



Africa No Filter

Using creative narratives to
change stereotypes





The case study on **Africa No Filter** is part of a series contributing to a larger research on intermediary organizations. [You can find all the details here.](#)

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Africa No Filter is identified under organizations constituted through pooled funds from two or more institutional donors*



*We have identified 4 different models on how intermediary organizations work. To learn more, [visit us](#).



01. How did they start?

Africa No Filter (ANF)* is a donor collaborative founded in May 2020 by Ford Foundation, Bloomberg, Mellon Foundation, Luminate, Open Society Foundations, Comic Relief, the Conrad Hilton Foundation, and Hewlett Foundation. These **funders came together through the common vision that collaboration yields better results than individual efforts.**

Additionally, they realized that a different approach was necessary in their development strategy in the continent—one that focused on challenging the narratives that diminish the variety, dynamism, innovation, and agency of the 54 African countries. Instead of perpetuating stereotypical beliefs that depict the continent solely in terms of poverty, disease, conflict, and corruption, ANF aims to highlight the diverse and vibrant realities of Africa.

*More information on ANF is available [here](#)

**Ford
Foundation**

Bloomberg

 **Mellon
Foundation**

Luminate

 **OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS**

**CONRAD N. HILTON
FOUNDATION**

 WILLIAM + FLORA
**Hewlett
Foundation**

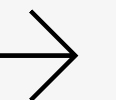
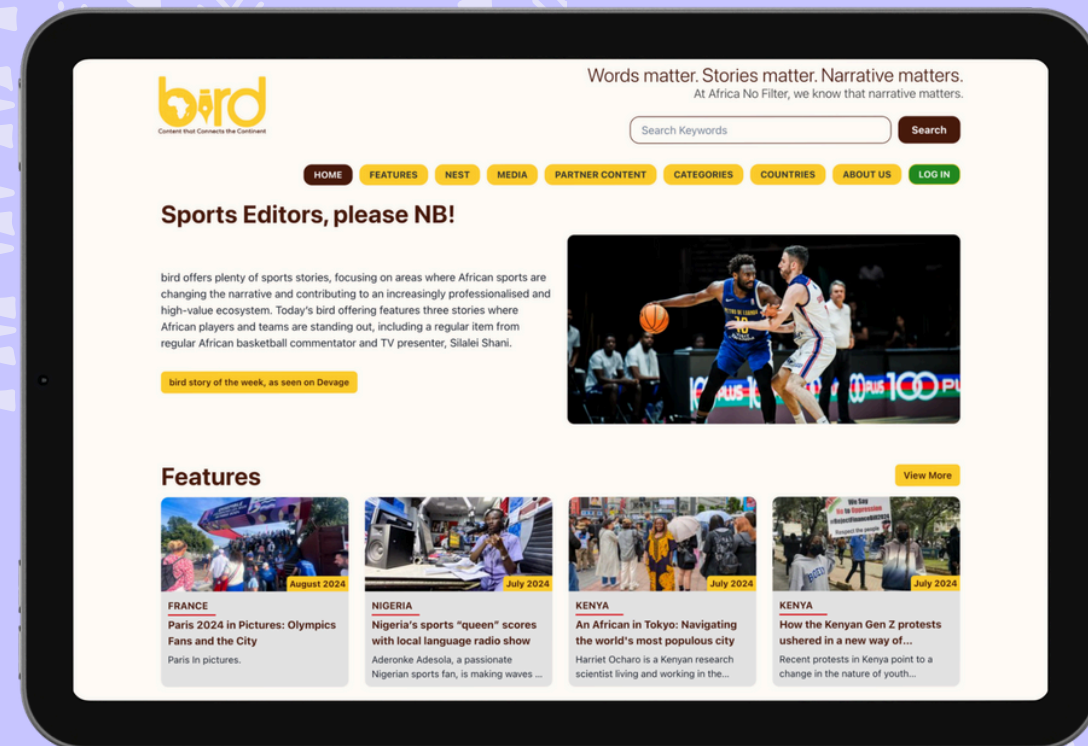
COMIC RELIEF



02. How do they define themselves?

ANF identifies as a donor collaborative and recognizes **its role as an intermediary organization, channeling funding to African creatives and storytellers.** Their grantmaking efforts are complemented by capacity-strengthening initiatives and the creation of a robust community. **While grantmaking is a core activity, ANF also engages in direct implementation.** For instance, they funded Bird Story Agency, a news agency providing free narrative-changing content, such as features, pictures, and videos, to African news platforms and publishers.* Also, **ANF is actively involved in advocacy**, striving to improve the continent's representation in regional and international media.

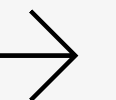
*More about Bird [here](#)



03. How does Africa No Filter work in Just and Equitable Governance?

ANF contributes to just and equitable governance by fostering new perspectives and challenging harmful stereotypes about Africa and its people. **By highlighting Africans' agency and innovative capacities, as well as the continent's diverse opportunities, ANF creates a platform for deeper conversations and reflections on critical issues related to race, gender, equity, and power dynamics.** ANF aims to establish an empowered narrative-change ecosystem and a community of informed storytellers dedicated to altering harmful narratives within and about Africa. This initiative not only shifts external perceptions but also transforms internal self-conceptions among African people.

As ANF Executive Director Moky Makura noted, challenging existing narratives and perspectives towards Africa is the first step; **fostering belief in one's country and continent is essential for advancing just and equitable governance.** Without such engagement, cultivating active and involved citizens becomes a complex endeavor. Moreover, **ANF implements advocacy strategies towards governments to enhance an enabling civic space and towards media outlets, filmmakers, and journalists to ensure better representation of Africa and its people, thereby contributing to social cohesion.** Although ANF's impact on just and equitable governance is indirect, it significantly advances rights, fosters agency and ownership, and strengthens the social fabric across Africa.



04. How do they fund?

THE AFRICA NARRATIVE COLLECTIVE

At the core of ANF's strategy is creating an ecosystem of storytellers and creatives. To achieve this goal, ANF has established the Africa Narrative Collective, which serves as the foundation for their grantmaking activities. Although grantmaking is a central component of ANF's work, the primary aim is to create a sustainable community that will maintain itself over time. Through the African Narrative Collective, ANF provides grantees with opportunities to connect, collaborate, build skills, and enhance their projects. This community-driven approach ensures long-term engagement and sustainability. In this line, ANF regranting strategy is dynamic and constantly evolving, and it entails six steps:



IDENTIFYING GRANTEES

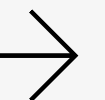
Initially implementing open calls, ANF shifted to a targeted granting strategy through the Africa Narrative Collective. Potential grantees, storytellers who are mission-aligned, are identified via social media, online platforms, and existing networks and communities of creatives. Community members, associates, and partners also recommend potential grantees. Once identified, the storytellers are invited to join the Collective as the first step in the grantmaking process. This approach has enabled ANF to identify and support individuals genuinely engaged in narrative change. ANF connects them with development experts, so they can delve into specific topics and gain additional insight.

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

ANF uses a participatory decision-making process for grants. Proposals submitted to the Africa Narrative Collective are reviewed and pitched to a review panel comprising the entire staff. Applicants can pitch directly to the panel, or the grants team can present on their behalf. Decisions are made by consensus, with key evaluation criteria including mission alignment, scalability, budget, and location. These criteria may vary depending on the grant type.

MONITORING AND ACCOMPANIMENT

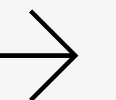
ANF has developed a flexible monitoring process over time. Initially, they required a written interim report midway through the grant and a final narrative and financial report at the end, with payment tranches contingent on these reports. To allow grantees more time for creation, they replaced written interim reports with verbal calls. During these calls, the ANF grants team discusses challenges and offers solutions, documenting the conversation. ANF team also removed the payment tranche linked to the interim report, now disbursing 70-75% upfront and 25-30% upon approval of the final report. This approach reduces administrative burdens while maintaining engagement, with interim calls proving highly beneficial for grantees.



05. Who do they fund?



ANF funds creatives and storytellers. **Grantees must be part of the African Narrative Collective and work to challenge stereotypes about Africa, telling better stories that disrupt the common stereotypes of lack, poverty, disease, corruption, and poor leadership in the continent.** Additionally, grantees must demonstrate previous work in narrative change through art, media, culture, digital platforms, technology, advocacy, and creativity. They must also be based in Africa or part of the African diaspora.



Funding is directed both to individual storytellers, and to organizations, with grants from \$500 to \$20,000 USD. **Since 2020, they have provided funding to over 270 grantees.** Grants are directed to arts and culture, media, content creation, and advocacy projects. ANF's grant portfolio entails the following grants:

PROJECT SUPPORT GRANTS:

Aimed at storytellers implementing specific projects or expanding ongoing initiatives. Grants are up to \$10,000 USD.

OPERATIONAL SUPPORT GRANTS:

Offered to organizations to cover operating costs, program delivery, skills-building activities, networking, and job creation for creatives, artists, and journalists. Grants are up to \$15,000 USD for narrative change organizations, media houses, festivals, galleries, and digital platforms.

KEKERE STORYTELLERS FUND:

Targeted at emerging artists and storytellers, primarily focusing on digital production. Grants are up to \$3,000 USD.

CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT SUPPORT:

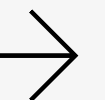
These grants aim to strengthen infrastructure, management, and governance in the arts and media sectors through training and capacity-building initiatives. The specific amounts vary.



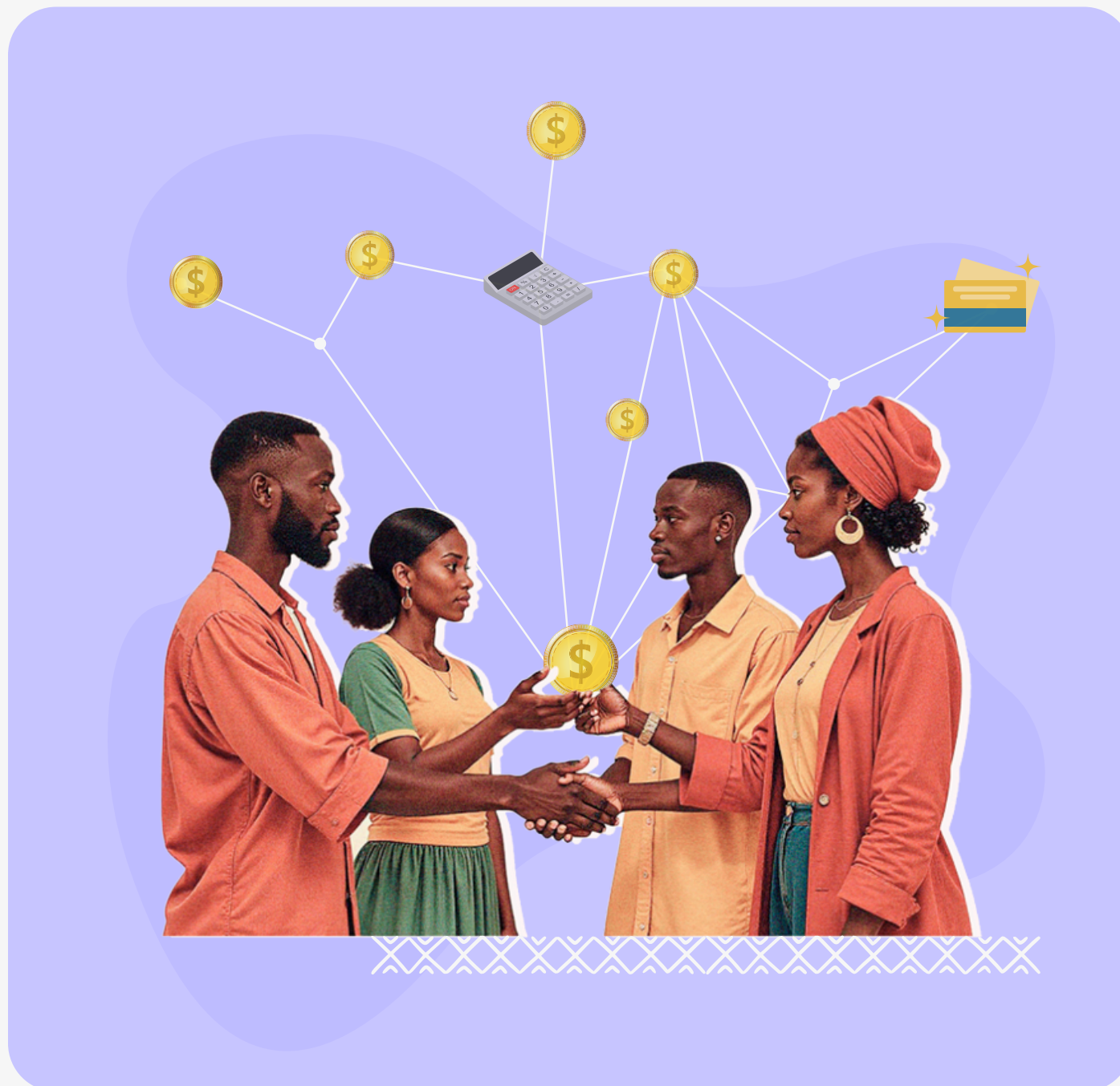
06. Who funds Africa No Filter?

ANF receives funding from the eight founding organizations that compose the pooled fund, listed in #1 above. **ANF has unrestricted funding to conduct its operations.** They submitted their initial strategy and from then on, they have received funding in a two-year cycle. There is no limit to the funding renewal by donors. **Donors are invited to renew their funding for as long as ANF's mission remains a priority for them.** This contributes largely to the organization's sustainability and ability to plan and execute their activities, allowing them to concentrate most efforts in fulfilling its core goals, without the constant concern of identifying additional funding to cover operations. **Unrestricted funding has enhanced the organization's autonomy and ownership and facilitates longer term-planning and higher levels of adaptation to a constantly changing ecosystem.**

Despite monetary sustainability not being a priority concern, ANF is developing complementary strategies that diversify the funding mechanisms for the organization. Through their Partnership Division, they focus on services that are connected to the organization's know-how and developed skills in effective communication and content creation. The **fee-for-service model targets other funders and partners to generate additional revenue for ANF.** They are currently considering extending these services to the private sector. This model involves providing funds from partners for specific projects that offer mutual benefits, with ANF charging an administration fee to cover project delivery costs and logistics, as well as support overall operations. Funding from the pool is done within the framework of unrestricted funding. However, if any of the core funders develops a specific project to be delivered by ANF, separate funding will be required to execute that project and will also be ring-fenced and treated within the framework of a fee for service.



07. Challenges

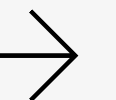


ADAPTING GRANT PROCESSES FOR CREATIVES

Most of their grantees, creatives, and storytellers lacked prior experience in managing grants or following the processes involved. Consequently, ANF had to develop and adapt mechanisms to integrate the creative world into the development sector.

ENGAGING AND STRENGTHENING A COMMUNITY

Building a self-sustaining, community-driven ecosystem is another ongoing challenge for the organization. According to Moky Makura, community building has become very competitive. Identifying the right mechanisms to motivate people to join and keep them engaged has been a significant challenge. Despite this, the added value of the Africa Narrative Collective has successfully motivated most grantees to remain engaged.



ADAPTING OUTREACH STRATEGIES FOR MULTILINGUAL AFRICA

ANF operates at a continental level, directing their actions across the 54 countries of Africa. This diversity provides valuable input for content creation and challenging narratives but also presents challenges in dealing with varied local contexts, languages, and realities. ANF acknowledges the limitations of its reach, both in terms of content and the creatives who can participate in the African Narrative Collective. Since most activities are conducted in English, many creators are excluded. To address this, ANF is constantly rethinking their outreach strategy. For example, they now produce materials in French and have included French-speaking team members.

ADAPTING GRANT PROCESSES FOR CREATIVES

For donor-dependent organizations like ANF, a key challenge is balancing the need to sustain funding for existing grantees while also supporting new grantees, particularly from less-prominent countries or regions.

FOSTERING AUTONOMY, AVOIDING DEPENDENCY

A key challenge is to empower grantees and storytellers to develop self-sustaining revenue and operational models, rather than fostering dependency. This has motivated ANF to sustain initiatives with broad systemic impact, such as skill building through fellowships and residencies, to support long-term viability and autonomy.



08. Recommendations for donors



As pooled and unrestricted funding have allowed ANF to grow and innovate within the development and philanthropic sectors, their main recommendation for donors is to expand these funding strategies. Unrestricted funding and pooled funds enable organizations to gain agency and ownership, plan for the long term, and focus on implementing and fulfilling their goals without the constant need to seek new funders. Therefore, continuing and amplifying this model for other intermediaries is highly recommended.

Unrestricted funding requires trust in the intermediaries. ANF emphasizes that donors should trust these organizations and recognize that meaningful change takes time. Unrestricted funding provides the necessary flexibility to build the mechanisms required for long-term change.





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[DETAILS HERE](#)