

Annual Report 2021
Voice4Thought Foundation



www.voice4thought.org

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Preface to the Annual Report

2021 was a special year for Voice4Thought: the year brought new projects, new people, and a new governance structure, and we grew, learned and have developed and professionalised. We are glad that borders opened up. The insecurity that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the world also had its effects on V4T. Travelling was difficult, people were ill, we were insecure about the situation in Mali where we are running our important V4T Academy, and gatherings of people were not possible. In short, we had to work with all the difficulties that the pandemic brought. Yet, we also feel as the pandemic brought opportunities for us, as we improved our online working, teaching and connection to the team in Mali. With all the energy of our teams to continue our work, and to have voices in Africa publishing on the issues happening around insecurity and the pandemic on our website, social media and our archive.

Because of the pandemic, it has once again become clear how important the role of the digital world is in everyday life. From the foundation of our organization we have learned and grew more into the digital space. We changed the outlook of our website and have been able to attract new bloggers such as Arnold Ngbagalet, a slammer from the CAR and a refugee in the DRC. He has become so active and we are lucky that he shares his thoughts with us!

Voice4Thought Academy in Mali started a 5 year programme in April 2021 as part of the PGLR+ consortium. We experience this as a compliment for the methodology that we developed: the V4T Academy is a mobile academy where young people learn to discover, understand and share their experiences about and with their social and political environment. Our pilot year in Mali was a success and we will build on this experience to develop the Academy in Mali and beyond in the coming years.

Fundraising is of course one of our core activities as well. We are proud that we were able to attract the attention of SOAS University in London, and a group of researchers from Norway and the Netherlands, who praise our method in the Academy. In these new projects we explore the collaboration between the Mali Academy of youth and these groups of researchers.

Next to enlarging our team in Mali, we have also welcomed Jasmijn Peeters to our team in the Netherlands. Jasmijn joined us to help with fundraising after she made the continuation of the Cameroon project (children going to school in conflict situations) possible. She started to show her interest in communication and the development of projects in Europe. Jasmijn is a Latin-America specialist and will help V4T to include voices from Latin America. We hope she will join us in 2022 to further develop these important contributions to V4T.

There are enough successes that will help us face the challenges that we will certainly encounter in 2022, but we are ready!

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

About Voice4Thought

Voice4Thought: dialogue and knowledge to think critically

Vision

Voice4Thought is a not for profit foundation that offers a platform where different voices can participate in building an inclusive debate and critical knowledge on social, political and economic 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. Therefore, we provide them with 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.

Mission

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. 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. Together we can set up new and innovative ways of creating and sharing knowledge and create an inspiring knowledge community of engaged people.

What we do

The core of Voice4Thought is our digital platform where we connect all dots. Nevertheless, we are equally engaged in on-the-ground projects and events. We organize our own festivals and participate in others, we host a platform for bloggers worldwide and organize workshops, debates and cultural events. We support voices and collectives with whom we work in writing and executing projects, such as the Voice4Thought Academy in Mali. Next to this, we have a peer-reviewed and academically recognized online publication 'Bridging Humanities'.

In our work we focus on the use and integration of different media and sources: text, video, photography, audio, cartoons and multimedia. We use different and new research methodologies in an experimental framework, which involves using visuals to promote an interactive fruition of our projects. With this approach, we aim to elaborate new forms of dissemination of knowledge by collaborating with cultural organisations, universities and publishing houses to start new initiatives inspired by the V4T philosophy.

ANBI Status and Chamber of Commerce

Voice4Thought Foundation is recognised by the Dutch Tax Department as a public benefit organization. It has an ANBI status (Algemeen Nut Beogende Instelling). The RSIN fiscal number of the foundation is 856321382. We are registered with the Dutch Chamber of Commerce/Kamer van Koophandel (KvK 65930029).

More information can be found on our website: www.voice4thought.org

2021: Highlights and projects

1. Voice4Thought Academy Mali

The Voice4Thought Academy (V4TA) Mali is a project 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 research areas, are affected. The 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. V4T Academy has developed an approach that helps young people understand what is going on in their country 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.

For us, getting to know each other better is the basis of peace. As (the expressions of) youth are often neglected in Malian society, 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, but also to better express themselves on the situation in the country. The ability to think critically is the start of every conversation.

An important part of the V4T Academy is the [Online Archive](#) (Resource Centre). This online environment contains the research data produced by our V4T Academy trainees: 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 [V4TAcademy website](#).

After the first pilot year of the Voice4Thought Academy in Mali, where we were a project under the larger Programme pour la Gouvernance Local et Redevable (PGRL), led by SNV and financed by the Dutch embassy in Mali, we got invited to join the consortium of SNV, ICCO (CORDAID) and Oxfam for their new five year PGRL programme: PGRL+. In 2020 and 2021 we wrote the proposal together and in April 2021, we started our new five year adventure.

In April 2021 we expanded our Academy from the regions of Bankass, Bougouni, Douentza and Macina to 6 more regions: Bandiagara, Goa, Niono, San, Ségou and Tombouctou.

At the end of 2021 we trained over **1.193 young people** in digital and field research, data analysis and storage and using these data for artistic expressions such as slam, theatre, video, podcast and blogging. Their expressions, products and findings are shared through the [website](#), social media ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)), events and debates in the communities.

Research themes included motor taxis in Bamako, conceptualisation of ‘youth’ by different actors, school activities in winter in San, goldmining, and unemployment of the youth.



Picture: A mototaxi in Bamako. Read the blog series about motor taxis in Bamako, [here](#).



Picture: Still from interview. Read the ‘Ou est ma place dans cette société ?’ (What is my place in society?), [here](#).

The Academy Mali also engages and collaborates with other local organizations, programmes and specialists. The collaboration with Ivorian *slameuse* Amee as part of the Slam et Eve festival in Bamako in June 2021 was highly successful. [Together with female Academy students Amee worked on developing their slam art and performing skills.](#)



Picture: *Slameuse Amee and her workshop participants.*

We have also made a documentary film about the first year of the Academy Mali and its actors. [Episodes of the film can be watched on our website.](#)

2. DDMAC

Voice4Thought is part of [DDMAC](#) (Decoding Digital Media in African regions of Conflict), an interdisciplinary research project that started in December 2021. The project consists of researchers affiliated with research institutions in Norway, the Netherlands, Mali (Voice4Thought Academy Mali) and Ethiopia. Together they collect data on the role of digital communication in the development and mediation of conflicts. The researchers particularly focus on information disorder and how disinformation and hate speech flow in digital networks.

The project took off in December 2021 with the formation of the teams. The research and training workshops will start in 2022. V4T Academy Mali will host a training workshop in Bamako, Mali in February and March 2022.

3. SOAS - « Djonya Kélé Ja Toulon »

The "Djonya Kélé Ja Toulon" (Gamers against slavery in Mali) project is funded by the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) University of London and is in collaboration with two other Malian organisations - Donkosira and Kasart Media -, next to our own V4T Academy, and expert scholars. The one year project running from November 2021 to November 2022 focuses on 'inherited slavery' which in some areas of Mali is still a practice; although taboo and a difficult subject. The project aims to understand the situation better in the Kayes and Macina regions of Mali, especially from the point of view of young people. It does so by two extensive periods of field research by young people from the area in multiple villages in

Kayes and Macina, after which the results of this research are used to create a theatre piece, as well as a mobile video game that can help open up the conversation on this taboo subject.

The young people from Kayes and Macina are either already trained by and working for the Voice4Thought Academy in the regions Segou and Macina, or are trained by V4TAcademy experts in qualitative research methods, archiving and the V4TA expert in artistic expressions. The first workshop will be held in February 2021 in Bamako. The mobile game will be launched in October 2022.



Picture: Team on their way to do research in the Macina region.

4. Coup d’Afrique du Slam Poésie (CASP) - 2021-2022

The final of the second edition of the [African Slam Poetry Cup](#) finally took place on Saturday 19 February 2022 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia after several postponements and uncertainties. Initially scheduled to take place in November 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic changed all our plans. At first, the continental competition was simply postponed, but as time went on, things became more complicated and it became clear that the pandemic would last. So CASP's implementing partner in Addis Ababa, Poetic Saturdays, offered to collaborate with the digital innovation community in Addis Ababa to host some of the stages of the competition virtually.

In July 2021, candidates from 33 countries participated in the pool stages, which took place over 4 days, after which eight finalists were selected to participate face-to-face in Addis

Ababa on Saturday 19 February 2022. Seven of the eight applicants were present in the Ethiopian capital. The final was won by Mr Oumar Baldé from Guinea, second place went to Mauritius, Madagascar and Cameroon fought it out and finished third and fourth respectively.

The CASP was created in 2016 in Cameroon and the first edition took place in N'Djamena, Chad in 2018. Voice4Thought has been a partner of this event since 2017 and was present at this first edition as well as the second one in Ethiopia. The contribution of V4T can be seen at different levels:

- Training in slam-related professions such as communication, audiovisual, blogging, project management and all these indispensable elements that help strengthen the slam movement in Africa.
- Media coverage of the festival, audiovisual documentation of the festival and archives of data relating to the organisation and the festival.
- Institutional support in the drafting of the CASP dossier, the search for partners/funding and direct financial support.



Picture: CASP winner Elhadj Oumar Baldé. Source: CASP

5. Tchadcast

Together with two young bloggers from N'Djamena, Deuhb Zyzou and Nady Doumdanem, and Didier Lalaye, director of the V4T Académie program in Mali but Chadian citizen, we wrote a project proposal for a three episode podcast in Chad on democracy. The podcast is called Tchadcast. This small project, which may function as a pilot, was funded by the Dutch Embassy in Chad. Preparations and some recordings started in late 2021, the majority of the recordings and editing take place in 2022, as well as the distribution and publication and broadcasting of the podcast. Podcasting is new in Chad and the format developed for the Tchadcast is certainly a novelty. It bears clearly V4T's signature in the sense that it is a well researched and creative podcast. Voices of local humorists, slammers and experts can be heard in the Tchadcast.

6. Africanhiphop.com archive

The [African hip hop archive](#) project is an experimental research based on a data-set collected in different African countries and in the African diaspora between 1993 and 2020. The Africanhiphop.com archive consists of thousands of music cassettes and other multimedia and texts related to the development of hip-hop culture across the African continent and its diaspora between 1996 and now. Between January and May, student Daniel Okiror of African Studies in Leiden started out as an intern working to digitalise the first 50 cassettes from the archive. A ResourceSpace environment was created to upload the data (audio, scans and descriptive text). In 2022 this data set will be used in support of a funding application to grow the archive project and to collaborate with artists, researchers and other stakeholders in and outside of Africa on creating metadata and publications.



Picture: Our (previous) intern Daniel Okiror working on digitizing the archive.

7. Education Cameroon

With the [Education Cameroon](#) project, we support young people in the English-speaking part of Cameroon in their education.

We monitor 25 pupils; 21 in Baba, 2 in Douala and 2 in Limbe. These pupils were previously part of an orphanage project in the Baba region ([read more about how the project came to us](#)). Unfortunately, due to the conflict that broke out in Anglophone Cameroon in 2016, this orphanage was destroyed and the children were scattered across the region. Through (private) donations, we have been able to support the children in their daily lives and education.



Picture: by Gosse van Dijk. Baba, northwest Cameroon, 2016. Read his blog 'My stay at the orphanage' [here](#).

8. Study Fund

The Voice4Thought study fund is a new initiative whose structure we set up in 2021. The fund will be live on the website by mid 2022. Voice4Thought provides a platform where diverse voices from around the world can participate in building an inclusive debate and critical knowledge on contemporary/current social, political and economic issues. These voices are often actors in long-term, unseen, unrecognised, forgotten or silenced social and political processes of change in their countries of origin/home countries. As a platform, we offer them a place to make themselves heard. In order to develop their voice, education is necessary. Gaining knowledge through education is important 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 continue their education. We have helped countless young people on their way by being part of our platform. However, sometimes a formal education is necessary for further development, and that is what this study fund is for.

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

9. Thoughts and voices

We have had some inspiring and thought provoking contributions over the course of 2021. Amongst them:

- Blogs on the slam art festival [Slameroun](#) in Cameroon organized around the theme 'Art for the Anglophone crisis'.
- Mirjam de Bruijn had a fruitful conversation with the Dutch ambassador in Mali Marchel Gerrmann in De Balie Amsterdam, [Our man/woman in Mali](#), about the security situation in the country, the political climate, the rich culture, and not to forget our V4T Academy Mali programme.
- A series of sharp analysis on the [elections in Chad](#), [security crisis](#) in Mali.
- Together with Arnold Ngbagalet we published [Songo Events](#), an initiative by Arnold's organisation Force dans la geste, encouraging conversations about art and socio-political issues in the DRC.
- And we paid a tribute to the important voice in and outside the academic world, [Marie-Soleil Frère](#).

10. Collaboration with Bridging Humanities

[Bridging Humanities](#) is an open access, peer reviewed, interdisciplinary and multi-area platform that allows a working place to publish digital projects in innovative formats. Bridging Humanities includes original research from the Humanities intended as an open field that is connected with other disciplines in co-creation with others.

In 2021 we started preparing the multimedia publication for the Nile Pop project in cooperation with IHE Delft, Institute for Water Education. On Nile Day the 21st of February 2020 the Nile Pop event took place in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. There was poetry, music and stories on the river Nile from Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia. The Bridging Humanities publication will consist of audio - music and poetry live performed during the event - and written stories. The dedicated website for the Nile Pop project will benefit from photography by the Everyday Nile initiative. Publication is planned for September 2022.

Website and Facebook statistics

1. Website statistics

Overall the Voice4Thought website experienced a growing number of visitors during 2021.

Users

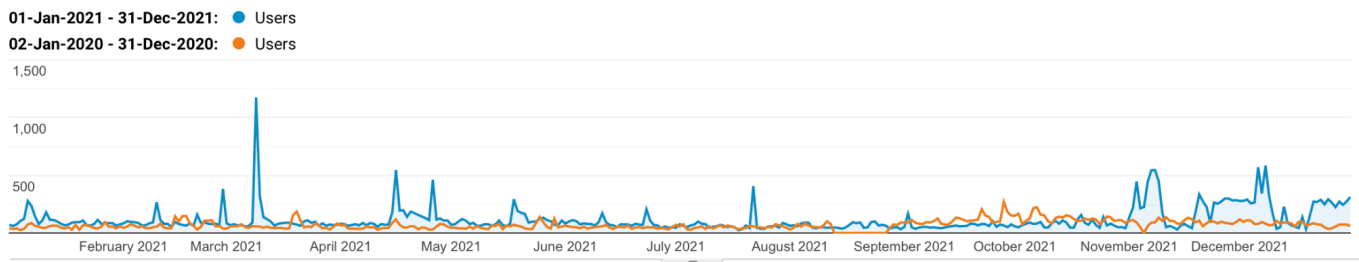
67.71%

38,505 vs 22,959



The amount of users as measured by Google Analytics went up by 67.7% from 22,959 to 38,505. Out of these, nearly 6% are returning visitors, while the rest are new to V4T.

When compared to visitor numbers during the previous year, there are regular peaks during which the amount of daily and weekly visitors increases abruptly (see graphic below). The sudden growth is often caused by a surge in traffic to a newly published article.



About half of traffic (48%) during 2021 was direct (typically by entering the web address or referral from another page), organic search accounted for 40%, social networks brought in nearly 11% of the total visitors.

72% of visitors use a mobile device or tablet, the rest use a desktop computer or laptop (in 2020, V4T only had 56.6% mobile users).

2. Facebook statistics

The posts with the most reached audience in 2021 through Facebook are listed below:

1. The rise of [women in slam poetry](#).
2. What is [happening in Mali](#)?
3. Who is [our man/woman in Mali](#)?
4. Jasmijn verkoopt pure biologische en ongeraffineerde [karitéboter \(sheaboter\) uit Mali](#).
5. [A new project!](#) More to come.
6. Artists [Jolien Wallis de Vries & Sapin Makengele \(Sapinart\)](#) have been working together.
7. The [arrival of Masra Succès](#), leader of the opposition party Tranformaty Party (Les Transformateurs), has been changing the political landscape in Chad.
8. Abelle Bowala, a Congolese comedy artist of international renown, will be one of the multidisciplinary female artists invited for the [second edition of SONGO ÉVENT'S](#).
9. The International Crisis Group published a [new report in the context of fighting terrorism in the Sahel](#), titled: 'The Challenges of the Chadian Army.' Zyzou reflects.
10. The [Voice4Thought Academy](#) (V4TA) is part of the PGRL programme ([P-GLR](#))(collaboration with OXFAM-SNV-CORDAID) that works on the empowerment of youth in political processes in Mali.

Organisation in 2021

1. New team members

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.

In 2021 we welcomed the following new team members:

Team Voice4Thought Academy Mali

Ousmane Kebe - Coordinator Goa

Mohamed Ag Alloulou - Coordinator Tombouctou

Gouro Diallo - Coordinator San

Bibata Maiga - Coordinator Niono

Team The Netherlands

Jasmijn Peeters - Fundraiser

Bianca Omatuku - Intern Cameroon under supervision Faithful, director of Festival International Slameroun (local partner of V4T)

2. Board and Advisory Board in 2021

We are grateful and happy with our active Board, and Board of Advisors in 2021.

Board

Andrew Makkinga (chair)

Mirjam de Bruijn

Susan van Esch*

Board of Advisors

Balt Leenman

Kitty Zijlmans

Freek Stoopendaal

Our Board and Board of Advisors are not remunerated for their contributions to the organisation.

**The 2021 annual narrative and financial report has not been approved by Susan van Esch, as she left the Board in April 2022. See the chapter on organisational and governance changes below for more information. We are grateful for her fruitful contributions to the organisation, as well as her active role in the organisational changes over 2021.*

3. Organisational and governance changes

Professionalization

In 2021, we took some important steps in the professionalization of our organisation. The introduction of the new Dutch law on foundations (WBTR) has been a reason for this development. With the introduction of the WBTR, we have prepared adjustments in the form of management and organisational policies. One of them is the overall governance structure of the organisation and who is accountable for what. This also includes the position of the director, who is responsible for the day-to-day management, and who is supported by a management team with a Supervisory Board. The introduction of these changes also mean a change from our Board in 2021 to a Supervisory Board in 2022. All changes will be finalised in 2022.

In addition, by the end of 2021 we created a new part-time vacancy for a 'fundraiser'. This position will be filled in 2022. The purpose of the position is to raise funds for various projects, and also to look for general funds and/or contributions for the foundation. \

New home!

In September 2021, we moved to The Extra Mile, a co-working space in Amsterdam Zuidoost. The rent is on a temporary basis to keep costs down as much as possible. The team in Mali also moved into a bigger office to accommodate the growing team in Bamako.

Changes that COVID-19 brought

As mentioned in the preface, the COVID-19 pandemic was difficult for our organisation as we couldn't travel across borders. Yet, we would also like to acknowledge that the pandemic has given us the opportunity to improve our working together online, our hybrid meetings - also with our international teams - and even our teaching and training in The Academy. Since late 2021 we have been reflecting on making the trainings more available online and also possible in a hybrid form. This is an effect of COVID-19 (the NL team not being able to travel to Mali) but also because of the security issues in Mali (the Bamako team not being able to travel to all regions easily over land, and with flights being very expensive). So next to a hybrid way of working we are now also working on a hybrid way of teaching!

4. Financial management and risk management

Financial management

We use periodic reports to manage the organisation and finances of the projects. These reports are discussed and evaluated in the management team and with the project leaders periodically. All unplanned purchases pass through the budget manager for approval. A distinction is made between projects and general expenditure for the organisation. Exceeding budgets is prevented in this way.

In 2021, Voice4Thought achieved a positive result. In comparison to 2020, the foundation also received more money than it spent beyond its projects. These funds will be used as working capital to ensure the continuity of the projects, to guarantee the continuity of the

organisation and to invest in future projects. The foundation has a good liquidity position, no long-term debts and no doubtful debts. More information on our financial management and the financial report on 2021 can be found on our website.

Risk management

As a foundation, one of the biggest risks for the continuation and sustainability of our activities is that funding is limited and that we are dependent on subsidies and grants. For this reason, we have created the vacancy of institutional fundraiser to help support our work further and to decrease this risk. Moreover, as of 2022 we will work on an overview of the possibility to create a continuity reserve in our financial management to ensure we can continue our work for some time, even if funding stops (for a while).

Furthermore, we note that the risk of insecurity in many of our project zones, such as in Mali and Chad, are quite severe. We are aware of this, and as it is part of the nature and *raison d'être* of our organisation, we have systems in place to assess the situations well. However, to reduce the risks and to better mitigate these risks, also for our team in Mali, we have created new organisational policies on security.

5. Collaboration and funding¹

Active Partnerships in 2021

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

Funding partners and donors in 2021

Royal Dutch Embassy in Mali
Royal Dutch Embassy in Chad
Leiden University, The Netherlands
UMC Utrecht, Utrecht
SOAS University, United Kingdom
Oslomet University, Norway

We have also received private donations for the Cameroon Education programme and the Study fund (Studiefonds).

¹ More information on funding partners and donors can be found in the financial report 2021.

Looking forward to 2022

We are excited for the activities planned in the next year.

- Implement our new organisational and management structure. It is a great step forward in our professionalization.
- We are exploring the possible expansion of the Voice4Thought Academy in other Sahel countries such as Niger and Chad.
- We are excited about the recordings and editing of the Tchadcast in 2022. Tchadcast is 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'. The project is approved by the Dutch embassy in Chad.
- We are looking forward to starting with workshops of the DDMAC programme and the SOAS project.
- We are excited to welcome a 'fundraiser'. We are busy applying for funds and projects, including for the organisation of a festival in Utrecht for the celebration of the city's anniversary next year. The fundraiser will be an added value to our ambitions.