

Wiki Loves Africa 2023 Interviewers Report

Following a successful first iteration in 2022, the organizers of WLA decided to maintain the tradition of interviewing organisers of the contest in the 2023 iteration with a purpose of receiving feedback on Wiki Loves Africa 2023, themed Climate & Weather, and receive suggestions and ideas on how the 2024 contest could be improved.

This year, Wiki Loves Africa international contest interviewed 3 local organisers, 1 member of the video jury (first time group) and 1 participant in the contest.

Interviews set up

Wilson forwarded direct emails to five local organisers in Morocco, South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon including one video contest participant from Nigeria taking inspiration from last year's report. The participation of a very experienced member of the video judging team was largely coincidental, but provided a significant insight on how to perceive this competition in a more professional perspective. Only 3 local organizers responded and showed up to be interviewed.

Interview objectives were framed around:

- what went well in the Wiki Loves Africa 2023,
- and what could be improved on for Wiki Loves Africa 2024 and beyond.

The interviews were conducted on Google meet on 3 occasions, and were recorded, but can only be accessed by the Wiki In Africa team (links provided below). Two of the interviews were conducted in English language, while one was conducted in French language, the respective languages spoken by the local organizers from Morocco and Cote d'Ivoire. The interview recordings are under one hour long except for the French language iteration which lasted for almost two hours as there were 3 organisers and we also had to factor in translations in real time.

The line of questions asked during the interviews were aimed at understanding the following contexts:

- Personal involvement
- Local organizing
- Local impact
- International team support
- Communication and publicity
- Wiki Loves Africa 2024
- Wiki Loves Africa - The Future

Outcome and lessons

Personal involvement

On personal involvement with Wiki Loves Africa, four of the five interviewees were first timers in organizing and Jury for Wiki Loves Africa, Two had good participation experience and even won prizes in past editions; however, all were quite familiar with the contest.

Local organizing

Local organizing posed some challenges to the organizers, as some had difficulty in getting enough hands on the team and also struggled with getting participants to attend events and training. The organizers were able to engage youth participants, mostly through social media especially Facebook and Instagram and in the case of Cote d'Ivoire, prospective protégés of the lead organizer to submit entries towards the Wiki Loves Africa 2023 theme of Climate & Weather.

Local impact

Although there was a report of difficulty with accessing local events in Nigeria, there were generally positive reviews as the organizers mostly made use of social media while communicating around the campaign. This yielded good results in attracting participants locally. Facebook appears to be a preferred medium for reaching african creatives as all the interviewees employed its use at some point of the project especially with publicity and communication.

In Côte d'Ivoire, most of the participants were prospective mentees of the lead organizer (who is a professional videographer) and went on to secure jobs in related fields post the contest training, practicals and eventual submissions testifying to improved capacity and skills development.

International team support

The local organizers commended the efforts of the project facilitator, Wilson, in ensuring constant and effective communication during and after the contest while giving kudos to the Wiki Loves Africa International team for organizing a successful Wiki Loves Africa 2023 under the Climate and Weather theme.

Communication and publicity

There was profound appreciation of the constant and comprehensive communications and related materials from the international organizing team especially in French language. They also think the current prize categories are okay pointing out the need to promote the special prize categories including videos and audio and graphic for clarity and awareness purposes. External partnerships were a bit difficult for the local organizers and there didn't seem to be much awareness of some of the media material created by the WLA international team for establishing such. One of the interviewees had believed that the contest is owned and run by the Wikimedia Foundation thereby highlighting the need for clarity around the organizational

structure behind WLA. There were suggestions for a more aggressive publicity campaign on social media targeting creatives in the 18-35 age range, these included;

- Bigger push with social media promotions (paid) of winners to create FOMO for prospective participants.
- Approach social media strategy with a view to reach out to specific regions and not the entire African continent at once.
- Make the winners the centrepiece of social media campaigns and promote in various African regions specifically. For young photographers use Instagram, but for the mass populace, focus on Facebook.
- Advertise the contest anchored on Wikipedia's readership stats.
- Categorize video prizes into constituent parts: narratives, documentaries, etc
- Target Universities and school students for graphics category submissions.
- When drafting a publicity material for WLA 2024, apply priority in the following order: competition, prizes, theme and impact and viewership stats.

Wiki Loves Africa 2024

The organizers are looking forward to the 2024 iteration of the contest and express optimism to participate. Suggestions for the 2024 theme included Animals and society, Africa and the future and Peace. Two groups of organizers are willing to collaborate on organizing and contest publicity via exchange training in 2024. Two others are willing to step up their current participation roles to become organizers in their various locations for the WLA 2024 contest.

Wiki Loves Africa - The Future

They suggested that attention be given to marketing, social media, advertising and quality control in the immediate. All of the interviewees agreed to volunteer for more participatory roles including volunteering to train communities and other participants thereby contributing to improved capacity and self development agenda of the movement as well as quality submissions for the contest. The international organizing team is encouraged to expand the contest to all parts of the continent especially East and South Africa as there appears to be a saturation in West Africa already.

About the interview process

What worked well

This year, interviews were conducted much earlier than usual (after the upload phase and before the winner announcements). There was a different approach to interview various WLA groups including organizers, participants and jury and this provided diverse and well rounded feedback. Interviewees were selected based on levels of involvement in their various participation groups as well as availability on proposed interview dates. The interviews were quick and lumped with French organizers having one session, one for jury and one for participants. All the interviews were recorded. Each interview session usually starts with an exchange of pleasantries to help the local organizers relax and feel at ease.

What didn't work well

The French version of the interview was unusually long due in part to the need to translate questions and responses from English to French and vice versa. Interview transcripts are only possible if the language of conversation is English.

Wiki Loves Africa 2024 interview lessons

1. Lumping interviewees with shared cultural/language experience into groups was successful as it helped them appreciate their similarities and differences and created an opportunity for training collaborations.
2. Flexible interview dates to accommodate interviewees' schedules is a good strategy.
3. Being ready, to convert to interviews, what may appear initially as simple feedback conversations around the contest may be a solution to having more respondents.
4. Organizing interviews right after the actual contest phase is good and effective as events from the process are still fresh in the memory and would be easy to recall.
5. Having a transcription tool that transcribes other languages besides English language will be handy for the interviews in the future.

Useful links

- English - [Link](#)
- French - [Link](#)
- Jury - [Link](#) (English)