



Notes

Jun 26, 2026

Inaugural Board Meeting/ 2025 Annual Report

Invited [Amy Robbins Towers](#) [Joy Ekanem](#) [Chinecherem Udeh](#) [Ayisha Osori](#)
[Federico Borello](#) [Ibrahima A. Niang](#) [Nkemdilim ILO](#) [Partners ThoughtsandMace](#)
[Salim Mohamed](#) [Mathias Hounkpe](#) sina.mory@zerbo.org [Udo ILO](#)

Attachments [📅 Inaugural Board Meeting/ 2025 Annual Report](#)

Meeting records [📄 Transcript](#)

Summary

The advisory board convened to review organizational strategy, financial performance, and operational plans while electing new leadership.

Reviewing Strategic Organizational Vision

The board discussed the 2024 to 2026 strategy aimed at strengthening governance through knowledge generation and Civil Society Organization capacity building. This framework emphasizes cross-sector collaboration to address democratic challenges.

Operational Metrics and Expansion

Discussions highlighted performance metrics including 4 new projects and positive feedback from partners. Expansion plans for the Senegal office focus on leadership programs regarding Artificial Intelligence and energy.

Electing Board Leadership Positions

The board appointed a new Chair and Vice Chair to provide organizational governance and guidance. This leadership structure aims to support resource mobilization and increase institutional visibility.

Decisions

Aligned

- **Integration of AI into strategy** The organizational strategy will be expanded to incorporate the role of AI and digital technology in the context of democracy and governance.
- **Board Chair and Vice Chair selection** Salim Mohamed is elected as Board Chair and Amy Towers is elected as Vice Chair.

We've **updated the Decisions section** using your feedback.

Let us know what you think: [Helpful](#) or [Not Helpful](#)

Next steps

- ☐ [Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD] Update Strategy: Incorporate artificial intelligence, digital infrastructure, and energy security considerations into the organizational strategy document.
- ☐ [Udo ILO] Conduct One-on-One: Conduct a meeting with Amy Towers to collect her feedback and questions for the upcoming strategic planning.
- ☐ [Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD] Execute Senegal Projects: Translate and adapt core primers and curricula into French for Senegal operations. Launch the governance leadership program and initiate the national governance dialogue series as part of the strategy to build a solid base.
- ☐ [Communications team] Interview Board Leads: Contact the board chair and vice chair to coordinate an interview for the organization multimedia channels. This will serve as a public announcement regarding the new board leadership.
- ☐ [Chinecherem Udeh and Joy Ekanem] Prepare Minutes: Draft and finalize the minutes of the board meeting for distribution.

Details

- **Meeting Logistics and Preparation:** Udo ILO opened the meeting by coordinating technical requirements for the session, including the screen-sharing process for the board pack and presentation slides ([00:03:55](#)). The team confirmed the necessity of projecting the board pack during the meeting and switching to PowerPoint slides for the strategy and annual report presentation ([00:05:36](#)). During the setup, participants engaged in casual conversation while waiting for others to join, and staff members confirmed that the transcriber was active ([00:07:58](#)).
- **Meeting Objectives and Purpose:** Udo ILO formally welcomed the participants to the inaugural advisory board meeting of the firm, acknowledging the scheduling challenges that delayed the event. The primary goals of the session were for board members to get to know each other, receive updates on firm activities, review the annual report and organizational strategy, and formally elect a chair and vice-chair to establish a structure that allows the firm to leverage the board's expertise ([00:14:48](#)). Udo ILO emphasized the importance of drawing on the board's skills and guidance in a structured manner, noting that the board's bylaws and the annual report had been shared via email prior to the meeting ([00:17:33](#)).
- **Introductions of Partners:** Udo ILO introduced himself as the founding partner of the firm, noting that the organization began in 2008 and shifted its focus in 2021 toward thought sector engagement, democracy promotion, and public sector support ([00:18:41](#)). Udo ILO highlighted that while they are based in the Netherlands, they oversee Nigeria operations, with a small team in Nigeria. Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD introduced themselves, noting they are based in Senegal and fully operational, while Nkemdilim ILO introduced themselves as the administrator based in the Netherlands. Udo ILO also mentioned Matias, the principal partner for Benin, who was unable to attend the meeting due to a family engagement ([00:20:09](#)).
- **Introductions of Board Members and Staff:** Board members Amy Towers, Dr. L. Zerbo, Federico Borello, Salim Mohamed, and Ayisha Osori introduced themselves, sharing their backgrounds in banking, energy security, human rights, and development. Amy Towers noted their background in finance and

work in conflict zones, while Dr. L. Zerbo mentioned their work advising on energy security and their residency in Austria and Burkina Faso ([00:21:36](#)). Federico Borello spoke on their role at Human Rights Watch, and Salim Mohamed highlighted their work in Kenya and East Africa regarding development and the rule of law ([00:23:07](#)). Ayisha Osori introduced themselves as working in London. Firm staff members Joy Ekanem (Programs Manager) and Chinecherem Udeh (Communication Officer) also introduced themselves ([00:24:46](#)).

- **Adoption of the Agenda:** Udo ILO invited the board members to review and adopt the meeting agenda. Amy Towers moved to adopt the agenda, and Federico Borello seconded the motion, formally proceeding with the meeting ([00:26:03](#)).
- **Strategy Presentation Overview:** Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD presented the 2024 to 2026 strategy, noting that the firm aims to catalyze the ecosystem amidst a defining moment for global democracy, characterized by democratic decline, a trust deficit, and demographic shifts ([00:27:24](#)). They identified structural disconnects in the funding ecosystem, noting that donor models often lack local nuance and exclude African voices, while homegrown philanthropy is hindered by a lack of tax incentives and a pervasive fear of government interference ([00:28:40](#)). The firm aims to redefine third sector advisory by focusing on high-level networks, localized information, and unprecedented cross-sector collaboration ([00:30:02](#)).
- **Strategy Pillars and Objectives:** Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD outlined the firm's vision for effective governance that reflects the interests of ordinary citizens, focusing on knowledge generation, skills development, and the facilitation of comparative learning spaces ([00:31:45](#)). The strategy includes two main pillars: knowledge generation to support institutional resilience, and skills development to equip Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), funders, and stakeholders for impact through change management and board development. Furthermore, the firm aims to facilitate connectivity through events like ideas hackathons, cross-sector interaction, and a yearly award for exceptional collaboration ([00:33:13](#)).
- **Operational Structure and Governance:** Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD detailed the firm's operational structure, which includes three geographic nodes in Nigeria, Senegal, and Benin, and relies on an orbital governance model

(00:36:15). This model consists of the Board of Partners (the ultimate decision-making body), full-time and part-time staff, a pool of senior and technical advisers, and the Advisory Board. The firm upholds values of integrity, inclusivity, and pragmatism, supported by safeguards such as a whistleblower policy and strict quality control measures to ensure value for money and transparency (00:37:37).

- **Discussion on Operational Alignment and Regional Cooperation:** Dr. L. Zerbo raised concerns regarding how the firm's activities align with existing institutions and regional governance bodies, such as the African Union and East African Committee (00:41:41). Udo ILO clarified that the firm has prioritized providing context analysis and supporting CSOs by working with funders (00:42:49). They cited examples of working with the Ford Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation to provide training to 100 CEOs of non-governmental organizations and 90 organizations respectively, focusing on governance, fundraising, and strategy, which resulted in the publication of primers on influencing change and CSO resilience (00:44:05). Additionally, the firm is working with government entities in Nigeria, including the National Human Rights Commission and the National Agency for Science and Technology Research, to promote people-centered policies (00:45:48).
- **Discussion on Advisory Board's Role and Expansion:** Federico Borello inquired about the specific ways the advisory board could support the firm's expansion (00:46:56). Udo ILO explained that the firm needs help elevating its work to interact with regional bodies, assistance with resource mobilization—specifically for a 20-country compendium project—and increased visibility in conferences and webinars (00:48:07). Furthermore, Udo ILO emphasized the desire for the board to provide "ideation" support to help the firm identify opportunities and challenges they might be overlooking (00:49:16).
- **Potential Award Initiatives:** Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD and Udo ILO discussed the potential for establishing awards to recognize citizen engagement, social accountability, and public sector excellence. They proposed that these awards could provide small grants, technical support, and visibility to help organizations and government agencies experiment with new ideas and scale successful initiatives (00:50:11).
- **Emerging Themes: Technology and Energy:** Salim Mohamed highlighted the critical role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and technology in democracy and

governance, noting that young people are increasingly using these tools for information generation. Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD agreed that this is an area where the firm can provide added value and confirmed it would be amended into the strategy ([00:52:36](#)). Dr. L. Zerbo added that the discourse on AI and data centers cannot be separated from energy security, emphasizing that many African countries face energy shortages that limit the potential of such infrastructure, and suggested the firm consider nuclear energy in its development portfolio ([00:53:55](#)).

- **2025 Annual Report Highlights:** Udo ILO concluded by summarizing the 2025 annual report, describing the year as a crossroad of knowledge, policy, and democratic change ([00:55:42](#)). The firm focused on closing knowledge gaps, building institutional capacity, and supporting policy reform ([00:57:21](#)). Udo ILO noted that the firm responded to political and economic disruptions by diversifying funding, engaging with government institutions as clients, and championing digital literacy with partners like Luminate ([00:59:06](#)). They highlighted the polarization research conducted for the Ford Foundation, which involved state-level consultations and a survey of over 150 organizations, as well as the opening of the Senegal office, as significant milestones for the year ([01:00:58](#)).
- **Luminate and MacArthur Project Updates:** Udo Ilo detailed recent organizational work, including a grant from Luminate that supports a cohort of grantees focused on tech justice and digital assets in Nigeria, with an emphasis on organizational governance and collaborative learning ([01:03:01](#)). Additionally, Udo Ilo discussed the conclusion of a project with the MacArthur Foundation, which allowed the organization to interact with over 90 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on issues of resilience and sustainability, resulting in the production of a formal primer on the subject ([01:04:34](#)).
- **Financial Overview and Performance Metrics:** Udo Ilo reported that the organization received \$296,000 in total project funds during 2025, with 15% allocated to administrative costs ([01:04:34](#)). Performance highlights for the year included the execution of four new projects, engagement with over 70 organizational partners, and a 95% positive feedback rate from training participants. Furthermore, the organization achieved over 20 mainstream media mentions, published 50 op-eds, and maintained a newsletter subscriber base of over 2,000 individuals ([01:06:16](#)).

- Strategic Direction and Operational Improvements:** Udo Ilo emphasized that the organization will embed rigorous political economy analysis into future work to address persistent political instability and declining institutional trust ([01:06:16](#)). Operational plans include seeking public sector partnerships, upgrading internal capacity to manage information disorder, and leveraging Artificial Intelligence tools to improve knowledge management and proposal generation ([01:08:31](#)).
- Recent Organizational Milestones:** Udo Ilo reported on progress in digital communications, online followership, and efforts to harmonize standards by translating global learning into local capabilities. A key operational milestone was the launch of "Building on Solid Ground," and Udo Ilo noted that resources produced by the organization were utilized by CSOs during an emergency retreat, serving as a sign of the organization's growing traction and influence ([01:08:31](#)).
- Election of Board Chair and Vice Chair:** Following a scheduling conflict for Federico Borello, the board conducted an election for leadership positions ([01:10:14](#)). Nominations were put forward for Salem Mohamed and Dr. Lamine Zerbo for Chair, and Amy Towers for Vice Chair ([01:11:36](#)). During the discussion, Dr. Lamine Zerbo advocated for elevating women to leadership positions, though Amy Towers noted their preference and comfort serving as Vice Chair given their background as a Chief Operating Officer ([01:13:59](#)). Ultimately, the board appointed Salem Mohamed as Chair and Amy Towers as Vice Chair ([01:15:13](#)).
- Board Leadership Acceptance and Commitments:** Dr. Lamine Zerbo committed to supporting the new leadership by leveraging their professional connections at institutions such as the African Development Bank and the Economic Community of West African States ([01:17:41](#)). Salem Mohamed accepted the role of Chair, expressing a desire to ensure the organization's impact reaches marginalized communities, while Amy Towers affirmed their commitment to supporting the team and organization ([01:18:57](#)).
- Feedback on Organizational Model:** Amy Towers praised the organization's work, highlighting the "multiplication" model as a powerful approach in the current environment. Amy Towers noted that the organization's strategy of filling systemic gaps and aiding other grantees is a highly effective way to leverage resources ([01:20:12](#)).

- **Expansion into Senegal:** Dr. Ibrahima Amadou Niang presented expansion plans for Senegal, which include translating primers into French, launching a cohort-based governance leadership program, and establishing reform labs to pilot practical reforms. Plans also involve starting a quarterly National Governance Dialogue Series in August to address topics such as Artificial Intelligence, digital public infrastructure, and public service delivery ([01:21:23](#)). Additionally, the team aims to conduct research ahead of the January 2027 local government elections to inform pre- and post-election insights and develop a comprehensive donor engagement strategy ([01:22:56](#)).
- **Closing Remarks and Communication Strategy:** Udo Ilo stated that the communications team will reach out to the new board leadership to organize a formal announcement, which may include interviews for multimedia channels ([01:24:10](#)). Udo Ilo expressed gratitude to the board members for their participation and reaffirmed a commitment to transparently communicating challenges and successes while implementing the organization's strategy ([01:25:26](#)).

You should review Gemini's notes to make sure they're accurate. [Get tips and learn how Gemini takes notes](#)

*How is the quality of **these specific notes**? [Take a short survey](#) to let us know your feedback, including how helpful the notes were for your needs.*



Transcript

Jun 26, 2026

Inaugural Board Meeting/ 2025 Annual Report - Transcript

00:03:55

Udo ILO: Hello

Chinecherem Udeh: Good afternoon.

Udo ILO: everyone.

Chinecherem Udeh: Good evening.

Udo ILO: Good evening. Um just uh making sure that the share screen option is working

Chinecherem Udeh: Hey.

Udo ILO: well.

Chinecherem Udeh: Oh, okay. Okay. The slides

Udo ILO: uh the slides because uh we will oh this

Chinecherem Udeh: Okay.

Udo ILO: is the report not even there but so yeah uh the the board pack we probably will need to to share it

Chinecherem Udeh: Yes. Okay.

Udo ILO: as in project it in the course of the meeting,

Chinecherem Udeh: project. Okay.

Udo ILO: right?

Chinecherem Udeh: Yes.

Udo ILO: Uh

Chinecherem Udeh: Yes.

Udo ILO: so but you can do that, right?

Chinecherem Udeh: Yeah, I can. I

Udo ILO: Okay. So I think we do it from your end.

Chinecherem Udeh: can.

Udo ILO: So that's for the agenda and then for the presentation when we want to present the strategy it'll be good to go to the slide that is the powerpoints on in its own are you following what I'm saying Hello.

00:05:36

Udo ILO: Hello, Na. Can you hear me?

Chinecherem Udeh: Sorry, I I I I for a

Udo ILO: Uh, ask him that now you need to pro uh share your screen and project the the board pack. But when we are presenting the strategy and the annual report, the PowerPoint slides is what is to be projected. Hello Next. Are you having problem with your connection?

Chinecherem Udeh: all of a sudden this is the first time you so we're going to project the board pack while the meeting is going on then when it's time then when it's time for the

Udo ILO: Yes,

Chinecherem Udeh: slides open up the slides

Udo ILO: we project we project the slides and be changing them as the person is speaking. When I say next slide, you change your next

Chinecherem Udeh: Okay.

Udo ILO: slide.

Chinecherem Udeh: So, I am going to set that up right now.

Udo ILO: Anyway, I've killed my own do it from my own side.

Chinecherem Udeh: Um

Udo ILO: Mrs. Aan,

Joy Ekanem: Huh?

Udo ILO: your internet is working today.

Joy Ekanem: My internet is always working, sir.

00:07:58

Udo ILO: Okay.

Joy Ekanem: Sometimes I don't just like people to see, you know, my pretty

Udo ILO: Ah,

Joy Ekanem: face.

Udo ILO: I understand. You save us the inconvenience. Eh, that's so

Joy Ekanem: Well, so sorry.

Udo ILO: thoughtful.

Joy Ekanem: Wow.

Udo ILO: Ban ban. Okay.

Joy Ekanem: H nature you don't have internet enough to turn on

Udo ILO: I don't know.

Joy Ekanem: your you know there's no

Chinecherem Udeh: No, there's this is dark.

Udo ILO: I thought we pay we pay people enough for internet,

Joy Ekanem: lights I don't I

Udo ILO: but here we are.

Joy Ekanem: mean

Chinecherem Udeh: So,

Joy Ekanem: okay do you

Udo ILO: Here we are.

Joy Ekanem: want I to be on call sir.

Udo ILO: Uh, not really. Not

Joy Ekanem: Okay.

Udo ILO: really.

Chinecherem Udeh: they sent to me

Udo ILO: There's no

Joy Ekanem: Yeah,

Udo ILO: column.

Joy Ekanem: you're just the one talking now. You're just doing the talking. We're just
We're just um

Udo ILO: Yeah, it's just for you to observe how the meeting go, how a board meeting
goes.

00:09:13

Joy Ekanem: Yeah.

Udo ILO: So,

Joy Ekanem: Mhm.

Udo ILO: so assuming I'm not uh I'm not what's it called? Assuming I'm not available,
you guys can run a board meeting.

Joy Ekanem: Yeah.

Udo ILO: That's just the whole

Joy Ekanem: Okay.

Udo ILO: idea.

Joy Ekanem: Just a minute. Okay.

Udo ILO: You're the person admitting people, right?

Joy Ekanem: Yes.

Udo ILO: Okay.

Joy Ekanem: Oh god.

Udo ILO: Enjoy. What?

Joy Ekanem: No, just my kid in the background saying she's done pooing. That's it. Just normal stuff.

Udo ILO: Yeah, the way they announce it like they put gold, but it's okay. Joy, admit people. Oh.

Chinecherem Udeh: I remove the not or should I leave it

Udo ILO: Uh,

Chinecherem Udeh: there.

Udo ILO: please put on the the transcriber.

Chinecherem Udeh: That's going on

Udo ILO: Hello sir.

Chinecherem Udeh: now. What's included?

Udo ILO: Uh, okay. Hi Emmy.

Amy Towers: Hello. How are you?

Udo ILO: I'm good. Good to see you. It's been ages.

00:13:32

Amy Towers: I know it's been far too long.

Udo ILO: Thanks so much. Hi. Are

Amy Towers: Always.

Udo ILO: you Aisha? Are you there?

Joy Ekanem: No,

Udo ILO: Okay.

Joy Ekanem: I think that's a note taker.

Udo ILO: Oh, okay. She's not joined yet.

Joy Ekanem: Yes.

Udo ILO: Hi, Salem.

Salim Mohamed: Hey Jude, how are you?

Udo ILO: Right. Hi,

Salim Mohamed: Hey bro. Hey boo. How are

Udo ILO: Ibu.

Salim Mohamed: you?

Udo ILO: You guys were together in uh in in uh Stan Stanford.

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: We're together in Stanford.

Udo ILO: Yeah, I remember that.

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: It's been ages. Almost almost almost eight years.

Udo ILO: Yeah,

Salim Mohamed: Yes,

Udo ILO: it's been a long time.

Salim Mohamed: it's been ages.

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: Yeah.

Udo ILO: Okay, let's just wait for Federico.

Federico Borello: I'm I'm here though.

Udo ILO: Ah, Fed,

Federico Borello: Can you Can you hear me?

Udo ILO: I didn't know you were

Federico Borello: Yeah, I can't see anyone.

00:14:48

Udo ILO: there.

Federico Borello: Well, I actually see the meeting agenda. That's why I can't see you guys. I see the Yeah,

Udo ILO: Good to see you, Fed.

Federico Borello: good to see you.

Udo ILO: You're in which part of the world?

Federico Borello: I'm home in Washington DC.

Udo ILO: Oh, wonderful.

Federico Borello: Yeah.

Udo ILO: Wonderful. Uh let me see who else is trying to join. Uh Dr. Zable is in Moscow. So he's trying to connect from there. I hope I hope he's able to. Uh I I think we can just go ahead and start uh because I know uh most of the board members have quite very tight schedule today. So and we want to see if we can keep this within 1 hour uh so that uh you can go back to work some of you who are still at work. Uh I I want to on behalf of uh the thoughts and make partners welcome each and every one of you to this inaugural uh advisory board meeting. uh we would have wanted this to have happened earlier than now but for obvious reasons trying to find the right time for everyone to be available it was a bit tricky but we just figured that almost one year after the announcement of the of the international board we just

00:16:18

Udo ILO: had to meet even if it's just brief uh briefly uh uh at least for the board members to know each other uh to update you on the things we are doing you know share the annual report with you which we already did but just talk you through it and also the strategy of the of of the firm. Uh formally introduce you to the partners and of course uh elect uh and the chair of the advisory board and the vice chair and at least have the basic structure that will allow us to to benefit extensively from your skills. Uh so that's that's one of the reason why we needed to have this meeting. Uh the second point is of course uh each and every one of you who graciously accepted to stay in this advisory board uh come to this board with a range of skills and expertise and network. And the whole idea of course has been fundamentally to see how we can benefit from your expertise and your guidance as we try to to navigate the work the work of the firm.

00:17:33

Udo ILO: Uh and being able to have a structured way of drawing from your expertise is one of the things we're hoping this this board meeting will help us achieve. uh so that we can it wouldn't just be about having a board for the sake of having a board but at least getting the necessary supports and uh guidance that we know most uh you know all of you can provide. Um we did just for the sake of uh information and reminding you share the bylaws of the board the one that was adopted via email uh sometime last year. We shared it before this meeting so you can familiarize yourself with you know what the board is doing and what is expected of the board and also we shared the annual report which is going to be the main one of the main document for conversation today. Uh so but I will stop here and I will invite the partners to uh put on their cameras and introduce themselves and then we yield the floor to the board members to introduce themselves. uh just uh basic information.

00:18:41

Udo ILO: I didn't introduce myself uh because I just assumed uh everybody's familiar with me. But I will start with myself. Uh my name is Udo Judlo. Uh I'm the founding partner uh of thoughts and advisory. Um this this the initial uh ideation of this firm started in 2008 when it felt more like a law firm. But over the years, especially in 2021, uh the partners came together and decided to rethink the focus of the firm to make it more more uh razor uh staff and dedicated more to thought sector engagement, democracy promotion and public sector uh uh support. and uh I'm the principal partner for the for the Nigeria for

L zerbo: I'm the physical fun.

Udo ILO: the Nigeria operations. Uh but of course I'm based in the Netherlands. We've got a small team in Nigeria that that we work with. Um so I'll stop here and I'll yield to Ibrahima.

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: Yeah, thank you. Thank you very much. Um and uh good afternoon board members depending on where you're sitting.

00:20:09

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: So mine is um Amadun Ibu Sagal. We started operation um in Sen. Um thanking Jude for the guidance as well. So yeah, fully on board now and starting our operations and I'll be talking about it uh a bit later. Thank you very much.

Udo ILO: Thank you.

Nkemdilim ILO: Good evening everybody or anywhere you're from.

Udo ILO: Okay.

Nkemdilim ILO: My name is Enilo and I'm also based in Netherlands managing the administrative part of it. Hi Federico.

Udo ILO: Thank you. Chem uh is I don't know if we have Matias. Uh I'm not sure Matias is on call. Uh Matias is is one of the partners. Uh but Matias's daughter is getting married on Saturday. So uh uh is understandable if he's not able to to join this call. But Matas is one of the partners and he is a principal partner for Benin. Uh we've not yet had operations there but something that is currently on the works. I will now yield to the uh to the board members to do the introduction.

00:21:36

Udo ILO: Uh and if if you permit me, I can just invite Amy Towers to do her introduction.

Amy Towers: Hello everyone. Good afternoon. What a pleasure to meet you. And uh Udo, what a privilege to serve on the board. Very exciting. Um I had my professional career in uh banking, finance, and Wall Street as a chief operating officer and spent the last several years serving international and national organizations primarily in conflict zones in uh in Africa and somewhat in the Middle East. and excited to work with you and uh and contribute to your success.

Udo ILO: Thank you, Emmy. Dr.

L zerbo: Well, thank you Udo.

Udo ILO: Zel

L zerbo: So, I'm Nina Zerbo uh from Bukina Faso working in I don't know all parts. uh I'm advising President Kagame on energy issue and then I'm the chairman of the Ronda atomic energy board even though I'm from Bkina Faso I'm also advising few other head of state on energy security issues on the continent and resident in Austria where I've been in um for the past 25 years and also in Bukinaaso so one of my daughter said where they say where's daddy living she say he lives in the plane so I travel a lot and then I want to apologize for uh not being so regular in my uh communication with Udo.

00:23:07

L zerbo: So Udo, my sincere apologies and then to you all. I'm uh right now in Moscow and uh I didn't I was mixing the time and not knowing that the meeting was starting in 2 minutes. So my sincere apology but I'm looking forward to contributing as much as I can and certainly happy to be with all of you in the board. Thank

Udo ILO: Thank you, Doc.

L zerbo: you.

Udo ILO: Aisha Hello Aisha, are you there? Okay, let me move to

Federico Borello: Good afternoon,

Udo ILO: Fede.

Federico Borello: good evening, morning wherever you are everyone. My name is Federico Borello. I'm the deputy executive director at Human Rights Watch where I run all our programmatic work and before that I spent a decade running center for civilians in conflict and you know two familiar faces Udo and Amy and also Cam. Glad to see you all uh and to join me here today.

Udo ILO: Thank you. Feel

Salim Mohamed: Uh good evening everybody. I'm Sali Muhammad from Kenya and uh glad to meet you all and my background is in development, human rights and the rule of law and uh currently I'm working as a consultant with the UN UN habitat and uh

working in conflict areas which is Somalia and looking in terms of Uganda and Tanzania and Kenya.

00:24:46

Salim Mohamed: So my primary focus of work in subsahara and Africa really looking in terms of the East African countries and glad to meet you all.

Udo ILO: Thank you Salem. Uh Aisha, are you able to talk

Ayisha Osori: Yeah, looks like you can hear me,

Udo ILO: now?

Ayisha Osori: but I'm on the train heading from Naples to the network is really excuse me. I think I'd always said I was a Navy.

Udo ILO: Yeah.

Ayisha Osori: I went from and then in London and I work

Udo ILO: Yeah.

Ayisha Osori: so pleasure to meet you all.

Udo ILO: Thank you, Aisha. Uh uh we have two of our staff on this call. Uh I will invite them to just introduce themselves quickly and say what they do for the firm.

L zerbo: That's good.

Joy Ekanem: Yes, please. Good evening,

Udo ILO: Enjoy.

Joy Ekanem: good afternoon, good morning. My name is Joy Ekanim. I work as the programs manager for thought and maze here in Nigeria. Pleasure to meet you.

Udo ILO: Thank you. Enjoy.

00:26:03

Chinecherem Udeh: Hello everyone,

Udo ILO: Ch.

Chinecherem Udeh: my name is Charm and I work with with advisory as a commission communication officer in Nigeria. Thank you.

Udo ILO: Thank you very much.

Chinecherem Udeh: Thank you very much.

Udo ILO: Um, sorry, NA, can you mute? So, thank you. Uh the the next thing on the agenda is the adoption of the agenda. So uh I'm hoping the the board members have looked at the agenda and if maybe one or one board member can just uh adopt it uh or move for the adoption of the agenda or if there are things that we need to include uh maybe this is the time for uh the board members to highlight that. Otherwise, uh, one of the board members can just go ahead and, uh, adopt the agenda and we move to the next item.

Amy Towers: So moved.

Federico Borello: Second.

Udo ILO: Thank you. Thank you, Emmy. Thank you, Emmy. Thank you, FedE. Uh so um we wanted to of course explain a little bit about the organization to you what we are trying to do in the continent uh and some of the programming outlook that we have.

00:27:24

Udo ILO: So I will invite uh Ibrahima uh he prefers to be called Ibu to uh present the uh tot strategy uh 2024 to 2026. Ibu, you have the floor.

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: Thank you very much um Udo and all members. So I'm going to be walking you through the strategy. So we thought you know a few slides could be you know much more easy for you

L zerbo: It's nothing.

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: to really understand the uh what we are doing. So um our main objective here is to really um you know work towards catalyzing the the ecosystem in the region and u you know um we are all aware of the fact that obviously um we're at a defining moment for global democracy uh which requires new thinking

because as we all know there is a you know a democratic decline there is a a trust deficit and there's also a demographic shift in across Africa. Uh we also uh found that there were structural disconnects and misaligned resources that are breaking the the current funding ecosystem.

00:28:40

L zerbo: Okay.

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: Um we see on one hand uh donor and funding which is misaligned and uh on the other hand the philanthropic uh and capacity gap. So we we we notice that donors are really shifting uh you know uh and funding models really uh lack local nuance and this often ex excludes African voices from from defining the the support that that comes from them and on the other hand we we see that there's a lack of u homegrown philanthropy. Uh I mean most of us who been working in philanthropy would have obviously felt this way uh driven by an environment that that lacks tax incentives but also that is you know per also lacks pervasive fear of getting uh you know in government's way. So NOS's face sustainability issues and um capacity challenges which really limit their their impact. So uh miss is a small social um enterprise with a with a wide network you know which really provides or at least tries to provide the the right answers.

00:30:02

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: It's a policy and third sector support firm which is in established to ensure that African governance reflects the best interest of of ordinary citizens and we want to do this through um you know mobilizing high level networks of decision makers but also developing localized information and generate uh vital new knowledge but also facilitate unprecedented collaboration between uh disparate sectors. uh and actors. So um you know in in redefining third sector uh advisory um you know we we we we thinking about uh uh three dimensions here you know um

focus uh methodology and and funding alignment. So uh we are also really um you know thinking of um uh uh engaging partners not only traditional partners but also you know uh new partners who could bring something to the field and uh we want to challenge the traditional approach of doing uh business. So uh our approach is based on ideation on new knowledge generation but also on on strategic design and in terms of methodology we we really want to we really want to promote a hands-on uh you know approach uh bespoke support uh that is tailored to individual organizations and uh in terms of funding we're also you know advocating for locally nuanced funding uh you know something that is really uh driven by homegrown uh sustainability.

00:31:45

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: Um our vision and mission um you know very quickly our our our vision is uh as follows effective governance in Africa and beyond that reflects the best interest of citizens and uh ordinary people because we we know that to be a global resource for democracy promotion governments institutions and practitioners we have to really um you know enhance knowledge creation skills development and third sector So a third sector ecosystem uh improvement. So um talking about gener generating knowledge and and facilitating space uh that is naturally uh that naturally drives ecosystem effectiveness. So here we are looking at three things. generate knowledge, improve skills and facilitate comparative learning spaces. And this is going to lead to enhanced collaboration between third sector institution, government and the private sector. And in turn this could lead to you know uh the ecosystem effect transformed but also uh always our end goal citizens um uh quality of life being improved. So um our first two uh objectives uh gear towards elevating third sector capacity through knowledge and and targeted skills.

00:33:13

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: So pillar one is u knowledge generation. Uh and pillar two is skills development. Under knowledge generation we we we we our goal is to support effectiveness and sustainability of third sector operations by doing what? by targeting uh institutional resilience uh prospective research funding strategy and also third sector physibility studies um under uh skills development our goal is to equip csos funders and stakeholders for relevance and impact and uh you know uh through responsible change management frameworks board development context and environmental sensiv sensitivity but also uh through uh storytelling. Our third and fourth objectives are geared towards forging powerful connectivity across previously silent and the you know the two pillars are as follows. The pillar number three is facilitating space spaces. So the goal here is to enable networking, joint learning and also the active interrogation of ideas and we hope to do this through ideas hackathons, co-creation events, comparative knowledge development but also high level networking and the is cross- sector interaction.

00:34:36

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: Uh the goal for us is to improve understanding between governments, creatives, private sector and the third sector. And we hope to achieve this through influencing cross- sector partnerships, joint program development, but also a yearly award for instance for exceptional cross- sector uh collaboration. So TNM uh tome TNM acts as the vital nal inter intersection of a transformed ecosystem you know between uh the donor community government institutions third sector operations and private sectors and also uh creatives and we want to do this by positioning ourselves at the exact intersection of these you know four actors uh you know armed with new knowledge, skills and networking and uh you know we hope to exponentially increase the effectiveness of the entire uh system. But we we we we understand that you know in order to achieve that we need to deploy a comprehensive spectrum based toolbox for intervention you know based on insight generation through research and polls uh through uh assessment tools physibility studies and needs assessment. We also need to do it through capacity building uh with specialized training modules uh for instance in project management in context sensitivity in new um you know topics such as artificial intelligence but also um you know through responsible change uh management and advocacy.

00:36:15

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: But we also understand that we have to do this also through the ecosystem amplification through publications. As you would see for instance uh some primers are already out and this helps position us as thought leaders uh you know via manuals, guides and also policy brief but also maybe moving towards podcasts where we can contribute to improving cross learning and knowledge uh sharing across uh the third sector. understand that this has to be anchored um you know u uh in regional influence uh and we have to work from three strategic geographic nodes. So uh to maze operates uh with physical offices in Nigeria where the founding partner uh started the first office and uh in Senegal and Benin. So country level implementation is supervised by incountry principal partners and local teams but at the regional level uh it's managed directly by the board of partners uh that is meeting today deploying a diverse pool of external experts as well and technical advisers to scale impact seamlessly. So um maybe just uh two or three more uh key points.

00:37:37

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: Um we are operating with uh uncromi uncompromising institutional integrity and quality control because our core values are creativity, innovation, integrity, inclusivity, pragmatism, adaptivity and community which is very important for us. And uh we also have some very important governance and safeguards uh which are strict compliance with diversity, equality and inclusion but also robust safeguard policies against harassment supported by you know uh we have a whistleblower policy which ensures total transparency and accountability and we pay attention to minority voices in project design. In terms of quality control and value, uh we are putting in place rigorous systems uh managed by the senior and technical advisor team to really ensure that you know uh our partners get value for money but

that there's also financial transparency and premium knowledge um uh production. Um so um mace um has an orbital governance structure which is designed for agile expert-driven operations. So we have the board of partners meeting today. The board is the ultimate decision-m body driving the firm's strategic direction.

00:38:59

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: uh we have the staff so the operations who are working full-time and some are also working part-time to manage the day-to-day project execution and we have the senior and technical advisers who are a diverse uh pool of external experts who provide specialized advice thematic support but also resource uh generation and um the advisory board is the the out of mustering to be honest and um you know it we hope that the board is really going to help us expand thoughts and mace global network and impact we hope that this will be operating via bianual virtual meetings like the one we're having today uh and we we understand that the board really serves as the ultimate enabler of our strategy through uh three core mandates so respectability and intellectual guidance network expansion but also you opportunity catalyzation. Uh so to end this presentation which has been a bit long, I'm just going to say that toen really wants to provide or at least help uh provide the right answers for the future of African governance because we all know that the decline of of democracy is notable.

00:40:21

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: uh you know but we believe that with the right knowledge aligned with funding and uh unprecedented cross- sector collaboration the third sector can really reshape the civic space. So um I will uh stop there udo uh sorry for being long but yeah thank you

Udo ILO: Thank you. Thank you, Ibu.

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: over

Udo ILO: Um I would have said let me add a couple of stuff but I will just uh open it up for the board members if there are clarifying questions or observations uh that you may have uh and then because of that we can provide you know some some additional information. So just in terms of the products uh the knowledge products this is one of them. This is the primer on influencing change uh that was launched in 2024 and this is our most recent publication uh building on solid ground which is on the resilience and sustainability of CSOS in Africa. This was also launched in May uh of this year. But I will leave the floor open uh if there are questions from the board members uh that that will respond to.

00:41:41

L zerbo: Udo. Yeah, Udo.

Udo ILO: Yeah.

L zerbo: Sorry to to be the first one to ask a question.

Udo ILO: No,

L zerbo: I mean,

Udo ILO: please.

L zerbo: yeah. Uh, Udo, one thing I mean, I've seen you and you and I have been in uh several meetings or fora, you know, where some of those topic are being discussed. So I wanted to know if um uh as you're taking the board members are uh enablers to uh of uh the core activity that were mentioned by Ibu uh what are you doing at the operation level uh to doveetail some of your core activity what is done by other institution within the continent that first and then also how that goes along with uh some of the the governance bodies is you know at regional level uh within the continent let's say you take EPOS you take the East African Committee you take the Africa union and then some of the related institution what type of uh you know cooperation you having with them in uh delivering uh the core activities that were mentioned just

00:42:49

Udo ILO: Thank you. Thank you very much. Uh very very very important question. So what what we have done uh in the last uh 3 years or so that we commenced operation in this mode of you know having the partnership is that uh as I mentioned the first thing we've tried to do is to help provide some level of context analysis of what the situations are and because of course we require resources to be able to do that uh we have prioritized a lot of times alignment with what available resources are seeking for. So uh so so one of the things we've done over the years for instance

L zerbo: Sorry.

Udo ILO: in Nigeria is that we've worked with three different foundations to provide specific support to their grantees in country. So for Foundation the work was to rethink how CSOS and NOS's influence change in Nigeria. What kind of tools do they use? How do they collaborate? What are the challenges that they encounter? How how how can those be addressed?

00:44:05

Udo ILO: So what we did in that project was to do a case study of progressive and uh important change efforts in Sagal in Nigeria in Bkina Faso and use that to develop a curriculum of which 100 uh CEOs of NOS's in Nigeria were part of and at the end of that it was a two-day training broken down into two parts. uh so we can manage the numbers and at the end of that we were able to use that process to develop our first primer which is the the primer on influencing change which more or less articulates in very practical and simple terms some of the ideas that came out from that conversation and we then circulated these amongst organizations and we have also developed a curriculum that can be used to teach what is in that primer. So what I'm saying NS is that most of our engagement now has been through funders working with their partners. So immediately after that project with Ford Foundation, we took on another project on resilience and sustainabilities of CSOS in in Nigeria working with MacAF Foundation where we spent time with about 90 organizations over four to five

days uh going through issues of governance, strategy development, fundraising, uh network building and talent management And he It was out of that process also at the end of that process that the primer on resilience and sustainability of CSOS in Africa came about.

00:45:48

Udo ILO: Uh of course there was research with other NOS's across the continent that came about. So what we've been doing now is looking at where the problems are in terms of the operations of CSOS in the continent developing resources on that and impacting those skills. We of course have an interest to to do a work at the regional level and I was going to mention in in uh subsequently after the annual report of our proposal to trust Africa to develop a compendium of change efforts in the continent. 20 change efforts in the continent to tease out what makes what's the things that make change possible and the things that limit change across the continent and use that to develop a body of work that csos community organizers can use in the work in in the work that they do. The other side that didn't come that I want to mention also is that we're also working with government institutions and that speaks to your point you the question you were asking and so we're looking at progressive government institutions that have work that implicates democracy and good governance.

00:46:56

Udo ILO: So in Nigeria now we're working with National Human Rights Commission. Uh we are just uh we're also working with the the National Agency for Science and Technology Research. uh as well as the national electricity uh regulatory commission and the idea here again is to look at how we can influence people centered policies by these agencies and strengthen their mechanisms to make sure that one they are allowing public input into their work but they're also developing policies that are

people friendly and that can open up the the economic and uh governance space for people in Nigeria.

Federico Borello: Udo, I have a question in the similar to what Aisha put in the chat. Uh Udo or Ibu. Um when you say that you you know you would benefit from uh

Udo ILO: Okay.

Federico Borello: expansion, you know, from the from from your advisory board for expansion, what do you mean? You mean expansion to new partners, into new countries, into new areas? like what what is it that you need the most now at this stage of the organization?

00:48:07

Federico Borello: What would be more more helpful?

Udo ILO: Okay, I will go and I you can please jump in. I think uh just like uh Dr. Jose mentioned about the regional bodies. We will of course want to elevate our work to be able to work with some of those regional bodies and of course introductions and uh sharing contacts with people who who are in those spaces who can be useful to the work we do will be very relevant. We are of course looking for resources. So for example, we started this compendium research since last year, but it's been difficult to find resources to pull it off because we're talking about 20 countries and all of that. So we will be interested in suggestions, ideas on how we can better do resource mobilization.

L zerbo: True.

Udo ILO: The third part is about visibility. We want to be able to present some of our work in important forum. We want to be able to be in webinars. We want to be able be able to be in conferences where we can showcase some of the things we are working on and some of the things we've been able to produce.

00:49:16

L zerbo: That's fine.

Udo ILO: And being able to leverage on your network uh and partnerships and and uh circles of influence to be able to do that will be beneficial to us. And the final point is the ideation part. As we think through some of the things we want to do and I will share a bit of them in the next presentation,

L zerbo: Awesome.

Udo ILO: we will love we would love to benefit from your own ideas about some things we're not thinking about, some things opportunities we are missing or challenges we are not paying attention to. That will also be helpful for us in in being able to structure our programs in a much much stronger way and impactful way for the environment that we're trying to change. Ibu, I don't know if you have something to add.

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: No, nothing to add on that one. But just maybe um uh on a question that Aisha asked on on on the chat. Hi Aisha. On the on the awards.

00:50:11

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: Um you know I think at this stage we we were maybe thinking that might be interesting to uh to have like you know for instance like citizen engagement and and social accountability awards for instance to encourage stronger citizen voices and uh really contribute to to bottom accountability but also inclusion and maybe also you know awards on other sectors like for instance you know public public sector excellence awards to reward maybe you know agencies or local governments or maybe ministries uh who would be you know performing well in uh you know public service delivery but also you know improving uh institutional excellence and maybe also you know in the field of um of innovation for instance you know like governance innovation uh awards to support uh experimentation and scaling of uh some some ideas, you know, uh being able to provide probably, you know, um a small fund to support uh the winners to uh you know, uh implement or experiment the their ideas, you know, with small grants, technical support, but also help them get visibility.

00:51:31

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: But yeah, that's just in the you know, in the thinking um at this stage over

Udo ILO: Yeah, just to also add on on Ibu's point that part of the things we really want to do is being able to elevate what works. uh be it individual initiatives that are making impact or institutional initiative or government level initiative being able to elevate those kind of information in a way that it can impact other players in the space who are struggling with similar challenges where they are. And so such a word even though we have not configured how what it's going to look like at the end of the day could be one way to elevate lessons so that others can see it and see what they can make out of it in terms of their own challenges in places where they work. Uh I don't know if there are more questions or comments before I present quickly the annual report.

Salim Mohamed: Yeah. And uh I just that was a very good presentation but uh I just wanted to comment on something.

00:52:36

Salim Mohamed: I don't know if you can all hear me.

Udo ILO: Yes, we can hear you.

Salim Mohamed: Yeah. I'm basing on my the context where I'm coming from Kenya and looking in terms of uh the

Udo ILO: Yeah.

L zerbo: Yeah,

Salim Mohamed: power of AI and governance and uh an area that uh re really not much has been done especially if you look what happened yesterday in my country where in terms of how young people are using AI to generate information and uh conversation with regards to government governance and democracy and uh is that an

area that we also intend to maybe look into because I didn't hear anything on the presentations on technology, the use of AI, the use of technology and with relation to democracy,

L zerbo: Hold this

Salim Mohamed: governance and all that.

L zerbo: confirmed.

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: Yeah, that's a a very good point, Salim. And I I think uh in in some of the conversations we had that was also going to be you know one of the amendments we're going to probably you know bring to this strategy with all the you know growing ecosystem on digital public infrastructure but also AI as you mentioned and it different uses which is still at the very nent stage and u you know uh we believe we can also have an added value in in in that field.

00:53:55

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: So yes definitely that is going to be um you know um

Udo ILO: Any

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: added into the strategy

Udo ILO: more questions from the board?

L zerbo: Udo yeah sorry in uh what you know I didn't want to talk about

Udo ILO: Yeah.

L zerbo: it but uh hearing what Salim said about u AI digital technology and then where the world is going and then uh how Africa uh for instance is yet to uh to not be uh to not just be on the menu but to be at the table and then to discuss those issues. Uh I wanted to say that the AI issue and the data center has brought a significant no a non uh uh I would say an important problem which is energy uh because most of our country have rushed into building data centers and then we don't have enough energy to power those centers and then they've been sitting in some countries and then not uh giving uh what they should have been uh what they were meant for. So energy is becoming a a serious issue and then in fact I'm in Russia to discuss this issue at an international uh forum and I think we cannot talk AI today without energy security and

uh when we talk about governance industrialization development uh let's keep in mind that there are 32 plus countries in the continent that are considering nuclear energy as part of their game and part of their development portfolio and that's something that uh we shouldn't shy away from uh uh considering in our discussion and the study that are done by the uh

00:55:42

L zerbo: the I mean the institutional framework that you're leading. Thank

Udo ILO: Thank you so much.

L zerbo: you.

Udo ILO: Very very very very important nuance on the AI and the energy crisis. Thank you. Uh any more comments from the board? Okay. So um the the annual reports uh that we have is for 2025. But like I mentioned in my introduction, we started running this firm in different mode in this partnership uh framework since uh early 2022. And over over those years we've there's been a number of activities that we've carried out. But uh for 2025 of course uh we define it as a crossroad of knowledge policy and democratic change uh which was the main context within which uh we operated. Uh and of course these realities require research that influence policy in institutional capabilities and the ability to implement reform legal intervention that uphold rights and funding structures that support long-term resilience. And so the summary of the work we we did uh please go back to the first slide. The the summary of the work we did revolved around our work with civil society.

00:57:21

Udo ILO: Like I mentioned, we we we are now being approached by funders to help provide support to their grantees because the way we try to work is not to be implementing traditional NGO kind of projects but rather to provide the right kind of

support to CSOS and NOS's and government institutions to be able to do their work well. And so it's about closing the knowledge gap, building institutional capacity both for third sector institution as well as public institutions. uh supporting the reform of policy framework in terms of generating new knowledge or generating policy briefs that help inform those changes and playing a role in coordinating actors within the space to be able to deliver uh on on on some of these things. So next slide please. As as the uh managing partner explained in the annual report, we've learned again and again that the distance between knowing what should happen and making it happen is bridged by institutional capacity, legal framework and strategic partnership. And that was the gap we tried to fill in 2025. Uh uh of course uh the disruptions we saw in 2025, the political volatility, technological disruptions, economic challenges uh that all triggered a response from our part.

00:59:06

Udo ILO: Uh, one of course is trying to diversify our sources of funding and resource generation which then imply that we try to work with government institutions uh, locally as well as engaging with funders uh, to support our work but trying to see how we can go into partnership with local institutions, government institutions uh, as our clients and delivering services for them. uh championing information integrity, digital literacy, which is something we are doing with Luminates for their partners who work in a digital uh governance and tech justice space. Uh and of course embedding adaptive strategies and political economy analysis into our core programming. Making sure that what we the kind of support we provide to partners is not just technical but very well embedded in the reality of the space from where they work. And that's why we try to make our offerings a bit a bit personalized to either institutions or or organizations that we work with. Next slide. So um I I don't want to go too much into this uh because here we're just trying to explain the way we approaching our work or the way we approached our work in 2025. uh doing more of comprehensive needs assessments like we did with the uh polarization research that we did uh for Ford Foundation in Nigeria uh ensuring that the pro the the products that we develop get the buying of the sector.

01:00:58

Udo ILO: So we did uh we did a research on polarization within the NGO sector in Nigeria. But the process of that research involved a state level consultation with CSOS and CSO leaders. Uh uh part of it was a polling exercise that had a sample size of more than 150 organizations just to understand the kind of challenges they face. So making sure that the shared ownership in what we are developing, co-creating knowledge and measuring success of course focused on how resilient our partners are at the end of the day. I think I lost my slides. Okay, let me let me let me uh put them up from here. Okay, I hope you can see my screen.

Amy Towers: Yes, we

Udo ILO: Okay. So, some of the significant milestones we had in 2025 was of course the inauguration of the Seneagal office. Uh Ibu will speak a little bit about some of the things they're doing. Uh now h of course your gracious acceptance to be part of our advisory board. uh the polarization project that I just mentioned divided with stand policy paper and dissemination tour uh which happened in about four states in Nigeria four regions in Nigeria uh but this is the first of its kind study on how polarization is impacting the ability of CSOS in Nigeria to to deliver at optimal level.

01:03:01

Udo ILO: Uh same year we got a grant from Luminate. Uh and the idea of the grant was to help support a cohort system of their grantees who are working on tech justice and digital assets in Nigeria. And part of our work is to support them in terms of their organizational governance. uh to support them in collabor in in uh in uh facilitating comparative learning amongst them and providing uh specific skills on governance, resilience and storytelling and then helping them to cocreate joint advocacy ideas that can help move the needle in tech justice and governance uh uh uh and tech governance in Nigeria. And this has been quite uh an enlightening experience for us because we also learn a lot just being part of these uh facilitating this cohort designing

the framework for the cohort, designing their activities and agenda for the year and providing hands-on support to organizations around issues of strategic development and other necessary uh uh structures that they need to be able to be resilient and effective in the operations. Uh the other two projects that are captured in our financial overview which wasn't mentioned of course was that our resilience and sustainability project with MacArthur.

01:04:34

Udo ILO: Part of it came started in 2023. Part of it happened last year which was the the closure of that project. And and what that project did for us was that it allowed us the opportunity to interact like I said earlier with more than 90 csos in Nigeria answering the question how can they be more resilient how can they be more sustainable in the operations beyond the grant from Macaffa Foundation and this included developing a five-part curriculum uh that we used to train them this included uh technical support to organizations on various issues over the uh in the course of the project. But most importantly out of that project and the research that we conducted uh in in the duration of that project we were able to produce this uh primer on resilience and sustainability of CSOS in Africa. But in terms of the numbers uh in 2025 the total sum of project that came to us as uh Tots and M was about \$296,000 spanning uh funds from Luminate Macato Foundation, Ford Foundation. Uh there were small research from Good Luck Jonathan Foundation uh and uh a number of uh gratis technical work that we did for for a couple of organizations either helping them look at their strategy or helping them develop a plan uh programming plan and and stuff like that.

01:06:16

Udo ILO: But in terms of uh uh grant income that we got last year, it was around 296 uh,000 of which 15% was administrative costs uh that came to the organization. So um

so in terms of uh some of the wins or our project in numbers we executed four projects four new projects last year. Uh we had more than 70 organizational partners that we worked with. Uh in terms of our events and training, the average response we got from participants gave us a 95% positive feedback in all the trainings that we that we carried out last year. We had about 20 plus mentions in uh mainstream media in in Nigeria. Uh we had uh 50 published opets again part of our knowledge uh knowledge generation and policy influencing work and our newsletter goes to more than 2,000 uh subscribers uh as at the last So, um given what we've learned uh last year, as we move forward, um it is clear to us that persistence of political instability and instrumental trust decline institutional trust demands more traditional demands more than just traditional advisory services and so our strategic integration embedding rigorous political economy analysis will be central to the work we do going forward.

01:08:31

Udo ILO: Uh we will keep looking for ways to sustain funding like I said increasingly now looking at public sector partnerships and we are getting some traction in that area uh and upgrading our own internal capacity to navigate information disorder and also leveraging on on on uh AI tools which by the way is helping our work tremendously. We've now been able to organize all our resources over the years in our Google suits making it possible that we Gemini any any member of staff can go in there and generate a proposal find any document they're looking for. So our knowledge management has also really really improved. Uh this year we will continue to improve our communication in digital platforms. Uh there's been some progress in the number of followership that we're having uh online. Uh continue to ensure mutual accountability in our projects. one of which being the work we're doing with limit uh continue to co-create right now we are for instance working with a number of NOS's to bid for an EU uh opportunity given that now a lot of NOS's in Nigeria are relying on us as a technical partner in knowledge creation uh and of course harmonizing standards and translating global learning to local uh capabilities is uh the launch of building on solid ground is one of the major event that has happened this year but most of the work was done last year.

01:10:14

Udo ILO: I will end by saying that one of the high points for me last year was when uh csos in Nigeria gathered for an emergency retreat to review governance challenges on the country the shrinking civic space and the challenges NGOs's are having in delivering on their work and two of our resources were their pre-ereading material one was the work we did in 2023 uh the retreat we had with senior uh cso leaders and government specialists where we reviewed the state of the country and what could be useful in in influencing the new government that document and the polarization documents were the two reading material that was used by these csos in Nigeria for this important event and that for us was a sign that whatever we're doing is gaining some traction. So, I'm going to stop here and if there are questions from the board, I'm I'm happy to answer.

Federico Borello: I'm sorry I put it in the chat. Unfortunately, I have a conflict now at 2:00. So, basically now, is there anything we need to approve?

Udo ILO: Yes.

Federico Borello: Anything?

01:11:36

Udo ILO: The election of our board chair and vice chair. So maybe we can we can do that right away before before you

Federico Borello: Could we do that before?

Udo ILO: go.

Federico Borello: Is that okay for the others?

Udo ILO: Yeah. You know,

Federico Borello: Sorry.

Udo ILO: you guys just nominate and and we'll take it from there.

Federico Borello: Who are the nominees?

Udo ILO: I'm not a board member. Uh Aisha,

Ayisha Osori: Hi.

Udo ILO: are you still here?

Ayisha Osori: Yeah, I just came back actually and yeah,

Udo ILO: Okay.

Ayisha Osori: thank you Freder letting us do this quickly. I I nominate Bene as chair and Amy as vice chair.

Udo ILO: Okay, I shall nominate Salem as chair and Amy as vice chair. Uh just to say just to say it's not heavy lifting.

Federico Borello: I have

Udo ILO: I can I can guarantee you that it will not be heavy lifting. It will be two meetings in a year and few phone calls from me before that and I'll start by asking you about your family first before I burden you with our issues.

01:12:45

Udo ILO: So it will be a nice phone

Federico Borello: I I had I in my board so I wholeheartedly approve that

Udo ILO: call.

Salim Mohamed: I I I I

Federico Borello: and I'm also

Salim Mohamed: no can can I can I nomin like thank you for the nomination and uh I wanted to nominate uh well Zabo that's his his name Dr.

Udo ILO: Yes, Dr. Za. Yes, that's

Salim Mohamed: Zabu and uh Amy as Dr. Zab as the chair and Amy as a vice chair.

Udo ILO: correct.

Salim Mohamed: one being my the reason behind that is the fact one with the connection in the different African countries that is working and to be able to take us

into those spaces where we can have like the organization into those conversations that we want to be part of and it will be of added value and also to be able to bring us in the conversation spaces of AI and energy and uh that's why I really wanted not that I wanted to nominate him as a chair and Amy as the vice chair.

Udo ILO: Okay, Doc.

01:13:59

Udo ILO: Doc, you're muted. Doc, you're muted. If you can hear me, you're muted. Yeah.

L zerbo: No, sorry. I I was just saying that I was about to ask to nominate a lady as a chair and then a man as a vice chair for we need uh we too much into because I'm an international gender champion and then I think we should uh give more uh u visibility to capable women in our uh work and then also because women are more into um you know they're more compassionate in those type of issues and uh more uh lenient than what men can do and then we can be in the in the background and then help do the work. So that's what I wanted to suggest before Salem uh put my name

Udo ILO: Okay.

L zerbo: forward

Udo ILO: Uh so now we have three different

L zerbo: so maybe Amy can talk.

Amy Towers: I I yeah, I will um I I appreciate um the nomination surprise

L zerbo: Yeah.

Amy Towers: um but I'm I'm happy to contribute um and I certainly can make the time

01:15:13

Udo ILO: Yes.

Amy Towers: and I would appreciate the the comments of of Dr. Zerbo. I'm very comfortable serving in a vice chairman uh role given my my background is as a chief operating officer and problem solver

L zerbo: Come on.

Amy Towers: and things like that. So um uh appreciate the the gender nod but with my area of of expertise I'm very comfortable serving uh in a vice chair role.

Udo ILO: So, doc, are

L zerbo: So sim I would

Udo ILO: you

Salim Mohamed: Doc,

L zerbo: say

Salim Mohamed: you're not because we

Udo ILO: okay? Okay. Salim I would suggest you take the role uh because

Salim Mohamed: need

Udo ILO: I also know that uh Dr. Zbo I know how we struggle to connect uh because of some of the things he's doing especially this nuclear related work he's doing uh it requires uh a number of times that he's in places where he can be reached so if you are comfortable I would say you and the Amy can can lead us

L zerbo: and Salim, you can count on my uh whatever time I can make available to help uh both Amy and yourself.

01:16:49

Udo ILO: Sal we take that as a yes.

Amy Towers: Wonderful.

Salim Mohamed: I

Udo ILO: Okay.

Salim Mohamed: Okay.

Udo ILO: Thank you so much Salem. I fed I know you have to

Federico Borello: Okay,

Udo ILO: go.

Federico Borello: approved. Thank you very much. So glad to meet you the ones I had not met before and see you Amy and and Ken. Uh and congratulations for this.

Ayisha Osori: Congratulations.

Udo ILO: Thank you,

Federico Borello: Talk to you soon.

Udo ILO: Fed.

Federico Borello: Bye-bye. Bye.

Ayisha Osori: I'm going to have to run off to I'm going to lose Wi-Fi,

Udo ILO: Bye.

Ayisha Osori: but congrats Salem and Amy. Looking forward to working with you.

Udo ILO: Thank you,

Ayisha Osori: I'm sorry thoughts and me team for having to run,

Udo ILO: Ali.

Ayisha Osori: but hopefully next one I'll do better and I won't be on the road.

Udo ILO: Enjoy the

Ayisha Osori: Have a good weekend everyone.

Udo ILO: train.

Ayisha Osori: Thank you.

Udo ILO: All right.

Ayisha Osori: Ciao.

Udo ILO: All right.

L zerbo: So, congrats.

01:17:41

L zerbo: Congrats to Salib and Amy.

Udo ILO: Uh

L zerbo: uh we are looking forward to uh assisting you the best we can and as Udu said I'm uh difficult to catch but you sometime I have to insist and then uh I will make sure you know whatever connection I could and then I will make sure I include uh uh you know you guys in some of the discussion we have we were in Kegali for a nuclear energy innovation summit the next one will be in Rome not far from uh Nigeria in the west part and then we have discussion on some of the issues because it has head of state level. So I will make sure in that context or the African Development Bank or Echoas or any other setting that you guys are connected one way or another. You can count on me for that.

Udo ILO: Thank you doc.

L zerbo: Yeah.

Udo ILO: Thank you doc. Salim Amy maybe have to make some acceptance

L zerbo: Thank you.

Udo ILO: speech. Oh boy.

Salim Mohamed: and I need a PA to write my acceptance speech.

01:18:57

Salim Mohamed: Anyway, yeah, thank you for I think I kind of like I really wanted Dr. to be the chair but uh since you said that it's not heavy lifting I kind of have to accept and since we all on board in terms of uh ensuring the success and like the to ensure that the organization has impact in Africa and more so like it trickles down to the communities that are marginalized and really affected and how that impact can be can drive to so the thing is I'm Looking forward forward to working with the team and seeing how I can learn more and also be able to support the team more.

Udo ILO: Thank you, Salem.

Amy Towers: Um, yeah, I'll I'll just echo what Selim has said. I look forward to u serving Sim uh as the chair and

Udo ILO: Emmy.

Amy Towers: and you Udo and the organization and seeing uh we'll figure it out. I need to learn some more and figure out where we can add value. But I would say just reflecting on what you have presented to us in the annual report in discussions.

01:20:12

Amy Towers: It's it's impressive um what you've done with modest resources and the concept of amplifying and multiplying I think is very powerful in this environment right now. The fact that MacArthur has sought you out to make their grantees more effective with the grants and and the resources they're giving them is a model and is something um filling those gaps. You know, there's both innovation that's exciting and ideiation. Um but you can multiply effectiveness if you start filling some of the gaps that are there within the system that exists. So I think it's a very effective two-pronged approach.

Udo ILO: No, thank you. Thank you, Emmy. Thank you, Salem. Uh, I also be available to have a one-on-one just to provide I'm sure Amy, knowing you, I know you have questions and some ideas. So I will I will engage with you to be able to get all of that and feed them into uh the planning uh that we're doing especially I mean this year is almost over as we also think of 2027. Uh but just to mention that we have a number of possible projects that we are

01:21:23

L zerbo: Okay.

Udo ILO: negotiating uh chiefly with government institutions in Nigeria. But Ibu can talk quickly about some of the things we want to do in Sagal.

L zerbo: Okay.

Udo ILO: uh one of which of course is the translation of one of our primers to French and updating it to make sure that the franophone Africa are able to utilize them. But if

you can just quickly mention some of the things uh you're thinking of doing in Sagal and then we can wrap up

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: Yeah, thank you very much and thanks to our congratulations to our board chair and and vice chair. So very quickly, so as as you so rightly mentioned, so we will be uh working on translating and adapting some of the primers and also curricular uh into French. Um we're also hoping to launch a a governance leadership program uh which will be cohort based and uh probably have the first cohort uh this year. Um we're also thinking of you know establishing um uh uh what we call um uh reform labs uh so where we can actually co-design and pilot practical reforms whether it's going to be with uh you know civil society organizations or with local governments you know we are still thinking about that we're also thinking about um initiating um you know starting in August uh a quarterly multistakeholder forum on on governance you know that is going to be called the national governance dialogue series where

01:22:56

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: we you know focus on on issues such as um artificial intelligence, digital public infrastructure, public service delivery and uh on the basis of these conversations we're going to also uh develop policy briefs and make sure that uh you know we follow up on the on the various actions that will be taken. Uh Sagal is going to be holding very important uh local government government elections in January 2027. Uh and these elections would be very decisive because of the political situation but also because of all the new key reforms you know and all the debt situation the new uh you know IMF plan etc. So we we really want to also use this these elections as an entry point for governance reform by conducting research ahead of the elections on citizen priorities, local government government performance gaps but also accountability mechanisms and then later we're going to publish uh pre uh election insights but also post elections insight but also really engage media and uh and stakeholders and then uh maybe also use this year to really um develop a donor enga engagement strategy.

01:24:10

Ibrahima Amadou Niang, PhD: Make sure that uh we we convene donors to to our various uh you know events uh you know package our initiatives in into a more you know fundable um if I can call it that way a more fundable uh you know package where we you know have leadership academy and innovation fund but also governance labs. Uh so you know all in all this these are the you know the the main uh activities that we want to do uh from now on and until the end of the year. Uh this year is a year of consolidation of building a solid base in Seneagal and starting uh our signature programs uh with the support also of colleagues uh who are based in in Nigeria. Over. Thank you.

Udo ILO: Thank you, Ibu. Uh any comments from the board? Okay. Um uh Amy and Salem, we will reach out uh from with the comm's team because we would of course put this out as an announcement and the coms team may want to do a short interview for our multimedia channels just but they they will reach out to tell you exactly what they will need for it.

01:25:26

Udo ILO: But uh again, we'll make sure it's not something that will burden you so much. Uh I just want to thank all of you. Um I know I have you know personal connections to most of the uh advisory board members. Uh uh interestingly Salem and Ibu were in Stanford together for the for the uh Fisher uh fellowship. So there's this there's all this connection there. Uh Amy Amy was my guardian angel when I was in Civic. Uh I can't thank her enough. Uh Dr. Zbo has always been the big brother in big events. Uh and so we're just really fortunate that all of you agreed to be to be part of this and our promise is that we will do our best to make sure that this strategy is implemented to its best possible uh uh version, but also to be transparent and open with you about what we're doing. And if we have challenges, we also let you know. But relying extremely and extensively on your own advice and wisdom in making sure that uh this this firm

succeeds. So thank you so much and thank you so much for your time. All right. Thank you.

L zerbo: Thank

Udo ILO: Have a good evening or good afternoon.

Salim Mohamed: Thank you.

Udo ILO: Yeah.

L zerbo: you.

Udo ILO: Bye-bye.

Salim Mohamed: Bye-bye.

Udo ILO: Hello N.

Joy Ekanem: Hello.

Udo ILO: So guys,

Chinecherem Udeh: So guys,

Udo ILO: prepare the prepare the minutes. Prepare the minutes.

Chinecherem Udeh: prepare

Udo ILO: Hi Emmy. It's so good to see you.

Joy Ekanem: Okay.

Chinecherem Udeh: just left.

Joy Ekanem: Yeah. Um, so you're transcribing

Chinecherem Udeh: Okay.

Joy Ekanem: here.

Chinecherem Udeh: Yeah, it's transcribed. I think it should be able to send us the list once the call is

Joy Ekanem: All right.

Chinecherem Udeh: over.

Joy Ekanem: Please.

Chinecherem Udeh: So, okay. All right.

Joy Ekanem: All righty.

Transcription ended after 01:27:57

This editable transcript was computer generated and might contain errors. People can also change the text after it was created.