



Grant Manual

Voice in Lao PDR

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1. A letter from.....

"We pledge," says the UN, in its manifesto on the Sustainable Development Goals, *"that no one will be left behind [in the collective journey to end poverty and inequality]."* In addition, the most marginalised will be prioritised: *"We will endeavour,"* the UN pledges, *"to reach the furthest behind first."*

It is in this context that the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs ("the Ministry") designed a special fund, called Voice, with the objective to support rightsholders in their efforts to exert influence in accessing productive and social services and political participation. Voice forms an integral pillar of the Ministry's overall Dialogue and Dissent², and Power of Voices³ frameworks which aims to strengthen the capacity for lobby and advocacy of civil society organisations in low- and lower-middle-income countries to allow for participation in mainstream development processes. Voice is executed by a consortium of Oxfam Novib and Hivos which coordinate the programme at national level in the ten Voice focus countries⁴: Oxfam in Laos is responsible for Voice in Laos.

Overall, Voice targets five rightsholder groups. Depending on a country's contextual analysis, calls for proposals will focus on specific groups through an intersectional lens. Voice in Laos **primarily** focuses on:



The youth and the elderly;



Women facing exploitation, abuse and/or violence;

and a **secondary** and **intersectional** focus with:



Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people;



People living with disabilities;



Ethnic minorities.

The Voice rightsholder groups are often the hardest to reach. Therefore innovative approaches to strengthening capacity of lobby and advocacy as well as empowerment are essential. A linking and learning process encourages sharing of lessons learned, and provides a forum for mutual learning and empowerment of the most marginalised and discriminated groups. Voice is an eight-year programme, for which a total of €86 million is available for programme-, grants-, management- and linking and learning costs. This includes a total of €60.2 million available for grants for ten countries, the Voice 2016-2023 Fund.

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

² <https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documents/parliamentary-documents/2015/07/01/voice-the-accountability-fund-and-the-participation-of-civil-society-organisations-in-theme-based-calls-for-proposals/letter-to-parliament-on-voice.pdf>

³ <https://voice.global/assets/2019/12/Voice-policy-frame-Extension-English-November-2019.pdf>

⁴ The Voice focus countries are: Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Indonesia, Philippines, Laos and Cambodia.

2. What types of grants will be awarded?

The Voice grant facility is designed to support informal groups as well as formal organisations, coalitions, and networks although the applicant needs to be legally registered or recognised and have a bank account in the applicant's name. The grant types are as follows:



Empowerment grants: Targeting (informal) groups or organisations to raise awareness, to work on leadership skills, build confidence and skills and work against discrimination of the most marginalised groups. Smaller grants with a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 24 months, which are accessible for informal groups⁵ through for example a partnership with formal organisations. Empowerment grants can be up to €25,000.



Influencing grants: Targeting organisations and networks to strengthen their influencing, lobby and advocacy capacities to amplify the voices of rightsholder groups. Influencing grants that are country specific can be up to €200,000 for a duration of between 18 and 36 months.



Innovate and Learn grants: Innovate and Learn grants focus on organisations that want to learn from innovation and/or to test and scale new approaches with a focus on human-centred innovations that are context-specific and relevant to **empowering, amplifying and/or influencing the voice of rightsholders** to participate fully in society. Innovate and Learn grants can be up to €250,000 for a minimum duration of 12 and a maximum duration of 36 months.



Sudden Opportunity grants: Creating flexibility to undertake joint action to address specific rapid opportunities to influence policy or practice in dealing with a reduction of civic space. The opportunity impacts one or more of the Voice rightsholders in one or more of the impact themes. Grants responding to a sudden opportunity are available from €5,000 to €200,000 for a duration between 6 and 12 months.

To date, **Influencing Grants** in Laos is available in 2020 only.

For each grant type, there are different approaches related to making proposals, assessing applications and reporting against grants. Empowerment grants are flexible and contain fewer requirements. Influencing, and Innovate and Learn grants have more requirements to mitigate risk and increase accountability. We strongly urge you to review the Frequently Asked Questions available via: <https://www.voice.global/f-a-q/>.

Voice stands out from other grant-making programmes by developing a grant application and reporting process that is accessible, user-friendly and innovative adapted to the rightsholder groups and grant type.

⁵ Groups which emerge naturally due to the response and common interests of the members of an organisation who can easily identify with the goals or independent activities of the group.

- For Influencing Grant, budget proposed is more than 50% of the annual income of the consortium.
- Proposed project is not responding to the VOICE thematic areas

Linking and Learning

The Linking and Learning component provides an exciting opportunity to link to other stakeholders and to learn together. Voice promotes and supports linking and learning throughout. Also within the grants. All grantees are encouraged to include linking and learning activities in their proposal and ways of working.

Therefore Voice invites you:

- To plan for involvement of the rightsholder group(s) and main stakeholders in all project phases and relevant decision making
- To develop a change agenda for the project in particular and if relevant, for your organisation in general
- To develop your own learning agenda or learning questions
- To join one of the existing and/or new groups or events focusing on shared learning and innovation.⁶ that will work on different learning questions
- Propose innovative approaches or solutions that can be tested and if successful, be scaled up
- To document all the learning and changes happening within your project
- To engage in gathering stories of change as part of the monitoring and evaluation of the project
- To engage actively with other grantees and the Voice team to overcome challenges and to learn

4. How will your application be assessed?

from successes but even more, from 'failures' and challenges

Voice uses a 3-step assessment process. These are:

1. Eligibility or threshold criteria: minimum standards that all applications must meet. If an application does not meet all of the threshold criteria, it will be rejected.
2. Criteria relating to the quality of the project proposal (project check).
3. Criteria relating to the quality of the applicant organisation or the lead party of the consortium (organisational check).

For the small grants (empowerment grants up to €25,000) a lighter / adapted version of these types of criteria apply.

Step 1: Threshold Criteria

The threshold criteria are minimum standards that all applications for Voice grants must meet. The criteria are as follows:

- a.** Applications can only be submitted by organisations which possess legal registration/recognition and a bank account in the applicant's name -even if just opened for the purpose of Voice.
- b.** Applications are only open to locally registered entities in Laos⁷. Empowerment grants are also open to informal groups and non-registered organisations.,
- c.** The project needs to address one or more of the impact themes:
 - improving access to (productive) resources (finance, land and water) and employment
 - improving access to social services, health and education in particular
 - fostering space for citizen participation:
- d.** The project benefits one or more of the following rightsholder groups:
 - The elderly/senior citizens and young people
 - Women facing exploitation, abuse, violence
 - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gender, intersex (LGBTI) people
 - People living with disabilities
 - Ethnic minorities group

Voice emphasises the intersectionality among groups and prefer to see projects that tackle more than one barrier to inclusion. Voice in Laos focuses on the elderly and women as cross-cutting identities, and is especially welcomed in all projects.

- e.** As a sudden opportunity or threat cannot be influenced by one organisation or entity exclusively, an application to address a sudden opportunity must include collective actions⁸.
- f.** The applicant or the lead party (if the application is made by a consortium) is a legally registered not-for-profit civil society or community-based organisation with an operational bank account in the applicant's name. Social enterprises are welcome to apply and must be able to show how their social mission is embedded in their organisational processes.
- g.** The applicant or the lead party (if the application is made by a consortium) is a local entity with an operational bank account in the applicant's name.

⁷ For the purposes of Laos this means registration as an NPA with the Ministry of Interior or as a (social) enterprise or as a locally recognised organisation. The non-negotiable element is a bank account in the organisation's name.

⁸ Behaviour or actions of a group of individuals or organisations working towards a common goal. When individuals or organisations engage in collective action, the strength of the group's resources, knowledge and efforts is combined to reach a goal shared by all parties.

