

# **Year Report 2020**

## Voice4Thought Foundation



[www.voice4thought.org](http://www.voice4thought.org)

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## Statement

Voice4Thought is a not for profit foundation that offers a platform where different voices around the world can participate in building an inclusive debate and critical knowledge on social and political issues of our time. Most of these voices are actors in longstanding, often unseen, unrecognized, silenced or forgotten social and political processes of change in their countries of origin and across borders. We believe in the power of storytelling in multiple ways. We provide voices a digital and on-the-ground space to tell their stories through academic, artistic, and journalistic expressions, workshops and outlets and give the space for others to rethink their and our world critically.

We seek to bring academia to the streets and the streets to academia: we believe in knowledge as the result of a co-creative process in which we seek for new connections and opportunities to learn in order to enable dialogue between academia, decision-makers and civil society in and outside of Europe. The reciprocal process is at the core of our aim to develop new methodologies for understanding (political) change in societies, and giving a space to the unheard voices. The power of diverse Voices (V) and ways of Thinking (T) helps us to rethink our world from a critical perspective.

In 2020, Voice4Thought really started to institutionalise the organisation in projects, the website and in two actual offices. Our website and network of bloggers have expanded its function(s) and our platform also offers an important space for news from often underreported regions. The website is central in the organisation and our co-production's visibility and where we share all end-products. We are increasingly investing time and resources in improving our digital environment, e.g. website, social media and digital archives, such as the [Centre de Ressource for the Voice4Thought Academy in Mali](#). Facebook, Instagram and Vimeo are our main media outlets next to the website.

2020 was an important year for Voice4Thought. We innovated, grew and expanded our methods and approaches to new areas and new regions. New permanent team members joined and we set-up a whole new team in Mali for the Voice4Thought Academy project, together with the PGRL consortium. Next to setting up the Voice4Thought Academy in Mali in January 2020, we continued with crucial collaborations such as Bridging Humanities, the online peer-reviewed journal and the Innovative Research Methods Master teaching programme at Leiden University. In 2020 we were happy to continue our collaboration with ZAM Magazine (the Netherlands), Coup d'Afrique Slam de Poésie (CASP) (Chad) and Groupe Agoratoire (Mali), and start with Upinion (the Netherlands) and Prospect Eleven (the Netherlands), where we also hold our Amsterdam based office.

Of course, Voice4Thought also experienced difficulties because of the COVID-19 pandemic, where we were forced to work from home and were restricted from some travel. Luckily, we and our partners have not been affected severely by the pandemic and we were happy that we could mature as an organisation.

We are proud to share this year's achievements with you.

On behalf of the V4T team,  
Mirjam de Bruijn, General Director

## 2020: Highlights, V4T projects and organisational updates

### 1. Voice4Thought Academy in Mali

In January 2020, we started the first [Voice4Thought Academy](#) (V4TA) in Mali.

The Voice4Thought Academy is a space in which Malian youth are encouraged and empowered to express themselves through different (artistic) channels on the basis of a body of knowledge and opinions in order to play their role in peace processes and to restore a healthy society in Mali and the subregion. Mali is in a phase of conflict. Several areas, including our search areas, are affected. This conflict could be summed up in a few words: crisis in the north and the problem of governance. Young people are trying to make sense of it all, but the situation seems to be getting worse and worse. V4TA has developed an approach that helps young people understand what is going on in their different areas so that they can make their own analyses and better express themselves on the situation. Each area has its own dynamics which offers a space for research and exchange on the different themes, approached with a critical eye.



The results of this research are accessible in our archive (digital library) which will, over time, inform the research sites and Mali. For us, getting to know each other better is the basis of peace. As youth are often neglected, the Academy wants to stimulate restoring their dignity and become involved citizens. The Academy offers them skills that are necessary to be heard and included in decision-making processes. The ability to think critically is the start of every conversation.

After 10 months we trained over 350 young people in digital and field research, data analysis and storage and using these data for artistic expressions as slam, theatre, video, podcast and blogging. Their expressions, products and findings are shared through the website, social media, events and debates in the communities. V4TA is part of the PGLR program, led by SNV and financed by the Dutch Embassy in Mali.

An important part of the V4T Academy is the [Online Archive \(Resource Centre\)](#). This online environment contains the research data produced by our 350 V4T Academy trainees throughout the first year: video, audio, photos, transcriptions and translations, reports and more. A selection of this data will be accessible to the public, while the rest remains available to the V4TA teams, artists, some researchers, students and journalists in Mali and abroad. The data also feeds blogs and features stories published on the V4TA website.

Check out a recap of the pilot year of the Voice4Thought Academy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKi915FTjBU>



The Voice4Thought Academy [website](#) serves as a platform where a selection of the results of the research situations encountered by our research teams are presented in the four areas of intervention: Bankass, Bougouni, Douentza and Macina. You can find articles, audiovisual reports and (blog)texts on the page.

In the future we aim to expand this website into an external page where participants of the Academy can also find tutorials to improve their skills, inspirational content, and exchange ideas.

## 2. Teaching programmes at Leiden

### 2.1. Innovative Research Methods

The [Innovate Research Methods](#) project introduces students in V4T methods where research methods are expanded with digital tools, such as digital photography, video, the use of all kinds of software for making maps, and for publication of results in multi-modal ways. The possibilities offered by the digital are endless, but how does a researcher develop in the digital age with academic rigour?

V4T combines academic research and artistic expressions into an inclusive and creative methodology. This innovative methodology has inspired the organisation of teaching modules at Leiden University, within the African studies BA and MA programmes. V4T developed a website where [the results of the research of the students are](#)

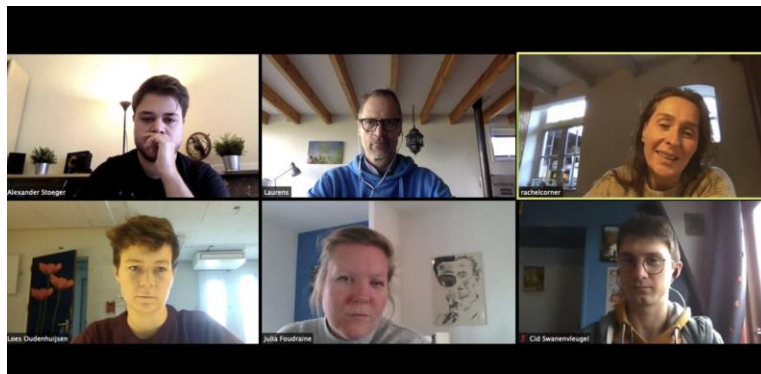


[presented](#), with a special section with tools and instructions for the application of the methodology. The project inspired people at the university as well as students and will be part of the new media lab at the Humanities faculty of Leiden University that will be realised in September 2021.

## 2.2. Training for Impact

On the 5th of November 2020, LeidenGlobal, the Taalmuseum and Voice4Thought organised [Training for Impact](#). A day full of workshops to equip young researchers with ideas and tools to think creatively about ways to share their research findings with a broader audience.

How do you tell stories with photography? A question that was discussed during the (online) [workshop photography](#) organised by [Laurens Nijzink](#) (journalist and anthropologist), and [Rachel Corner](#) (photographer).



## 3. Follow-up Stichting Scholtus-de Bruijn: Studiefonds

Stichting Scholtus - de Bruijn merged with Voice4Thought, and as such took over the funds of the foundation. Stichting Scholtus-de Bruijn initially started to provide aid to local people in Chad, Mali and Cameroon. One of these projects involved supporting an orphanage in the village Baaba in the northwest of Cameroon; paying its children's school fees and daily provisions over several years.

After years of severe unrest in the region the orphanage has ended its practices and many children were forced to flee. Voice4Thought has tried to keep track of the children but that appeared to be difficult. However, we were able to support 15 children with their school fees and supplies.

In line with the philosophy of Stichting Scholtus - de Bruijn, Voice4Thought has started developing its own study fund (Studiefonds). As a platform, we believe in the necessity of education to develop one's voice. Gaining knowledge through education is important (in general, and specifically in crisis areas) in order to enlarge and deepen one's own world.

In the years that we have been active as a foundation, we have noticed that there is an enormous need among young people to further their education and development. We have helped

countless young people on their way by letting them be part of our platform. However, sometimes a formal education is necessary, and that is what this scholarship fund is for.

Our scholarship fund offers support to motivated people who want to increase their knowledge but do not have the means to realize their ambition. They can appeal to our fund.

#### **4. Thought and voices: expansion of bloggers and voices**

Our network of bloggers also treated us to sharp analyses, critiques and inside stories on the COVID-19 pandemic in [Burkina Faso](#) and the [DRC](#) and the political crises in [Chad](#), [Cameroon](#), and [Mali](#). We also shared insightful background stories from the refugee crisis in [Greece](#), examples of hope from [Central African Republic](#) migrant youth and on being queer in [Senegal](#).

#### **5. (New) team members and Board**

The strength of V4T is our [multidisciplinary team](#). We believe that a better future is possible when the youth, especially those who are often forgotten or not heard, are entirely involved. We work together, train and create spaces so they can tell their stories through academic, artistic and journalistic expressions, workshops and events. By doing so they give space to others to rethink their and our world critically. We were happy to invite our Voice4Thought Academy team in Mali to the Voice4Thought family this year.

##### **Team Voice4Thought Academy - Mali**

Oumou Cissé - Coordinator Bougouni  
Aboubacari Dia - Coordinator Douentza  
Amadou Tapo - Coordinator Macina  
Boukary Teme - Coordinator Bankass  
Mariam Sidibe - Coordinator Monitoring & Evaluation  
Mamadou Sissouma - Responsable Financier

We are also grateful and happy with our active Board, and Board of advisors.

##### **Board**

Mirjam de Bruijn (board member)  
Andrew Makkinga (Chair)  
Susan van Esch (Secretary)  
Marieke van Winden (Board member)

##### **Board of advisors**

Balt Leenman  
Kitty Zijlmans  
Freek Stoopendaal  
Ton Dietz

## Website and Facebook statistics

### 1. Website statistics

The year 2020 saw an increase of almost 100% in the total number of visitors to the V4T website. The majority of visitors are found among the age groups of 18-24 and 25-34. There's a slight bias towards male visitors (60 / 40%). English and French readers (according to their web browser settings) are divided almost equally. Top countries according to visitor location are France, the USA and the Netherlands. 17,8% of V4T website visitors are located in the top 4 African countries. The best read story on the website was the testimonial of a Chadian COVID-19 patient during the early days of the pandemic; that post accounted for almost 10% of total website visits.

**Total website visitors in 2020:** 22,977

**Total page views:** 42,548

- **Male:** 59,9%
- **Female:** 40,1%
- **Age groups**
  - 25-34: 35,19%
  - 18-24: 24,58%
  - 35-44: 16,77%
  - 45-54: 10,65%
  - 55-64: 7,91%
  - 65+: 4,90%

#### Top languages

English: 39,87%

French: 37,99%

Dutch: 4,45%

#### Top countries

#### Share of total visitors

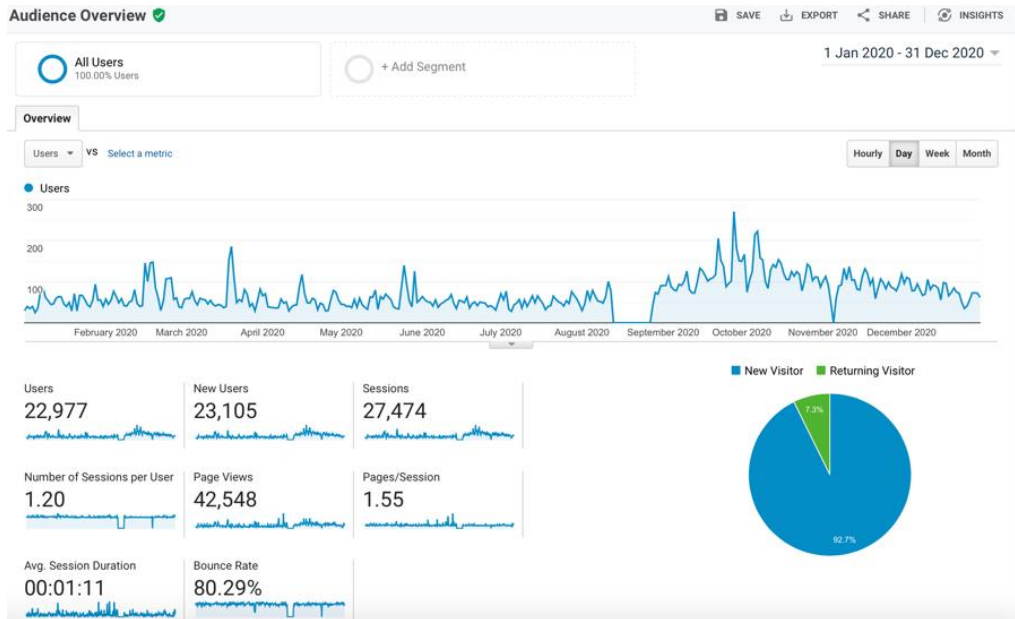
1. France	15,11%
2. United States	13,62%
3. Netherlands	8,23%
4. Cameroon	5,23%
5. Chad	5,05%
6. Kenya	4,03%
7. Mali	3,49%

#### The best performing stories

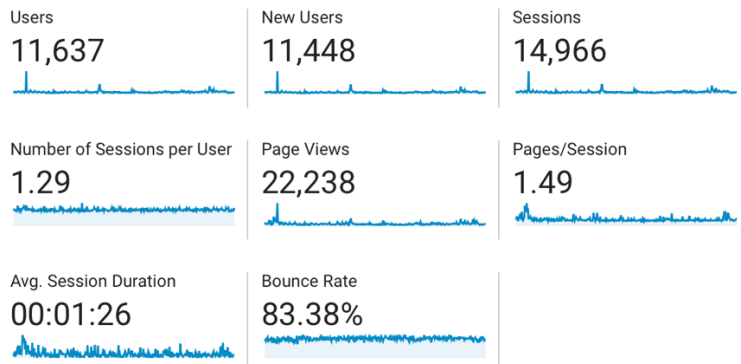
- <https://voice4thought.org/fr/temoignage-jai-ete-teste-positif-a-la-covid-19> (9,43% of total website visitors)
- <https://voice4thought.org/tchad-des-individus-plus-riches-que-letat> (4,71%)
- <https://voice4thought.org/the-relationship-between-art-and-history> (3,97%)
- <https://voice4thought.org/our-candidate-is-mobutu-propaganda-in-candidat-na-biso-mobutu-1984> (3%)
- <https://voice4thought.org/thawra-the-lebanese-revolution-in-art-and-words> (2,48%)



**Figure 1. Overview of visits to the Voice4Thought.org website 2020**



**Figure 2. Overview of visits to the Voice4Thought.org website 2019**



## 2. Facebook statistics

The posts with the most reached audience in 2019 through Facebook are listed below:

1. [Offre d'emploi](#) : nous recherchons un(e) chargé(e) de communication pour le Voice4Thought Académie.
2. Chadian poet-singer and sculptor [Maoundoé Célestin launched](#) a new project called "Au nom de l'art".
3. La [pandémie de corona](#) a un impact majeur sur la vie des gens dans le monde entier.
4. Learn how to make [an impact](#) with your research!
5. From 2 till 7 November the 7th edition of the Festival International de Slam et Humor [FISH MALI](#) will take place in Bamako.
6. While the [Sahel is fighting](#) against Covid-19, violent attacks by Boko Haram jihadists continue to take place in Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger.
7. New post! Is the African continent able to [deal with Covid19?](#) Some thoughts by blogger Zyzou.
8. Happy [International Women's Day!](#)
9. [Happy new year!](#)
10. A great way to start your week: Thomas created a two-hour set of his [favorite vinyl finds of late!](#)

## Independent projects supported by or in partnership with V4T

### 1. Collaboration with Bridging Humanities

Bridging Humanities is an open access online peer-reviewed academic publication platform that aims to experiment with academic research based on digital methodologies. The focus of the journal is on biographical-narrative research that is carried out in co-creation and integrate digital methodologies. V4T is the administrative partner of Bridging Humanities in projects. Check out [the website](#) to learn more.

#### 1.1 Project Paul Julien

In 2020 we worked on a project by Andrea Stultiens. She is disclosing the archive of photographs by [Dutch explorer, photographer and amateur anthropologist Paul Julien \(1901-2001\)](#). Her [project](#) transgresses the borders between social science (anthropology) and the arts where she decentralizes the photographer through a reworking and manipulation of Julien's photographs that is only possible through digital means. It's an exercise in 'decolonizing' Paul Julien's oeuvre. The project will be published in the first quarter of 2021.

In the meantime, Bridging Humanities is open and actively searching for [contributions](#).

## 2. Student publications

Voice4Thought encourages students to publish their work on its platform. In 2020 we published the documentary [‘Hair and Identity’](#) of Leiden University students Melat Pusch and Sheki Lumumba. Their documentary explores black hair and identity in relation to the Natural Hair Movement.

Mahlet Ayele Beyecha, also a student at the Leiden University, published her documentary [‘Sankofa: Voices of the Rastafari in Ethiopia’](#) on our website. The film is part of Mahlet’s research project.

## 3. African Hip Hop platform

The [African Hip Hop](#) platform is gradually getting back to activity. Thomas is responsible for the platform. It is an important online and offline archive of Hip-hop culture in Africa since the mid-nineties. Digitisation of its music library of hundreds of rare and unique tapes, minidisks, CDs, LPs, photos and documents is underway.

With the support of an intern in 2021, a beginning will be made with digitalisation of the material and further support will be sought to complete the digitalisation, archiving and sharing of the content.

## Collaboration and Funding in 2020

### Active Partnerships in 2020

Bridging Humanities, the Netherlands  
G Hip Hop, Senegal  
DAWA Health, Chad  
LeidenGlobal, the Netherlands  
Groupe Agoratoire, Mali  
Ndjam s'enflamme en slam, Chad  
Tchad+, Chad  
Coup d’Afrique Slam de Poésie (CASP)/ASCP, Cameroon / Chad  
SNV, the Netherlands/Mali  
Oxfam, the Netherlands/Mali  
ICCO/CORDAID, the Netherlands/Mali  
Upinion, the Netherlands  
Gemeente Leiden, the Netherlands  
ZAM Magazine, the Netherlands

### Funding partners and donors in 2020

Leiden University Fund (LUF) and Stichting Elise Mathilde Fonds  
Innovation Fund, Leiden University  
Children's Urology Foundation  
Gemeente Leiden  
Stichting Scholtus - de Bruijn (merged with V4T)  
Royal Dutch Embassy in Mali

More information on funding partners and donors can be found in the financial report 2020 which will be available in May 2021.

## Looking forward to 2021

We have much to look forward to in the new year!

- The Voice4Thought Academy in Mali will be extended for 5 more years. The expansion will also take form in the movement to other regions in the country, reaching even more youth. We are now an active partner within the consortium of the PGRL+ programme.
- Looking even more into the future, we will investigate the possible expansion of Voice4Thought Academy to the rest of the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the Lake Chad region.
- We will take on internships of Master students from Leiden University. As an organization we also want to shape knowledge exchange in this way. Part of their internship will be related to their research projects.
- We will start digitally archiving the Africa Hip Hop collection. This is the start of our aim to 'decolonize' research data, hereby creating a more equal relationship between the north and south and in this manner knowledge production. An important part of this is the accessibility of this archive to researchers and research centers in Africa. In other words, putting much emphasis on different ways of data sharing and accessible publishing.
- In Francophone Africa, we are looking forward to setting up a podcast project. A project of creating networked citizen journalists in Central Africa (CAR, Chad and Cameroon) that work on freedom of expression in Central Africa's 'media desert'. This has been approved by the Dutch embassy in Chad.
- In line of our professionalisation and expanding organization, we will work on the revision of the website.
- We will look for a new office space later in the year. The office at Prospect Eleven has so far been a great development. Unfortunately, the Prospect Eleven project will end with the demolition of the building. We will move to a new office space with Prospect Eleven as soon as it is known where.