Karibu Foundation
RESISTING AND REBUILDING

KARIBU NEW REALITIES GRANT PGM PILOT PROJECT 2021-2024

Final Evaluation Report

July 2024

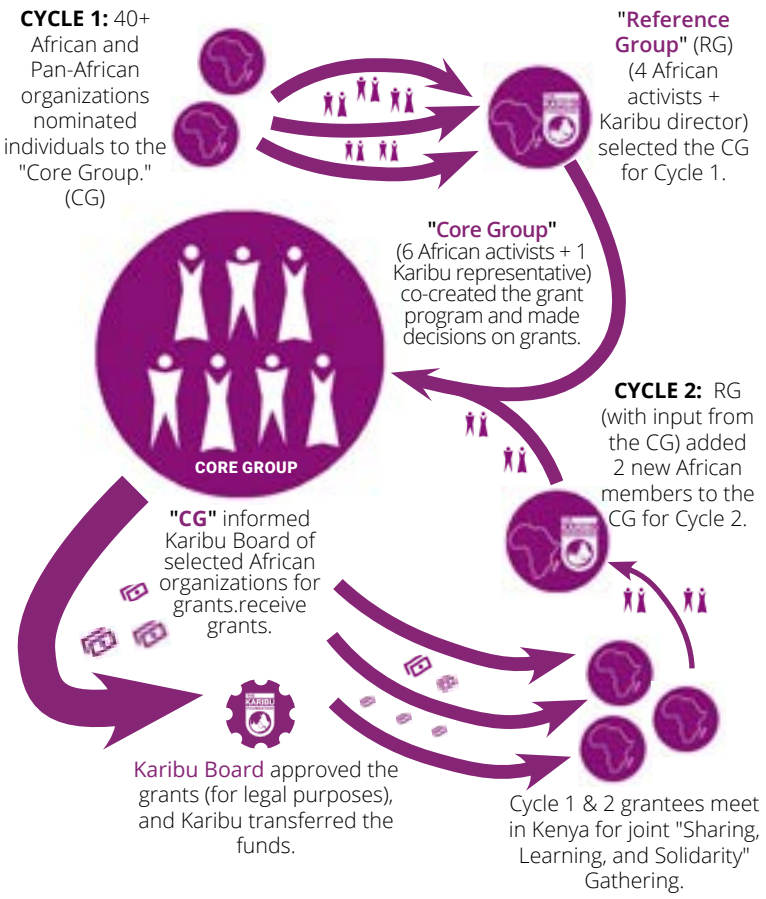
AT A GLANCE

ABOUT

The "Karibu New Realities Grant" was a 2.5-year pilot project in participatory grantmaking by the Karibu Foundation, in which African activists and civil society members co-created a grant program and made decisions on which initiatives would receive support.

Over the course of the pilot, the program's "Core Group" supported 25 groups of change agents (social movements, associations, organizations, cooperatives, collectives, and networks) in Sub-Saharan Africa who launched bold, innovative initiatives. These forward-thinking, "constructive troublemaking" ideas sought to disrupt the status quo of injustices facing the continent and the world.

PILOT STRUCTURE



PILOT TIMELINE

JULY 2021
PILOT LAUNCHED
The Karibu New Realities Grant pilot is launched.

NOV 2021
CORE GROUP FORMED
"Core Group" selected based on movement and organizational nominations.

2022
CYCLE 1
Cycle 1 of the pilot commenced. "Core Group" co-created grant program. First set of grants provided.

2023
CYCLE 2
Cycle 2 of the pilot commenced. "Core Group" revised based on lessons from Cycle 1. Second set of grants provided.

2024
LEARNING & EVALUATION
Learning and evaluation process on the pilot undertaken, including gathering of grantees.

CONTENTS

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BUILDING THE ROAD AS WE GO

The journey that we, the Core Group of the "Karibu New Realities Grant," have been on over the past three years was not always easy. It has been filled with moments of joy, frustration, confusion, and often moments of the unknown. "Building the new" demands whole different parts of our heads, hearts, and being - it is in no way easy or straightforward.

But we believe that the journey was worth it.

This evaluation report serves as the final summary of the learnings, shortcomings, and achievements from the “Karibu New Realities Grant” participatory grantmaking pilot process with African activists and civil society members that took place from 2021-2024.

It is based on the experience that the KNRG Pilot has built an important blueprint for a vehicle that was built and driven on a road that we created as we drove. This vehicle may, in the future, have different drivers, different components, and/or different ways of steering - but it is a vehicle that can take us forward.

This evaluation report serves as a basis for concrete observations and recommendations for the feasibility, costs, and new mechanisms of an institutionalized KNRG within Karibu’s grantmaking structures. It highlights the possibilities, “must-haves,” and areas for improvement in a potential institutionalized KNRG based on the learnings of the pilot.

We may not have gotten everything right throughout the KNRG pilot process, and we have certainly not solved all of the challenges that we face. But we believe we have created something that did move power - and something that is worth continuing in some way, shape, or form.

- The Core Group of the KNRG, July 2024

1 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The KNRG aimed to practically put into effect the ethos of 'nothing about us without us' and to continue to shift power also in Karibu's grantmaking. This chapter summarizes the recommendations of the "Core Group" of the pilot.

THE KNRG: A SUCCESSFUL PROTOTYPE FOR A SCALED PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING APPROACH

The "Core Group" of the KNRG would like to start this report with a clear recommendation: the Karibu Foundation and other grant-makers should integrate and scale the lessons learned from the KNRG, a successful prototype of Participatory Grantmaking, into future grantmaking strategies.

As a whole, we experienced the KNRG to be a strong reorientation and re-energising of Karibu's grantmaking efforts with African grantee partners. There are never-the-less ways that can make the program more time and cost effective, without cutting the heartbeat of the project on the alter of efficiency.

All the recommendations (for "must haves", "can be changed", and "open questions to be discussed") for a scaled program are presented here.

"MUST HAVES" for a successful and impactful PGM model for Karibu:

1. Convene a diverse and politically engaged African Core Group:[1]

- **Intersectional Approach:** Maintain regional, thematic, gender, generational and linguistic diversity to include a wide range of voices and perspectives.
- **Social Justice Focus**: Ensure the group prioritizes the original heartbeat of the pilot, in that it keeps a focus on the needs of social movements on the ground rather than turning into a bureaucratic organ.
- **Size and Decision-Making**: The group should not be smaller than the current size, and should aim for consensus-based decisions rather than voting.[2]
- **Continuity and Rotation**: The group should find a good balance rotating membership, combined with some stability to preserve institutional memory.
- **Power:** The group should strive to consistently find mechanisms to check their own power, to avoid creating new faces/ forms of old ways of working.

"MUST HAVES" for a successful and impactful PGM model for Karibu (continued)

2. Retain institutional link to Karibu / Participation of Karibu Staff:

- **Institutional Glue:** A Karibu staff member should participate in the Core Group in the future. This member will handle administrative tasks, lessen the burden of the other core group members, navigate Norwegian legal structures, and serve as a cultural interpreter and institutional link between the Core Group and the Karibu Board.
- **Role and Dynamics:** This person should be aware of the power dynamics they have, and have a movement-building perspective. They are not the majority voice, but can play a key role in navigating institutional challenges of this type of model.
- **Voting vs. Support Role:** There are differing views on whether the Karibu representative should have a vote and part of decision-making, or if focus should solely be focused on administrative support within the Core Group.

3. Retain focus on Movement Building:

- **Social Movements / Power Building:** Lessons from Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 show that it is critical to focus on social movement and power building, and how local efforts can be connected and multiplied for systemic change. A new form of KNRG should retain this view and focus for the new (and old) realities of Africa.
- **Focus on Movement Ecosystems:** It is nearly impossible to define social movements in the African context due to diverse contexts and shrinking operational spaces. A more direct and concrete focus is supporting groups that ensure that the ecosystem of social movements are ready and in a position to act.
- **Building Solidarity:** Both grants and approach to the grantee partners should emphasize the importance of actors connecting, building power, and being part of a larger ecosystem for social justice. This also means playing a role in connecting the grantees to each other, or to other external processes that can be added value for their efforts.[3]

4. Keep a Grantee-Centric Approach:

- **Simplify Processes:** Make the application process simple and approachable, minimizing "donor language" and unnecessary demands. [4]
- **Take administrative burdens:** To the extent that it is possible, Karibu should try to take the administrative burden of grantees related to reporting, note-taking, and monitoring.
- **Measure What Matters:** Focus on learning and measuring what really matters, to avoid placing heavy administrative burdens on grantees.

5. Creative and Flexible Support for Movements:

- **Avoid NGO-ization**: Strive to support movements without turning them into traditional NGO projects. This includes strict demands on audits, reporting, etc.
- **Flexibility in Grants:** Allow for adaptability in grants to meet the dynamic nature of social change.

SUMMARY / RECOMMENDATIONS

"CAN BE CHANGED" and still have a impactful PGM model for Karibu

1. Administrative Costs:

Deep participation requires time and investment, and it's crucial not to cut corners in this process. However, the administrative costs must be balanced with the funds available for Grantee Partners. Possible cost reduction strategies:

- **Travel and Meetings:** While travel and physical meetings are essential for success, the Core Group could limit travel to once a year and choose economically sensible destinations.
- **Invite another donor:** Explore options to see if an external donor could be interested in engaging in the next phase, to share administrative costs
- **Honorarium Model:** [5]While compensation for Core Group members time is essential to avoid being extractive, there are ways to re-look at the honorarium model - as the current Core Group feels the amount could be reduced and still have value for members.

2. Time and Internal Routines:

The KNRG process was time-consuming due to the deep participation required. While the Core Group believes the time spent was appropriate for achieving positive results, there are opportunities to expedite the process:

- **Streamline / Re-think Application Review Process:** Implement new methods for reviewing applications more efficiently. Other internal routines related to applications could be optimized.
- **Less time on "discovery" and "defining" phase:** Use the model that was developed for at least a multi-year process, before having to re-define.

"OPEN QUESTIONS" that still need to be considered in a new model

1. **Partnership Model:** The current KNRG model focuses on new partnerships rather than long-term ones - and long-term partnerships matter.
2. **Grant Cycles:** The model is not based on following full grant cycles (closing one grant, then applying for new grant) and only has completed Cycle 1 evaluations.
3. **Does not respond to urgent matters:** The application and approval process is lengthy and doesn't accommodate urgent actions due to the need for advance submissions.
4. **Participation Vulnerability:** Core Group members' ability to participate fully is affected by among other things their activism and personal lives, which may place more burden on some (including Karibu staff) than others.
5. **Risk Factors:** The model has potential risks that have been discussed (e.g., grantee project issues, internal conflicts, board disagreements) that have not yet occurred, but may need additional mechanisms[6].
6. **Financial Considerations:** There's a need to align KNRG's operations with Karibu's financial limitations and consider impacts on other global partnerships outside KNRG's scope, which is impossible for the Core Group to respond to.

2 EVALUATION DESIGN

The Core Group designed the evaluation using the imagery of a blueprint for a vehicle. This vehicle may, in the future, have different drivers, components, forms depending on the context, and/or different ways of steering. This chapter discusses the evaluation design and how it serves as a foundation for moving forward.

Evaluation Purpose and Design

The evaluation process of the pilot is built into the “Framework" agreement of the KNRG Pilot, in section 10: “A final report from the grantmaking group of their implementation of the pilot is produced within 6 months after the end of Cycle 2”.

At the joint meeting between the KNRG Core Group and the Karibu Board in September 2023, it was agreed that the "Core Group" had the power to define what an evaluation should look like, and how it should be done.

The main goal of this evaluation report is to lift up learning from the pilot and provide suggestions to the Board about what an institutionalised KNRG could look like based on the experiences and learnings so far.

Data

The Core Group utilized previous internal evaluations, conversations with grantees, and findings from an external research project as their main sources of data. They also organized an internal evaluation methods workshop with an evaluation consultant based in South Africa, as well as the "Learning Sharing, and Solidarity" gathering of KNRG Grantees in 2024.

Scope

Throughout the evaluation phase, the Core Group took into consideration these three areas:

The vehicle (KNRG) itself

- **Its internal parts** (the grant program we collectively built) - our processes, routines, time use, financial use of the admin, facilitation, structures, tools, meetings, its vulnerabilities.
- **Its external parts** (the grant program’s relationship to grantees) - how did the grantees experience the processes, routines, human relationships, external information, etc.

The vehicle's (the KNRG) contribution to social change on the ground in Africa:

- **In what ways did the KNRG help add wind in the sails of the grantees in their struggle for change?** In what ways did it not help to do this?
- **What are the change effects of the contribution of the KNRG funds to real transformation on the ground?** In what ways did it miss the mark in supporting transformation on the ground?

How (or how not) did the vehicle (the KNRG) help to build a blueprint for others grantmakers in the sectors to follow:

- **Where might we have seen wider ripple effects of this vehicle than we originally expected?**

3 | WHAT WAS BUILT

The Core Group has compiled most of the KNRG process, internal mechanisms, and learnings into an interactive digital presentation available online. To avoid duplicating content, we encourage readers to explore this presentation for insight into the internal mechanisms developed during the pilot. The presentation is available at:

https://prezi.com/view/s5ybDbUEJBBlh6dVBPv5/

THE DIGITAL PRESENTATION INCLUDES:

The co-creation process

Including the following "phases"

1. Convening phase
2. Discovery phase
3. Define phase
4. Development phase
5. Decision and reflection phase.

It also includes an info-graphic on the mechanics of how decisions were made.

Internal mechanisms and processes

This includes:

1. Mechanisms, routines, and internal guidelines for our work together.
2. Templates for joint work
3. “Communication, Expectations, Responsibilities” document
4. "Conflict of Interest/ Conflict of Loyalty" document
5. Application materials / guidelines / processes

The strategic priorities about grants

This includes:

1. Emphasizing responses to breaking status quo of economic, socio-cultural, political, and ecological crises we are facing
2. Focus on movement building / social movements
3. Focus on a pan-African orientation
4. Having a grantee-focused approach / simplifying processes

EVALUATING THE VEHICLE

The Core Group went through a comprehensive exercise, where we went through each of the "Phases" of the co-creation of the KNRG (Cycle 1 and Cycle 2).

We evaluated each phase based on the following areas, which also served as the basis for many of the recommendations included in Chapter 1.

KEY STRATEGIC CHOICES OF EACH PHASE

What were key choices that were made?

STRENGTHS / WEAKNESSES OF THESE CHOICES

Was this the right choice? Should we have thought differently?

ETHICAL VALUES PRODUCED

What are some of the positive, ethical/ normative values that we affirmed?

FUNCTIONALITY

How functional were the choices for the Core Group, and for grantees?

TIME EFFICIENCY

How time efficient were these choices, and was this time necessary?

FINANCIAL COSTS / SUSTAINABILITY

What are the financial costs associated, and are they critical?

INTERNAL EVALUATION

The comprehensive learning and evaluation of the KNRG's various phases and strategic choices were conducted continuously, including multiple times during each phase, after each phase, and as a major exercise during the evaluation phase.

LESSONS

On the co-creation process itself

"Experimental" work is messy, and it is okay that it is not perfect. A "building the road as we go" approach was liberating and key.

The participatory PROCESS is equally important as the RESULT. It was key that the group moved together always without leaving someone behind, and that we worked for consensus in the work we did. If you are going to do participation, do it right.

It is okay that our first "structure" needed tweaking after Cycle 1.

Periods of "unknown" that took emotional energy - sometimes felt like waking through the fog. "Building the new" is exceptionally hard and demands a different part of your being/brain.

Physical meetings were urgently needed as time went on, or this process would have likely stalled. Having a flexible road map was key. But this had to be a co-created map, and not necessarily set before we started.

Power will always be a part of the equation. The question becomes how are the various power dynamics being managed/checked/re-balanced? It's like gravity — pretending it doesn't exist won't stop you from falling.

Group had to both be visionary but also pragmatic at times- this was not always an easy task. It was challenging to find out where this boundary was, but we acknowledged that we are on a journey - and must consistently work to make the process better and more adaptive.

This was a learning-by-doing process. PGM provides important new solutions, but also opens many new questions that need to be tackled. It was critical that we had at least 2 cycles to test things, and to update/ adapt as we learned.

LESSONS (CONT.)

On the internal processes of the Core Group

Group went on an emotional journey throughout the process. The processes demanded large amounts of trust (that took time to build), both with each other but also between the Core Group and Karibu.

Important to recognize that inter-personal, cultural, and political dynamics of the group were part of the journey. The "Communication, Expectations, Responsibilities" document become an important tool that we came back to frequently, to help mitigate this as much as we could.

A "Core Group" will never be an expert on all subjects, and will never be absolutely inclusive or representative. The group acknowledged that we lacked on certain critical knowledge-bases, and this was brought in to the group in Cycle 2.

Group sometimes felt a little "alone" in this work, as it is still rather ground-breaking. It was important for us to meet with other African / global South groups doing similar things.

There were more sensitive political and social questions in the group, especially given the diversity of the group, which were not always easy to talk about from our various backgrounds. This sometimes made decisions and discussions more difficult. We strove for consensus when possible, but also requested external support to get more information on certain topics when needed. We also agreed to aim to be bold when working with new issues we didn't know / had never talked about before.

The process brought to light the issue that the Core Group is now in a new position of power and privilege, and that this required reflection internally. This was especially true in relation to grantees, as Core Group members entered new roles of power. We could have considered a "Power and Privilege" workshop for the Core Group early on.

LESSONS (CONT.)

On the grant-making process

We struggled to reach social movements in our grants with Cycle 1, and that most applicants (and many grantees) tended to be small CBOs or NGOs. The question then become how we might place more emphasis on movement building, rather than solely a grassroots anchoring.

The application-review process was time demanding. Although we had mechanisms to try to give each applicant an equal chance, we still need good routines for reviewing applications when they come - especially to check-in with each other about what maybe we missed.[7]

That having only English applications did not represent the diversity of actions on the continent. We needed more language diversity on the Core Group, and it was important that we opened to French and Portuguese applications in Cycle 2.[8]

The grantmaking process is complex, and not always black-and-white - as much as we wish it was.[9]

It would have been helpful to have wider mapping exercises or even deeper relations to social movements on the continent to better understand the main struggles and needs of movements.

We had to consistently work to "de-donorfy" the language of applications, and to make sure that we don't further contribute to the NGO-ification of movements. We needed to consistently critique our own wording, documents, and communication.

We tried to remove as much administrative burden from those applying as possible, including simplifying the process, provided lo-tech alternatives for communication (including WhatsApp and low-res documents), and to simplifying all reporting requirements to that which we actually had to know. [10]

It was very difficult to find out which applications would be supported, especially when we saw how many exciting processes could not be supported. We struggle to know if an "open application" process was adequate, as it resulted in majority of applicants spending time to apply without receiving funding.

4

GRANTS PROVIDED

Over the period, the KNRG provided supported 25 bold, innovative, forward-thinking and "constructive troublemaking" groups in Africa. They were quite diverse in their form, objectives, and focus areas - this was an intentional choice of the Core Group to ensure the Pan-African and intersectional lens of systemic change.

13 grants /
120 applicants

CYCLE 1

Covered a range of themes:

challenging extractivism, womens' rights, confronting patriarchy, food sovereignty/ agro-ecology, water rights, political participation, disability rights, eco-unions, art as activism + more[12]

12 grants /
208 applicants

CYCLE 2

Covered a range of themes:

social movement ecosystems, building power, climate justice, shrinking space for civil society, youth participation, feminism and land issues, oil pipelines, decolonizing aid + more[11]

A CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL CHANGE

The Core Group was open that we recognized that **transformation takes time**, and thus the duration of the grants (6-12 months) should be understood as a **contribution towards transformation**.

It would be unfair and unrealistic to assume that deep transformation could happen on such short timeframes. As activists ourselves, we know this to be true.

We thus tried to map what types of change affects (big or small) could be seen from the grants, as well as grantees' own views of what creates transformation, while knowing that many projects are still underway.

MAPPING CHANGE EFFECTS OF THE GRANTS

We mapped the change effects of the grants in two ways: through the conversation-based "learning and sharing" evaluation meetings with each grantee, as well as a group exercise during the "Learning, Sharing, and Solidarity" gathering of a majority of grantees in May 2024.[13] The information is sorted into four categories:

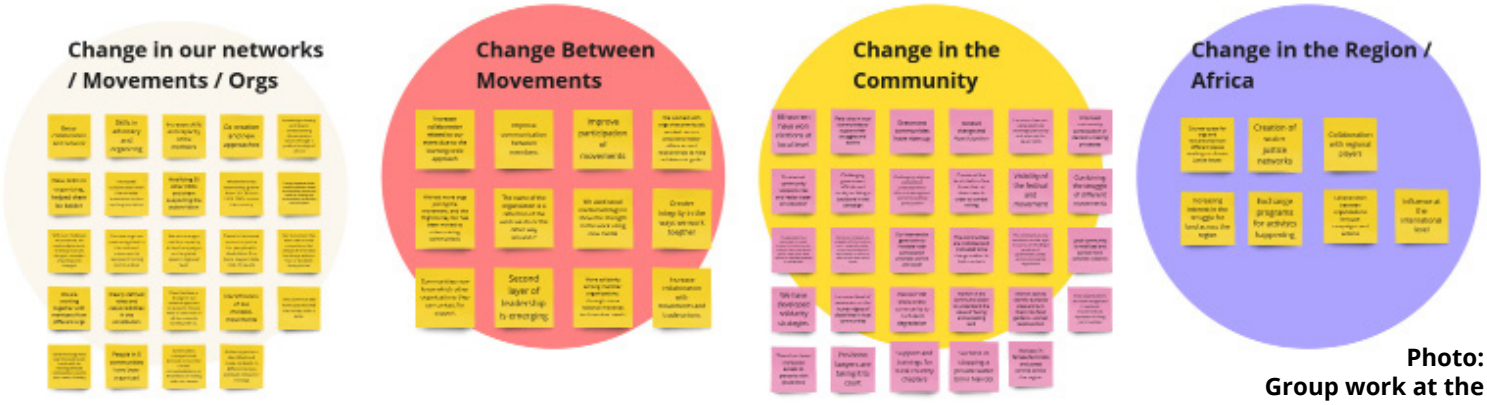

Photo: Group work at the KNRG Gathering in Kenya, 2024.

1. CHANGES INSIDE OF MOVEMENTS / ORGANIZATIONS / NETWORKS

Grantee partners often spoke about the change they saw as being related to improvements in their **internal work and mobilizing,** which made them better equipped to continue the fight externally. Many highlighted better collaboration and networking within the grassroots groups they represented, which have led to co-creation and new approaches. Many spoke of the importance knowledge sharing internally, and how it contributed to a deeper understanding of the political issues that were taken place.

Additionally, many spoke of increased skills and capacity among members when it came to preparation for their advocacy and organizing, helping them to be bolder and more effective in their efforts.

Several partners observed a marked increase in organizational reach and influence, with significant increases in membership and numbers within their organization. This included more people taking part in political schools, more access to training manuals on fighting extractives, increased access to justice, with pro-bono lawyers within their organization.

Given the continual theme of "movement building" that came up in both Cycles, many grantees highlighted the need for stronger internal process within their membership masses. One concrete example of this that came up is the importance of "people knowing their rights, as a means to build power". Or if the movements would be equipped to following national legislation, they need trainings to be able to know the details.

MAPPING CHANGE (CONT)

2. CHANGES BETWEEN MOVEMENTS, NETWORKS, OR ORGANIZATIONS

Grantee partners also brought up many changes **between movements, organizations, and networks**, reflecting increased collaboration and improved communication during a time where movements are very divided.

Many grantee partners experienced enhanced alliances and relationships as they worked with organizations that had never previous collaborated with. These collaborations enabled more effective power-building by allowing each group to focus on its specific sphere of influence.

Photo: Group work at the KNRG Gathering in Kenya, 2024.

Some models that were raised, for example, was the learning circle approach during events fostered greater collaboration, enhancing the participation of various movements. Improved communication between members was also a key change, facilitating smoother interactions and cooperation.

Another example was mobilizing various community groups within mining-effected communities, where they began to more clearly see their joint struggle. The use of social media hashtags showcased the strength and impact of their work, leveraging new media for greater visibility and engagement. Two new movements managed to get started -one related to Water Justice and one related to Pan-African Eco-Union network.

Another change that was noted was second layer of leadership emerging within several movements, promoting sustainability and resilience within the movements.

3. CHANGES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

While a majority of the ripple effects of change that were followed related to internal or between movements, meaningful change was also **seen in the communities the grantee partners were working** (both locally and nationally).

For example, in Nigeria and Kenya, movements contributed to a major wins within the legislature which could have privatized water to major corporations. In Zimbabwe - one initiative contributed to the election of 66 women at the local level, showcasing increased political participation.

MAPPING CHANGE (CONT)

Another theme that came up was a more unified and increased youth voice in the democratic processes on the continent, with grantees contributing to this. In Uganda, grantee partners noted that local leaders and elders began making space for youth voices - rather than pushing them out. In Nigeria, major steps were taken to recruit young people to fight fake election news. Their efforts were covered in major international news channels.

4. CHANGES ON A CONTINENTAL LEVEL

The least mentioned, but never-the-less important, change that was experienced was **changes on a continental level**. This is perhaps not surprising, given that a majority of the grantees were conducting their efforts on a local and national level.

The creation of counter spaces for organizations and movements has facilitated collaboration on climate justice issues, leading to the establishment of water justice networks and increased cooperation with regional players.

Collaborative campaigns and actions between organizations have bolstered their influence at the international level, while rising interest in land struggles has unified regional efforts. Exchange programs for activists have further strengthened these connections, fostering a cohesive and dynamic movement across the continent.

5. HOW THE KNRG MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO CHANGE FOR THE GRANTEES

The final change we mapped was how the KNRG might have contributed in other ways to the grantee partners' work.

We received much feedback of how the KNRG contributed otherwise to their work:

- The appreciation that their efforts were being seen by other African activists and civil society members through the Core Group, who knew their contexts well.
- A simplified process, that did not demand a lot of administrative burden on their work - that would have taken much time for them and their struggles on the group.
- Open and flexible reporting requirements.
- Appreciation that conversation and follow-up after the grants represents a change from other "donors" and donor meetings - focus on building solidarity between groups
- Opened up funding from other donors, who were not willing to take a risk on them until they saw that Karibu had supported them.

LESSONS

On the grants

- Movements / African civil society really are struggling to survive right now. They are feeling disconnected, and a common thread is that the space for them to operate is shrinking (and activism being criminalized).[15] The KNRG can play a role in connecting in these vulnerable times.
- What works in one context in terms of tactics and methodologies, does not always work in a different setting. This shows the importance of local / cultural understanding.[16]
- In certain regions and thematic areas (f.example Central Africa, LGBTQI+ groups, indigenous groups), we likely need to re-think what it means to be "bold" and devise strategies to support bold in that particular context. There can't be a "one sized fits all" in the methodology.
- It is impossible to define a "social movement" on Pan-African level. We must therefore think about how we support eco-systems of movements, to allow them to thrive and operate.

On mapping change

- It is too early to see the long term effects of the grants, and how they have served as contribution to the change that the activists and movements are already doing. The KNRG was only designed for one-time grants.
- It is clear that it is much easier to see and talk about changes that happen internally within or between movements, than it is on a transformational / systemic level. It is difficult for movements to find ways to tell the stories of the change they see, especially when the struggle is so big.
- Conversation-based formats for documenting changed, as opposed to written communication, seemed to be much more productive in catching nuances.[14]
- Focus on movement building, and mapping how this is happening on the African continent, could be an important step for the future work in the African context.

5 | POTENTIAL WIDER IMPACT OF THE KNRG

Early in the process, the Core Group noticed significant and unexpected interest in our work from various parts of the world.

We hadn't anticipated the opportunity to be an advocate for shifting power in grantmaking when we began this journey. As a result, we have included a chapter on this topic, sharing two anecdotes that illustrate how this process may contribute to broader systemic changes in the grantmaking world.

INCLUSION IN RESEARCH ON NON-COLONIAL LEARNING

Several researchers followed and documented the KNRG's efforts as part of their study on co-creation as a channel for non-colonial learning. The results, compiled into a case study, have been developed into a policy paper and best practices research document, which has been submitted to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These resources will soon be made available to the public, and some of the findings have been integrated into the pilot's recommendations.

INVITATIONS FOR ADVOCACY AND SHARING

The Core Group and Karibu's representative have been invited to speak and contribute to over 15 strategy sessions and events—both public and internal—hosted by other grantmakers, international networks, and churches. This has sometimes included engaging with the top leadership of these organizations. We are humbled by the overwhelming response to our process and the widespread interest in our results and learnings. Notably, certain components of our work have already been integrated into other grantmakers' processes, even before the pilot has concluded. The international interest—from the Global South, Norway, and beyond—signals that our efforts may have a larger impact than we initially anticipated.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The primary consensus of the Core Group is a clear recommendation for the Karibu Foundation to integrate and scale the lessons of the KNRG into its grantmaking strategies moving forward. Additionally, it is recommended that this blueprint may also be of interest for other donors to consider. This chaper explores the "Core Group's" final reflections at the end of the pilot.

The KNRG: A Prototype and a work in progress

The "Core Group" acknowledges that the KNRG pilot project (and the findings presented in this document) do not represent the "perfect" or "correct" solution. In fact, we might find that we may change our views as we continue to learn and un-learn. Instead, we see all of this work as a contribution to building the new - and this document as a collection of the learnings of a process that is still in progress.

We also acknowledge that this evaluation is primarily internal, and risks not being objective.

We never-the-less have strived throughout the process to have a continual learning-orientation, and to consistently re-evaluate and change our efforts.

Our efforts over the past years have been based on a guiding question that we established in February 2022: How might we design a grantmaking process that empowers/gives agency to CHANGE AGENTS on the ground in Africa, to the point that she has more influence in responding to the crises she is fighting?

This is thus a work-in-progress, with a continual critical view of our own efforts.

Moving forward

Our clear recommendation is that the KNRG can serve as a prototype and is a positive step forward for Karibu and others. As one KNRG grantee said during the KNRG "Sharing, Learning, and Solidarity Gathering" in May 2024:

> ***"The KNRG and its way of working represent the future of grantmaking - where power is clearly moved closer to the work we activists do on the ground in Africa".***

A new formation of the KNRG (in whatever form it takes) must continue to uphold diversity of grantees and Core Group members, focus on movement building, and keep grantee-centric approach that uses creative and flexible support mechanisms.

CONCLUSIONS (CONT.)

A word of encouragement

The "Core Group" would also like to congratulate the Karibu Board for being willing to take a risk on a project like this, and by being willing to release their own power to movements closer to the ground.

This is an important step in moving power, and ensuring that voices from the South are heard.

We hope that other donors will also be willing to learn and be inspired from these efforts, and also be willing to take a critical look at their own power. And we hope that Karibu takes a pro-active approach to being a leading voice related to the decolonization of traditional North-South grantmaking.

A final note to future PGM groups

As we close up our time as the current "Core Group" of this pilot, we hope that potential new groups that come after us will take this report and our experience - and not be afraid adapt it and build on it. We are grateful to those who came before us, who we have been able to build on and be inspired by. And we need to continue to strive to find new solutions - this is just one step forward into the unknown!

We hope that potential new groups will continue to look critically at their own power, to continue to look critically at this process, and that they will keep a focus on the needs of movements on the ground - rather than turning into another technocratic, bureaucratic grantmaking organ. We should do all we can to avoid recreating old structures and patters, only with new faces.

The world continues to be more complex, and the needs of activists and movements are becoming greater. We need to do everything we can to support their efforts!

In solidarity,

The Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Core Group of the "Karibu New Realities Grant" Pilot Project, 2021-2024

ENDNOTES

This section provides more details on a number of points from the evaluation report.

1 CORE GROUP SELECTION:

In the pilot, Karibu and PGM Reference Group convened a group of candidates that:

- Demonstrated their ability to use analytic courage, strategic clarity, and moral courage in their struggle for a more just world
- Had a clear ability to collaborate across thematic areas and across generations
- Had demonstrated eagerness and experience towards moving towards a new generation of activists
- Had the ability to understand and communicate national or local challenges + their links with systemic or international challenges
- Are nominated by and anchored to already existing organizations, networks, or movements in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Can communicate (written, orally) in English as a working language (for practical reasons)
- Have access to internet (for practical reasons)
- The final composition of the participatory grantmaking “Core Group” will place specific emphasis on a high representation of women and young people, and we thus encourage the nomination of younger and women candidates
- Are committed to actively building and participating in the pilot for the duration of their term (1 full day meeting each month + 2 hours of independent/team work weekly for 1 year + potentially other physical meetings during the period)"

Other important criteria could include:

- Deep experience in civil society and social movement building in particular, in order to understand the work of grantees.
- Have worked to promote Pan-Africanism

Additional language backgrounds (French / Portuguese) can be an important strength

2 CORE GROUP SIZE

The group should not be smaller to ensure diverse perspectives and comprehensive decision-making. Maintaining a larger group helps achieve a more balanced and inclusive approach, which is crucial for consensus-based decisions. It also helps even the workload, etc.

3 BUILDING SOLIDARITY

Survey results from the KNRG "Learning, Sharing and Solidarity" gatherings indicated that grantees find solidarity a critical issue, but felt insufficient time was dedicated to it.

4 SIMPLIFIED PROCESS

The KNRG kept concept notes short (4 pages), did not request unnecessary documents until later in the process, asked simple and clear questions, and offered various template options. It also offered more low-tech options for those with limited access to internet data (documents in low-res, WhatsApp as a contact feature). Reporting was simplified to a maximum of two-page reports combined with a one-hour narrative conversation, and no audit was required for the grants. This approach received positive feedback during evaluation.

ENDNOTES

5 HONORARIUM MODEL

While the honorarium model was flexible for the diverse backgrounds of the core group, it posed challenges for those representing social movements not affiliated with organizations or CBOs. This aspect needs more consideration. Reports from "hosting organizations" on their experience with the honorarium model are still pending.

6 RISK FACTORS

In all grant-making processes, whether PGM or standard grantmaking, various risks need to be mitigated. There is a delicate balance between increasing risk appetite and basing work on trust, which is crucial, while also finding appropriate mechanisms to reduce certain types of risk.

For KNRG, several potential risks—such as grantee project issues, internal conflicts within the Core Group, and board disagreements—did not materialize significantly. However, the next Core Group could benefit from a more thorough discussion on risks—what they are and what they are not—to develop strategies for mitigating them should they arise.

7 APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Reviewing applications was time-consuming, with most work done within Karibu's digital grantmaking system. While helpful, the system requires significant onboarding and could be improved to be more participatory and user-friendly. Karibu should consult with their system developers to address these issues.

8 GRANTMAKING IS COMPLEX

Many of us in the Core Group wished we could have been even more radical in how we designed the process, but we learned that there is not one clear-cut answer. We learned that reading applications, make decisions about funds, having discussions about "risk", and standing in solidarity in every way is complex. We also noted that power is complex. For us, this was also an affirmation that this is a work-in-progress, and we need to continue to improve as we move forward.

9 MULTI-LANGUAGE APPLICATIONS

We used digital tools to translate applications to English, the common language of the group, but also ensured that a native French/ Portuguese speaker reviewed the non-English applications for quality control.

While we did not receive a large number of non-English applications, we noticed more nuanced applications once the grant information materials were translated into French, for example.

We also tried to accommodate non-English applicants in the review process by bringing in a French interpreter for specific processes.

10 CHALLENGES OF SIMPLIFIED REPORTING

We unfortunately are not able to comment on the effects of this simplified process related to quality control especially related to finances - as we know that many grantees still struggled with financial reporting and needed assistance with this. Even if the process was simplified, it still demanded follow-up and time of Karibu staff.

We are happy that auditing was not a demand for grantees, but perhaps would have liked to have an outside look at the finances from someone not involved with the grant themselves or some other creative

alternatives.

11 STATUS OF CYCLE 2 INITIATIVES:

At the time of the writing, Cycle 2 initiatives were not yet completed.

12 STATUS CYCLE 1 INITIATIVES

At the time of the writing, there was one initiative from Cycle 1 that was still not initiated. There were currently no routines around challenges with program implementation of grantee partners. This could be considered in the future.

13 MAPPING CHANGE

We can present several concrete examples of changes that have occurred following the initiatives, as raised during the evaluation conversations, the pre-survey before the KNRG Event in Kenya in May 2024, and the mapping exercise conducted in May 2024.

However, we must be realistic and recognize that it is nearly impossible to assume that large changes will occur and be sustained after such a short amount of time.

14 SHRINKING SPACE AND CRIMINALIZATION OF ACTIVISM

The safety of activists, especially in times of shrinking space, was a critical question when we are working with grantee partners.

We believe that this issue will continue to become greater, and that even more thought should be put into what role Karibu should play in these situations.

15 TACTICS / CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The observation that tactics in one setting may not work in another, is another key finding that supports the need for decision-makers to be closer to movements on the ground.

16 NARRATIVE REPORTING ROUTINES AND CHALLENGE

The oral narrative reporting process was fascinating, as it proved to be dynamic and much more fruitful for all parties compared to long written reports. At the same time, we learned that there was a difference when the Core Group members conducted the "Learning and Sharing" meetings versus when Karibu's representative was involved. There was perhaps more openness and willingness to discuss shortcomings when Karibu's representative was not present.

We also noted that this process demanded good follow-up routines, including access to a transcript of the conversation for memory purposes, uniform templates for recording what was said, and the ability for grantees to read and edit the prepared notes. This was time-consuming but very valuable.

Karibu New Realities Grant

A PILOT PROJECT IN PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING

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