

Annual Report 2022
Voice4Thought Foundation



www.voice4thought.org

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Preface to the Annual Report

We gave our New Year's message for 2023 the title: "A year with a lot of anger, but also hope". 2022 was a year full of turmoil and anger of the youth in Africa. V4T observed that youth in conflict ridden Mali went [to the streets to protest](#) against the presence of France as they felt the military action of the French did not contribute to peace. This protest also resonated in other countries. On the 20th of October, the Chadian youth went to the streets against the outcomes of the National Dialogue. This day will go into the history as [Black Thursday](#); over 200 people were killed, 1300 arrested and 40 disappeared. Protests often hide another question: The youth demand a government that allows them a future.

We as Voice4Thought have observed and felt the anger already for a long time. In fact, it has been the decisive argument for founding our organisation. It has motivated us to continue developing projects together with the youth in several places around the world. We try not to despair but rather share messages sent from youth in our networks who are based at the frontlines. Messages that should be heard.

Furthermore, to be able to cope with these emotions of anger and frustration, and to turn them into positive energy we keep innovating and renewing ourselves. We have increasingly turned to the development of podcasts, which are less invasive to produce. This is especially valuable in the countries where freedom of speech becomes a luxury. With the use of audio only, our teams in the field are less exposed and at risk as compared to using video. The project 'Tchadcast' is our first attempt to develop the podcast style for V4T. In the next year, we will make this a more common technique for our productions.

Feelings of discontent and anger with society can lead to polarisation and tensions. Witnessing these processes we came to the conclusion that it is necessary to work on developing methods to depolarize. Particularly in the use of language, anger can cause individuals and groups of people to stand opposite each other. The project '[Tchadoblog](#)' in Chad helped us to develop a method for depolarised writing, and thus channeling the anger into a critical reflection. In Tchad we did a study for the International Crisis Group on the use of social media - a strong force when it comes to polarisation - in the messy period after the death of president Déby in April 2021. It gave us inspiration to develop projects that provide an alternative to polarisation in the media.

That language can serve change has been shown by the art of slam poetry. Our longstanding relationships with slam artists have this year resulted in an official partnership with CASP (Coupe d'Afrique de Slam Poésie), the leading organisation on slam art in Africa. And we became a founding member of the World Poetry Slam Organization, which held its first edition in September 2022.

Anger is a catalyst. An emotion we need to transform into change, courage, hope. As female slam artist Mariusca from Congo-Brazzaville says in [her poem 'Espoir'](#) (Hope):

*Ta passivité réprime
Pour primer l'inconcevable*

*Faire rimer aspiration et espérance car
Les seuls limites qui nous limitent sont celles que l'on se fixe*

Your passivity represses
To overcome the inconceivable
Make aspiration and hope rhyme because
The only limits that limit us are the ones we set for ourselves

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 nonprofit 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

2022: Highlights and projects

1. Voice4Thought Academy Mali

The Voice4Thought Academy (V4TA) in Mali is part of the [PGRL+](#) (Programme de Gouvernance Locale Redevable) programme for 3 years now and has continued to grow steadily last year. The Académie counts 8 'Antennes' in the North, Central and Southern part of Mali and most of these regions are conflict zones where young men and women are trained in research and artistic expressions. We have trained more than 700 people, and there has been an increasing learning to use research tools to conduct more in-depth research in the field. Research has translated into some great theater plays, slam and other forms of expression, some of which can be viewed on the [website](#).

This year the regional teams of V4TA reported on the political transition in Mali, the great meeting of all the Malian V4TA regional teams in Siby, the increasing violence in certain communities and several cultural events. Check out these interesting and vibrant [videos](#)!

Also, the full [documentary 'Art et Savoir'](#), divided in episodes, about the first year of the Academie can be viewed online. In this film, the coordinators from the different regions talk about their experiences, important research topics and what motivates them to engage in the development of their country and to work with young people.

We also introduced the itinerant schools in the ten provinces of Mali. The itinerant school is a training school for youth in the V4TA disciplines. The most talented youth will join the teams of researchers and artists who will form a group based at the youth houses (*Maisons des jeunes*) in the communities. In their research and artistic expression these schools focus on themes and issues specific to the current situation in each area. The young people trained will in turn pass on their knowledge to a new generation of Academy students in their communities. This makes the Academy a sustainable institution that will continue independently, and can continue to establish valuable collaborations with local youth houses.



Picture: Assistant of the itinerant school conducts research in Siribala, Niono.

Autonomisation

One of the objectives of the V4T Academy is to support the V4TA Antennes (Tombouctou, Douentza, Gao, Segou, San, Niono, Bankass and Bougouni) in becoming autonomous in order to continue the Academy after PGLR+ will stop funding its training activities. This means that from 2023, the Antennes will have to start searching for other projects or to offer their “Research and Expression” training and consultancy services to other organizations. Some of the Antennes have been already involved in other projects like [SOAS](#), [DDMAC](#) and the Pastoralist Research project (see section 2 and 3). Other Antennes have been asked to develop artistic expressions during thematic events like the annual international ‘16 days of Gender Based Violence’ campaign amongst others. All 8 Antennes have been working in 2022 on relationships with other partners in the field and bringing their attention to the activities of V4TA. Some have already established long term partnerships for future collaborations.

2. 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 run from November 2021 to November 2022 focused on 'inherited slavery' which in some areas of Mali is still a practice, although taboo and a difficult subject. The project aimed to understand the situation better in the Kayes and Macina regions of Mali, especially from the point of view of young people. Youth were trained in research and visual techniques and skills. Data was gathered during two periods of field research in the two regions. Based on the research conducted, a theater piece was created, and in a possible next phase, a mobile video game will be created. These artistic and ‘gamified’ products contribute to the public conversation on this taboo subject. The mobile game was launched in 2023.

Visit ‘Djonya Kélé Ja Toulon’ Facebook page, [here](#). And more information on [the website](#).

3. DDMAC

[Decoding Digital Media in African Conflicts](#) (DDMAC) is a project funded by the Norwegian Research Council, in which V4T Academy is responsible for research in Mali (see the [website](#)). The leading researcher of V4TA is Modibo Cissé. Mirjam de Bruijn leads the project with Bruce Mutsvairo and Kristin Ogoreth. A [workshop](#) with Malian experts in the field of digital media was held in February 2022. The outcomes of this workshop are part of a research publication of the project.



Picture: Solar energy in a camp of displaced people in Bamako, Mali. © Mirjam de Bruijn

Pastoralist Research in Mali with University of Florida

This project concentrates on the impacts and responses to insecurity in different regions of Mali, with a focus on the pastoralist communities. Voice4Thought Academy researchers collaborated with researchers from the University of Florida. Together they have conducted 300 in-person surveys in three regions of Mali with different forms of conflict and violence in relation to political instability, social and ethnic tensions, and jihadism. The research (qualitative and quantitative surveys) emphasized relevant demographic information, perceived threats, changes in security, and associated responses to political and environmental conflict in the past decade – how it has affected their lives, what changes they made, how mobility, herding, and livelihoods have been affected, and how they perceive their current livelihoods and security compared to previous periods.

4. Medialab

In collaboration with Leiden University we further developed the ‘digital methods skills hub’, where students of the faculty of Humanities are taught the main methods for research and publication of V4T: blogging, video, audio, and digital tools for research on social media dynamics. In 2022 the skills hub started its official integration into the teaching programmes of the faculty. With this successful growth, Federica Notari, research assistant at the Leiden University, is now in lead of the development of the hub. The role of V4T will gradually diminish. We can celebrate this as a success of our methodology.

The skills hub resulted in the [Innovative Research Methods \(IRM\) website](#), and will continue to be developed. Innovative Research Methods that is a community-based space for exploring new and creative ways of conducting, displaying and utilising academic research.

5. Coup d’Afrique du Slam Poésie (CASP)

V4T has collaborated with [CASP](#) (Coupe d’Afrique de Slam Poésie), the biggest organisation on slam art in Africa, for its first edition in 2019. This year we discussed the possibility of partnering officially with CASP. The [visit](#) of CASP’s director (Didier Lalaye) and vice-director

(Arnoud Bana Enono) to the V4T office in Amsterdam at the end of September 2022, gave us a lot of inspiration to develop new projects. We signed the MOU and became official partners.

5.1 World Poetry Slam Organization

Voice4Thought became officially a [founding member](#) of the [World Poetry Slam Organization](#), which organized its first edition in Brussels in September 2022.



Picture: Arnoud Bana Enono (aka Faithful) giving a workshop on slam poetry during the World Poetry Slam Organization event.

6. Tchadcast

Together with two young bloggers from N’Djamena, Deuhb Zyzou and Nady Doumdanem, and Didier Lalaye, director of the V4T Academy program in Mali, 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.

Recordings of the Tchadcast took place in late 2022. Due to the demonstrations in October and repression that followed, publication and broadcasting has been postponed to 2023.

7. Tchadoblog

This project is titled “Tchadoblog: reconter le Tchad Autrement.” The objective of the project was to co-create together with a group of young bloggers a methodology to learn to write in depolarised ways in the polarized society of Chad For decades already Chad has been a deeply divided society. This project wants to produce stories as an alternative to the polarized Chadian (social)media. Moreover, to show media consumers that there is another way of presenting Chadian society, beyond the “Us vs. Them” rhetoric, beyond simplistic “black-and-white” thinking, beyond the single story.

The pilot project we could develop with the help of a small fund of the European Union in Chad. Voice4Thought worked in collaboration with a team of bloggers who united themselves in Chad's first ever [association of bloggers](#) - now an officially recognized structure. The experience gained with the project Tchadoblog has helped us to make a start with the development of shared methodology to write depolarizing stories. Some of the written texts have made it to the V4T website. We expect more contributions to come!

Zyzou wrote about [protests in Chad](#) and [protest songs](#). Mirjam has led a research for the International Crisis Group on the polarising tendencies on social media during the political transition period in Tchad. This research also shows the urgency of the [topic](#). An evaluation of the workshops was held in February 2023. Fully recognising the experiences with, and potential of, the Tchadblog project inspired us to write an adapted sequel for a larger project, more rigorous project around the same subject.



Picture: Workshop Tchadoblog in N'Djamena, October 2022.

8. Education Cameroon

With the [Education Cameroon](#) project, we support young people in the English-speaking part of Cameroon who otherwise do not have the financial means to go to school. At this moment, we are monitoring 45 pupils. Most of them are based in Bamenda, some in Douala, Limbe and Baba.

The pupils were previously part of an orphanage project in the Baba region ([read more about how the project came to us](#)). Due to the conflict that broke out in Anglophone Cameroon in 2016, this orphanage was destroyed and the children were scattered across the region. V4T managed to localize the children and maintain personal contact with them. Through (private) donations, we have been able to support the children in their educational efforts.

The Education Cameroon project has entered a new phase with stable donations from Belgian foundations. We also sent out a call for more individual support for a child's schooling trajectory. In the academic year of 2022 – 2023 we were able to pay the school fees of all 45 children.



Picture: Four of the schoolchildren.

In August 2022 we started to organize creative workshops for the children. Due to the ongoing conflict, it was not safe for some of them to travel to Bamenda, where the workshops were held. Despite the limited group, the participants were very positive about the activities we offered (painting, music and beats-making). They had a good and creative time during their summer holidays (which is rare for most of them) and we hope that we can repeat it next August.



Picture: Participants of the workshop in August 2022.

The impact of these workshops was great: the participants continued to create and started making music independently. For example, three of them started their own music group. From the talent and the motivation we observed, the idea arose to work on a new V4T Academy in Anglophone Cameroon, based on the work we have done in Mali. The children of the educational project in Cameroon will be the core-team of the academy and the vice-director of the CASP, Arnoud Bana Enono, will be the project coordinator. Together with them, we are currently working on the first steps of the project plan.

9. Study Fund

2022 was also the year of our [Study Fund](#) to be running. The Study Fund gives out scholarships to motivated students who want to personally grow and increase their knowledge but do not have the means to realize their ambition.

We are proud to announce that Godwill, from Bamenda, Cameroon, was able to [graduate](#) with the support of the V4T Study Fund, and now holds a degree in Human Resource Management. Congratulations Godwill!



Picture: Godwill on his graduation day, September 2022.

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.

[Bridging Humanities](#) is V4T's open access, peer reviewed, interdisciplinary, multi-area and academic platform, that allows a working place to publish digital projects in innovative formats.

In 2022 we intensively worked together with the IHE Delft (Institute for Water Education) on the publication called [Nile Pop](#). This publication is based on a conference in the Rijksmuseum of Oudheden in Leiden bearing the same name and will reveal the river Nile in essays, poetry, music, film and photography. The launch is planned for 22 February 2023, international Nile Day.

11. Thoughts and voices

Thoughts and voices that made us (re)think our world:

- A thought provoking blog about the [meat lobby](#), that signifies the development of the Voice4Animals Academy (development of this project ongoing)
- A blog series on the National Dialogue in [Tchad](#) and the [Central African Republic](#), by Deuhb Zyzou and Arnold Ngbagalet
- A blog on the commemoration of [Argentina's living trauma](#), by Jasmijn Peeters
- The (Facebook) live stream of the [World Poetry Slam Championship](#) in Brussels
- Mirjam de Bruijn had an interview on the [large-scale protests in Mali](#) against sanctions imposed by ECOWAS in January at the Dutch radio station Bureau Buitenland

Website and Facebook statistics

1. Website statistics

During 2022, the Voice4thought.org website was visited by a total of 64,030 users. 63% of them used an English language browser while 33% used a French language browser. Direct traffic accounted for 88% of visits, organic search traffic for 8,5% and social traffic for 2,8%.

In 2021, the visitor total was 39,000, so this suggests a growth of 64%. However, a sizable part of the growth seems to have been caused by so-called bots originating in Indonesia, which visit the website with the purpose of posting spam or to otherwise exploit the website. Measures have been taken to limit the amount of spam users.

The most popular articles include:

1. <https://www.voice4thought.org//tchad-des-individus-plus-riches-que-letat/> (2463 views)
2. <https://www.voice4thought.org//perceptions-des-jeunes-sur-le-chomage-au-mali/> (1189 views)
3. <https://www.voice4thought.org//fr/masra-un-caillou-dans-la-botte-du-general-deby-2/> (816 views)
4. <https://www.voice4thought.org//african-cup-of-slam-poetry-coupe-dafrique-de-slam-poesie/> (517 views)

2. Facebook statistics

The posts with the most reached audience in 2022 through Facebook are listed below:

1. [Help funding](#) life saving surgery for Amiti Rebecca - 16.8K people reached
2. [Congratulate Mariusca Moukengue](#) on winning the Prins Claus Seed Award - 3.3 K
3. Tchadoblog organises '[Initiation au Blogging](#)' - 2.5K people reached
4. [Godwill has finished his degree](#) - 2.4K people reached
5. V4T is proud [founding member](#) of the World Poetry Slam Organization - 1.5K people reached
6. [Marieke van Winden](#) has passed away - 572 people reached
7. Shaping [our relationship with slam](#) with director of CASP and director of SLAMeroun - 438 people reached
8. The [first edition of the World Poetry Slam Organization](#) takes place in Brussels - 413 people reached
9. Association of Chadian bloggers and V4T collaboration called [Tchadoblog](#) - 372 people reached
10. [Blog on seven year old Lay](#) who passes during a game of football - 335 people reached

Organisation in 2022

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 2022 we welcomed the following new team member:

Team Voice4Thought Academy Mali

Mamadou Togola - Coordinateur recherche quantitative.

Fiona Dragstra, who was part of the team since the start of Voice4Thought has left the organisation as a team member in December 2022, but will join the Supervisory Board as of March 2023.

2. Board and Advisory Board

V4T started to professionalise its organisation. We are officialising our new structure beginning of 2023. The supervisory board and its mandate was reformulated, new articles of association formulated, and new members of the supervisory board invited. The official installment of the supervisory board will be in March 2023.

Supervisory Board

Andrew Makkinga
Maarten Mous
Daphne Pit
Affoh Guenneguez
Fiona Dragstra

Advisory Board

Balt Leenman
Kitty Zijlmans
Freek Stoopendaal

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

In memoriam Marieke van Winden



On Monday 28 November 2022, we said goodbye to Marieke van Winden. She passed away last Wednesday after fighting an impossible illness for a year and a half. I am a former colleague of hers. Marieke was head of communications at the Africa Study Centre (ASC). She organised many great exhibitions, seminars and book reviews with the aim of translating those scientific texts and words to a wider audience. With these activities, Marieke was certainly an inspiration for the first steps of Voice4Thought. She brought artists into the ASC, and thus she was also one of the first to introduce the decolonisation agenda that is now so high on everyone's list. Where possible, Marieke gave Voice4Thought a place in her activities for the ASC. She helped us with her enthusiasm to persevere and build the organisation. It therefore made perfect sense to ask Marieke to join the first Voice4Thought board. She said "yes" and thus helped us professionalise the organisation, as it was very difficult to find enthusiastic people when we started. It really has been a decisive period for V4T and I would like to thank Marieke again for that.

3. Collaboration and funding

Active Partnerships in 2022

Bridging Humanities, the Netherlands
Chad+, Chad
Coup d'Afrique Slam de Poésie (CASP), Cameroon/Chad
CRASH, Chad
Eyeses, the Netherlands
ICCO/CORDAID, the Netherlands/Mali
Leiden Global, the Netherlands
Ndjam s'enflamme en slam, Chad
Oxfam, the Netherlands/Mali
Slameroun, Cameroon
SNV, the Netherlands/Mali

Funding partners and donors in 2022

European Union, Chad
Karuna VZW, Belgium
Leiden University, the Netherlands
Oslomet University, Norway
P.J. Rogaar Stichting, the Netherlands
Royal Dutch Embassy in Mali
Royal Dutch Embassy in Chad
SOAS University, United Kingdom
Stichting Dirk Bos Fonds, the Netherlands

We have also received private donations for the Cameroon Education programme and the Study fund (Studiefonds). And a special thanks to all private donations done for the surgery for our V4T Academy Mali colleague Sissouma's daughter.

Looking forward to 2023

A number of exciting activities await us in the new year:

- We are expanding our activities beyond Africa and The Netherlands; we are moving to Colombia! Two of our team-members, Catherina Wilson and Jasmijn Peeters, will be doing fieldwork in Colombia and exploring opportunities to start our first Latin-American Academy in Sibaté, near Bogota.
- V4T's Tchadcast, a podcast containing discussions, interviews, sketches and slam, will be broadcasted at radio stations, social media and Whatsapp. Due to the demonstrations on the 20th October 2022 and the following repression the initial broadcasting dates have been postponed.
- The launch of the special Bridging Humanities issue 'Nile Pop' in collaboration with IHE Delft will be launched in February 2023.
- We are looking forward to the launch of the film 'Jeunesse et Politique, l'ombre du passé sur le présent' by Mirjam de Bruijn and Gaby Kada Fouakalbo that was realised with a fund from Leiden University. They followed young activists in Chad from 2015 to 2022. The itineraries of these activists tell the story of the impossibility of social change in Chad. The film is part of Mirjam's research in Chad. First we will show the film in Chad and then distribute it internationally.