



VOICE Advisory Board Meeting, August 30th and 31st 2016, Hivos Executive Room, The Hague / MINUTES

Advisory Board (AB)

Ms. Anke van Dam (AD), Strategic Policy Advisor, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Bart Romijn (BR), Director, Partos, Netherlands

Ms. Nidhi Goyal (NG), Trainer and Researcher: disability rights and gender justice, India

Mr. Tom van der Lee (TL), Director Campaigns and Advocacy, Oxfam Novib, Netherlands

Ms. Josephine Kulea (JK), President, Samburu Girls Foundation, Kenya (arrival on August 31st)

Mr. Edwin Huizing (EH), Director, Hivos, Netherlands

In attendance

Marinke van Riet (MR), Programme Manager, Voice

Clemens Wennekes (CW), Finance Coordinator, Voice (partial attendance)

The meeting opened at 13:30 on August 30th.

1. Summary of Key decisions

- Election of Chair to help prepare agenda and chair meetings : Bart Romijn
- Advisory Board decided to refine the ToR of the Advisory Board by adding ambassadorial role and a focus on long-term sustainability
- Advisory Board decided to add one additional meeting a year making the total two. In 2017 this will be face to face but for subsequent years it may be virtually.
- Advisory Board decided that all minutes should be made available via www.voice.global

2. Action list

Action	Responsibility	Deadline
Revise ToR for the AB in governance documents and website	MVR	31 October
Develop and share skills matrix	MVR	6 October
Share doodle for next AB meeting	MVR	6 October
Share revised Annual Plan	MVR	6 October
Share revised budget including grants allocation	MVR	14 October
Set-up list serve for the AB	MVR	Done

3. Introductions and Expectations

In the absence of a Board elected Chair at this stage in the meeting it was agreed that MVR would chair and moderate the meeting. Board members were welcomed to the first Board meeting of Voice. Due to visa issues JK was only able to join on August 31st.



The afternoon of August 30th was spent on presenting the organisations and/or work the AB members represented. This ranged from a presentation on the Dialogue and Dissent Framework of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs –of which Voice is part- to Partos which is the umbrella organisation of Dutch NGOs working in international development and the work of Consortium members Oxfam Novib and Hivos. NG presented her work as a researcher and activist for the (sexual and reproductive) rights of women and girls with disabilities. The next morning JK was able to share her experiences as a Samburu fighting harmful traditional practices through the Samburu Girls Foundation.

All members expressed their excitement of joining the AB of such an important programme in light of the *Leave No One Behind* philosophy in the Sustainable Development Goals. It was expected that the AB membership may demand more time than the programmed annual meeting, particularly in the beginning of its implementation. An additional face-to-face meeting has been agreed in early 2017 due to the overall context analysis only being ready later in 2016 as well as further development of the communications and linking and learning strategy. This may have implications for the overall programme and annual plan which the AB needs to be involved in. It was explained that only annual meetings of the AB have been budgeted and hence any additional meeting should ideally take place virtually or aligned to an activity or event which the AB members could participate in. The latter was particularly welcomed especially if it was a Linking and Learning event taking place in a Voice focus country (rather than The Hague). The AB expressed a desire to become actively involved in the programme using their skills and expertise in an active advisory role. It was decided to develop and complete a skills matrix which would be shared with the Voice country teams to demonstrate the skills and expertise the AB has and people could tap into –moderated by MR.

The AB also discussed the way they would like to be informed about Voice. They expressed a desire to receive Newsletters (rather than specific updates addressed to them) and are interested to hear more stories in due course. They also mentioned their willingness to add on visits to Voice Country Teams and grantees if they happened to be in a Voice focus country for other purposes.

The Programme Manager followed with an official introduction of Voice’ s overall objectives, principles, management structure, the Theory of Change and progress thus far in anticipation of the Global Launch on the 1st of September. In addition the governance structure was discussed with an in-depth discussion on the AB Terms of Reference which are as follows:

1. Provide ON/Hivos with objective and independent advice on the key components of Voice, being: (a) the grant scheme, (b) management of the subsidy facility and (c) the linking and learning process.
2. Act as a sounding board for ON/Hivos and provide guidance for safeguarding the main principles of Voice, amongst which:
 - Vision on capacity strengthening for lobby and advocacy for the most marginalised and discriminated groups
 - Inclusion of the most marginalised and discriminated groups
 - Maintaining a gender-sensitive approach



- Empowerment of civil society, locally driven agendas for the inclusion of the most marginalised and discriminated groups
 - Providing a forum for mutual learning and empowerment
 - Flexibility to adapt to changing contexts
3. Review the annual plan and budget submitted by ON/Hivos and provide strategic level advice.
 4. Provide advice on the Terms of Reference and methodology for the mid-term review and the external final evaluation.

During the discussion on the above-mentioned TOR, BR expressed a specific desire to not be involved in any granting decisions which the AB agreed falls outside of its remit and mandate. After some discussion it was agreed that the following two roles would be added:

5. Serve as Voice ambassadors to further Voice's objectives regarding dissemination, awareness raising and credibility.
6. Review and contribute to the long-term financial sustainability of Voice

The AB finalised the session with a discussion on the modus operandi of the AB. It was agreed that BR would serve as Chair of the AB with the specific roles of helping to prepare the agenda as well as chair the meetings. A list serve would be set up to facilitate smooth communication. The AB also expressed a desire to invite the Voice Steering Committee to a part of the AB meetings to make sure they are appropriately updated on overall organisational alignment, progress on operations and the performance of the Coordination Team, especially MR. As far as communication is concerned the AB aims to be succinct and precise in their communication to allow for the maximum accessibility for NG (this includes, for example, no screenshots and a clear caption to all pictures). And finally it was agreed that all minutes would be made available via www.voice.global and to the Voice Country teams, except for confidential discussions.

4. Feedback on Draft Annual Plan and Budget

MR presented the draft Annual Plan in detail followed by a presentation of the budget by CW. Overall the AB expressed its satisfaction with the set-up and style of the AB which gave a good overview of the plans and objectives for 2016 and 2017. The following suggestions and recommendations were made:

- a. To add a section on leadership responsibilities especially relating to disputes, grievance and escalation mechanisms in the overall decentralised management set-up. For the AB it wasn't clear who carries the ultimate responsibility of Voice and hence this needs to be clearly articulated. Also the introduction would benefit from a clearer explanation of the overall vision and mission.
- b. The inclusion of translation costs was welcomed by all and the AB left it up to the Coordination team to decide on using the underspent of the first quarter or a part of the contingency budget.
- c. The AB recommended that the grant budget should be 'front-loaded' as much as possible with 2017 and 2018 being the peak years of grant commitments. An important distinction



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needs to be made between grant commitments and actual liquidity needed. This is especially relevant for the annual requests for an advance.

- d. As part of the Communications strategy it would also be good to include a mapping exercise of events / strategies / linking and learning of the Dutch NGO sector, including but not limited to Partos Leave No One Behind Platform. For example Partos organises an annual Innovation event and in 2017 it would be good to explore including Voice.
- e. The AB expressed its disappointment that no grants could be allocated to informal groups directly due to the legal requirements of the Ministry around registration and bank accounts. This implies that for example, empowerment grants, may have to be structured via a host organisation rather than to the informal group directly. This is already one step further removed from the ultimate target group and may create some further power dynamics. This is a concern for the AB. Even though MR and AD mentioned some flexibility around the concept of registration the AB recommended that this issue is further explored with the Ministry as Voice matures.
- f. BR recommended specifically that the MEAL section is strengthened by adding a feedback loop of MEAL learning back to informing management decisions. After all the MEAL work will yield useful findings on how management can be improved.
- g. BR recommended that Innovate and Learn grants are lowered to a minimum of €25.000 to €5.000 as in his experience national level innovations are not costly and could be very effective. The AB agreed.
- h. NG and JK made some further suggestions for the outreach section. From their experiences social media (closed Facebook groups, Whatsapp groups) are widely used among some of the Voice target groups especially People Living with Disabilities and women in vulnerable situations. Internet and community radio are popular means too. Country offices should also tap into youth leaders at universities, student unions and for example slum committees, homes for the homeless as well as informal women's committees.

The above recommendations will be incorporated into the next iteration of the Annual Plan and budget. The deadline for the final Annual Plan and Budget is 1st of November.

5. Close and Follow-up

The AB agreed that they would like to have an additional board meeting early 2017, and ideally in person. This is to discuss the contextual analyses, Linking and Learning plus Communications strategy which may have an impact on overall programme implementation. MR will send around a doodle to find an appropriate two days in late January or early February 2017. MR will also set up a list serve email address for the AB and MR although it is also encouraged for the AB to develop a way of communicating independently of the Programme Manager.

There being no other business the meeting was declared closed at 16:30 on August 31st.