizens engage in decision-making processes that shape their lives.

Our approach is rooted in the power of dialogue and inclusivity. By leveraging our innovative interactive radio method, coupled with input from our audience through SMS, instant messaging, and social media, we create dynamic platforms for public discourse.

These spaces connect citizens, decision-makers, civil society, and other stakeholders, fostering vibrant discussions where pressing issues are addressed, actions are identified, and accountability is upheld. At Africa's Voices, we believe in the transformative potential of citizen voices.

Through our G&A programme, we translate these voices into impactful evidence on a significant scale. By crafting compelling narratives grounded in citizen evidence, we equip decision-makers with invaluable insights and actionable ideas for positive change. In Somalia, our commitment to enhancing social accountability is exemplified through our flagship initiative, the Common Social Accountability Platform (CSAP).

Since its inception in 2018, CSAP has played a pivotal role in amplifying citizen participation in decision-making processes across peace-building, humanitarian, and development programs. Through CSAP, we strive to create a more inclusive and responsive governance framework, empowering citizens to shape their collective future.

As we reflect on our accomplishments and chart the course ahead, we remain steadfast in our dedication to advancing governance and accountability across Africa.

The programme received a total participation from opt-ins of **26,237**. Total research question answer messages from opt-ins were **135085** and total relevant messages received were **109646**.

Utilising the Common Social Accountability Platform (CSAP) for citizen engagement in developing a gender strategy for Somalia

Together with our partners, (European Institute for Peace and Elman Peace) conducted the fourth diagnostic radio series of the European Union (EU) funded Strength Through Tolerance (STT) project in Galmudug, Puntland, and Jubaland regions of Somalia. The series aimed to collect citizen-generated data for the development of a gender strategy for the Federal Government of Somalia as part of the STT project. Africa's Voices implemented a 3-week interactive radio show across 15 radio stations, focusing on women's participation in politics, access to education, and economic empowerment.



Photo by Flickr.com

The shows engaged 3,093 individuals who sent 7,006 messages, creating a platform for citizens to discuss gender equality issues anonymously. Each show featured community guests addressing audience concerns, fostering meaningful and dynamic citizen-led conversations focused on enhancing and mainstreaming gender inclusion in Somalia. The inclusion of community representatives added credibility and relevance to the public and citizen-led dialogue, incorporating firsthand knowledge and experiences in developing a gender strategy for Somalia.

Strengthening peoples' participation and inclusion in decision-making and democratisation processes in Puntland

We also partnered with the Puntland Development Research Centre (PDRC) to implement the Strengthening Peoples' Participation and Inclusion in Decision-Making and Democratisation Processes in Puntland project. Africa's Voices deployed its Common Social Accountability Platform (CSAP) methodology, engaging citizens through interactive radio shows in Puntland to gather views on strengthening participation.

The initiative received substantial engagement, with 2,283 citizens participating and 6,661 messages received during the radio broadcasts. The project ensured meaningful stakeholder engagement by mapping key stakeholders, including SDC partners, community leaders, local NGOs, and government institutions, to support citizen information and engagement processes towards the one man one vote experiment with democratisation in Somalia.

An interactive radio series to diagnose citizen-led pathways to sustainable peace and development in Northern Kenya

In collaboration with the Frontier Counties Development Council (FCDC) and the Institute of Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) at Garissa University, conducted an interactive radio series across seven radio stations in the FCDC region of Kenya. The FCDC region includes the counties of Garissa, Isiolo, Lamu, Mandera, Marsabit, Samburu, Tana River, Turkana, Wajir, and West Pokot. This project aimed to collect citizens' views on peace, identify barriers and drivers, and propose citizen-led solutions for sustainable peace and development.

Throughout seven consecutive weekly shows, 12,783 individuals actively participated, contributing 83,818 unique SMS messages, providing insights into the barriers, drivers, and solutions for sustainable peace and development in the FCDC region. The interactive format featured guests from local communities involved in peacebuilding, such as government representatives and civil society organisations, who shared information about ongoing initiatives and addressed citizens' concerns.

Strengthening citizens' participation in decision-making through interactive radio dialogue in Kitui, Machakos and Makueni Counties

Over the past decade, since the adoption of Kenya's 2010 Constitution, both national and county governments have sought to increase public participation in governance. Despite efforts, effective public involvement remains a challenge. In response, Africa's Voices Foundation (AVF), in partnership with the South Eastern Kenya Economic Bloc (SEKEB) and funded by Porticus, implemented the Common Social Accountability Platform (CSAP) to foster dialogue between citizens and their county leadership.

The project, which focused on Kitui, Machakos, and Makueni counties, utilized mass media, telecommunications, and social science research to gather citizen opinions and translate them into actionable insights. Through a series of radio broadcasts on Musyi FM, along with an SMS platform, AVF engaged 3,074 individuals who sent in a total of 5,147 messages over the five weeks of radio broadcast, providing a voice to women, youth, and people with disabilities—demographics often excluded from public participation.

The dialogues revealed key citizen concerns, with water, sanitation, road infrastructure, and health as top priorities. Citizens also expressed support for inter-county collaboration, particularly in areas like agriculture and transport. Recommendations from the study emphasized the need for more inclusive public participation processes, accountability for development projects, and specific efforts to include marginalized groups in governance processes.

The project highlighted the potential of diverse multimedia channels, like interactive radio and SMS platforms, in enhancing public participation and ensuring citizen voices shape local governance decisions.

Rapid surveys: Assessing impact, minority inclusion and evaluating services delivery on Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) projects in Somalia

In September 2023, the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC), dedicated to development initiatives in Somalia, collaborated with Africa's Voices to design and deploy a rapid SMS survey, leveraging its extensive Somalia database. Additionally, AVF complimented the SMS survey with 18 focus group discussions conducted in predetermined districts across Somalia.

The rapid survey aimed to support the development of SDC's annual report for 2022-2023, focusing on measuring the impact of its supported interventions. Key areas of assessment included beneficiary satisfaction, inclusion of minority groups in decision-making, and service delivery evaluation. A total of 416 participants provided valuable feedback through 1,403 messages. The FGDs engaged 180 participants, ensuring gender balance and enriching the annual report with diverse citizen perspectives.

"We Need Collective Action" Public participation to support climate change adaptation in the South-Eastern Kenya Economic Bloc (SEKEB).

Between July and September 2023, Africa's Voices Amplified (AVA) collaborated with the Danish International Development Agency (Danida) through Uraia Trust and Luminare Foundation to implement the "We Need Collective Action" project. This initiative aimed to promote public participation in climate change adaptation within the South Eastern Kenya Economic Bloc (SEKEB), covering Kitui, Makueni, and Machakos counties.

The project conducted a comprehensive 3-month multimedia campaign to assess community understanding of climate change, identify barriers to climate-friendly behaviours, and gather community-led solutions. Key components of the project included: Four weekly radio shows broadcasted on local stations, facilitating open citizen-led discussions and engaging a substantial audience. Three on-the-ground forums held in each SEKEB county, targeting marginalised groups such as women, youth, and persons living with disabilities (PLWDs). Analysis of citizen-generated data, revealing key insights and recommendations for climate change adaptation strategies.

Key findings from the project include: High awareness of climate change impacts attributed to deforestation, emphasising the need for afforestation and reforestation efforts. Citizens taking proactive measures like tree planting, indicating a willingness for civic-led responses. Limited awareness of government actions to assist residents in coping with climate change effects, suggesting a need for more prominent and effective initiatives.

Water availability is identified as a major concern, highlighting the importance of investments in water supply projects. Recommendations based on the findings include:-

Prioritising sustainable farming practices and water management initiatives. Investing in afforestation and reforestation efforts, supporting community-driven campaigns.

Conducting broader and targeted climate change awareness campaigns. Ensuring access to healthcare services and empowering youth in climate resilience efforts. Prioritising inclusion of PLWDs through targeted outreach and collaboration efforts. Overall, the project demonstrated effective citizen engagement and provided valuable insights to inform climate change adaptation strategies in the SEKEB region.



Photo by Flickr.com

Enhancing citizen engagement and public participation in SEKEB Region for climate change adaptation and monitoring of County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) implementation

Building on the success from the “We need Collective Action project,” Africa's Voices, funded by the Luminate Foundation, collaborated again with Musyi FM between October and December 2023. This second initiative aimed to enable citizens to monitor and oversee the implementation of CIDPs, thereby strengthening county accountability. The series, spread over five weekly shows, involved 3,258 participants who sent in 18,947 SMS messages. Guests from local civil society and county administrations discussed ongoing projects, addressing citizen concerns.

Key findings from the interactive radio discussions revealed: A significant number of participants (28.9%) reported that proposed community projects were not yet implemented. Water provision was recognized positively, particularly in Makueni County (53.7%). Health sector improvements were noted by 17.3% of participants, with strong support in Machakos (56.8%). Road infrastructure projects were acknowledged by 14.5%, with notable support in Makueni (43.4%). Public meetings were highlighted by 25.6% of participants as crucial for community engagement, particularly in Makueni (43.5%).

The importance of public participation for project sustainability was emphasised by 18.4%, with suggestions for security measures (10.1%) and community-based project management (8.5%). To enhance the participation of women, youth, and people with disabilities (PLWDs), 36.5% of participants advocated for equal opportunities and representation. Raising awareness and ensuring their involvement in public forums were also stressed. Regarding budget formulation and implementation, 59.3% called for public participation forums, with 16.8% emphasising civic education. However, 5.3% expressed disinterest due to economic challenges and corruption concerns.

Recommendations included: Enhancing transparency and community engagement. Replicating successful water and health sector strategies from Makueni and Machakos counties. Prioritising road infrastructure maintenance. Addressing additional project needs in health, roads, agriculture, and energy. Intensifying community engagement strategies. Incorporating local labour in project contracts. Ensuring fairness in project distribution. Documenting best practices for replication. Proactively incorporating public participation in budgeting. Launching civic education and awareness campaigns. Addressing disinterest in public participation by tackling economic and corruption issues.

Overall, this initiative highlighted the importance of citizen engagement in county governance and the need for transparent and inclusive processes to ensure effective development and accountability.

Citizen engagement to inform World Bank's Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) and Country Partnership Framework (CPF) in Somalia

Africa's Voices utilised its interactive radio and SMS methodology to support the World Bank in the development of the Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) as part of its development framework. The SCD is a diagnostic procedure aimed at identifying a nation's primary challenges and opportunities for achieving faster and sustainable development, aligned with the goals of eradicating absolute poverty and promoting shared prosperity.

Through the project, citizens were consulted, and their views were analysed to generate insights shared with the World Bank, contributing to the development of the Country Partnership Framework. 3,026 participants participated in the radio discussions and a total of 13,309 SMS were shared. Phase two of the project elicited a total engagement of 2,584 participants who sent 9,466 messages in response to the weekly research question.



Photo by Flickr.com



Photo by Flickr.com

Thematic area 2

Citizen Evidence for Social Change

As we reflect on the milestones achieved in 2023, we are proud to share the impact of our Citizen Evidence for Social Change (CESC) programme, which lies at the heart of Africa's Voice's mission. Through CESC, we harness the power of interactive radio and mixed-methods capabilities to place citizens at the forefront of programme design and policy responses across various sectors, from education to public health, gender equality, and livelihoods.

Our interactive radio approach serves as a catalyst for large-scale, plural, and inclusive discussions that are both contextually-based and citizen-driven. In regions where the space for public debate is limited, these discussions become invaluable, empowering communities to voice their concerns and aspirations. By understanding and amplifying citizen voices, Africa's Voices facilitates more responsive programme and policy design, aligning initiatives with citizen needs and opinions.

Moreover, our citizen voice-centred approach serves as a powerful tool for challenging harmful social norms, identifying key drivers of social and behavioural change, and monitoring shifts in beliefs over time. Within the media-enabled discursive spaces we curate, negative perspectives are challenged by the public itself, while positive attitudes towards social change are brought to the forefront. This not only fosters a culture of dialogue but also promotes visibility for transformative narratives.

CESC operates on a theory of change rooted in the belief that media well utilised can effectively challenge and shape perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours by amplifying positive narratives within social settings. This model, when applied to Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) programming, ensures a more contextual and participatory change process, where citizen voices serve as the driving force.

The programme received a total participation from opt-ins of **16,410**. Total research question answer messages from opt-ins received were **50,073** and total relevant messages were 28,576.

Addressing sexual and reproductive health challenges and associated issues in Somalia

In partnership with the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC) and various organisations, we conducted an engaging radio series across Somalia. The interactive radio series specifically targeted challenging societal norms, negative beliefs, and attitudes that impede women's access to SRH services including Gender Based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation etc. Its overarching goal was to foster a supportive environment through the dissemination of constructive behaviour change messages.

This community-wide outreach was designed to engage both men and women, with a focus on emphasising the significance of quality care in the realm of sexual and reproductive health. A total of 4,268 participants shared 18,836 SMS.

Empowering girls and young women: Challenging barriers that hinder them from attaining self-sufficiency and independence from aid reliance

Africa's Voices continued with the implementation of the Learning through Education and Access to Employment Pathways (LEAP) project in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei Settlement. Supported by World University Services Canada (WUSC), in recent months, the project aimed to unravel the barriers hindering the journey towards self-sufficiency and independence from aid reliance among young women and girls for both host and refugee communities.

Through an innovative six-week interactive radio dialogue, community engagement activities, and collaboration with local partners, Africa's Voices sought to ignite positive change. Comprehensive financial literacy programs, promotion of unconventional income-generating activities, advocacy for fair hiring processes and support for GBV survivors were some of the recommendations made from the project. A total of 4,807 participants engaged in discussions over the 6 weeks, 8 different nationalities were reached with 53% of the participants being women and 77.5% being youth.



Photo by Flickr.com

Shaping discourse

Africa's Voices actively engaged in the ShiftThePowerSummit 2023 in Bogota, Colombia, collaborating with global organisations to discuss rejecting externally imposed solutions and advocating for a paradigm shift. The summit emphasised empowering communities to lead their development initiatives, challenging the international funding system to be more locally-owned. Representing Africa's Voices at the event, our Programmes Manager, Mr. Moses Maina, made significant contributions during the event and established valuable contacts.

Africa's Voices is committed to ongoing global engagement, aiming to position people and communities as central actors in their development journey. The organisation seeks to inspire decision-making prioritising dignity, equity, and trust while recognizing the inherent power within communities.

We participated in the Integrity Awards ceremony in December 2023 organised by Transparency International Kenya and had the privilege to read the citation for the winners of the Judicial Integrity Award 2023.

AV participated in a panel discussion on bringing government and citizens together, along with reflections on the recently launched report on Kenyans' experiences with devolution in December 2023.

The Executive Director participated in the 2023 Human Rights Defenders Awards ceremony in Nairobi. The award recognizes and appreciates the human rights work of young and upcoming HRDs in Kenya and support talent.

AV also participated in a workshop on Peace, Governance, Equality on the fight against corruption, promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen voices at the Embassy of Switzerland in Nairobi.

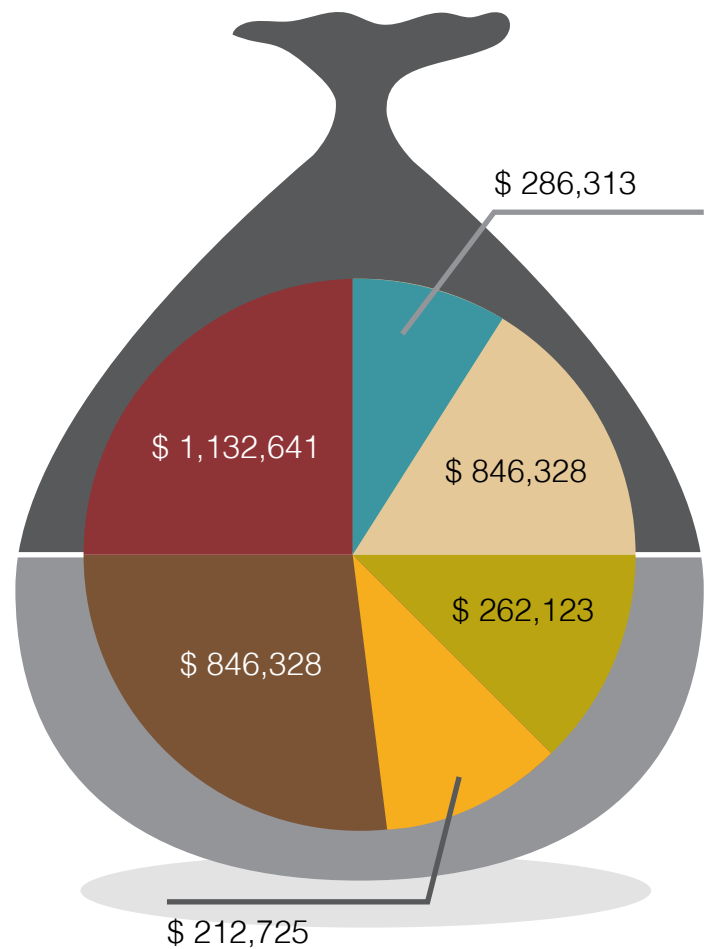


List of staff members.

- **Samuel Kimeu:** Executive Director
- **Damaris Ndegwa:** Deputy Executive Director
- **Anna Tomson:** Senior Advisor, Research, Design and Analysis
- **Moses Maina:** Programmes Manager
- **Mary Nzilani:** Grants and Projects Manager
- **Mercy Njung'e:** Senior Research Officer
- **Hassan Ali :** Research Officer
- **Mary Kasiva:** Research Assistant
- **Suada Abdullahi:** Research Assistant
- **Lucas Malla:** Quantitative Analyst
- **James Madegwa:** Data Analyst
- **Alexander Simpson:** Software Engineer
- **Isaack Mwenda:** Software Engineer
- **Daniel Mwendwa:** Software Engineer
- **Peter Muchara:** Senior Finance and Administration Officer
- **Anne Mwaniki:** Finance and Grants Officer
- **Oscar Mudega:** Media and Engagement Officer
- **Rosemary Khasiala:** Office Assistant

Financial records/ reports

- **Income**
 - Restricted income: \$ 846,328
 - Unrestricted income: \$ 286,313
 - Total income: \$ 1,132,641
- **Expenditure**
 - Restricted Expenditure: \$ 846,328
 - Unrestricted Expenditure: \$ 262,123
 - Reserves: \$ 212,725



List of Partners.



European Union



WORLD BANK
GROUP



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC





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-  Facebook: [Africa's Voices Foundation](https://www.facebook.com/AfricasVoicesFoundation)
-  LinkedIn: [Africa's Voices Foundation](https://www.linkedin.com/company/AfricasVoicesFoundation)
-  Website: www.africasvoices.org

