

Reflections of the SVA Board on the conclusions and recommendation emerging from the evaluation exercise.

In view of public accountability, the board of SVA has decided to publish the general conclusions and recommendations of the independent evaluators who during 2025 conducted an external evaluation of our portfolio. With relevant grantees it has shared specific conclusions and recommendations regarding projects. You will find the general conclusion under this link. More information can be provided upon request, please email info@stemvanafrika.nl

This evaluation exercise has been part of a nearly two-year process of reflection that started in 2023 in Hilversum, The Netherlands with a symposium involving a variety of European stakeholders, concluding with meetings in Nairobi in September 2025 with African stakeholders.

Reflections on the evaluation exercise

The SVA Board appreciates all the work done by the evaluating team. The general background information, contexts, SWOT analysis, lessons learned, and conclusions, as well as the chapters on specific countries and topics that are part of the final report provide interesting input and insights. However, the board feels that the set of specific and general recommendations do not easily translate into a feasible, coherent organizational and grantmaking strategy for the foundation.

This evaluation has made clear that SVA is a very small if not minute actor in the field of community media, in Africa, but even in the countries in which it has been operating. It has spread its resources in many different projects, topics and grantees, of which the evaluators sampled a few. The evaluators conclude that most partners achieved remarkable results with these small grants. However, they raise concerns about sustainability of these results and flag some weaknesses of providing “serial small grants” to some partners.

As SVA board we have concluded we face a strategic choice: move away from serial small grants to fewer bigger grants or try doing small grants better. The recommendations of the evaluators seem to lean towards the first option. They also strongly endorse a long-felt desire of the SVA board to devolve decision-making to African actors.

Grantees raised numerous important needs in the Nairobi meeting. The country and topic specific chapters of the evaluation report provide sensible recommendations to grantees and SVA that benefit from follow-up providing bigger grants. However, being a small actor, SVA may not be best positioned to do that. We could pick one concern, or

one or two grantees for the next few years but the evaluation does not provide us with elements to make conclusive choices in this respect.

The conclusions and recommendations of the evaluators do not specifically address a longer-term concern that has proved to be difficult to address in the past and which did catch quite some attention during the various meetings of board members with some partners and stakeholders/experts: the precarious situation of women journalist and the underused potential of community media to support and empower hard-to-reach women audiences in communities in conflict and/or marginalized areas.

Strategic decisions taken by the SVA Board

Weighing all the inputs and ideas that emerged over the past two years, as well and the insights provided by the external evaluation exercise, early 2026, SVA has decided that its number one strategic priority will be devolution of decision-making power to African actors.

As to the choice between going bigger or doing small grants better, we have opted for the latter.

Feedback provided by a variety of stakeholders has led the board to decide to continue to focus on providing small grants while concentrating support systematically and strictly on women as station managers, journalists and members of audiences of community media in or catering to marginalized and conflict areas in DRC, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, is a niche that fits our size and strengths.

Currently the board has engaged with a group of four African women journalist/community media experts in DRC, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania to design an African-led grantmaking process and governance structure. We hope to launch a first iteration some six (6) months from now. You can expect news on this venture on this site around that date.