

# Report of the Board

## Board Report 2023

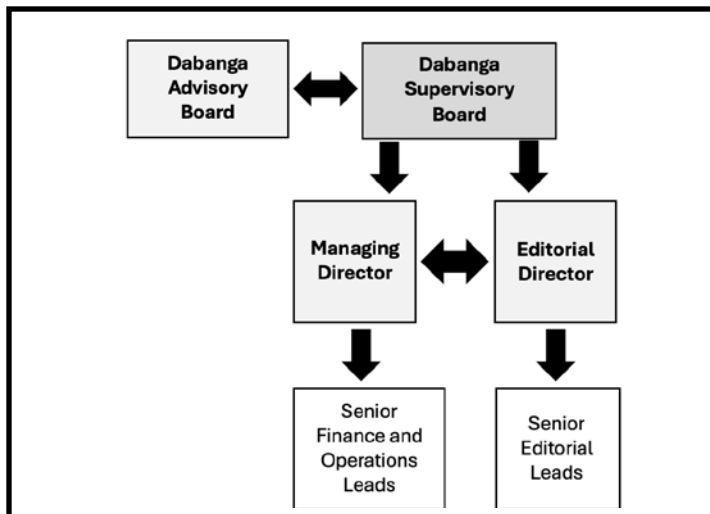
This Annual Report outlines the activities implemented in 2023 by Stichting Dabanga Foundation (Dabanga). <sup>1</sup> The aim being for Dabanga to play a meaningful fourth estate role in Sudan, contributing to peace, reconciliation and the country's long-term democratic transition.

### Origins & Statutory Goal

Stichting Dabanga Foundation is a foundation created to enable Sudanese people in Sudan, in all states and regions to participate in the exchange of knowledge, news and information, with the vision of a democratic Sudan where freedom, peace and justice prevail, and where human rights are enshrined, in particular the right to freedom of expression and access to information.

Dabanga was registered as a foundation (stichting) under Dutch law on 09-02-2021 (RSIN 862236733) with a corporate seat in the municipality of Amsterdam. Before this the organisation functioned as a project team with Free Press Unlimited (FPU). As of 09-02-2021, the organisation operates independently with an office in the municipality of Amsterdam.

### Board, Key Staff Positions, and Structure



Supervisory Board	
Chair and Member of the Supervisory Board	Hamid Ali Mohamed Nur Hussein, Date of entry into office 08-02-2021
Member of the Supervisory Board	Johannes Jacobus Daalmeijer, Date of entry into office 08-02-2021
Member of the Supervisory Board	Abdelbagi Jibril,

<sup>1</sup> Radio Dabanga, <http://www.dabangasudan.org/>

	Date of entry into office 08-02-2021
<b>Executive Board</b>	
Chair & Managing Director	Nigel Ballard Date of Entry into Office 08-02-2021
Secretary/Treasurer and Editorial Director	Kamal Elsadig, Date of entry into office 08-02-2021

It is the task of the Supervisory Board to supervise the policy of the Executive Board and the general course of business in the Foundation and the organization with it. In the performance of their task the Supervisory Board members shall be guided by the interest of the Foundation and organization with it. No remuneration is granted to the Supervisory Board members. Expenses shall be compensated to the Supervisory Board members on presentation of documentary evidence. The Supervisory Board last met for its Annual General Meeting in 2022 and its inaugural meeting in 2021.

The Executive Board is vested with the conduct and management of the business and the affairs of the Foundation. The Foundation shall be represented by the Executive Board, in so far as not otherwise provided for by law. In performing their duties the Executive Board members shall regard the interests of the Foundation and the organization connected with it. The Supervisory Board determines the remuneration and the other employment conditions of the Executive Board members.

## Main Targets and Activities in 2023

Objectives:

- Provide news, information & knowledge accessible and relevant for all Sudanese
- Provide news and analysis content relevant to diverse audiences
- Provide informational and educational content to diverse audiences

## Executive Summary

2023 was another turbulent year for Sudan. While there were reasons for optimism at the beginning of the year that an agreement between civil forces and the military government could result in a new transitional government to put Sudan back on its path to democracy, these hopes were shattered: On 15 April 2023, fighting broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The conflict quickly affected all of Sudan and turned the country into the largest displacement and protection crisis in the world: The UN recorded more than 7.2 million people as displaced inside and outside the country since 15 April; 25 million in need of humanitarian assistance, with almost 18 million facing acute hunger. The hope with which Sudan entered the year was in stark difference to the desperate situation Sudan and its people are facing at the end of 2023.

In this complex operating environment, Dabanga nevertheless made progress towards its main objectives. Key achievements include that Dabanga:

- Increased shortwave broadcasting hours from 1.5 to 2.5 hours per day, bringing independent news and information to a growing audience of Sudanese unable to access other media channels
- Reached more than 800,000 followers on its Arabic Facebook page, with an average monthly reach of 1,5 million
- Published 6,470 articles on its bilingual website
- A monthly average of half a million tweet impressions (on Twitter)
- Reached more than 20,000 YouTube subscribers
- Upgraded its satellite television channel to show video and moving images, making the channel more attractive to its audiences
- Launched its 24/7 online radio station, providing news, music and entertainment around the clock at the press of a button
- Launched new website to be more functional and appealing to audiences
- Launched new radio programmes aimed at holding those in positions of power to account
- Devised new ways for audience participation through social media and online engagement activities and features such as live events
- Doubled its online audiences in various social and online metrics compared to the beginning of the year.

The main challenges affecting the project during the past year relate to the conflict environment and the impact this has on staff and the time to fully implement the organisations goals.

## **Objective 1 – Provide news, information & knowledge accessible and relevant for all Sudanese**

### **Shortwave**

Dabanga in January increased its shortwave broadcast service from 1.5 hours to 2 hours per day, adding a full run of Dabanga's flagship news analysis programme "Sudan Today" to its news bulletin and informational programming. The importance of Dabanga's shortwave news services became even more important after 15 April: With other communication channels including phone networks and FM transmission severely disrupted in many parts of the country for weeks and even months at a time, shortwave once again became the only source of information for additional sections of society.

### **Website**

In January 2023, Dabanga launched a re-designed website. The new website is more visually appealing using photographs and highlighted articles, it enables viewers to navigate easier through different news categories. The website also includes Progressive Web Application, meaning once users have visited the website on their browser, they can return and continue reading articles even when the internet connection is interrupted. After the launch, Dabanga received overwhelmingly positive feedback and constructive ideas for further improving the website. This included feedback by other journalists and organisations who rely on Dabanga's website for work. Dabanga's Head of Online and Project Officer reviewed

staff and audience feedback and worked with the website developers to make further improvements throughout the year.

Dabanga steadily increased the traffic and reach of its website in 2023: at the end of December, sessions on Arabic website page views stood at almost 180.000, compared to 78.000 in January – an increase of 126% over the calendar year. On the English website, numbers increased similarly, with 66.000 page views at the beginning of the year and more than 131.000 at the end of December, doubling the number of sessions within one year. Visitors to both the English and Arabic website spend notable time on Dabanga's pages, reading news content for an average of 3:10 and 3:15 minutes, respectively, per visit. The number of individual users, new users, page views and sessions on the Arabic website were higher towards the end of the year (October, November and December), than at any time earlier during the implementation of this project.

### **Online Radio**

Also in 2023, Dabanga launched its new 24/7 online radio station, which can be accessed from the heading-banner in Dabanga's new website or via this link: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/radio-player/index.html>. Dabanga 24/7 is an automated online radio station which allows Dabanga to broadcast around the clock. The work that went into creating and updating this channel over the year cannot be underestimated: for the past 15 years, Dabanga has been used to producing audio content for a couple of hours of shortwave content per day only – the shift to all-day broadcasting without an increase in staff and the use of new software requires significant changes in daily production methods and ways of thinking. Such change can only be incremental and will continue also into 2024, given that Dabanga still continues to produce news and programmes every day and has also increased its shortwave output twice in 2023. Due to the continued updates to this online channel, Dabanga has not formally launched or publicised its 24/7 online radio; still, up to 1000 unique users listen online monthly.

### **Television**

The new radio also feeds into Dabanga's re-designed television channel. Working with external consultants and internal staff, Dabanga re-vamped its "radio-with-still-images" channel to a tv station with moving images/videos, with improved audio, and set schedules and the ability to broadcast live. Given the small size of Dabanga and its inability to report freely from Sudan, Dabanga cannot establish itself a complete tv-station that has television production teams producing a 24/7 video stream. Instead, Dabanga determined that a mix of moving and still images would be the most suitable output. Dabanga decided to use an innovative screen-layout that is simple and focusses on images and visuals, combined with news ticker-style news, instead of the words-heavy output used in Dabanga's old tv channel, and which is common among other television news channels. As an additional feature, Dabanga uses live views of its website and social media channels to give those without internet connection access to these channels, and to promote traffic and engagement with its social media channels for those who *do* have internet access.

### **Social Media**

Dabanga's social media news service consists of various social media channels. Dabanga's [Arabic Facebook<sup>2</sup>](#) page is by far the most popular account with more than 800.000 followers at the end of the reporting period – a 22,5% increase over the project's baseline data of June 2022. Facebook is also Dabanga's most active platform, with the social media contributors posting between 20-40 stories per day – with links to Dabanga's website or to those of other trusted, independent and verified news outlets. In mid-2023, Dabanga's Head of Online started streamlining and curating the posts on social media, being more selective in posting and catering increasingly to Dabanga's audience. Dabanga's Arabic Facebook page sits alongside its [English Facebook<sup>3</sup>](#) page which targets an international audience located both inside and outside Sudan.

Dabanga's [YouTube<sup>4</sup>](#) account is another significant output, reaching close to 13 million impressions over the year, and doubling watch-time with more than 20.000 hours of Dabanga content watched in December alone. Additional platforms are Dabanga's [SoundCloud<sup>5</sup>](#), which Dabanga does not promote actively, but uses as an archive of all its shows, categorised by playlists, one playlist for each programme. And its [X \(formerly Twitter\)<sup>6</sup>](#) channel, targeting a more niche, bilingual audience, with Dabanga increasing its followership by close to 20% over the year, reaching almost 50.000 dedicated followers and more than 1.2 million impressions in December alone. Notable has been the high number of mentions of Dabanga by other X users (between 550 and 600 in the last quarter of the year up from around 100 at the beginning of the year) – evidencing the engagement of users with Dabanga content. By making content available in various forms and on different platforms, Dabanga maximises its reach among a target audience with different preferences or resources for accessing media.

## **Objective 2 - Provide news and analysis content relevant to diverse audiences**

Dabanga's core output is its news content. By making available news in various forms (audio, text, graphic/video), lengths and platforms, Dabanga maximised its reach among a target audience with different preferences for accessing media.

### **Audio & Broadcast News**

Dabanga produces an overview of the day's news stories in 3-4 minutes. These audio-headlines are produced 5 days per week, and distributed via social media and shortwave. A longer news bulletin of 15 minutes is also produced every afternoon with a more in-depth look at the day's top news-stories, and broadcast on shortwave as well as satellite tv, shortwave radio, and social media. The shorter news-headlines are also included in Dabanga's feature news analysis programme "Sudan Today", which is produced 5 times per week lasting 30-minutes. In addition to news headlines, the show includes a more in-depth look at 2-3 news stories, an analysis of

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<sup>2</sup> [راديو دبنقا - السودان | Amsterdam | Facebook](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Radio Dabanga - Sudan | Facebook](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Radio Dabanga - YouTube](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Stream راديو دبنقا | Listen to music playlists online for free on SoundCloud](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Radio Dabanga \(@RadioDabanga\) / X \(twitter.com\)](#)

(social media) news trends, and insights from a journalist or other experts on the main topics of the day. Sudan Today is produced “as live” every afternoon and broadcast on shortwave and satellite TV the same evening and distributed via social media.

### **Video News**

As a new product in autumn 2023, Dabanga developed video newsflashes – a 3.5-minute summary of the day’s most important news items in audio-visual form (video with stills including audio and subtitles). These have been created especially for social media audiences. Each video gained the highest views of Dabanga content each day, often with more than 150.000 views per video on Facebook.

### **Website**

News articles form the bulk of Dabanga’s written content on its [bilingual website](#),<sup>7</sup> with an average of 15 articles per day on the Arabic website, and 3 daily articles on the English website in 2023. Dabanga’s Arabic and English website traffic doubled over the year in several indicators. Dabanga’s news service responded swiftly to the events since 15 April, publishing breaking news on its [website](#) and [social media platforms](#).<sup>8</sup> The broadcast production team produced additional [news programmes](#)<sup>9</sup> over the first weekend of the conflict. One day after the start of the conflict, a special edition [news analysis programme](#) featured reports on the situation in Darfur, Kordofan, Blue Nile and Khartoum with interviews with citizens and viewpoints from political parties. The following day, Dabanga reported breaking news on the humanitarian consequences of the fighting in [Darfur](#) and [Kordofan](#) states, with witness reports on the seizure of Nyala airport by the RSF. Also, in a multi-media report including audio from the ground, Dabanga confirmed the destruction and looting of ministries, markets and buildings used by UNICEF. As the conflict continued, Dabanga collected eyewitness accounts and reported on the first locally negotiated ceasefire in May.

In 2023, Dabanga’s news service was highly responsive to the developing situation on the ground, and became more consistent, with Dabanga ensuring more up-to-date posting of content especially on its tv, website and social media.

## **Objective 3 - Provide informational and educational content to diverse audiences**

Dabanga meets its audience’ informational and educational needs through the production of informational content on different themes each day. Dabanga aims to address more complex topics in ways that engage and connect audiences. Dabanga’s weekly informational and educational radio programmes are broadcast on shortwave radio, satellite TV, social media, website, and social media.

### **Kandaka Programme**

Kandaka is one of the few programmes in Sudanese media that is specifically dedicated to women’s perspectives on current affairs. Each program profiles a new topic with expert guests and critical discussions. In 2023, Kandaka also focused on

<sup>7</sup> [الصفحة الرئيسية - Dabanga Radio TV Online \(dabangasudan.org\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [راديو دبنقا - السودان](#) | [Amsterdam](#) | [Facebook](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Dabanga programs - Dabanga Radio TV Online \(dabangasudan.org\)](#)



conflict and its psychological, social and physical impact on women, on gender-based violence, as well as on ‘everyday’ topics affecting and shaping the lives of Sudanese (women) such as marriage traditions and popular Ramadan foods.

### **Youth Issues Programme**

The focus before the outbreak of the war was on the constructive participation of youth in the transitional processes, providing a platform for youth to raise issues, develop solutions, and engage with responses from political actors and those in positions of power. As an illustration, Youth Issues in one episode in March delved into the escalating tension between the RSF and SAF, specifically focusing on their divergent perspectives regarding the framework agreement. Through interviews with both youth participants and a political analyst, the programme extensively debated the potential repercussions of this divide on Sudan. This episode provided a platform to analyse and understand the contrasting positions within the military component and shed light on the implications for the country, from and for a youth audience. Additionally, the program focused on issues such as environmentalism, drug use, persons with disabilities, youth opinions and the needs of youth in IDP camps.

### **Scales of Justice Programme**

In 2023, the programme focussed on the legal implications of the October 2021 coup for justice and reconciliation. With transitional justice one of the five contentious issues as part of the 2022/23 renewed transitional process, many episodes centred on the negotiations leading up to the signing of the final agreement on transitional justice. In March, Dabanga updated audience on the conditions in which transitional justice can and should be utilised; an early February episode explored the Sudanese dialogue workshop held in Cairo, specifically examining the issues surrounding transitional justice and the extradition of wanted individuals to the International Criminal Court. The programme also dedicated an episode to transitional justice workshops organized such as those organised in Blue Nile; and the national conference organized by the Trilateral Mechanism on building a Sudanese model for transitional justice.

On 15 April, Dabanga suspended all its feature programming. Instead, the editorial team, concentrated on providing news information and analysis content, including through its flagship news programme “Sudan Today”. In addition to news, Dabanga also recognised the information needs of audiences for expert opinion(s) and views of decision-makers and therefore re-vamped its long-form and ad-hoc interview programme “Talk of the Day” into a daily show with more varying content since late April. While the conflict impacted the regular broadcast of thematic feature programs, it did not stifle the pressing need for conversations around gender, youth, and justice. Therefore, “Talk of the Day” seamlessly integrated these pivotal topics into its fabric. Dabanga also (re-)launched other shows such as “With the Citizens” – a programme featuring eye-witness accounts of the ongoing conflict, and “From the Camps” – a show dedicated to issues affecting displaced and fleeing people.

Dabanga also ensured it provided practical advice to its audiences, through short interviews with experts providing tips on the ongoing conflict situation, such as what to do as a civilian in event of active hostilities, how to shelter from bombings and administer first aid during hostilities, and psychological coping mechanisms. To further fulfil this advice function and help humanitarian actors inform those in the

country, Dabanga opened its broadcast platforms to select organisations and governments for public service and humanitarian announcements. This included shortwave, satellite tv and online content to facilitate evacuations by various governments shortly after the outbreak of the conflict. Dabanga also produced an audio-drama on social cohesion and peaceful coexistence as well as the role of individuals in a democratic society with a focus of increased agency for women in the Sudanese context, especially in governing and peacebuilding activities. Dabanga broadcast it on shortwave and online channels in December, with an average reach of 5,000 users per episode.

## **Financial position in 2023**

Income was significantly higher than the year before: the foundation realised 152% of the income of 2022. This is due to a new donor agreeing to fund the foundation directly instead of through a fiscal sponsor. For both years, an additional amount of around €600.000 was spent via the fiscal sponsor, leading to an annual income of €1.6 million euro and €2.2 million euro respectively for 2022 and 2023.

Expenditure was aligned with the budgeted amounts as proposed to the donors making the work of Stichting Dabanga Foundation possible. All donors approved the reports and the expenditure reported and continued supporting the organisation after the reporting year.

The foundation is able to project and manage its expenditures well due to its long experience with the type of costs involved with its activities and its stable team within and outside of the organisation.

## **Reserves**

In 2023, a positive balance of income over expenditure was realised. With this, the Foundation now has a continuity reserve of €54,820 compared to a negative reserve of €7,936 at year-end 2022. The continuity reserve amounts to 2,5% of the average annual operating costs of Dabanga, estimated at €2.2 million. The continuity reserve will be used to cover costs during a funding gap or to cover costs that donors cannot or will not reimburse.

According to best practices of nonprofit organisations in the Netherlands, a reserve of around 50% of annual operating costs, or €1.1 million would be reasonable to ensure stability and sustainability of the work of the organisation.

In addition to its continuity reserve the foundation also has an appropriated reserve for fixed assets. This reserve shows the remaining balance of the total purchase price of tangible fixed assets covered in full by donors through project grants, decreased by annual depreciation which is included as an expenditure.



## Investment policy

Stichting Dabanga Foundation does not hold any financial investments or participations. Its investments in equipment are made possible by donors who fund the full investment costs, for instance for the mobile studios the Foundation has and all of its broadcast and office equipment and furniture. The organisation as a policy only makes such investments if and when they can be recovered from grants. Given the low level of the continuity reserve it would not be wise to invest beyond this.

## Financial continuity and expectations for 2024 and beyond

The foundation has ambitious goals for the year ahead, through activities beyond the regular newsroom work as well as investments in organisational development, including further development of potentially income generating activities outside project grants. At the time of writing the foundation has secured €2.2 million in income for 2024, which is sufficient for its operations without extra investments. For the year 2025, already €1.6 million is secured from a currently ongoing grant. Given its track record in quality implementation and in fundraising together with its fiscal sponsor and its network, the foundation is confident that it can reach the necessary funding levels for the next two years. Sadly, the dire need on the ground in Sudan with the audiences makes this expectation realistic as donors maintain their commitment to keeping life-saving information available for the people in Sudan and in refugee camps in neighbouring countries.

## Budget 2024 in EUR

### Income

Income from grants	2,726,743
Income from donations	5,000
<b>Total income</b>	<b>2,731,743</b>

### Expenditure

Staff costs	1,757,543
Broadcast costs	436,800
Activity costs	258,000
Organisational costs	274,400
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>2,726,743</b>

<b>Balance of income and expenditure</b>	<b>5,000</b>
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The Board, Amsterdam, June 2024

Nigel Ballard, Chair Executive Board and Managing Director

Kamal Elsadig, Secretary/Treasurer Executive Board and Editorial Director

Hamid Ali Mohamed Nur Hussein, Chair Supervisory Board  
Johannes Jacobus Daalmeijer, member Supervisory Board  
Abdelbagi Jibril, member Supervisory Board