



## VOICE Advisory Board Meeting, January 19, 2018, Oxfam Novib Asia meeting room, The Hague / FINAL 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  
Ms. Josephine Kulea (JK), President, Samburu Girls Foundation, Kenya  
Mr. Edwin Huizing (EH), Director, Hivos, Netherlands  
Mr. Ton Meijers (TM), Director Programs and Campaigns, Oxfam Novib, Netherlands

### *In attendance*

Marinke van Riet (MR), Programme Manager, Voice  
Janine Spoelstra (JS), Support Officer, Voice (minute taker)  
Cat Essoyan (CE), Manager Governance & Financial Flows, Oxfam Novib, Steering Committee  
Voice  
Sokha Srey (SS), Grant / Partnership specialist, Voice in Cambodia (partial attendance)

The meeting opened at 9:40 AM and ended at 12.45 PM on January 19th, 2018.

### 1. Opening and welcome

The chair BR opened the meeting.

### 2. Update since last meeting: what has happened?

From 15-18<sup>th</sup> of January 2018, the first I-Cube Inclusion Innovation Indaba from Voice took place in The Hague. Eight global Voice grantees, five Linking and Learning Facilitation grantees and the Voice Linking and Learning officers from the 10 Voice country teams attended this event. The purpose of the meeting was to extract the learning from the first global grantees from the Learning from Innovation grant to inspire an overall learning framework for the future. The focus was on learning from innovation, including the content, methodologies and approaches. The format was the concept of an 'unconference'. This format led to a lot of energy, common agenda setting and spontaneous cooperation. Everybody, including the LGBTI participants, felt included and were working together. A visual note taker was hired. The event was worth the investment.

Feedback was given on the public day of the event which took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January. The AB board members were very positive about this event and mentioned the great atmosphere and energy. It was an excellent learning opportunity and interesting to hear stories directly from the grantees. The popup was great showcasing the work and to get a feeling what the grantees are working on. JK stressed that it's good to get together once a year. NG agreed that the world comes alive by bringing the global grantees in and especially engaging with groups in breakout sessions was very good. A recap of these sessions would have been good back in plenary.



For next time, inclusion games on a broader concept would be good as well. TM agreed that the energy was good, but he found it a bit difficult to grasp the real meaning behind the meeting. Often the level of discussions felt too academic compared to the work on the ground. TM feels that horizon scanning and mapping should be used more effectively because many things already exist so overlap should be avoided (but admitted this applies to all programmes). EH agreed that the popup was very good and found it courageous to have an unconference. Linking global to national is important.

CE added that it may have been useful to harvest and capture at the end of the inclusion games. BR stressed that it's important to keep thinking how to harvest minority and pluriformity. It would be good to get feedback from the afterthoughts of the participants.

Questions arose regarding the concept of youth, how they fit into Voice and how this is managed. MR explained that it's dealt with in different ways: in several countries. It is either very general or very focused (especially on intersectionality) but it depends on the overall context. Voices of youth not being heard is a global problem. Monitoring where the focus is going, is very important.

### 3. Update and results 2017 and plan 2018

MR presented the results of 2017:

53 calls for proposals have been issued; including 12 Influencing grants, 13 Empowerment grants, 19 Innovate and Learn grants and 9 Sudden Opportunity grants. Over 2500 proposals were received so the interest remains enormous. Thus far, 67 grantees have been contracted and a total of Euro 9.9 million has been allocated.

TM remarked that the way the Calls for Proposals are presented on the website seems quite broad. A lot of procedures can be found here, but not so much information on the topic of the call. MR explained that for some countries this is indeed the case because they don't get many proposals (such as Niger, Laos, Cambodia). In others it is much more focused. Organisations should be encouraged to apply for grants especially unusual suspects. For some proposals we have been flexible with eligibility because the ideas presented are so unique and Voice is guided by great ideas. In most instances international NGO's cannot be a lead applicant but join a consortium as a co-applicant to still acknowledge their important role as a technical assistance provider.

Emerging trends in 2017: new sub groups are emerging such as young domestic workers (Voice has 3 grantees working on that topic in Mali, Tanzania and Indonesia) and youth with intellectual and/or psycho social disabilities (Mali, Tanzania and Cambodia).

In general we are on track with the targets except for LGBTI community and PWDs which are a little bit lower as the PowerBi grant analysis tool demonstrates.



The discussion points for the annual plan 2018 are: capacity, especially at country level, stakeholder engagement or strategic partnerships, the online knowledge sharing facility and overall visibility of Voice.

Regarding capacity issues, MR remarked that the website takes a lot of time and energy also due to its bilingual element and that the smaller empowerment grantees take a lot of transfer costs, input and capacity.

MR informed that the 0% VAT proposal was approved by the Tax Authorities provided that the benefit lies exclusively in developing countries. The Coordination Team -in collaboration with other teams in ON- has been working on a concept how to implement this but this has run into a delay. It will now be prioritised in the first quarter of 2018 as extra capacity in the countries is essential and this was what the VAT was re-allocated to. The Coordination Team has submitted the concept as part of the Annual Plan and Budget 2018 to the Ministry which is awaits their written approval. TM stressed that this needs to be a priority due to the budgetary implications involved.

NG remarked that the 'Count me in consortium' is one of the partnerships of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. An event organised by this consortium will take place in Kenya. NK has suggested them to invite Voice.

TM stressed that content management should be equally if not more important than outreach, volume of applications and grant management. EH added that a good foundation and strong financial capacity are needed to be able to spend 50 million Euros in 5 years diligently and effectively. MR remarked that with the current capacity it is not possible to monitor the grantees sufficiently; more lean and mean procedures are needed but also more human resources to track and monitor performance.

BR remarked that Voice is a very specific programme. Strategic partners are needed because the Voice team is small both in The Hague and at country level. Outreach is mainly at national level, global outreach is added value. Capacity is needed to bring it all together. Therefore the AB agreed that a strategic partnership approach is needed which will then be discussed at the next AB meeting. The mid-term review will take place from March 2019 onwards so this should also be on the agenda of the next AB meeting.

Regarding the online knowledge sharing facility MR stressed that sharing knowledge on a national level is the key focus and from there it will be linked to a global level. Infrastructure. This was the key topic on the agenda of the meeting between the L&L grantees and officers and Coordination Team.



#### 4. Country in the Spotlight: Cambodia

As requested in a previous meeting to dive deeper into a single Voice focus country, Sokha Srey (SS) gave a presentation on Cambodia. Sokha started working as a grant and partnership specialist for Voice in Cambodia in December 2017.

SS started with some basic statistics: HDi ranking Cambodia is 143/188. Population is 15.762.370. Civic space in 2017 is repressed. The poverty rate in 2014 was 13.5%. Cambodia achieved the MDG of halving poverty already in 2009. Health and education remain both important challenges and development priorities. Voice was launched on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2016. The context analysis showed five dimensions of exclusion: social, economic, spatial and political exclusion. A cross cutting dimension is gender and youth.

So far, Voice Cambodia received in total 140 applications from seven Calls for Proposals. Oxfam in Cambodia approved (final stages) 14 grantees with a total commitment of EUR 1.416.307,88. Target groups are people with disability (38%), women & girls facing exploitation, abuse and/or violence (31%), age-discriminated (19%), indigenous people (6) and LGBTQI (8). LGBTQI will get more attention in future. SS gave a presentation of the projects. Challenges are technical capacity issues; capacity of applicants to analyse situations and proposal writing; criteria: bank account and 40% rule; open all calls at same time- time and expertise required; civic space. Especially civic space in Cambodia is challenging since the local elections in 2017 and leading up to general elections in 2018. The government makes it very difficult for people who want to speak up. NGO's activities have to be registered, approval sought in advance and additional funding limitations. Expressing in media has to be done carefully. Free and independent press and opposition party have been banned. On the up side, some groups like LGBTQI and people with disabilities, however, feel more free than in other Voice focus countries.

A question came up regarding the percentages of target groups related to the grantees. SS explained that LGBTQI is a new target group for Oxfam in Cambodia and the number of grants for this group is indeed a good number. For indigenous people it's more difficult to get a national platform in Cambodia. For the whole of civil society, Cambodia has a NGO platform and networks. Connections can be made between specific networks. The team in Cambodia has planned to do this in 2018 as well as look at safety and security. MR explained that the 40% rule has changed for certain grants and we are exploring opening bank accounts with microfinance institutions.

#### 5. Discussion on letter DCDD

AD gave background information on the letter from DCDD and the history of Voice as an inclusion fund that is broader than just for PWDs. DCDD thinks Voice is mainly financing Hivos and Oxfam Novib partners, however, numbers show the contrary. EH stressed that Voice is a public service contract executed on behalf of the Dutch MOFA so everybody can apply, not only ON or Hivos partners. The programme has specific objectives. BR added that it is important to reinforce the basis for Voice and to build up constituencies as part of strategic partnerships.



TM suggested to make an appointment with DCDD to discuss further taking political sensitivity into account. MR will set up a meeting with DCDD. BR and CE will participate in this meeting. Partnership in a broader sense will be put on the agenda of the next meeting of the Advisory Board.

#### 6. Exploring synergies

A broader radar for strategic partnerships is necessary. As part of the Partos innovation festival, Voice is in discussion with Partos to include a Voice Inclusion award.

#### 7. AOB

TM informed about the whistle blower policy and remarked that the Email address should be anonymised rather than be an actual person. MR agreed to adjust this in the whistle blower policy. JK enquired about the sudden opportunities grant in Kenya. MR informed her that the grant will be open once the grant modifications have been published in the Staatscourant.

#### 8. Closing and next meeting

The next meeting of the Advisory board will be held in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2018. This meeting will be linked to a linking and learning activity in one of the Voice focus countries. Marinke will propose dates in September/October. There is interest to go to Mali. The meeting was closed at 12.45.