

Voice.
Dialogue.
Evidence.
Action.

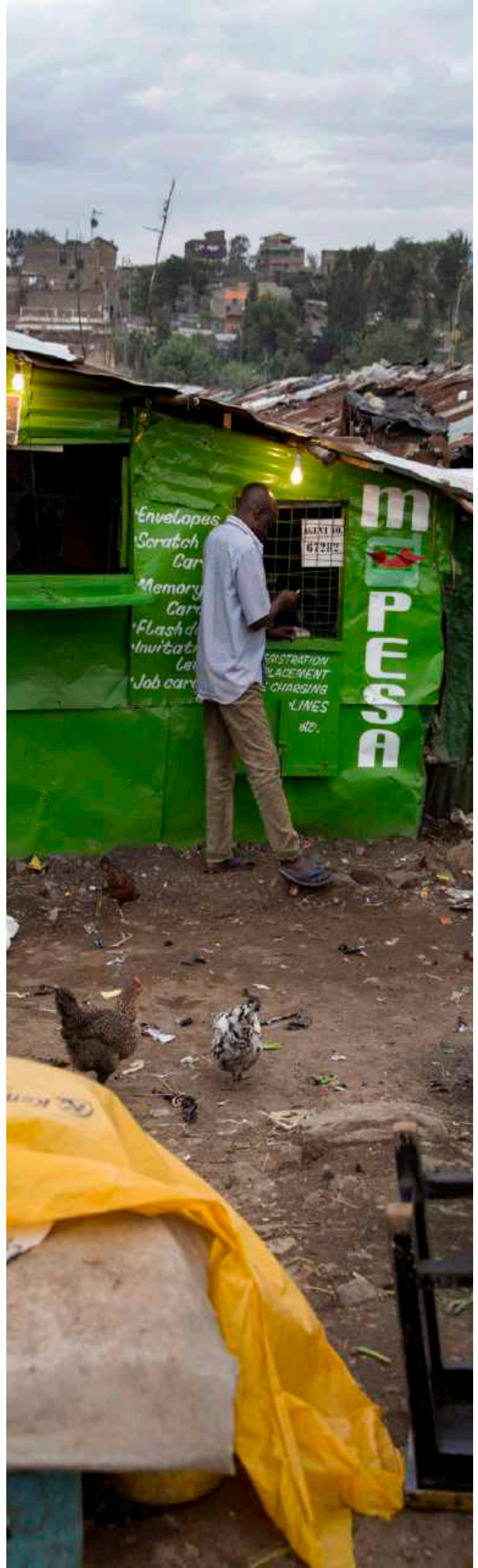
About Africa's Voices

Africa's Voices is a non-profit organisation, spun out of cutting-edge research at the University of Cambridge. Using a unique combination of capabilities - social science, media expertise and innovative technologies - we listen to citizens' authentic voices and turn this engagement into rigorous social insights that accelerate social impact.

We believe in the power of media to amplify voices and make citizens co-creators of a better future.

Our work reaches thousands of people facing displacement, inequality, discrimination, and poverty, from Somalia's drought-struck refugee settlements to Nairobi's vast slums. We deploy a unique take on interactive radio programming to engage citizens in large-scale meaningful dialogues in their own languages helping to improve health outcomes, turn the dial on gender equality and social inclusion, improve livelihoods, build more prosperous and cohesive communities and enable more downwards accountability from service-deliverers to the people they serve. Using responsible technology, we turn this engagement into actionable evidence on citizen opinions that strengthens the impact of development, humanitarian and governance programmes.

Find out more at www.africasvoices.org



Another year of putting **citizen voices** at the heart of Africa's transformation.

What do Somalis perceive to be the most viable solutions to their country's displacement crisis? Do the citizens of Siaya County in Kenya think their government has met the commitments made in the 2018-19 Development Plan? Why do people in Somalia think that women do not get equal access to justice?

2019 marked five years of Africa's Voices. In many ways, it was a year of transformation. We welcomed a new leader in Samuel Kimeu and became not only Africa-based but also African-led. We launched Imaqal, our largest and most ambitious project to date, to engage Somalis in a nationwide norm-challenging conversation about gender equality and social inclusion. For the second year in a row, we put the voices of citizens at the heart of humanitarian planning

processes in Somalia to inform the 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview. And we took our Common Social Accountability Platform, first launched in Somalia in 2018, to Siaya County in Kenya to hold the county government to account for the promises made in the 2018-2019 Development Plan.

In 2020, we continue to pursue our mission with the same zeal and excitement: to engage citizens in meaningful discussions, listen to their unique voices in 'spaces' they value, and turn this rigorous engagement into actionable insights that accelerate social impact in two ways: (i) as powerful evidence for more participatory, responsive and accountable governance and (ii) as citizen-led norm-challenging dialogues for progressive social change.

2015

Core funding from Hewlett Foundation and The David and Elaine Potter Foundation received.

Nairobi office established.

2016

Awarded The Market Research Society's President's Medal.

Awarded Wellcome Trust and DFID funding to evaluate our interactive radio method for deployment in public health emergencies.

2017

Delivered 13 projects in 5 countries.

Launch of CODA, our innovative data analysis tool, in collaboration with researchers from the University of Cambridge.

2018

Launch of the Common Social Accountability Platform (CSAP), our flagship initiative to strengthen public participation and accountability towards citizens, in Somalia.

2019

Introduction of a new offering- katikati, a unique one-to-one SMS communications platform.

Launch of Imaqal, our largest project to date.

CSAP expands to Kenya.

A note from our **Executive Director..**

The prospect of listening and engaging citizens at scale on topics they care about attracted me to Africa's Voices. I had for a while entertained the thought that it was possible to speak and listen to citizens across Africa on matters of continental concern. While this desire burnt strong in me, I did not know how this was possible until I came across AVF. I immediately saw the immense potential the methodology held to actualise my dream. Now at the helm of AVF, I count it both a privilege and a duty to sustain the dream of those who first conceived the idea and invested in research and development towards making it happen.

The highlight of our work in 2019 was the growth and reach of Imaqal as a trusted platform that engages thousands of Somalis in challenging norms that buttress gender inequality and social exclusion. Premised on a unique media-based and citizen-led approach to social and behaviour change, Imaqal has epitomised the potential of our Citizen Evidence for Social Change programme and will no doubt inspire similar initiatives beyond Somalia.

On the governance and accountability front, our Common Social Accountability Platform was tested yet again in Somalia. For two years consecutively, we worked with OCHA to engage citizens in identifying humanitarian priorities. CSAP was similarly deployed in Kenya's Siaya County to gauge citizens' views on the implementation of the county development plan 2018-2019. Based on the experience, we are convinced that CSAP can play a significant role in promoting effective public participation within the context of devolution in Kenya and beyond.

2019 was a year of transition. After steering AVF for five years as its founding Executive Director, Dr. Sharath Srinivasan returned to the University of Cambridge. He remains connected to AVF as part of a Technical Advisory Group to provide expert advice to AVF. Dr. Srinivasan also heads Katikati, a new joint venture between AVF and Lark Systems that provides cutting edge technology for one-to-one engagement with citizens at scale. In 2020, we rapidly deployed this capability to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, by engaging citizens on their understanding of the crisis and its risks and providing trusted public health information. This successful deployment within a few weeks proved the potential of this methodology in emergency situations. We were able to 'close the loop' with senior Ministry of Health officials directly responding to citizen concerns.

In 2020 and beyond, we will continue to pursue innovation that enables us to engage an even greater number of citizens in emergency situations and to enable them to hold service providers and decision-makers to account. We are grateful to those who partnered with us to make 2019 a success.

With very best wishes,
Samuel Kimeu

...and a note from our **Chairperson**

Our experiences of 2019 give us confidence that AVF can continue to add a key dimension to the efforts of many remarkable social service providers in an expanding range of fields in East Africa. This report gives a flavour of the range of our work.

As I write now, much of our effort has been switched to provide insights into understanding the difficulties for the hardest to reach that arise from Covid-19. I believe our ability to gather and analyse attitudes and reactions is a significant guide to government and independent health and social providers too.

The arrival of the pandemic coincided with the withdrawal back to Cambridge University of Sharath Srinivasan. His visionary leadership of AVF since our inception five years ago has been the pillar for developing special skills which are the basis of AVF's contribution. We salute him and look forward to his continuing support.

The arrival of Samuel Kimeu in the lead role coincided with the need to concentrate on the issues of the Covid-19. I believe Samuel has successfully led and adapted the team, working from their homes, to meet the need for clear analysis of the factors that can reduce the problems of those suffering from the crisis.

AVF has an exceptional skill base. This can ensure that the views of those whose needs are most acute are at the forefront of social efforts. Our small capital base is the only limitation to the breath of our contribution, whether in health or more broadly. Our aim is to be the friend of all social actors who understand the need to start by listening with humility.

Lord Cairns

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Reflections from our co-founder

Sharath Srinivasan: Five lessons for the aid sector from our first five years.

After five years at the helm of Africa's Voices and several more leading the pioneering research that led to our establishment, in 2020 Sharath Srinivasan returned to his duties as the co-Director of the Centre of Governance and Human Rights at the University of Cambridge. Reflecting on five years of seeing AVF grow, innovate and challenge government and aid actors to put citizens first, Sharath shares his own personal lessons and takeaways from the journey so far.

Lesson 1: A deep unflinching commitment to valuing voices

If you want to engage people, hear them, and speak to them about their world you have to value their voices. To do so you must find them where they are and on their own terms. Africa's Voices does that at local radio stations where meaningful discussions that matter to audiences are taking place.

Valuing voices requires an unflinching commitment. To build a vibrant radio-based dialogue using SMS in local language is difficult and demanding. It becomes tempting to simplify it by adopting more conventional opinion-gathering methodologies. Crucially, the burden of this commitment has to fall on you. This is where surveys fall short- they reach a lot of scale but they do so by reducing people to data points. But if you are willing to convene conversations, listen to what people have to say and collect their voices (messy unstructured language data), then the burden of deriving meaning, of analysis, of inventing and innovating around this challenge is on you.

Lesson 2: Think differently about outcomes and impact

Aid and development actors are on a perpetual journey to improve outcomes that are, as much as possible, measurable and tangible: better health infrastructure, higher school enrollment, better citizen participation in elections. While these are undoubtedly important and justifiable, there are other crucial outcomes that are overlooked because they cannot be reduced to numbers and immediate results.

For Africa's Voices, convening citizens around rich, inclusive and plural dialogues over local language

radio is both meaningful and valuable. When a participant reaches for her phone to send an SMS message in response to the question posed on the radio, she might indeed be interested in whether there will be accountability or whether her voice will reach decision makers, but she is equally likely to be interested in the discussion itself: she learns from it, she engages with fellow citizens, she cares about the experience of belonging, of meaning, of conversation. This is why, as opposed to conventional survey methodologies, people choose to participate and contribute their views to the discussion. There is no incentive to do so, they are not caught off guard at their front door and asked to answer questions the responses to which are often prescribed to them.

In our pursuit to think about outcomes differently from a human experiential perspective, we have, over the past five years, been helping others - aid and governance actors alike - to embrace the same attitude. It's not always easy but we have come really far. Partners that choose to work with us year on year are testament to this.

Lesson 3: Rethink "speaking truth to power"

Deriving accountability and action from unfiltered citizen voice is the true challenge for Africa's Voices. Equally, being accountable to the people they serve is a fundamental conundrum for service deliverers, government actors and the aid sector as a whole. One of the dominant frameworks in which we think about how citizens exercise agency is the idea of "speaking truth to power". This, however, puts truth at odds with power; it suggests that truth is the higher value, the one that is celebrated, and power is the misbehaving one, the one that must be conditioned and held to account.

Similarly, another prominent idea is that we need to gather all the opinions and preferences of citizens, digest them and come up with some useful statistics



as evidence to be delivered to decision makers. But vis-a-vis the realities and constraints of aid and development, accountability and action do not work this way.

Our truth is the power of citizen voice. In the five years of Africa's Voices, it became apparent that evidence alone, as nicely packaged and presented as it may be, is not the means to the end of accountability. Returning to the fundamentals of citizen voice and demonstrating that there are novel and better ways to listen has been our most powerful tool in engaging decision makers, forcing them to see beyond the frameworks they normally operate in. Ultimately, to achieve action and accountability we must begin by changing the ways we listen.

Lesson 4: The space for accountability needs to enlarge

There's been an undeniable revival of the discourse on accountability and participation within the aid space since Africa's Voices was born. But there have also been legitimate doubts as to whether such ideas are truly valued rather than merely a nice-to-have and whether the political economy of aid can withstand and genuinely sustain such commitments. Introduced into the norm of technical expertise that diagnoses problems and proposes solutions, citizen voice is a disruptive force because, more often than not, it leads to conclusions that don't fit in the silos and prevalent frameworks of the aid sector.

At the same time, it's hard to believe that downwards accountability is genuine when aid agencies are inevitably first and foremost accountable upwards, towards donors and towards media scrutiny, reducing downwards accountability to yet another project activity. This is why, the space for accountability needs to enlarge, it needs to become more independent in order to achieve real change. This can only be done through more radical approaches and ultimately, less business-as-usual and more creativity.

Lesson 5: Our structures of aid can hinder innovation

Africa's Voices was different from the beginning. Innovation is part of our DNA. But while there is a lot of support for innovation at face value within the aid world, it's difficult to be different in a space that thrives on labeling and categorising. AVF is not a research firm per se (though it has come out of research) and it's not a frontline aid deliverer (though it helps frontline deliverers align their work with the opinions of the people they serve). It's a charity, enabling change that is transformative, yet not the kind you could fundraise for in the streets of London or New York. It's been a challenge to grow an organisation that doesn't exactly fit in a box and it's a reminder of the ways in which the wider structures within aid can sometimes hamper or hinder change.

Sharath Srinivasan, January 2020

2019 highlights on things that **matter**

- 1** ...creating meaningful media-based spaces to connect citizens, authorities, civil society and others in vibrant public dialogues.
In 2019, we hosted **1,498 radio shows** across dozens of radio stations in Kenya and Somalia.
- 2** ...putting citizens at the heart of decision-making around issues that affect their lives.
In 2019, we received **323,750 messages** from over **70,000 citizens in Kenya and Somalia** who shared their views on a range of topics raised in interactive radio shows.
- 3** ...opening an impartial channel for Somali citizens to voice their opinions in humanitarian and governance programming beyond mandates, programmes and sectors.
In 2019, **30,000 citizens** used our Common Social Accountability Platform to share their perspectives with decision-makers on critical issues that affect their lives, from aid delivery to displacement.
- 4** ...building a nationwide citizen-led conversation to tackle the norms that sustain gender inequality and social exclusion of vulnerable groups in Somalia.
In 2019 alone, **45,000 Somalis** participated in our Imaqal programme's interactive radio drama and radio magazine discussions on topics ranging from women's access to justice to clannism and discrimination against minorities.
- 5** ...amplifying marginalised voices.
In 2019, consistently, over **40% of participants** in our interactive radio discussions were **women** and **50% internally displaced**.
- 6** ...fostering crucial citizen-authority encounters where issues are addressed, action is identified, and those in power are held to account.
In 2019, **98 decision-makers** from government and aid organisations appeared as guests in our interactive radio shows to respond to citizen voices shared via SMS.
- 7** ...ensuring citizens, especially those affected by the world's most challenging humanitarian emergencies, feel included and consulted in decisions that affect their lives.
In 2019, across our projects, over **80% of citizens** who participated reported that the process made them feel included in decision-making.



“Interactive radio (i.e. radio talk-shows driven by citizen input via SMS) leverages the reach and vibrance of Somalia’s media and telecommunications landscape. It has proven to be a highly relevant medium for large-scale, inclusive and cost-efficient consultative conversations between Somalis and humanitarian actors.”

UN Humanitarian Needs Overview Somalia 2020

Citizen Evidence for Social Change

Our Citizen Evidence for Social Change (CESC) programme leverages our pioneering interactive radio method to put citizens at the heart of programme design and policy response in sectors ranging from education and livelihoods, to public health and gender equality. In addition, this citizen voice-centred approach is a valuable tool in unravelling social norms that underpin harmful practices, determining key drivers of social and behaviour change and tracking 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. In 2019, we applied this approach to [Imaqal](#), our largest and most ambitious project to date, to build a nationwide citizen-led conversation on critical gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) matters in Somalia.

After a successful pilot in 2018, we returned to Dadaab and Kakuma, Kenya's largest refugee settlements, to launch a [three-year project](#) in support of DFID-funded KEEP II education programme. Using interactive radio and on-the-ground listening groups, we are engaging people in the settlements and in the host communities in norm-challenging discussions about stubborn practices that prevent girls from attending school.



“Yes, it’s something that was needed long time ago; it brings the community members closer to one another.”

Male, 18, Galkacyo

In response to “Do you think that the KAAHA NOLOSHA (Imaqal radio debate) conversations are contributing to a more inclusive society? Yes or No? Why?”



Imaqal: Promoting greater gender equality and social inclusion in Somalia

Somalia is at a crucial juncture as it prepares for constitutional reform and a new round of democratic elections. Recent milestones, such as the 2017 elections, are at risk of being undermined by ongoing conflict and weak institutions. The inclusion of marginalised groups is critical for catalysing participatory governance, reducing community vulnerability to conflict, and increasing stability. However, this requires not only a change in policies and structures but also a change in social norms that sustain discriminatory practices.

In 2018, the Somalia Stability Fund selected AVF and our partner, MedialNK, to deliver a media-based intervention to connect and amplify positive narratives around gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in Somalia. Launched in early 2019, Imaqal, Somali for “Listen to me”, has been sparking nationwide multimedia dialogues, centred on narratives and evidence from citizen voice, through radio shows, TV debates, social media dialogues and on-the-ground forums. Audiences interact with the campaign by responding to open-ended questions via SMS to a free shortcode. Imaqal deploys our Theory of Change which prioritises the transformational power of media to shift perceptions of social norms and amplify positive narratives in social and discursive settings. Ultimately, the stories and debates deployed by Imaqal transcend traditional barriers to GESI and present an alternative

53,840

citizens sent an SMS to share their views in response to debates on Imaqal interactive radio programmes.

92.4%

of 6,300 respondents said that the Imaqal radio conversations were contributing to a more inclusive society.

narrative that aspires to resonate with people.

In 2019, Imaqal created spaces where a vibrant large-scale and inclusive conversation on difficult topics that are prevalent in Somali society flourished: women’s exclusion from politics and decision-making; youth unemployment; systematic discrimination against minorities; rape and gender-based violence; clannism; the marginalisation of the displaced.

An average of 4,255 participants per week engaged by sending an SMS, with some episodes receiving responses from nearly 10,500 people. In total, at least 900,000 people across South Central Somalia and Puntland listened to Imaqal radio shows, watched Imaqal TV debates or reacted to Imaqal content on social media. Throughout the duration of the programme, 53,840 people sent 335,288 messages. Building a nation-wide conversation of such scale, plurality and richness is immensely valuable, particularly in Somalia where the space for public debate and challenging conventions is limited.

The timely analysis of SMS responses allows for the audience’s views to be fed back into the media production on a weekly basis. This way, Imaqal’s programming truly reflects the pulse of the conversation and ensures that positive role models get centre stage while marginalised voices are amplified.



Do you think that the Imaqal conversations are contributing to a more **inclusive society** where minorities, youth and women are less discriminated against?

“Minorities do not exist, all people are the same and have equal rights. Also, we should respect women since they are the most important part of the society.”

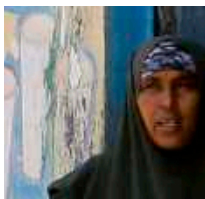
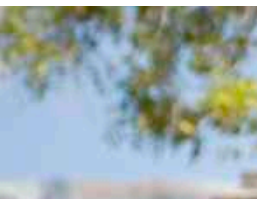
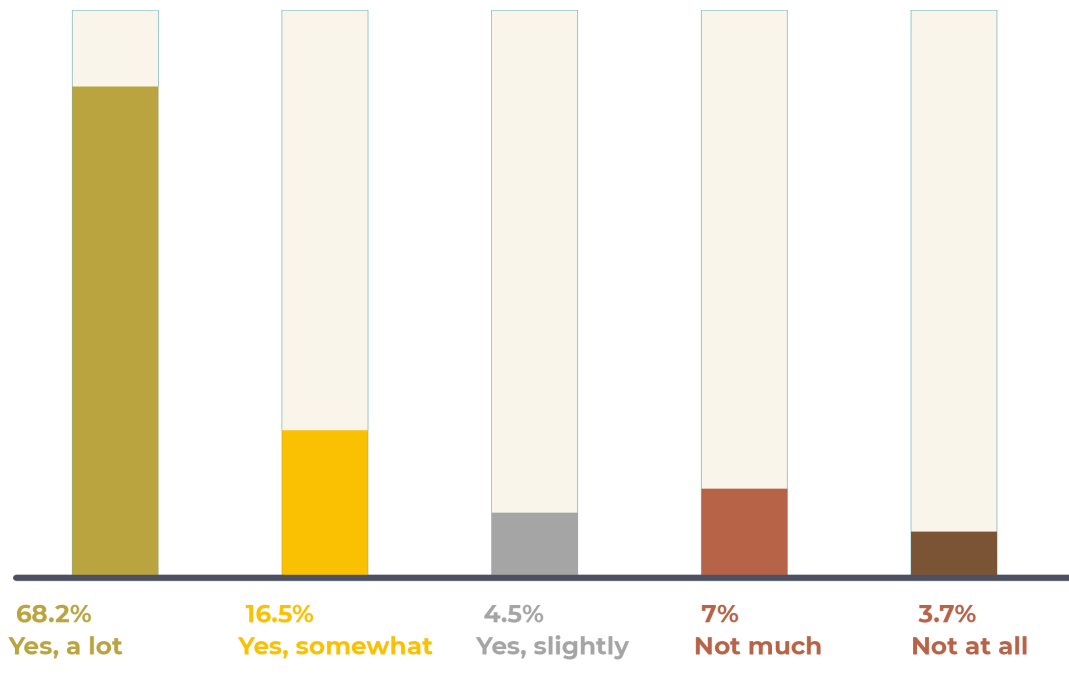
Woman, 37, Hiraan

“It is an alert for Somali people to awaken them to do the right things, like to lower the rate of rape, to educate young women and make them participate in decision making, to help IDPs.”

Woman, 40, Bakool

“Yes, it could change the idea of society about minorities and IDPs.”

Man, 26, Banadir



“The conversations are supportive to minority groups and working towards bringing unity among the Somali people.”

Woman, 15 years, Buulo burte

“Waa mahad san tihin walahi waxaa jiro xuquuq ey leyihin marka waxaa loogu heli karaa inloo ogolaado marka haweenku siyaasada waxbey kuleyihin.”

Male, 21, Dayniile

“Women have the right to participate in politics, and if allowed to {exercise the right} they can increase their opportunities. They have undeniable right to be part of politics.”



Credit: Tobin Jones

What impact did Imaqal achieve?

Building a nation-wide conversation of such scale, plurality and richness is immensely valuable particularly in Somalia, where the space for public debate that challenges norms and conventions is limited and marginalised voices are seldom heard.

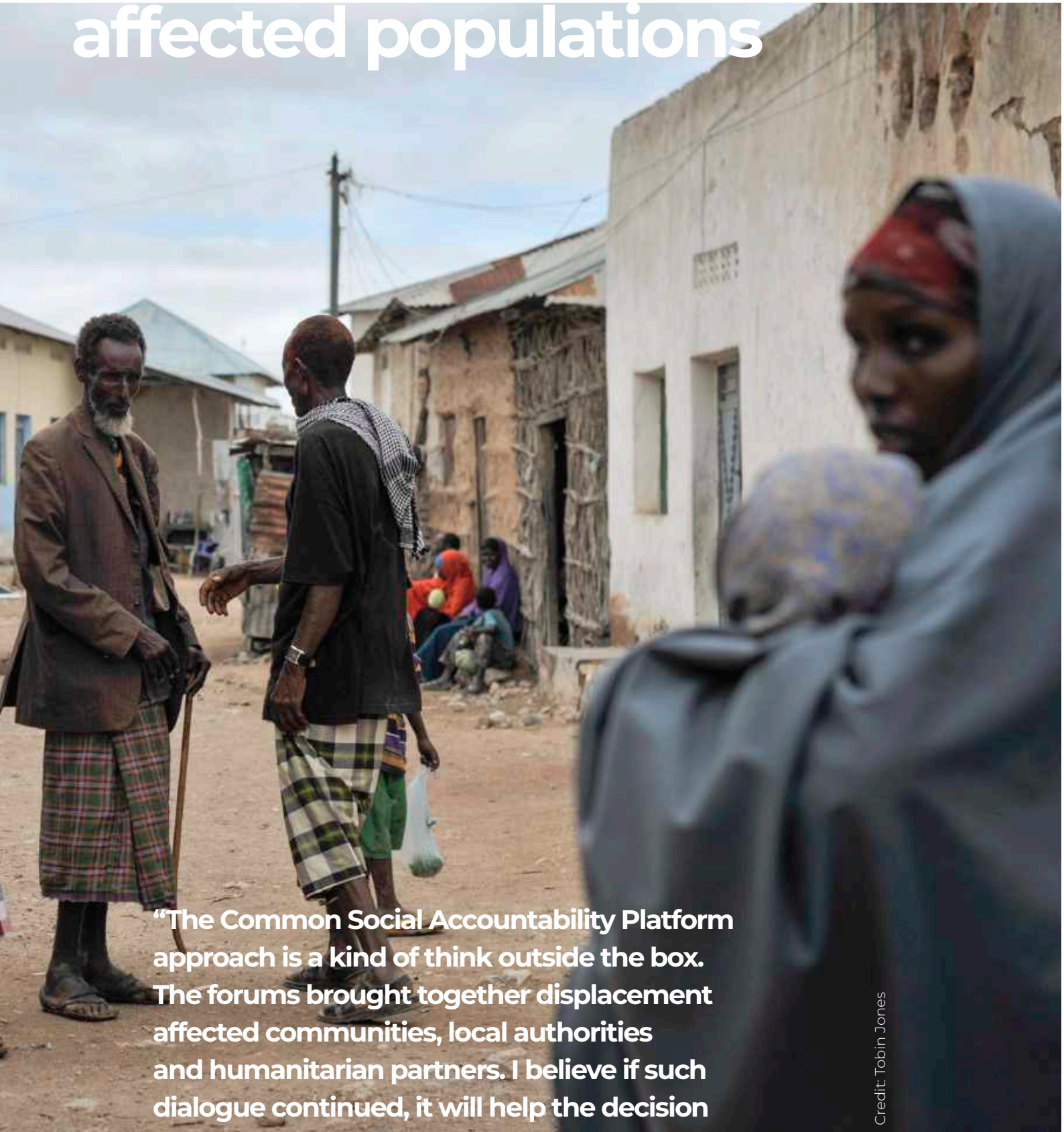
Our endline evaluation revealed that 92.4% of engaged participants thought that Imaqal conversations are contributing towards a more inclusive society. Most referred to the value of the programme in enabling discussion, unity, awareness and mutual understanding. The evaluation also found that Imaqal audiences were significantly more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes towards the inclusion of women in decision-making compared to those surveyed who hadn't been reached by the campaign.

A vibrant conversation on women's rights and inclusion

Among Imaqal's most popular interventions was [Xujadii Loo Xarig Furay](#) (“An Enigma Demystified”), a radio drama series that gripped audiences over the story of a forbidden young love between two people from different clans. Xujadii Loo Xarig Furay saw two worlds collide and reconcile to overcome barriers to the inclusion of marginalised groups: women, minorities, youth and IDPs. Issues of violence against women and women's access to justice featured prominently in the plotline and resulted in a rich nation-wide conversation, particularly as Season 1 coincided with the brutal rape and murder of a 12-year-old girl, Aisha Ilyes Aden, a high profile case that shook Somalia and triggered widespread calls for authorities to secure justice. Over the following weeks, as the drama was adapted to reflect the public debate, engagement grew substantially, reaching, at its peak, nearly 7,500 participants who sent almost 12,000 messages in response to a question that put a citizen voice, shared in response to a previous radio show, back into the conversation: “The reason why rape victims don't get justice is because the parents of the perpetrator protect their son'. What do you think about this?”

Overall, Imaqal dedicated 22 programmes to issues related to the inclusion of women, including access to justice, participation in politics and decision-making, and gender-based violence. The engagement numbers are testament to the power of such media-enabled spaces for discussion to challenge stubborn norms and provoke a meaningful and impactful conversation that can lead to change in harmful attitudes and beliefs.

Listening better to affected populations



“The Common Social Accountability Platform approach is a kind of think outside the box. The forums brought together displacement affected communities, local authorities and humanitarian partners. I believe if such dialogue continued, it will help the decision makers to think long term solutions for IDPs living in a city like Baidoa.”

Mr. Abdullahi Ali Watiin, former Mayor, Baidoa

Governance and Accountability

Our Governance & Accountability (G&A) programme changes how people participate in policy- and decision-making. Connecting citizens, authorities, civil society and others in vibrant media-enabled public discussions, Africa's Voices fosters crucial citizen-authority encounters where issues are addressed, action is identified, and those in power are held to account.

In 2019, we continued to drive inclusive governance in Somalia through our [Common Social Accountability Platform \(CSAP\)](#) which leverages Africa's Voices' interactive radio method to strengthen Somalia's fragile accountability ecosystem.

For the second consecutive year, we put voices of citizens at the heart of humanitarian planning processes. We [collaborated with UN OCHA, GroundTruth Solutions and REACH](#) to ensure that the voices of citizens inform the 2020 annual UN Humanitarian Needs Overview ([the 2019 HNO specifically commended our work](#) and the 2020 HNO highlighted Africa's Voices as one of three selected Accountability to Affected Populations initiatives in Somalia). We heard from 8,251 Somalis and we produced [actionable recommendations](#) for a more people-centred humanitarian response in 2020.

In 2019, we also deployed CSAP to [support the World Bank's Performance and Learning Review \(PLR\)](#), conducted to update the organisation's two-year Somalia country strategy. CSAP has enabled the voices of Somalia's citizens to be heard and taken into consideration in the process, demonstrating our method's potential in helping development aid actors listen first and listen effectively before they design their interventions.

In Kenya, we piloted our interactive radio method as a radical new way to galvanise civic engagement and public participation - the still unfulfilled promise of the devolution. In consultation with the Siaya County government, Africa's Voices designed [a four-week season of interactive radio shows](#) to drive citizen feedback on achievements under the 2018-19 Annual Development Plan. Each episode featured a guest from a relevant county government authority who responded directly to citizen opinions read on air. That way, 2296 people who sent 5490 messages participated in a large-scale, inclusive and sustained public dialogue with key decision-makers. 78.5% of respondents said the radio shows improved their understanding of county decision-making processes, while 77.2% said they thought the interactive radio public dialogue made them feel more included in decision-making.

The results of the pilot were presented to the Government of Siaya in August 2019 and are being used to inform new and innovative civic engagement strategies for county governments across Kenya.

Assessing the value of interactive radio as an effective tool for public participation. Read the full report.

Two years of putting **citizen voices** at the heart of Somalia's **Humanitarian Needs Overview**

Since 2018, we have been complementing the annual humanitarian planning process for Somalia by opening up radio-enabled spaces for citizens to voice their priorities in their own words and on their own terms. Unlike conventional survey techniques, consultations over interactive radio result in insights that are not only rich and plural - reaching people that are often excluded from traditional surveying - but also authentic and often surprising; they carry a nuance that would be unlikely to have emerged otherwise.


8,251 citizens participated in our 2019 interactive radio series to inform the 2020 HNO. 84% reported that the consultations made them feel more included in humanitarian decision-making.

Broadcast across a national network of 26 FM radio stations, the consultation built on a similar process that took place in 2018 in

Read our summary recommendations for improving accountability to affected people in humanitarian action.

tandem with REACH. In 2018, 8,955 citizens participated (and over 100,000 are estimated to have listened to the shows).

The 2019 intervention was designed to allow for direct comparisons of community priorities between both 2018 and 2019 consultations. In 2019, citizens placed greater emphasis on community organisation, governance, peace and security, compared to 2018. Emphasis on humanitarian services, such as water and food, declined.



“A lot of issues raised during the radio shows are things we also get reports on in the office. This is making us now to begin re-thinking about our strategy as regards to public participation.”

Credit: World Bank

Hon. George Rubiik, CECM, Governance - Siaya County Government, Kenya

“The methodology was captivating - a platform of engagement to discuss difficult topics such as land disputes was being made available in places where political accountability of local government authorities does not exist. We found this concept incredibly effective to gather information on the perception of the public on their authorities, on their work for their constituencies and on the relevance of international aid programmes...”

Teresa del Ministro, UN Regional Coordinator’s Office Somalia, Durable Solutions Unit

84%

of 8,251 citizens who participated in interactive radio dialogues to inform the 2020 HNO reported that the consultations made them feel more included in decision-making.

The Common Social Accountabiltiy Platform

Africa’s Voices launched the [Common Social Accountability Platform \(CSAP\)](#) in Somalia in 2018 to enhance the inclusion of citizens in decision-making across governance, humanitarian and development programmes.

By leveraging our interactive radio method for building dialogue and gathering public opinion, the platform aims to build a sustained channel for open conversation between citizens and decision-makers, across sectors and mandates.

CSAP uses a combination of radio programming and SMS messaging to create a platform that citizens actively engage in, while simultaneously allowing for feedback received from citizen SMS messages to be robustly analysed, understood and ultimately, acted upon.



All of our work in 2019

[What are the stubborn social norms that act as barriers to refugee girls' education in Dadaab and Kakuma? \(WUSC\)](#)

In 2018, we embarked on a nine-month pilot with the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) to unravel the social norms and beliefs that sustain harmful practices such as early marriage, halting or compromising girls' education in two of the world's largest refugee camps. In 2019, we launched a larger three-year project to support the implementing partners of the DFID-funded KEEP II project in enabling better educational outcomes for refugee girls.

[What practices do citizens in Kenya's Upper Tana region adopt to improve their agricultural land and protect the environment? \(ICRAF\)](#)

1,958 individuals participated in radio discussions over seven weeks to understand practices that are harmful to both farmers and the natural environment in one of Kenya's primary water sources, the Tana River. The findings were used to inform the World Agroforestry Centre's (ICRAF) interventions to reduce harmful land practices while simultaneously supporting the livelihoods of smallholder farming communities in the area.

[Do Somalis think that displaced people are sufficiently involved in decision-making? \(European Union\)](#)

The Common Social Accountability Platform was deployed to amplify the EU's RE-INTEG programme's visibility to facilitate sustainable re-integration of refugees and returnees. 9,436 citizens participated in the discussions.

[What do the citizens of Baidoa and Bossaso think the role of the government should be in responding to the displacement crisis? \(UNDP Somalia\)](#)

Working with the UN Regional Coordinator's Office, we engaged citizens in Baidoa and Bossaso, in their majority IDPs, to share their views on the government's role in responding to the displacement crisis.

[What do the citizens of Somalia think are the most important solutions for addressing humanitarian needs in their communities? \(Somalia Humanitarian Fund\)](#)

8,251 citizens used CSAP to share their priorities on humanitarian aid to shape the 2020 UN Humanitarian Needs Overview for Somalia.

[Do the citizens of Siaya County in Kenya think their government has met the commitments made in the 2019 Development Plan? \(Urban Institute/USAID\)](#)

Within the context of the USAID-funded AHADI project, Africa's Voices, in partnership with the University of Cambridge, tested the effectiveness of our interactive radio methodology as a tool for public participation in Kenya's Siaya County. We deployed interactive radio dialogues to convene spaces for meaningful exchange between citizens and decision-makers, where citizens held duty bearers to account for commitments made in the county's 2018-2019 Development Plan.

[What are do Somali citizens identify as the main development priorities for their country? \(World Bank\)?](#)

In December 2019, AVF conducted a nationwide radio consultation to explore development priorities suggested by Somali citizens, in order to bring citizen voices into the design of the World Bank's Performance Learning Review. A total of 4,816 people sent in their views from across the country. Of these, 83.5% reported that participating in the radio dialogue had made them feel they had more of a voice in decision-making processes affecting their community.

Read the report. Social Accountability on Durable Solutions: Perception survey in Bossaso and Baidoa

Our mission motivates us to become better. To bring about a transformation in the way Africans are heard in decision-making that affects their lives, we need to begin by transforming ourselves. Here is how we became better in 2019.

We moved!

In July 2019, our Nairobi team said goodbye to shared co-working spaces and moved to our very own shiny new office at Riverside Studios on Riverside Lane. This is a space that speaks to our values of growing together, a space where our team can develop, create and learn.

We landed a major humanitarian innovation grant.

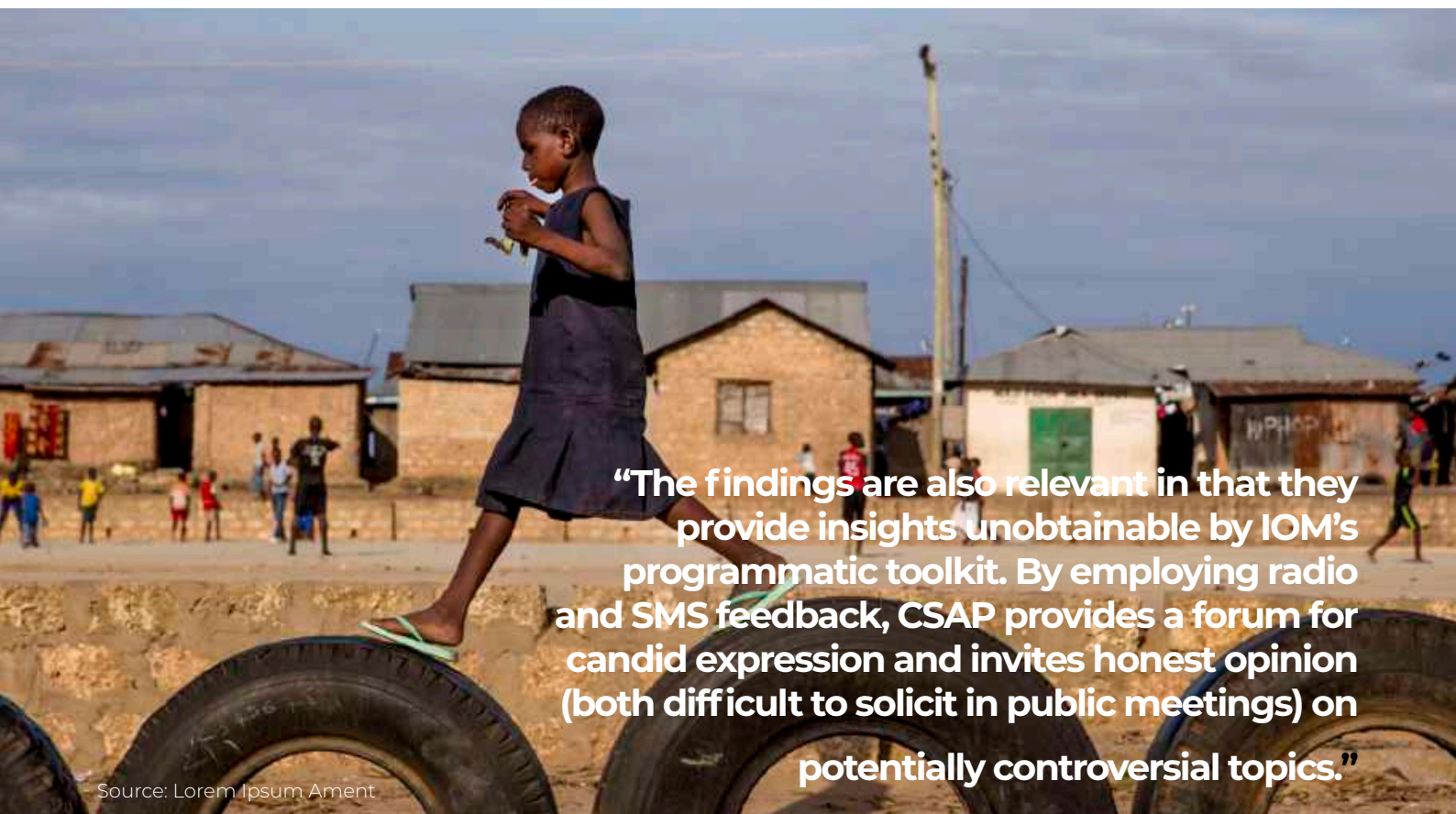
Africa's Voices was selected as one of the 2019 Twilio.org Impact Grant Fund recipients. The grant is being used to further grow katikati, our one-to-one two-way channel for open-text local language conversations at

scale, to enable crisis-affected communities to engage with and hold aid actors to account.

We are officially not only Africa-based but also African-led!

After five years of trailblazing Africa's Voices and over a decade of shaping the vision behind it, Dr Sharath Srinivasan returns to the University of Cambridge. From January 2020, our baton has a new leader's name on it: Samuel Kimeu joins Africa's Voices as our new Executive Director after leading Transparency International-Kenya for nearly a decade.

Earlier in 2019, our Senior management team also welcomed Damaris Ndegwa as our Director of Operations while our Board of Trustees has expanded with the addition of Dr Frasia Wangari Karua, who replaced Peter Da Costa, a committed supporter of our mission, who sadly passed in 2019.



“The findings are also relevant in that they provide insights unobtainable by IOM’s programmatic toolkit. By employing radio and SMS feedback, CSAP provides a forum for candid expression and invites honest opinion (both difficult to solicit in public meetings) on potentially controversial topics.”

Source: Lorem Ipsum Ament

Daniel Norfolk, Programme Manager, IOM Recovery & Durable Solutions Unit

Our team

Dr Sharath Srinivasan, Co-founder and Executive Director

Damaris Ndegwa, Director of Business Operations

Luke Church, Director of Programmes and Innovation

Anna Tomson, Senior Programme Manager, Governance & Accountability (G&A)

Agnes Gakuru, Senior Programme Manager, Citizen Evidence for Social Change (CESC)

Khadija Mohamed, Programme Officer, G&A

Naima Ibrahim, Research Officer

Fatima Mohamed, Research Officer

Moses Maina, Media and Engagement Specialist

Anne Mwaniki, Finance and Grants Officer

Alexander Simpson, Software Engineer

Elena Georgalla, External Relations & Communications Manager

Anna Colom, Senior Advisor, Research Design and Analysis

Isaack Mwenda, Senior Software Engineer

Gladys Tyen, Data Scientist

Samatar Abdi, Programme Officer, CESC

Salahweli Harun, Research Officer, CESC

George Gathigi, Senior Media Advisor

Nasri Ali, Research Officer, G&A

Mary Ondiek, Office Manager

Zakaria Adan, Research Assistant, G&A

Joram Tayo, Senior Accountant

Joshua Holmes, Product and Innovation Manager

Rita Zagoni, Lead Technologist

Ranjeeta Walia, Senior Finance Manager

Hassan Ali Mohamud, Research Assistant, CESC

Mercy Njung'e, Research Officer, CESC

Lucas Malla, Quantitative Researcher

Daniel Mwendwa, Software Engineer

Edgar Otieno, Research Officer

Kevin Onyando, Graphic Designer

Ahmednaji Bashir, Project Manager, Imaqal

Yahya Dahiye, Media and Engagement Specialist, Imaqal

Board of Trustees

Lord Cairns, Chairperson and Co-Founder. Former board member, Mo Ibrahim Foundation and former Chairperson of Voluntary Services Overseas

Sir David Green, Former Director General of the British Council

Dr Laila Macharia, Founder and CEO of Africa Digital Media Institute

Ms Fiona Napier, Development consultant. Formerly with Open Society Foundation and Save the Children

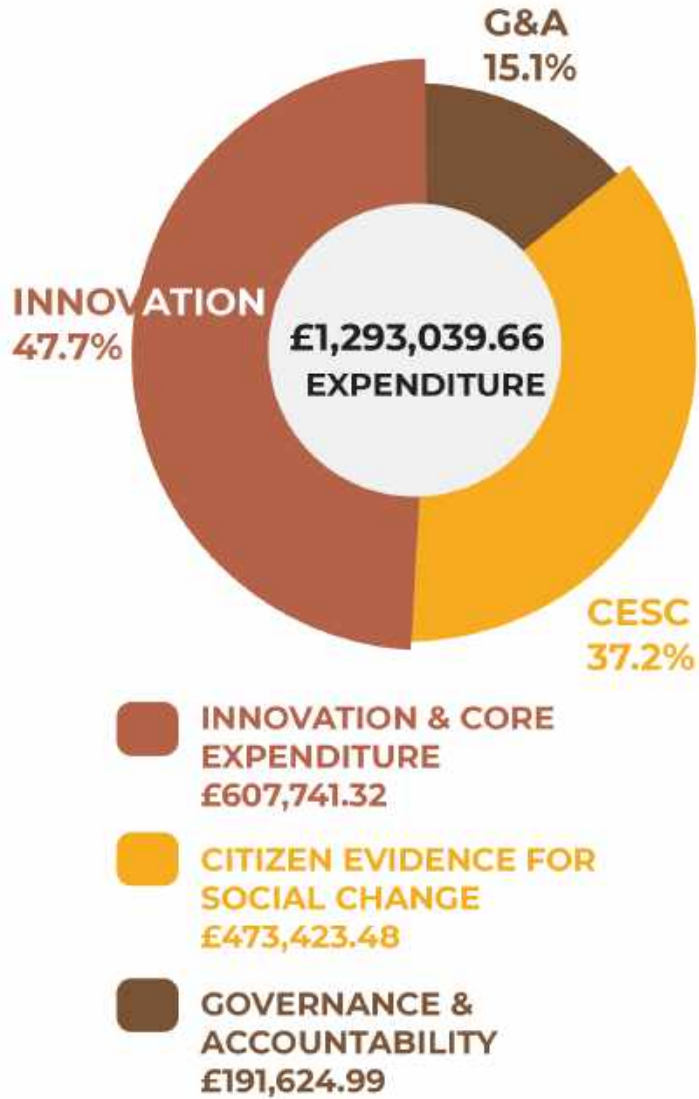
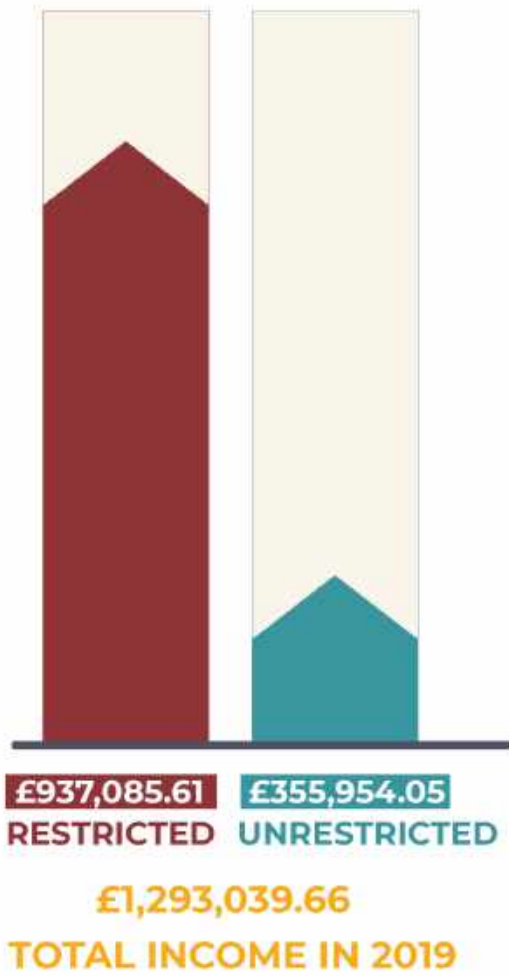
Dr David Good, Director of Research at Cambridge Global Challenges, University of Cambridge

Adrian Poffley, Chief Administrative Officer at the World Bank

Dr Frasia Wangari Karua, Health Systems and Business Consultant, former Program Director & General Manager at Amref Health Africa HQ



OUR 2019 financial statement



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Many thanks to Dr Josephine Green.



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