

2014 Annual Report

The Engine Room Foundation, org nr: 999 562 566

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Summary

The engine room is a applied research and support organization dedicated to improving the safe and effective use of technology in advocacy. The engine room partners with activists and advocacy organizations to help them plan and implement activities that use technological tools. The engine room also conducts applied research on the same dynamics, to inform project design, support activities and funding decisions for social good and accountability programming.

In 2014, the engine room developed new partnerships and new projects, organized and facilitated a series of events, and actively participated in numerous workshops and conferences. We provided direct support to over 50 advocacy organizations; our team of 3 grew to 10; and all of our organizational growth and increase in direct support and research is thanks to the support of partners and funders.

Our organization has also expanded significantly and adopted a number of policies and procedures, solidifying our organizational administration.

Highlights of our work from 2014 include:

- Holding [6 highly influential events](#) on responsible data on a budget for 1 event
- Designing and launching 2 large-scale research projects, with partners in 5 countries
- Providing in-depth technological and strategic support to 5 organizations as part of our Matchbox project
- Supporting Amnesty International in a complete redesign of their internal information management system for Individuals at Risk
- Building a community of responsible data practitioners and developing a collaboration of 16 organizations

Organizational Information

The engine room is registered as The Engine Room Foundation, a private foundation (stiftelse) registered in Norway in accordance with the national law on foundations (Stiftelsesloven). The engine room is a not-for-profit organization that supports human rights defenders and social justice activists that use technological tools and strategies in their work, by providing direct support, training, and applied research. Specific activities conducted in 2014 are described below.

The Engine Room Foundation has one employee, who is based in Oslo and functions as the foundation's general manager (daglig leder). The Foundation has a board of directors, and an executive committee, which operate according to the organization's governance and financial policies, which are available at

https://www.dropbox.com/s/633nxi0rke0hgg7/engnroom_governancefinanpolicy_211113.pdf?dl=0

In the course of 2014, The Engine Room Foundation took several measures to develop the organization and solidify governance procedures, including:

- added 7 team members on full time, freelance consultancy contracts
- added 3 directors to the board of directors
- refined governance and financial policies to adhere to Norwegian national law and international standards
- Contracted Norwegian bookkeepers to assist with financial management and Norwegian auditors to review and advise on operational procedures and policies
- established online accounting system for managing day-to-day financial administration

The Engine Room Foundation employs freelance consultants based in various countries to execute projects. We take regular measures to ensure a positive working environment, such as quarterly check-in meetings with all team members, online activities and annual in-person strategic retreats. The Foundation has experienced no accidents or injuries in 2014. The Foundation team is composed of 7 women and 4 men.

The Foundation's fiscal year is the calendar year, and in 2014, The Engine Room Foundation had an operating budget of **NOK 3,239,880** and closed the fiscal year with a balance of **NOK 741,181**.

Activities

Program Work

We substantially ramped up our program-related work in 2014. Our Responsible Data Program is focused on making it easier for advocacy organizations to use data responsibly. With this focus, we have developed and maintained healthy and collaborative partnerships to ensure that the program is relevant and effective for its target audience. In the course of 2014, The Engine Room Foundation has partnered with 16 partners, 7 of whom were active co-creators of the Responsible Data Forums and the wider responsible data movement. Through the course of the year we held 6 Responsible Data Forums:

- Responsible Data Kick-Off (Oakland, March)
- Responsible in Hosting (Amsterdam, May)
- Responsible Development Data (New York, May)
- Responsible and Private Sector Data (New York, July)
- Responsible Resource Sprint (Budapest, September)
- Consent and Crowdsourcing (Nairobi, October)

Our Matchbox Project is built to match high impact advocacy projects with the network of technical and strategic expertise they need to effectively use technology that powers their work. In 2014, we over 30 organizations with light-touch strategic advice, and 5 partners within-depth technical and strategic support in concentrated periods (from 3 to 9 months). All 5 of these partnerships will continue into 2015, which include:

- Fundacion Directorio Legislativo (Argentina): an organization that uses dialogue, transparency and access to public information to promote democracy and a stronger parliament. We are supporting the development of a website to show changes made to bills and the parliamentarians who promoted these changes.
- ¿Quién Compró? (Mexico): an online platform investigating how the Mexican congress spends public funds. The site shows where and on what public money is being spent. We are facilitating improvements to the website to allow for more effective collection, uploading and downloading of receipts obtained through freedom of information laws.
- Research and Advocacy Unit (Zimbabwe): a research organization focusing on issues related to women, displacements and governance. We are seeking to help set up a citizen reporting platform to collect citizen voices on MPs' participation in parliament, capture and record this information in a database, and link the database to individual MP profiles and a public interface for dissemination.

- Kubatana (Zimbabwe): a civic human rights information and advocacy organisation that provides and makes accessible online a range of human rights and public interest documents. We are helping the organization develop a tool to collect and categorize citizen reports on water availability throughout Harare.
- Institute for Public Policy Research (Namibia): is a research organization that delivers independent, analytical, critical and constructive research into social, political and economic issues affecting development in Namibia. Matchbox is providing support in the mapping of information related to the allocation of Petroleum Exploration Licenses in the country in an effort to increase transparency in the sector.

Direct Support to Partners

In the course of 2014 we have developed a set of core services that we can provide to organizations looking for support to integrate technology into their work. We do so on a pro bono basis and on a consultancy basis. Clients of our consultancy-driven support are primarily Western organizations with accessible budgets. This process has professionalized the way we provide support, led to strong partnerships with large international networks, and allowed us to bring more technical expertise onto the team to expand and develop the type of support we can provide. Developing the base of partners that can afford our services has also dramatically increased our financial resilience and has supplemented our core funding. We provide pro bono support when partners do not have budgets available and when we believe that our support can significantly strengthen their activities and efficiency. Most organizations that receive pro bono support are smaller organizations working in the global South.

Our direct support to partners is a critical part of our work. It creates impact and it keeps us connected to the real world problems that organizations are facing so we can better target our research and programmatic activities. Our direct support activities can be grouped according to two main types: project-based holistic strategic and technical support, and supporting partners to design engagement with their communities in workshops.

Project-Based Partner Support

The engine room team has been working with [Amnesty International](#) for two years on a variety of projects involving a mix of pro bono and consultancy work. In 2014, we worked with Amnesty to design and develop the training materials associated with their new Panic Button app. We also supported them through a redesign process of their internal information management for their global Individuals at Risk database.

The engine room team works with [SumofUs](#), to improve its team's security practices, moving beyond technical fixes and end-user tool trainings, but instead developing organization-wide behavior change. SumofUs is a campaigning organization that seeks to hold corporations accountable to citizens.

In 2014, [Oxfam Novib](#) contracted The Engine Room Foundation to conduct research on existing citizen feedback platforms and their technical specifications as part of a larger project

to build and support citizen feedback platforms. Oxfam Novib also contracted our organization to carry out research and provide direct support to Burundian local partners to better and more safely use technologies in electoral work. In 2015, The Engine Room Foundation will be working with Oxfam Novib to develop an access to justice technical platform in Rwanda that uses best practices in responsible data. Oxfam Novib is a Dutch development organization committed to building the capacity of its civil society organization partners in developing countries.

The [Rainforest Foundation of Norway](#) contracted The Engine Room Foundation to support the adoption of technologies for monitoring deforestation and land rights, to support their partners in developing related skills, and to explore the feasibility of developing a global monitoring platform that specifically targets the socially responsible investing community. We carried out research on how socially responsible investors related, and we're supporting RFN to design learning opportunities for network members to better integrate technology into their work. The Rainforest Fund supports programs that cover a range of issues from protection of civil and political rights of indigenous and tribal peoples, to the promotion and defense of their social, economic and cultural rights.

The engine room worked with [HURIDOCS](#) to provide information management support for several NGO partners in Egypt. Alix, our Creative Lead and co-founder, also joined HURIDOCS' board of directors in 2014. HURIDOCS is an international NGO helping human rights organisations use information technologies and documentation methods to maximise the impact of advocacy work.

In 2014, The Engine Room Foundation produced a feasibility study for [CIVICUS](#), identifying opportunities and risks for supporting their members in integrating technology for monitoring national progress towards the post-2015 development goals. CIVICUS is an international alliance dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world.

We continued in 2014 with our [WeGov](#) partnership and produced a liveblog for Open Knowledge ("OK") Festival; an [introductory guide to monitoring and evaluation approaches](#) for busy practitioners; a [primer on mobile technologies in development](#); an essay on the implications of technology for the evidence gathering of international mechanisms; and an essay on innovations in using technology to fight gender-based violence.

We've been working with the [Restart Project](#) to design and develop a website that provides visual information about the impact that Restart Parties has on the amount of e-waste participants produce. This work is intended to connect monitoring and evaluation approaches with data-driven, visual advocacy tools.

We supported [Asylos](#) to develop its new data-sharing tool for the decentralized research team that powers its support to refugees. We will continue working with Asylos to develop Kollekt.io to be used by larger networks of researchers.

Pro bono support that has been funded by this project-based partner support has included:

- Monitoring and evaluation support for Harassmap in Egypt
- Brokering security auditing for the Zimbabwe Peace Project

- Researching technology options for mailing lists for Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights
- Supporting Pawa254 to address responsible data challenges in land data aggregation in Kenya
- Working with Research and Advocacy Unit of Zimbabwe to visualize data for reports on parliamentary performance
- Light-touch strategic support in response to requests from 40 organizations ranging from questions about designing pilots using SMS feedback mechanisms, facilitating audience research and design of wireframes to inform future web development

Support Workshops

Another important part of our partner support is designing and leading events that support our partners' networks, programs, and capacity development. This work is also in line with one of our core mandates to support collaboration and facilitate connections in different areas of expertise. In 2014, we organized and facilitated many events for close partners to further that work, and played a supportive role in many others.

- We facilitated [School of Data's Summer Camp](#) which brought together 50 fellows, local initiatives and OK's School of Data team for a two-day camp to share skills, organize the SCODA network, and plan for their future work.
- We supported CIVICUS to design and lead events to inform their global Datashift program. We focused on how data might be collected and aggregated on specific issue areas (specifically data on gender-based violence, and anti-corruption efforts). The results of these workshops fed into our scoping study detailing how CIVICUS could design its Datashift program ([Link](#)). The Datashift program aims to create shadow monitoring mechanisms of the post-2015 MDGs with an aim to introduce citizen voices into the monitoring process.
- We supported [The Transparency and Accountability Initiative](#) (T/AI) to hold a workshop for 16 DFID governance advisors to discuss the strategic use of technology in program design.
- We helped Privacy International design and facilitate a one-day workshop with security trainers to learn more about how PI can help digisec trainers, and how digisec trainers can contribute to privacy research and advocacy. Privacy International is a UK charity committed to fighting for the right to privacy across the world through research, litigation, and advocacy.
- We worked with the Tech4Good team (producers of the Circle of 6 app) to plan their sustainability and user outreach strategies for 2015. The Circle of 6 app allows users to connect with friends to stay close, stay safe and prevent violence.

- We put together a large session at the OK Festival called [Can Open Data Go Wrong?](#) (or #OKOhNo) that presented 4 case studies about real world responsible data challenges as experienced by 4 practitioners. The event reached overflow capacity and was cited in several recaps of the Festival as one of the most compelling sessions.
- We participated in the annual Security-in-a-Box strategic planning session led by Front Line Defenders and Tactical Technology Collective to contribute input into the development of the Security-in-a-Box resource.
- We coordinated and led a session with more than 40 participants on the [Dark Side of Data](#) at the Community Knowledge Exchange (“CKX”) Summit
- We actively participated in a design workshop with the Balkan Data Academy to support the strategic development of a citizen election monitoring project in Bosnia.

Research Partnerships

[European Capability for Situational Awareness \(ECSA\)](#) – The engine room is providing strategic and technical support to the international consortium (led by [Free Press Unlimited](#) and [iilab](#)) contracted by the European Commission to produce a feasibility study for the development of an international monitoring platform for digital rights and violations of the freedom of expression online.

[Peace Research Institute Oslo \(PRIO\)](#)- The engine room is collaborating with PRIO on a research [project](#) on communicating risk in the digital age, and is responsible for producing an article on responsible data challenges posed by the use of digital communications tools in emergencies. PRIO is an independent peace studies institution that is researching the conditions for peaceful relations between nations, groups and individuals.

[Making all Voices Count \(MAVC\)](#) – Making All Voices Count has supported a 2-year research project to explore the factors that influence tool selection processes among voice and accountability initiatives in three African countries. The project is coordinated by The Engine Room Foundation and implemented by [Accountability Lab](#) in Liberia, [Network Society](#) (University of Witwatersrand) in South Africa, and [Pawa254](#) in Kenya.

[The Transparency and Accountability Initiative \(T/AI\)](#) contracted The Engine Room Foundation to conduct qualitative research on the roles, activities and self-conceptions of social movements in the tech, transparency and accountability field, to understand how, when and how their work for social good can best be supported by the international support and funding communities. This research work is in full swing and will be continuing into 2015.

Participation in Events

In addition to the events we led or helped to organize, The Engine Room Foundation participated in the following events in 2014.

- RightsCon (San Francisco, March)
- World Economic Forum summit on the norms for technology for development (San Francisco, May)
- International Security Coalition annual conference (Washington DC, May)
- OGP Research Strategy Meeting (Istanbul, June)
- OK Festival (Berlin, June)
- Open Knowledge's My Data, Open Data workshop (London, June)
- MAVC Learning Symposium (Dar El Salaam, June)
- Digital Design Weekend (London, September)
- Ethics of Data Conference (Stanford, September)
- Open Development Camp (Amsterdam, October)
- Abre Latam, (Mexico City, October)
- Sunlight Foundation and OCCRP Investigathon (Washington DC, November)
- International Civil Society Week (Johannesburg, November)
- White House Data Jam (Washington DC, November)
- OpenUp? conference held by Omidyar on Privacy and Open Data (London, November)
- MySociety Data and Research Event (London, November)
- Tech Salon on Ethics in Development (London, December)
- DataPop Launch event (New York City, November)
- SAFETAG Methods and Training workshop (Kiev, December)
- Balkan Data Academy workshops (Sarajevo, August and December)

Funders

[Hivos](#) – Hivos has supported the engine room’s responsible data work, specifically including participation costs for the [Responsible Data Forum in Budapest](#), and for the development of a Responsible Data Toolkit. Hivos is an international development organization that develops programs, engages in policy advocacy and researches a variety of topics.

[William and Flora Hewlett Foundation](#) – The Hewlett Foundation is providing The Engine Room Foundation with funding for the Matchbox Project to test our support methodology with local organizations in Southern Africa and Latin America working to promote transparency and accountability.

[Oak Foundation](#) – Oak Foundation provides The Engine Room Foundation with general support to allow for more responsive support and research for in-country advocacy projects.

[Open Society Foundation](#) – OSF’s Information Program is supporting the Responsible Data Forum, a series of collaborative events being convened in the first half of 2014. The Forum is an effort to develop useful tools and strategies for dealing with the ethical, security and privacy challenges facing data-driven advocacy.