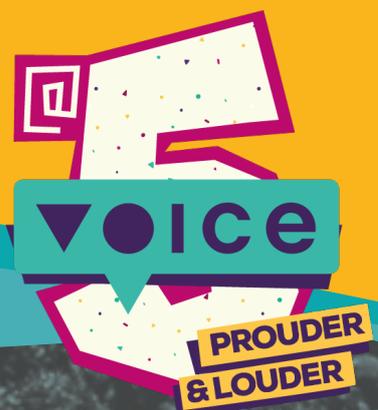




# VOICE(S) (UN)TOLD

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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WOMEN WITH ALBINISM

invisible, ritual killings, ghosts or devil, prone to skin cancer, visual impairments



TRANS GENDER WOMEN

no access to health, discrimination, violence



YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME



invisible, no voice, not being taken seriously, not represented in disability movement

INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN AFRICA



early marriage, FGM, beading, no land rights, low status

INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN ASIA



no land rights, no access to resources, low status

ELDERLY WITHOUT SOCIAL SERVICES

no state pension, invisible, forgotten, caretakers



# INTRODUCTION

*“We have thrived even at the darkest and most challenging times of our existence by surviving the pandemic. We commit to continue, we commit to hope, and we commit to rise above the situation. Most of all, we commit to develop a community where inclusion is not a right, we have to work for but a right duly recognized.”*

EXCERPT FROM THE LARGER STORY WOVEN BY VOICE IN THE PHILIPPINES LINKING & LEARNING FACILITATOR YGOAL, BASED ON SHARING BY GRANTEE PARTNERS ABOUT THEIR VISION FOR THE VOICE IN THE PHILIPPINES COMMUNITY, BEYOND VOICE.

## HOPE IS A POWERFUL THING

Voice dedicates this report to the vibrant and powerful civil society movements the world over, who are mobilizing and advocating relentlessly for a just and equal present and future. From [resisting violence against women with albinism in Uganda](#) and [supporting community environmental defenders to protect themselves against reprisals in Madagascar](#), to [setting up a cooperative welfare fund for informal women workers in Laos](#) and [truth telling efforts to convey the experience of survivors of human rights violations in Aceh and Timor-Leste through video documentaries in Indonesia](#).

Rightsholders and grantee partners of Voices continued to fan the flames of equality, solidarity, community

and justice amidst a second pandemic year. You give us hope and we hold you in deep gratitude.

2021 was a crucial bridge year for Voice. It marked the end of phase 1 (2016-2020) and the start of the extension phase (2021-2024). As a result of this continuing journey as well as the plans we could not fully realise, we defined 2020 as the year that was (un)finished. In 2021, we made our best efforts to finish phase 1. This effort was met with immense challenges as the pandemic continued to rise and subside the world over, including in the Voice focus countries. Movement restrictions and other public health measures continued to affect daily life, delaying or changing grantee partners' finalisation of their projects. At the end of 2021, Voice honoured 205 requests for amendments to the total of 395 grant agreements from phase 1. This is evidence not only of the practical challenges of administering grants and managing projects in an unprecedented



Grantee partner from Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS (APLHIV) in Laos shares a joke with a rightsholder.

context but also the tenacity and adaptability of grantee partners and rightsholders. While chasing closures, the Voice teams also launched the first calls for proposals under the extension phase. This included the roll-out of the [NOW-Us! Awards](#) to celebrate innovation in inclusion in 6 Voice focus countries, the start-up of the Empowerment Accelerated 'graduation' grants, a joint call for proposals with ROOM in Kenya and Tanzania to support [innovative initiatives that explore how rightsholders experience freedom at the crossroads of faith and feminism](#), a call for proposals to support [creative projects that will encourage artists and rightsholders to use arts as a tool for activism in Indonesia](#), among a host of others.

[Linking and learning continued to connect](#), outgoing and incoming, grantee partners and rightsholders in numerous events and platforms, enabling new ideas and joint actions to emerge. Throughout the height of the pandemic, information about the facts, the impact and the individual experiences of support and resilience were shared via the WhatsApp groups, Facebook pages and other Voice platforms. Peer to peer capacity strengthening as well as creative joint campaigns is a growing part of linking and learning- online, face2face or hybrid.

In some way, grantee partners have become more appreciative of the added value of linking and learning with other organisations, they have become more visible to each other. It has created another space for the rightsholders, grantee partners, and Voice to do business unusual—to let go of the fear of not being in control or structured and to embrace trying out things which may be new.

As Shilla Adyero, from [Lutino Adunu](#) in Uganda shared:

*“I feel that with linking and learning, it gives you the opportunity to reflect but also learn from other people and in that process, you also grow by being able to re-check your approaches to development.”*

We are proud to present to you Voices (Un)told. The beginning of the journey in this new phase of Voice.

# WHO WE ARE

*“Are you ready for me?  
I will expand what it  
means to belong.  
I don’t need you  
to accept me,  
I embraced myself  
a long time ago,  
Eloquent in myself,  
Successful in being me.”*

SITAWA NAMWALIE, KENYAN POET AND PLAYWRIGHT

## FROM VOICE TO BELONGING

2021 will perhaps be remembered as the year when living in a pandemic went from being new to being ‘normal’ for people across the world. For Voice, it presented an early opportunity to engage its global community in a reflective and celebratory event to mark 5 years of being. And so came about the [Voice@5 celebrations!](#) In Laos, Nigeria, Mali, Niger and Uganda, Voice teams gathered in-person with grantee partners and rightsholders and other wellwishers. In Kenya, Tanzania, Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines the Voice community connected virtually for their own national celebrations. Most importantly, for two



Ata Ratu, East Sumba's beloved singer song writer and female Marapu cultural figure, preparing to record songs to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.



hours on 7 April, we were in one space at the global celebration- #connected and #prouderandlouder. More than 384 people participated offline (in capitals and in villages) and more than 570 people participated online, including people who watched the live streams. There were 16 different languages, including sign languages! We danced to the beats of [DJ Catsu Diosi](#) from Uganda founder of the Dope Gal Africa network that celebrates and promotes African and diaspora female DJs and music creatives. We were moved to tears by a [collaborative performance](#) by Madina N'Daiye, the first woman and woman with visual impairment to play the kora, and Sitawa Namwalie, acclaimed poet, playwright and performer from Kenya.

The [Magic of Our Voices](#), documenting the stories of rightsholders and grantee partners, is the most powerful and humbling legacy of this event. Voice would not exist were it not for the people who have come together in a community around its shared purpose. The rightsholders and grantee partners who daily live the principle “Nothing About Us Without Us” as they affect change for their communities. The Voice team members who work their hearts out to make grants, amplify voices and facilitate linking & learning. And our allies, supporters and funders who continually trust us and guide us.

What kept Voice going in 2021 was the immense energy and creativity displayed by rightsholders and grantee partners as they adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic and conceptualised new projects to enhance inclusion for their communities. Following the trend from 2020, we saw a growth in **responsive approaches to using social media and digital technology** to foster social change. In Nigeria for example, Integriti Technologies and the Yes We Can Youth Leadership Initiative started [Politecracy](#) to equip rural youth with digital skills and promote political literacy. In Cambodia, the Khmer Youth Association is using an online platform to share messages that counter negative gender stereotypes from an intersectional perspective through an initiative called “**YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL**”. In Mali, the Association Malienne pour la Protection des Albinos is forming partnerships not only with other Disabled Peoples

Organisations but also a network of bloggers and influencer activists to advocate for the implementation of a law mandating quotas for political participation of women with disabilities through its project [Equilibrons pour un Mali plus inclusive](#).

Complementing these interesting examples of online activism, we had powerful offline initiatives demonstrating that change-making at the local level does not stop. With or without a pandemic. In Tanzania, the Aqua Farm Organization Arts and Culture for Development is creating an arts for change campaign to overcome socio-cultural and religious barriers that prevent women from participating in fisheries through the [Bahari HUB Yetu. Ukombozi wa Wanawake](#) project. In Indonesia, Sumba Integrated Development is continuing to organise to enhance access to social and education services for Marapu believers including through integrating Marapu inclusive curriculum in formal and informal education systems. In Uganda, [Voice of Encouragement](#) will take lessons from civil society in Kenya and Zambia to advocate for the re-entry of pregnant girls who are compelled to drop out of schools.

## MOVING TO THE SOUTH

A lookback on Voice in 2021 would not be complete without acknowledging the leadership transition in Voice and the purpose with which [Marinke van Riet](#) moved on from her position as the Programme Manager of Voice. She locates her conviction of ‘moving leadership to the South’ squarely in the context of discussions around decolonising aid and localising development. Representation matters. This provides inspiration not only for Voice’s ways of working now but also as it continues evolving for the future. Marinke’s departure from the team came at the heels of a long process of decentralisation that has resulted in a stronger presence of team members in the countries and regions where Voice works. These transitions, both within the coordination and country teams, in an already tumultuous and precarious context have required extraordinary tenacity, grace and compassion from current and incoming team members.

Above and beyond these changes in their own composition, the Voice teams grappled with an ever-changing context that presented diverse challenges to the work of grantee partners, particularly smaller, rightsholder led organizations and groups. Funding restrictions that

apply to Voice and cascade down to grantee partners coupled with the pandemic meant that the Voice teams had to continuously reflect on how best to accommodate the needs of the grantee partners while meeting accountability requirements. This meant listening to recommendations on COVID-19 responses, incorporating wellbeing into programming and budgeting, and being mindful in communications. Through all this, we continue to be buoyed by a common sense of purpose and the realization that these steps in inculcating care as a core value in grant-making are necessary to #ShiftThePower.

We are also thrilled to share that the mid-term review recommendation of greater representation of rightsholders in the Voice [advisory board](#) has now been fully realised. In October 2021, Rinaldi Ridwan, Co-founder and Vice-Chair, Indonesian Adolescent Health Association joined Nidhi Goyal, Bart Romijn, Christine Kandie, Caroline Kouassiaman and Dumiso Gatsha, completing the advisory board. We are grateful to have such powerful activists and development practitioners guiding the work of Voice.

## BUILDING TRANSFORMATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Since its inception, Voice has been intentional in seeking to listen and learn from its grantee partners. In keeping with this ethos, Voice in February 2021, commissioned the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP), to carry out a confidential survey with its grantee partners to understand what we are doing well and what we could be doing better. 257 grantee partners (a 69% response rate!) made time to engage in this exercise at an especially challenging and constraining time and provided feedback documented in [this report](#) prepared by CEP.

We were inspired to learn that grantee partners see Voice as having a positive impact on the work of the grantee partners themselves, their fields and their communities. The sense of solidarity and connection forged by our Linking & Learning efforts were also well received by grantees. Voice’s commitment to diversity and inclusion in its work and its commitment to combatting racism is also clearly seen and appreciated by our grantee partners. More importantly, Voice will [take action to address the areas of improvement our grantee partners have identified](#). These include- the quality of interactions between the Voice team and grantee partners, the stringency, intensiveness and formality of some Voice processes, and the perceived pressure on grantee partners to change their organisational priorities during proposal development. We are humbled



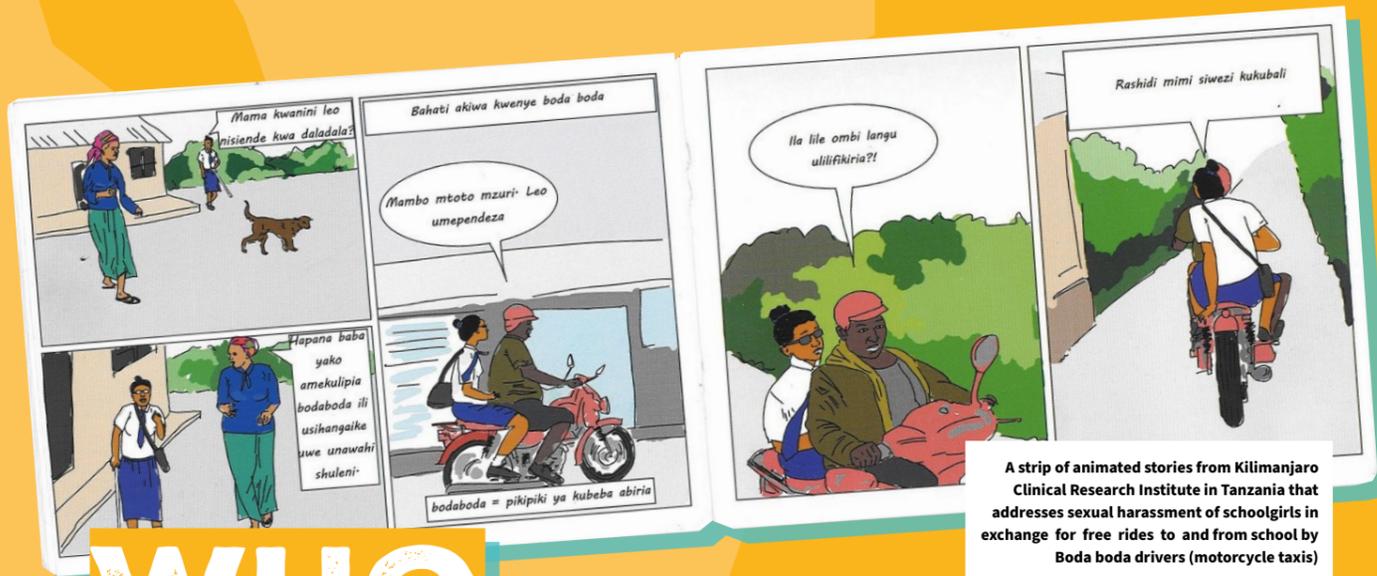
A young refugee woman from the Greater Wakiso area in Central Uganda participates in a practical skill building session on fashion design

to receive this feedback, which is particularly telling in the context of the long-due but ongoing sector-wide discussions on localising, decentralising and decolonising aid. While we are keen to contribute to the systemic change that the #ShiftThePower movement is demanding, we are equally committed to taking immediate, tangible actions that demonstrate our intention to be a feminist, trust-based, and inclusive grant-making facility. Since September 2021, Voice has been taking steps to ensure socialisation of the survey report within Voice, within Oxfam and Hivos, in addition to disseminating the report to grantee partners.

Voice has also begun an internal reflection on how to translate the recommendations received into concrete changes to our ways of working. One such reflection is taking place on the issue of terminology and a shift in our framing to viewing grantees as partners. This change comes from a collective understanding of the power of language and the way in which terminology itself can empower or disempower. We seek to signal our intention to build transformative partnerships with groups whose work Voice is resourcing and move away from transactional ways of working while recognising the funding relationship and the power dynamics it creates. The measures outlined in [the response](#) are some steps we are taking to ensure that this change in terminology is practically embodied further in our grant-making and ways of working.

During celebration of International Day of the elderly, the youth join hands with the elderly in Cambodia to amplify the voices of the elderly





# WHO WE FUND

Since its inception, Voice has been growing bigger, louder, and bolder as it continues to support a diverse group of nearly 1400 organisations, informal groups, and networks in Africa and Asia, representing the 5 rightsholder groups and previously unreached communities and sectors. Based on cumulative targets from 2016 to 2024, Voice has now supported a total number of 523 projects or 83% of the planned 629 grants. Like 2020, the year 2021 remained a transition period for Voice, characterised by the simultaneous closing of projects from phase 1 and processing of grant approvals for the 58 newly opened calls for proposals for the extension phase. Out of the 396 phase 1 projects, only 190 had been closed by December 2021, while for the extension phase,

131 contracts were signed. These processes continued to be enormously impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, while at the same time requiring an intensive amount of administrative work. Nevertheless, Voice continued to work flexibly and responsively with the grantee partners, given the pandemic driven realities of the Voice rightsholders.

Distributing the total funds expended in phase 1 and committed in the extension phase over the types of grants now gives the following picture:

## NIGER

- € 419,721
- € 673,933
- € 983,100
- € 87,217
- € 2,163,970

## UGANDA

- € 445,973
- € 1,891,127
- € 1,092,957
- € 384,047
- € 3,814,104

## LAOS

- € 360,031
- € 985,611
- € 1,193,444
- € 155,830
- € 2,694,915

## PHILIPPINES

- € 824,115
- € 1,666,211
- € 1,927,958
- € 433,027
- € 4,851,310

## MALI

- € 343,233
- € 2,043,696
- € 1,490,231
- € 35,076
- € 3,912,236

## NIGERIA

- € 456,787
- € 1,450,945
- € 1,182,711
- € 1,048,374
- € 4,138,817

## KENYA

- € 395,199
- € 1,914,590
- € 1,305,329
- € 324,245
- € 3,939,363

## CAMBODIA

- € 672,460
- € 1,046,097
- € 1,396,935
- € 68,530
- € 3,184,022

## INDONESIA

- € 1,027,181
- € 3,164,076
- € 1,777,981
- € 150,420
- € 6,119,658

## TANZANIA

- € 904,240
- € 901,764
- € 912,116
- € 189,838
- € 2,907,959

## MULTI-COUNTRY

- € 419,401
- € 6,235,064
- € 3,426,624
- € 592,498
- € 10,673,586

## GRAND TOTAL

€ 48,399,941

Figure 2 - Grant funding allocation per country and type of grant



## EMPOWERMENT PROJECTS

Investing in the self-led transformation of small rightsholder groups have now begun to take the shape of more sustained, deeper empowerment processes at the individual, group, and/or organisational level through the new graduation grants. From pilot-testing the Empowerment Accelerator grants in Tanzania and Indonesia, 6 more countries followed suit and released their own Calls for Proposals (CfPs). Seven (7) countries also continued to reach new grantees working on raising awareness, developing their own leadership, and building self-confidence through the regular Empowerment Grant window. From phase 1 to now, the Empowerment grants comprise 44% of the total number of contracts, but due to their small funding amount, they only amount to 13% of the total fund value.

From the year 2020 when the pandemic began up to the present, Empowerment grantees have been coping hardly with unexpected shifts in priorities, beyond their Voice-supported projects, as they experience the direct, harsh impacts of COVID-19. Loss of livelihood, food insecurity, inability to address emergency needs, and lack of access to information and technology are some of the reasons affecting their level of interest and ability to sustain their engagement in the projects and/or participation in the grant selection processes. Voice initiated internal assessments to understand these changes and gaps, and identified ways to respond to and support the needs of the rightsholders, reflected in the framing of CfPs for the extension phase and some flexibility in implementing the grants. For instance, the [Influencing Grant CFP in Laos](#) specifically noted the impact of COVID-19 to the returning migrants from Thailand, and invited applicants to respond to it. In the same way, the [Innovate & Learn grant CFP](#) from the Philippines invited projects to address loss of livelihoods and reduced source of income. This continues to be an area of learning and exploration in Voice.



## INFLUENCING PROJECTS

Strengthening the lobby and advocacy capacities of organisations to better represent, include, and amplify the rightsholders' voices continue to be the largest grant type in terms of contract value, amounting to 45% of the total funds. Fifteen (15) CfPs were opened for the extension phase, with priority in approvals due to their multi-year duration. A window specific to repeat multi-country Influencing grants resulted in continued support to 7 regional grantee partners working to build on the gains of their initiatives and further ensure their long-term sustainability. These include the protection and promotion of the civic engagement of young and women activists in Africa, and amplification of the voices and human rights of sex workers, deaf people, and women and young people who use drugs in Asia, among others.



## INNOVATE AND LEARN PROJECTS

Providing a space for testing, learning, and/or scaling up ideas and approaches, have taken an exciting turn in the extension phase. A total of 23 new CfPs were released to invite new innovations, engage or re-engage organisations called Linking & Learning Facilitators who work hand-in-hand with the other grantee partners, and launch the national NOW-US! Awards. Aiming to localise the successful partnership with Partos and Spindle in 2018, the NOW-US! Awards are now being implemented in 6 countries, piloted in Tanzania in 2019, to honor and recognise initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion, and trigger the self-empowerment of rightsholder groups and communities. A new CFP for a global Linking & Learning Facilitator was also released to strengthen the engagement of multi-country grantees in linking and learning activities.



## SUDDEN OPPORTUNITY PROJECTS

Responding to specific, unanticipated opportunities and threats through collective action remain open in the extension phase, with a slow uptake in 2021, seeing only 2 released CfPs. Since 2016, Sudden Opportunity grants have made up 7% of the total fund value of Voice, with largest portfolio in Nigeria. In 2021, Voice supported [6 ground-breaking projects](#) awarded grants under the Beyond a Hashtag Sudden Opportunity call for proposals which was prompted by the threats to civic space seen in the wake of the powerful campaigns and movements mobilizing under the umbrella #EndSARS, #EndPoliceBrutality, #EndBadGovernanceinNigeria, etc.



Photo session after a capacity strengthening session in Tillabéri and Tahoua regions

Titre du projet :

"Soutenir l'émancipation et la participation citoyenne des femmes victimes"

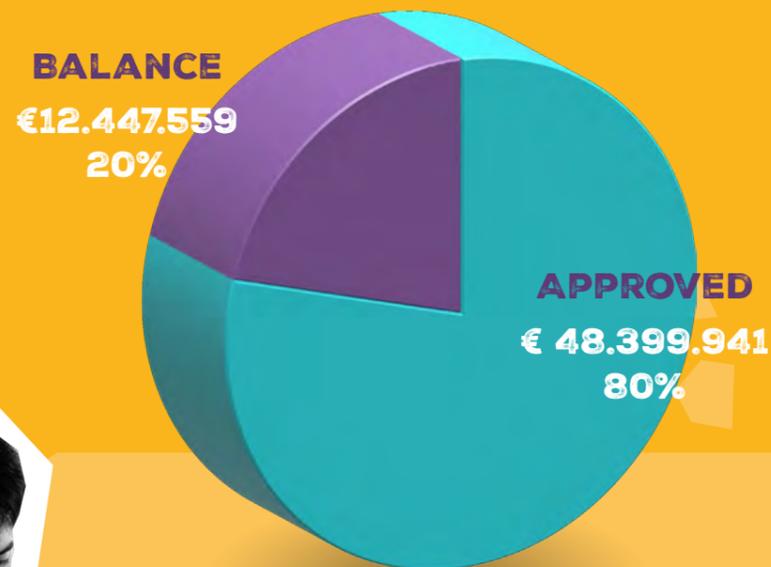
# PHASE IN, PHASE OUT

The transition of Voice from phase 1 to the extension phase has been a highly anticipated moment due to the expanding possibility of resourcing newer and larger number of rightsholder groups. However, the testing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic brought Voice and the grantee partners to a near standstill in 2021. In this section, therefore, we find it helpful to provide a more detailed insight into our progress by referring to both phase 1 and extension phase targets according to grant types, rightsholder groups, and impact themes.

Overall, Voice has allocated around 48 million euros to 523 grantees worldwide from 3 funding sources: MoFA phase 1 with almost 35 million, the extension phase with 13,1 million, and a collaboration with TAI-Hewlett

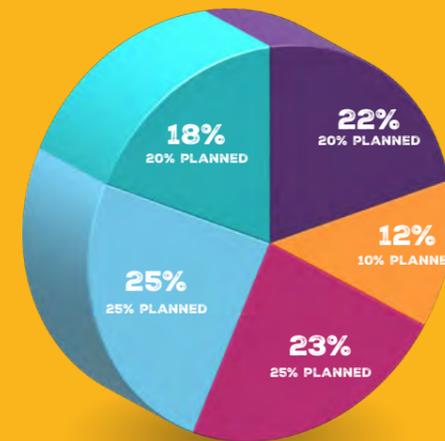
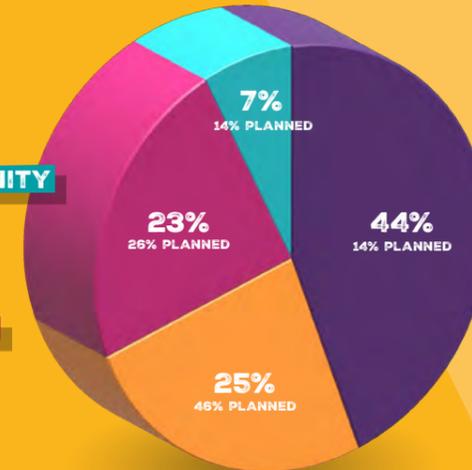
with almost 400k. At the end of 2021, 80% of the full available amount of 60,8 million euros from MoFA has been allocated. The remainder is expected to be approved in 2022. While this is good progress against the total budget available to Voice, there are continuous challenges in terms of expenditure at the level of grantee partners and resulting delays in transfers at the level of Voice. It is important to reiterate that the pandemic demands exceeding levels of flexibility and adaptiveness from all actors. In response, grantee partners and Voice are making a slow but sure pivot to meet the needs of the moment.

## TOTAL FUNDS € 60.847.500



## GRANT MODALITIES

- SUDDEN OPPORTUNITY
- EMPOWERMENT
- INFLUENCING
- INNOVATE & LEARN

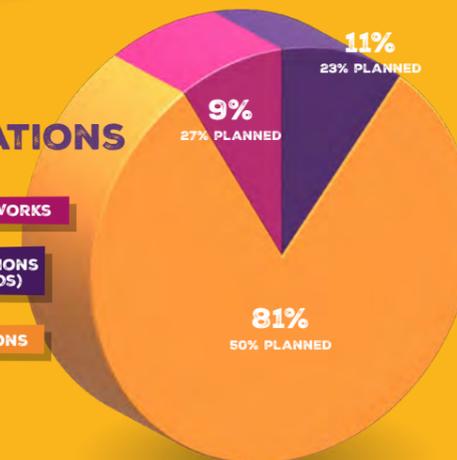


## GROUPS

- INDIGENOUS PEOPLE & ETHNIC MINORITIES
- VULNERABLE YOUTH AND SENIOR CITIZENS
- WOMEN FACING EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND/OR VIOLENCE
- PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
- LGBTI PEOPLE

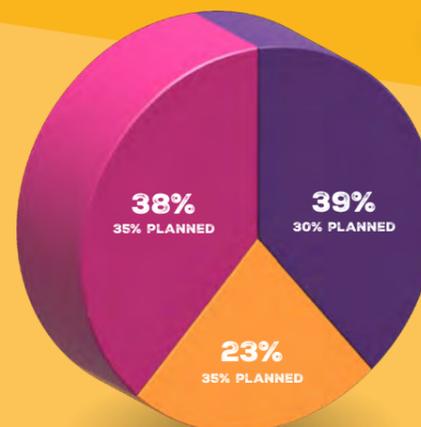
## TYPES OF ORGANISATIONS

- PLATFORMS AND NETWORKS
- INFORMAL ORGANISATIONS (GRASSROOTS AND CBOS)
- FORMAL ORGANISATIONS



## THEMES

- ACCESS TO IMPROVED SOCIAL SERVICES
- ACCESS TO PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES AND EMPLOYMENT
- INCREASED SPACE FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT



The targets on the left were determined based on the initial context analysis done by Voice during its inception phase, showing where and how the funds will be distributed in order to be aligned with the needs identified in the focus countries. The context analysis was last updated in 2020. As seen in the realised accomplishments, there are some areas where significant variances were observed (i.e., the number of Empowerment and Influencing projects, the types of organisations, and the distribution of themes). There are different reasons for these differences. For one, the country teams, in their own annual assessment and planning processes, found out that there are groups who had been harder to reach than others due to geographical locations, access to information, and weak capacities in seeking funds, among others. Thus, there had been more effort to reach and support informal groups and small organisations to support their visibility and capacity to voice out their hopes and aspirations. The contexts in the countries have also been changing rapidly due to the shifts in global and national socioeconomic-political trends. As a result, there were shifts in the way the countries framed their CfPs. In this [call for Influencing Grants in Kenya](#), for instance, there was a focus on rethinking advocacy strategies to promote the rightsholders' political and civic engagement, and moving away from conventional service delivery framework.



A rightsholder from Lao Disabled Women Development Center in a peer-to-peer pottery skills-sharing session.



A rightsholder advocating for inclusion of persons with disabilities in employment opportunities in Indonesia



Rightsholders march as part of celebrating the civil society week in Tanzania

## GRANT TYPES VIS-À-VIS IMPACT THEMES

Voice transitioned from being under the Dialogue and Dissent policy framework of MoFA in phase 1 to becoming part of the Power of Voices framework in the extension phase, particularly focusing on diversity and inclusion. While the nature of the programme remained the same, there were nevertheless some shifts in intentionality, reflected in the way the grant types and impact themes had been interacting in both phases. For instance, the Influencing Grants have the biggest fund value (47%) and threshold (i.e., maximum of 200,000 euros per project in the countries) in line with the original Dialogue and Dissent framework, but over the years we have been contracting more Empowerment projects (40%) with the smallest funding threshold among the four grant types, amounting to maximum 25,000 euros only per project. In the extension phase focusing on diversity and inclusion, these grant thresholds did not shift, but the intention to invest more in rightsholder-led groups and organisations has continued to be prioritised, even in the larger grant types of Influencing and Innovate & Learn.

Furthermore, the added impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to the programme, while transitioning into the extension phase, really required Voice to rethink and reassess its responsiveness to the needs and aspirations of the rightsholders. Thus, the three impact themes of Voice needed to be contextualised further in the extension phase based on the rapidly shifting demands of the time. The need for innovation and creativity has never been more underscored than in the recent CfPs inviting all projects and grant types to promote economic empowerment due to loss of livelihood, access to mental health services and wellness programmes, protection of digital rights, security and privacy, access to information and technology, harnessing arts and music to advocate for social justice, and strengthened initiatives in many other thematic areas. While the achieved targets, as illustrated in table 2 above, had no major variance from phase 1, these specific themes nevertheless provide a better picture of where the rightsholders' priorities are during the beginning of the extension phase.

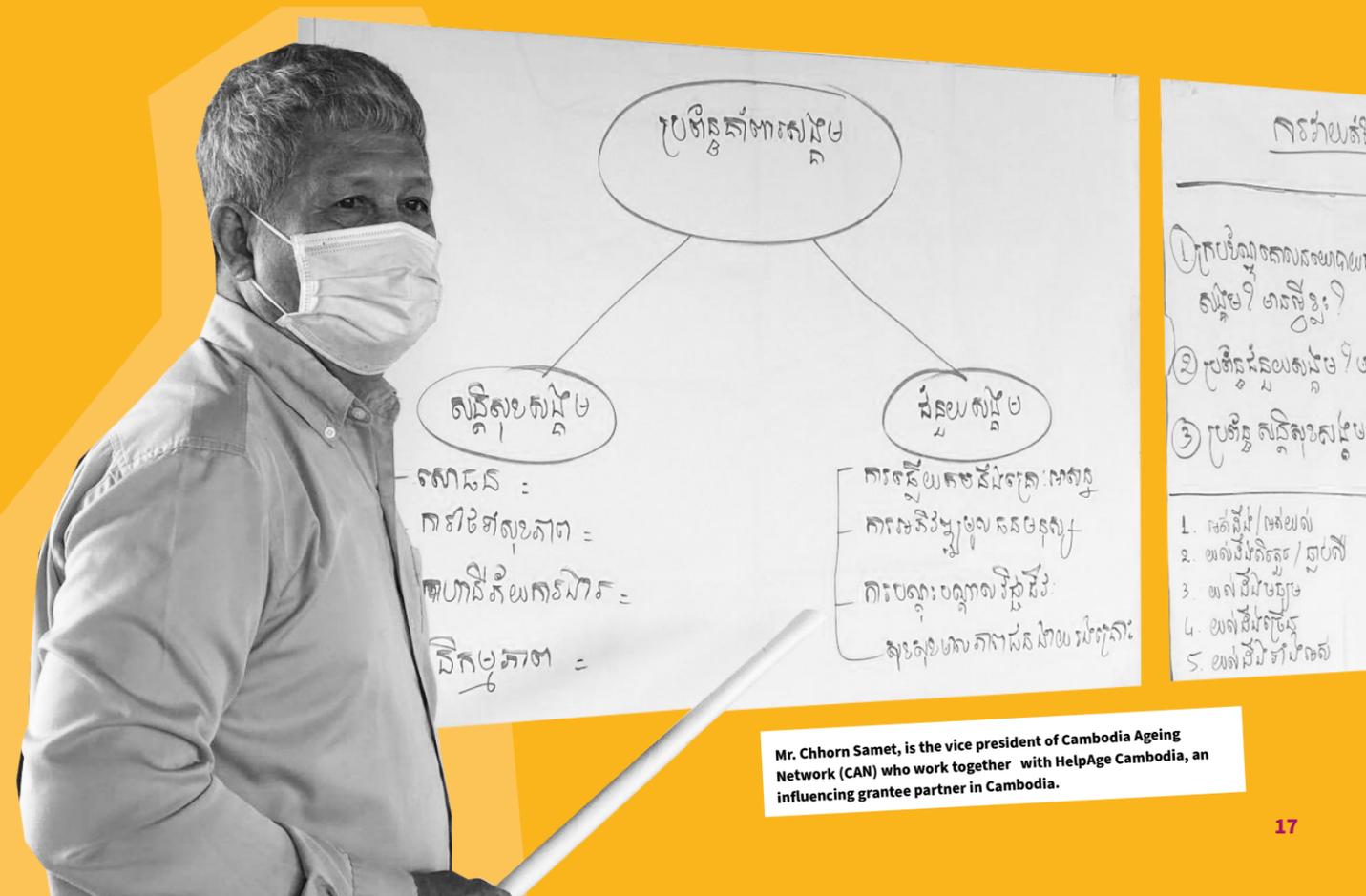
## RIGHTSHOLDERS

The strong push to underscore intersectionality as a fundamental aspect of understanding the lives of rightsholders had allowed Voice to reach an even broader network of communities, groups, and individuals with overlapping layers of lived experiences and intersecting identities. In the extension phase of Voice, the newly approved projects do not only remain focused on working alongside the 5 rightsholder groups; they have also opened and widened the way for the programme to reach and include more, such as stateless people and refugees, people affected by modern slavery, people who use drugs, people in conflict areas, individuals and groups most affected by climate change and natural disasters, and many more. This is in addition to the "sub-groups" previously identified in phase 1, characterised by the intersections of gender, ethnicity, age, and disability.

Investing in multi-country grants, which are regional grants to support and link the national initiatives to broader international movements, have also allowed Voice to embrace the participation and representation of rightsholders and their organisations based outside the 10 target countries. In Asia, the projects are reaching countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand. In Africa,

we are supporting grantee partners working in Central Africa (e.g., Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, etc.) and even Southern Africa (e.g., Malawi, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia). In phase 1, Voice released a regional Empowerment grant to connect small organisations in two or more countries to connect with each other and embark on a joint learning trajectory. However, in the extension phase, the multi-country CfPs were designed to focus more on the larger grant types to leverage the influencing work and innovations at the regional level.

The increasing representation of different subsets of rightsholder groups within Voice grantee partners and the widening geographic reach of the projects that Voice grants support are a concrete demonstration of one of the key findings of our mid-term review- **Voice has untapped potential to support self-led, rightsholder groups requiring resources.**



Mr. Chhorn Samet, is the vice president of Cambodia Ageing Network (CAN) who work together with HelpAge Cambodia, an influencing grantee partner in Cambodia.





## AT A GLANCE

**475 EMPOWERMENT PROJECTS SUPPORTED**

2016-2021

**2035 RIGHTSHOLDER GROUPS HAVE A SAFE SPACE**

to convene, share concerns and exchange ideas and experiences

**842 FORMAL AND INFORMAL GROUPS PRESENTED THEIR OWN CHANGE AGENDAS**

to external stakeholders

**To Empower:** A process by which rightsholders gain power over their own life, take their own decisions, by creating safe spaces to meet, increasing their confidence, and building awareness and skills.

In 2021, we continued supporting grantee partners and rightsholders who are organizing themselves and their communities to access their rights. Despite various challenges and limitations, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rightsholders continued taking ownership by working on their own empowerment. There were testimonies of boosted confidence and self-esteem among rightsholders, people who are facing marginalisation and facing discrimination overcoming self-doubt and internalised stigma, and rightsholders striving to become the best version of themselves while finding their voice and sharing their views. Below we share 3 stories from grantee partners highlighting these changes:

### A JOURNEY OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

The Indonesian Mental Health Association (IMHA), an Empowerment grantee partner has been working to support people with psychosocial disabilities who barely have access to basic rights and services. Through awareness raising and trainings, more rightsholders are now aware of their rights and they are carrying out advocacy to challenge the status quo. Rightsholders who previously lacked self-confidence and were ashamed of their disability status, as well as

receiving stigma and derision from the surroundings, have now acknowledged their rights as persons with (mental) disabilities and are rallying to advocate for their own rights. The IMHA engaged rightsholders in the formulation of a number of campaign and advocacy issues, as well as a creative design for a disability rights campaign based on the challenges they confront on a daily basis.

*“We would like to express our gratitude to Voice for giving incomparable support for our effort to “give back the voice” to women and men with psychosocial disabilities, one of the most stigmatised and discriminated groups in our society. We gained a lot of learning while also harvesting the results of this project. We now have new cadres and new networks that will contribute greatly to our advocacy effort in the future for the rights of persons with psychosocial disability”.*

ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN PARTICIPANT

### OUR RIGHTS, OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

In Niger, Voice Influencing grantee partner [Timidria](#) created a platform for awareness raising and active learning for women facing exploitation, abuse and or violence in North Niger on what their rights are and how they can rally together to pursue access to them. In 2021, there was significant progress in that some rightsholders reported a change in their mindset. People who thought there was nothing they could do to change their situation started taking charge of their lives and actively taking part in fighting against their own marginalization.

*“In the past, only the masters or their relatives had this right. We are now aware that this was a usurpation fostered by our lack of knowledge of our rights. Today, I can say: I said or I say. Before, we were told. We conduct our own awareness sessions on the themes of our choice, such as the participation of women in the communal councils”*

AHAOUA HAROUNA, WOMEN'S GROUP OF DAÏBERI

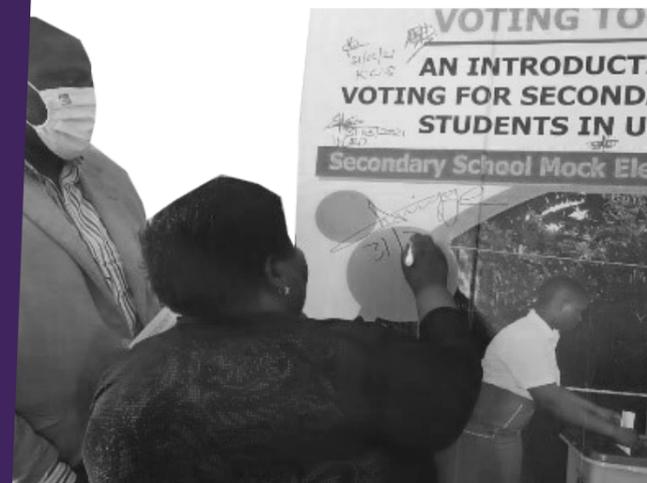
### FROM SPECTATING TO ACTING

[Sensitise Uganda](#) implemented an Empowerment project aimed at enhancing secondary students' civic participation through mock elections. The project conducted school-based election campaigns targeting school communities and outside communities including girls and boys, parents and leaders to create more awareness on civic and voter education. The concept of observing elections was introduced to empower students to know and understand their civic rights and duties, as well as the importance of casting their votes. Through this, rightsholders understood the role they have to play to promote democratic governance. “I started following national issues on TV because of the enlightenment I got from Sensitise Uganda”, Douglas, student at Progressive Senior Secondary School Kitintale. There is a need to widen the scope of intervention to reach even more students.

*“I felt good in my heart when my school was chosen among the schools that participated in the project. As a citizen, this exercise provided me a platform to participate in the national elections that were done in the country in January 2021 as a polling agent in my centre. I request Sensitise Uganda to expand the project to most of the areas in the country more especially rural-urban schools so that they also exercise it and they go and teach their people about how elections are done”.*

NAKIRANDA OLIVIA, STUDENT

Overall, these examples illustrate the dividends of empowerment efforts for grantee partners and rightsholders at multiple levels- individual (rightsholder), organisational (grantee partners) and community. The barriers to self-empowerment can range from self-stigmatisation and lack of awareness about individual and group rights, to express discrimination in exerting power as citizens. No matter the scale of the barrier, each step taken towards overcoming stigma, rights education and civic engagement, cascades wider social change.



Ms. Daisy Twesigye of The Electoral Commission launching the Mock Elections Toolkit developed by Sensitise Uganda as the Chief Guest



## AT A GLANCE

**823 (INFORMAL) GROUPS, ORGANISATIONS AND NETWORKS HAVE BUILT DIVERSE ALLIANCES,**

initiating an agenda to amplify rightsholders' voices

**164 ONLINE AND OFFLINE CAMPAIGNING ACTIVITIES**

undertaken

**1389 PUBLICATIONS LINKED TO AMPLIFICATION**

such as the *Echos from Madagascar* by *Natural Justice*, a sudden opportunity grantee partner whose project "Solidarity with African Environmental and Land Defenders" aims to support indigenous peoples and local communities and their grassroots organisations in up to seven countries in Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, DRC, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda and Madagascar).

**To Amplify:** is the process of acquiring the means and support to express and raise your voice.

Grantee partners and rightsholders demonstrated creativity and strength in a dynamic context by continuing to employ different tools and avenues to amplify their voices. They rose above existing challenges and decided to re-think, re-strategise and re-energise how they approached their amplification activities. 2021 also saw Linking & Learning facilitating organisations take the centre stage in facilitating connections between grantee partners and supporting amplification in different forms. Below we share 3 stories from grantee partners highlighting these changes:

## INSISTING ON BE/LONGING

The [ASEAN SOGIE Caucus \(ASC\)](#), a regional network of LGBTIQ human rights defenders and civil society organisations, organised the first-ever, month-long virtual [Southeast Asia Queer Cultural Festival 2021](#) with the theme "Be/Longings" in March 2021. The theme 'Be/Longings' was inspired by words "kerinduan" in Bahasa Indonesia or Bahasa Melayu, and "pangungulila" in Filipino. It sought to express the duality that the ASEAN region and its institutions are erasing a significant group of people from its memory. And from LGBTIQ persons point of view, they are missing a region that is genuinely caring, inclusive, and respectful of diversity. The [festival's programme](#) featured 30+ works, performances and events by 40+ queer activists and artists from all over Southeast Asia using various digital platforms. Through curating this cultural experience, ASC and their network of LGBTIQ activists, artists, culture workers and academics have engaged in a profound act of cultivating collective memory and generating social and cultural discourse on queer existence, thereby opening up a powerful alternative space for LGBTIQ people in the region to belong.

*"LGBTIQ people in Southeast Asia have always found ways to insist that we belong in our communities and in the region. We want to show that diversity of sexual and gender identities has always been part of our histories — this diversity even pre-dated colonisation and modern nation states that introduced laws that declared that our existence as illegal... With the help of Voice, this monumental festival was made possible, and LGBTIQ people from the region are given a space*



*to come together despite the many challenges that we are facing, a space where they can truly belong."*

ASEAN SOGIE CAUCUS, VOICE@5 MAGIC MOMENT

## LINKING ARMS, JOINING VOICES

The [Association for the promotion of youth in Kati](#) APYK, works to strengthen the leadership and engagement of girls and young women in the political sphere in Mali. APYK found itself facing a challenge in involving young women and girls who are not in school into their project. The consortium of [Femme et Tic](#) and [Kunafoni.com](#), the linking and learning facilitating organisation in Mali advised APYK to profile women and girl role models during the mobilisation and awareness campaigns instead of men, as was being done by APYK previously. APYK confirms that recalibrating its outreach approach in this way has enabled them to start integrating young women and girls more readily in their project.

In the Philippines, [YGOAL, Inc.](#), the linking & learning facilitating organisation in the Philippines, connected grantee partners and rightsholders with media practitioners. In some instances, this led to publication of [news articles that documented grantee partners innovations](#) to continuing reaching rightsholders and fulfilling their mandates in the context of the pandemic. In others, it resulted in profiling the personal stories of empowerment of rightsholders in mainstream media. This includes the account of Fermin Yap, a 21-year-old student who dreams of becoming a teacher one day who is also a person with visual impairment. Fermin won a national essay competition organised by the National Organization of Visually Empowered Ladies (NOVEL) in the Philippines in August 2021. [Fermin says:](#)

*"Winning for me validates my capacity, through my writing skills, to participate in such an advocacy campaign and to contribute to raising awareness on how to build an inclusive world for persons with visual impairment. I want to grab this opportunity to thank NOVEL Philippines and Preen.ph because you gave us this kind of moment to show our skills*

*in writing and most importantly, to present the characteristics of an inclusive world for persons with visual impairment that we must have in our country."*

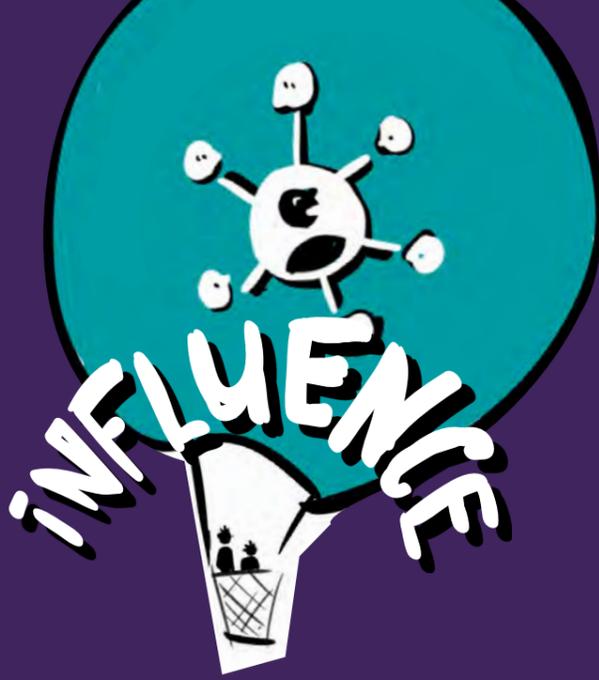
## BEYOND A HASHTAG

Nigeria's youth stood hand-in-hand to protest against the excessive force used by special anti-robbery squad, popularly known as SARS. They caught the world's attention through the #EndSARS movement which blossomed into the youth taking charge of their destiny for a better Nigeria. The sudden opportunity grant called "[Beyond a Hashtag](#)" brought creative youthful grantee partners like [Youth and Students Advocates for Development Initiative](#), [YSAD](#) among others with the project "[No Dey Give; Follow Traffic Rules](#)" which used innovative [digital campaigns](#) and use of toll-free numbers to create awareness on the menace of extortion of Nigerians by the police & how it is connected with police brutality. The campaigns galvanised citizens to move from bystanders to activists. Additionally, two countries; Kenya and Nigeria under one theme; Youth, Politics & the Digital Space held a knowledge exchange with the view to share experiences and lessons learnt in how the youth in both countries used [digital tools to call out the police](#) and in turn hold the government accountable.

*Undoubtedly, the youth play a vital role in their communities as they are a creative force and a dynamic source of innovations as they are contributing greatly to the political systems.*

PARTICIPANT AT THE KENYA AND NIGERIA'S COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE WEBINAR

As Voice completed the set-up of a fully localised linking & learning infrastructure in the 10 Voice focus countries, the Linking & Learning facilitator organisations embraced their role as a conduit for creative brainstorming, exchanging solutions and wider sharing of grantee partners and rightsholders stories. In the spaces of connection created by the Linking & Learning facilitator organisations, grantee partners found solutions to problems they faced in project implementation, found opportunities to strengthen their own skills on communicating their stories, and diversified and broadened their networks for wider reach.



## AT A GLANCE

**654 RIGHTSHOLDERS  
GROUPS, CSOS AND  
NETWORKS REPORT A  
BENEFIT**

by using a diverse set of lobby, advocacy and campaigning tools  
UP FROM 334 LAST YEAR

**301 VOICE GRANTEES  
HAVE DEFINED A  
CHANGE PLAN**

to strengthen their capacity to influence decision makers.  
UP FROM 183 LAST YEAR

**375 EXPERTS AND 219  
PLATFORMS HAVE BEEN  
DEPLOYED**

with the support of voice grants to strengthen grantees' and their implementing partners' social innovation and influencing capacities.  
UP FROM 131 EXPERTS AND 79 PLATFORMS LAST YEAR

**Influence:** The process where rightsholders and their representatives will use a range of lobby and advocacy tools to influence individuals, families, communities, private business, religious leaders, (social) media, and other decision-makers' policies, practices, and behaviours.

Grantee partners and rightsholders continued to adapt and refine their influencing approaches in line with the current COVID-19 context. Online training and knowledge sharing activities for leaders and activists as well as social media and radio campaigns were some of the ways in which influencing took place. This approach also had its limitations as activities around influencing decision-makers were often challenging, especially due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, some grantee partners were still able to conduct in-person meetings and taking an online approach worked well in other cases.

## AGE IS JUST A NUMBER

In Cambodia, [HelpAge Cambodia \(HAC\)](#) coordinated and supported representatives of Older People Associations (OPAs) from 5 capital-provinces in developing a new advocacy platform for elderly people, the Cambodian Ageing Network (CAN). Today, CAN represents more than 25,000 people from 5 capital-provinces and is an influential platform that enables elderly people and other marginalised groups to amplify their voices and echo their needs to policy makers and key decision makers at national levels.

As part of the success of HAC's Influencing grant, two elder representatives of CAN were selected as the members of the technical working group of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veteran and Youth rehabilitation (MoSVY) and fully involved themselves in the review and development of an action plan for the National Ageing Policy 2017-2030. One of them is Ms. Vanda, who is also CAN's president. She has put a lot of her efforts in collaboration with all members in advocacy work and engaging with multi-stakeholder and key governments through various dialogue and consultation to mainstream aging issues as well as to seek their support in addressing the needs of the elderly.



Mrs. Chan Roeung shows how she communicates with elderly persons. She is the Auditor of Older People's Associations (OPA's).

*"I felt very empowered and motivated of being a member in this technical working group with the ministry. I could say, it is my first time ever to join with national government to work on policy level"*

MS. VANNA, PRESIDENT OF CAN

## "I IDENTIFY AS..."

In Kenya, the [Nubian Rights Forum \(NRF\)](#) came up with innovative ideas to continue their advocacy efforts since COVID-19 started, using both digital and traditional media spaces to create more awareness on the importance and need of having identity documents. One of the most significant impacts was based on community-led advocacy. Building upwards from community forums, radio/media, and community skills training, NRF has seen members of their target communities plan and implement their own advocacy actions related to identification. These actions have targeted local, regional, and national policy makers from registrars to members of parliament, demanding change towards equality in the system.

In April 2021, for example, the organisation ran a #MYIDMYRIGHT web series with an aim of sharing success and challenging stories on obtaining legal documents. While these stories do not speak on the severity of the discrimination and risk of statelessness issues in Kenya for marginalised and minority communities, they highlight the challenges the community faces due to lack of documentation.

Through their different campaigns and by involving lawmakers in the activities under its Sudden Opportunity grant, NRF saw an increase in the application of legal documents with at least 500 Nubian individuals acquiring their birth certificates, passports, and identification cards.

As these individual experiences show, our grantee partners' projects allowed for influencing to happen on multiple levels across society, from the community level to the national stage. At the same time, individual actions are interconnected with actions at other levels, reinforcing each other. Champions and role-models such as Vanna and Metta inspire others like them, while NRF managed to motivate whole communities to speak up. Overall, the Influencing pathway of change its principle "Nothing About Us Without Us" illuminate ongoing processes of months and years, across which the influencing strategies of rightsholders unfold and are likely to encounter both unexpected challenges and unexpected successes as they are being implemented.



When I went to check I was told my documents disappeared.

A rightsholder giving first-hand account of the challenge of getting official identification documents

# LINKING AND LEARNING

Linking and Learning is the second core component of the Voice programme that contributes to the achievement of the overall results framework. It is a process centred on grantee partners and rightsholder groups co-creating opportunities to interact and learn with each other in an enabling environment where they are the ones who lead the way

Last year around this time we looked back and described 2020 as a year of amazing resilience and adaptability and creativity, a year to remember. Since then, we took a deep dive in linking and learning since the inception of Voice six years ago. These deeper reflections happened the second half of 2021.

So, 2021 closed with the writing of a learning document, bringing together experiences and lessons on the contributions grantee partners made to have society listen to their voices and seeing them for who they are. Human beings with all their rights and dreams. We also reflected on Voice as a grant facility for diversity, inclusion and innovation, and lastly, a reflection on Linking and Learning.

One important lesson drawn is to better listen to grantee partners, how they perceive the Linking and Learning component. Through trial and unlearning and being open to do new things, linking and learning came to life over the past six years; for the grantee partners (many of whom hadn't really thought about

linking and learning before), and for us, Voice teams. It inspired us to find different ways of supporting grantees to see and understand the potential value of sharing and connecting to others.

We also shifted the perception from Linking and Learning as a series of activities, to embracing it as an ongoing process. A process where all initiatives are based on consultation and founded on co-creation, coming together in such a way that it organically connects to the challenges of the grantee organisations and rightsholders projects initiatives, as well as their ways of working.

By now most countries have redesigned the linking and learning paths suiting their country's situation and civil society. Eight out of ten countries chose a new grantee partner for the facilitation of the in-country linking and learning activities. Based on prior experiences and inspiration from other countries and based on a deeper understanding of the Linking and Learning processes they envision.

Again in 2021, we could hardly meet face to face and were asked to show flexibility and creativity in our professional and private lives. However, some countries saw relatively few limitations due to the pandemic like Mali, Niger, Tanzania and Laos. Several face-to-face events took place here and organisations were able to meet up and learn together offline. Yet most remained online. Therefore, it wasn't possible to catch up with all plans for Indabas and Knowledge Exchanges that stem



**LINK & LEARN**  
BY VOICE

from 2019/20, but we had a huge party for Voice@5, as mentioned earlier in this report.

Another big learning was on the essential role of taking time to build trust and open relationships with individual grantee partners as well as the collective. This continues to inform innovations in our Linking and Learning practice, different online tools we're using and constant awareness of the need to adapt our online habits to what works best. Shorter and active, creative sessions is one way to go.

We are also very aware of the digital divide and the fact that the online sessions are less accessible in areas of low connectivity and for rightsholders participating in the different grantee projects. This automatically has an impact on the reach and character of the linking and learning activities. At the same time, we are aware of some of the advantages of online sessions, like the possibility to reach many more participants at once, to have other stakeholders join easily and without extra costs, and alike.

This also poses challenges, like how to create and hold a space that feels safe to most participants. And how to check in on that when most participants cannot

even use their video due to bandwidth limitations? Therefore, we need to be mindful talking about safe spaces and include specific mindfulness exercises that inspire open and authentic conversations.

A similar thinking can be applied to the communities of practice. A lot was learned during phase one on the usefulness and set up of communities of practice. Key: they have to make sense to the owners and participants in the community of practice and they have to be on topics and issues of interest to them. As Voice, our role is to facilitate them. Just that.

In 2021 we also realised a request expressed by the grantee partners: we included an extra 50.000 euros in the budget of the Linking and Learning facilitating organisations to respond to joint and inter grantee activities that find their roots in other linking and learning events and activities. So far, we had no possibility to make these joint dreams come true. Now we

A follow-up workshop after the formation of four communities of practice groups created by rightsholders in Niger



Linking and Learning facilitating organisation Live and Learn Cambodia pose for a photo session during a past linking and learning activity.

have at least an instrument to realise those initiatives to a certain degree.

Another shift is the reframing of mental health and wellbeing, visible within the world and surely within Voice. Where we started a journey embracing different groups of psychosocial and intellectual challenged youth and their parents, we came to integrate a much wider concept of wellbeing and the importance of mindful inclusion and self-awareness. This is a journey we will further in 2022.

To close this part, another beautiful product of 2021 mentioned earlier on and worth exploring is the magazine entitled "Woven Dreams". Guided by three principles- Leave no one behind, nothing about us without us, and putting those furthest behind first, Linking & Learning facilitator YGOAL and the Voice Philippines team published this linking and learning milestone report. In this report, the team compassionately listens to the hearts and minds of rightsholders and grantee-partners to take action and inspire each other to ultimately create an inclusive society.

## YEAR IN NUMBERS

Some of the most important data are presented here, compared to 2020. The change in type, place and duration of online versus offline events make comparisons a bit challenging, especially 2021 being a year of many project closures and new grantees onboarding. From 2022 a revised data set will be used, considering online, hybrid and face to face events

**2020** **2021**

**KICK OFF /INCEPTION MEETINGS ON LINKING AND LEARNING (L&L)**

**10** **21**

Many Calls for Proposals launched in second half of 2021, leading to a growing cohort of new grantees, introduced to Linking and Learning from inception.

**(BI)ANNUAL LINKING AND LEARNING (L&L) EVENTS – FACE TO FACE, ONLINE AND HYBRID**

**11** **18**

Annual events continued to take place face 2 face, online as well as hybrid. Especially online, some countries had several linking and learning events with all grantee partners in a year.

**COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (COP)**

**40** **15**

Fifteen new communities of practice were initiated in 2021. Part of the earlier formed 40 CoPs are still active, and 49 online sessions took place in 2021 by ongoing and newly formed CoPs.

**ENCOUNTERS OF GRANTEEES WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

**113** **40**

Besides the participation of stakeholders in CoPs, 2021 was characterised by project closures and new calls for proposals and approvals. This explains the relative low number of 40 encounters and influencing opportunities with other civil society and government actors.

**L&L CONSULTATIONS - ONLINE - OFFLINE**

**248** **88**  
**126** **21**

As to be expected, the number of online consultations is higher than offline. The data reflect a period of project closure and new approvals.

**OVERALL AVERAGE PARTICIPATION GRANTEEES IN A LINKING AND LEARNING ACTIVITY**

**209** **155**

On average 155 grantees out of 228 active grantees participated in some Linking and Learning activity = 69%. Yet, all grantees participate in at least 1 L&L activity over the course of their project, and quite some former grantees stay active in the L&L community.

**ARTICLES AND BLOG PRODUCED AND PUBLISHED**

**418** **81**

Apart from the reported 81 blogs and articles, 30 Stories of Change were elaborated by the teams. Blogs and articles can be found at Voice website, IndonesiaInklusi, and Facebook pages.

**LEARNING CALLS BETWEEN COUNTRIES**

**16** **1**

This will increase from 2022, when all (new) grantees have started implementation of their projects.



Rightsholders and grantee partners during a Linking and Learning event in Niger

## AT A GLANCE

### TARGETED OUTCOME 1

Marginalised groups, CSOs and other key stakeholders develop and implement innovative and effective strategies to reach, empower and strengthen influencing capacities of rightsholder groups

**376 ORGANISATIONS, INFORMAL GROUPS AND NETWORKS**

report the use and effects of new insights and innovative approaches



Global cumulative target 2021-2024

**TARGET 150**

In Tanzania, Empowerment grantee partner [Deaf's Sustenance and Development Organisation \(DSDO\)](#) has adopted agro-ecosystem model in Njombe region and managed to lobby free access to agricultural land for People with Disabilities (PWDs). Three groups of ten PWDs each were created, thus, 30 PWDs engaged. The creation of these groups was in line with the government requirement to access development loans as well as land for agricultural activities. It was also an initiative to promote collective action by the rightsholders for their own economic empowerment. In addition, DSDO managed to establish one agro-input facility out of two aimed at supplying avocado seedlings. The three groups formed links with the local government authority in Njombe to receive interest free loans for the engagement in agriculture activities.



Festival Handi-Capable was unique and a first of its kind that celebrated persons with disability in the arts in Mali

Another great example is the [collaboration between two organisations](#) in the Philippines: the [UP Babaylan](#), an LGBTI student organisation (an Empowerment grantee) and the [Leonard Cheshire Disability Philippines Foundation, Inc. \(LCDPFI\)](#), working extensively with people with disabilities and implementing an Influencing grant. During a Linking and Learning event, a session on disability sensitiveness by LCDPFI inspired members of UP Babaylan to increase sensitivity in their own organisation and platform. They invited LCDPFI and other Disabled People's Organisations, to give awareness-raising webinars and [to co-create an inclusive infographics campaign](#). They became aware of the intersectionality of their struggles. The deeper mutual understanding led to a joint Infographics on Mental Health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The country level NOW-Us! or NOW-Nous! Awards inviting ten preselected nominees to a bootcamp, was another space for getting new insights and directly innovating the original ideas to richer and more effective project ideas. The bootcamp itself became a space for reflection, such as in [Cambodia](#). Also, in Mali the focus in the bootcamp was to further develop and improve the nominees' innovative advocacy ideas. As one of the [participants from Mali](#) mentioned in the 2022 NOW-Nous! inception meeting: all ten innovative ideas worked on in the Bootcamp became so good that it was a very hard task for the jury to select only three winners.

### TARGETED OUTCOME 2

A Linking and Learning infrastructure is in place that visibly contributes to the insights, understanding and innovation capacity of grantees and other stakeholders

**68% OF ALL GRANTEES** report use of the Linking and Learning infrastructure



Global cumulative target 2021-2024

**TARGET 70%**

In 2021, Voice grantee partners across the ten countries participated in various linking and learning efforts (as detailed in the table above). Among grantees 15 new Communities of Practice (CoPs) were created offering opportunities for sharing and learning around grantee chosen topics, while some older CoPs are going strong and show growing participation of other stakeholders albeit slowly. It can be assumed that all grantees onboarded in 2021, participated in at least one inception Linking and Learning initiative throughout the year.

In Mali, the Linking and Learning facilitators "Femmes et TIC" and the Web TV "Kunafoni" facilitated in October 2021 a [festival dubbed "The Handi-Capable show"](#): people with disabilities are capable!". This festival created a platform to raise awareness on the abilities of people living with disabilities. We witnessed talents of all kinds carried by people living with all types of disabilities: people with albinism, hearing, visual and mental impairments and people with motor disabilities. The "Dana Amasagou" group of young people with hearing impairments won the first prize of 250 000 Fcfa. Their choreographic performance dealt with several topical issues including violence, anger, rape, drugs, community conflicts, politics, in short, the current situation in Mali. Seeing young people who cannot hear, dance and perform to the sound of drums, was simply magical. "We can't hear, but we feel vibrations from certain musical instruments such as the tam-tam, and it is from these vibrations that we can dance." a member of the Dana Amasagou Group

In Laos, the Linking Learning facilitator Laos, HuamJai Association, and its partner Phanthin facilitated [an annual linking and learning event](#) in December 2021. It was the first hybrid event in Laos, with some grantee partners participating physically while others joined online. They created [a mutual learning platform](#) to share learning questions or problems they want to solve together, success stories to learn from and mistakes that could be avoided. This hybrid event process has not been easy because it needed a significant amount of focus and patience. Online users may not be able to receive real-time responses or feel the atmosphere captured on camera, but this recent event has demonstrated that "we can do it," "we are in this together," and, for the most part, "we are learning from it." "We may not be able to meet in person today, but we are certainly connected powerfully online. Despite the physical distance, we were grateful to have connected virtually and that the health of everyone in the community is prioritized".

Wendy Otieno, one of the Voice Linking, Learning and Amplifier Officers writes in [her blog about the value of learning for effective grant-making](#): "the linking and learning approach allows rightsholders themselves to come up with solutions to some of the most pressing social justice issues. Simply put, this is a non-monetary type of support that goes beyond grant-making to enable collaboration, innovation, learning and ... unlearning."

Finally, an innovative route to learning was explored by the grantee partners and rightsholders in the Philippines, under the guidance of YGOAL. When looking into ways to further the communities of practice in an online and valuable way, [the grantee partners together defined a number of themes, of areas they wanted to explore and work around](#). So over the course of a couple of months, all those interested engaged around one of the topics and together cocreated solutions and new experiences that are documented in several ways.

## TARGETED OUTCOME 3

New ideas & approaches have been prototyped, tested and evaluated, ready for scale, shared and potentially adopted by relevant stakeholders

### 12 IDEAS AND APPROACHES DEVELOPED

/tested/prototyped and evidence of those ideas is published



## NIGERIA, MALI, SOUTH AFRICA & GHANA: MULTI-COUNTRY

Kids and Teens, a multi-country grantee partner in collaboration with its partners in Mali, Ghana and South Africa piloted an approach through their project Full Circle Tax Watch for Marginalised populations to promote rightsholder engagement in fiscal processes to promote government accountability. Despite youth being the overwhelming majority in the four countries, their voices are little heard and listened to by policy makers and in general by the adult



Ms. Choun Lay leading discussions on the impact of Covid 19 on the community during the annual linking and learning event in Cambodia.

population. The formulation and oversight of budgetary and tax policy processes and issues is one specific area of concern. Through capacity strengthening processes such as trainings and awareness raising sessions the project rightsholders have been empowered with skills needed to advocate for improved accountability around fiscal issues in Nigeria, most especially taxes and budgeting as a means to improve access to social services, health and education for marginalized communities. The knowledge exchanges and innovative facilitation methodology are increasing access to spaces for political participation thereby lessening marginalization of the target groups to a good degree. The project confirmed that the method of marginalised people sharing with budget and tax authorities and vice versa is a promising model for maximising learning, while also creating a highly empathetic understanding of issues. Rightsholders are gradually gaining confidence to self-advocate, generate evidence-based research and policy recommendations to influence and catalyse the creation of and access to open political spaces, processes and participation for young people.

## TARGETED OUTCOME 3.1

### 104 EFFECTIVE IDEAS AND APPROACHES DOCUMENTED

(including through Innovate and Learn grants)



## KENYA

The Chepkitala Indigenous Peoples' Development Project (CIPDP) in collaboration with Digital Democracy and the Forest Peoples Programme are implementing the [Boititap Korenyo \(The Wealth of Our Lands\) project](#) in Kenya. The project empowers the Ogiek Community to overcome land rights issues by promoting just data-driven access to land and create more open participation and civic engagement on land issues. Through informed data collection processes, Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping as technological platform, the project generates evidence-based research products and policy recommendations. These are utilised to self-advocate and influence and catalyse access and just land use by Ogiek Community. The project also promotes the creation of more political spaces, processes, and participation accessible by these rightsholders.

## NIGER

In Niger a significant step was taken with the [documentation and adaption of the social media charter](#). It aims to support both the organisations and the government to use social media safely and in a socially



A poster of the 2021 South East Asia Queer Cultural Festival.

respectable and effective way. For 12 months, the Association of African Professional Communicators APAC and Association of Bloggers for Active Citizenry ABCA consortium travelled through 7 regions of Niger to present and explain the social media charter, which thankfully was adopted by the multitude of web activists.

Mohamed shares:

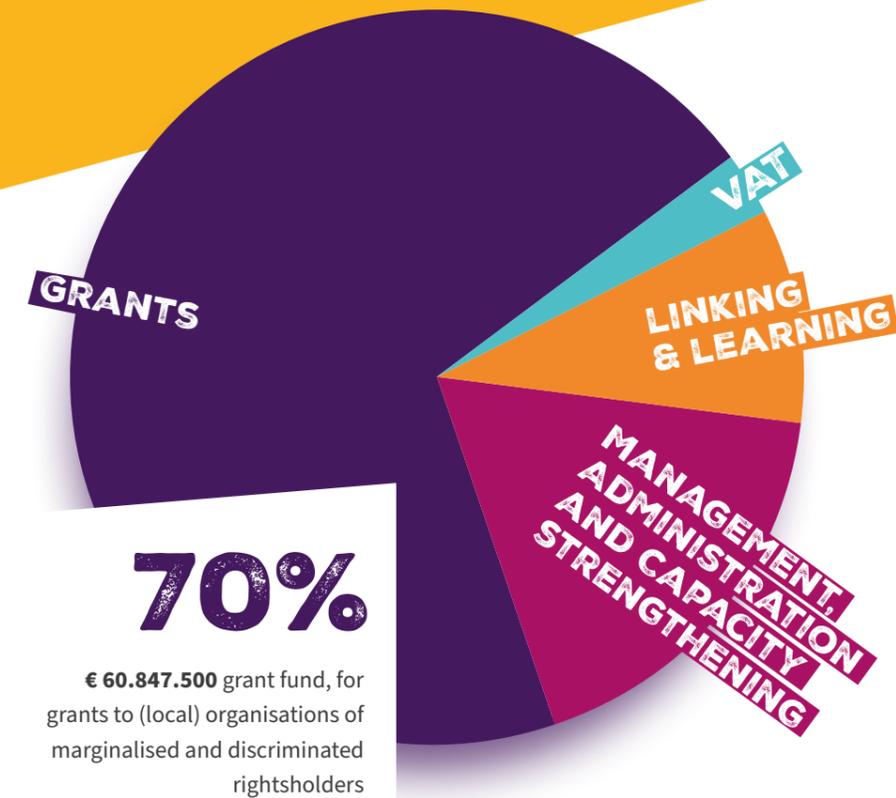
*my name is Mohamed Attaka Idrissa, I am 29 years old, I am a computer maintenance technician in a private radio station in Agadez. The social media charter allowed me to reframe my intervention on the web and to verify the veracity of the information while respecting human rights and to preserve my source of information.*

**Voice** colleagues and event organisers in 2021 also started to document the experience organising inclusive online or often hybrid events, with tricks and tips as well as awareness of possible challenges to overcome. The Voice@5 event led to two publications, [part 1 focussing on the process facilitation learnings](#), and [part 2 on the technical facilitation](#). And Wendy Otieno, shares her [lessons learned on organising virtual events](#) with the grantee partners in Kenya.

# HOW WE SPENT

Voice is an eight-year fund (2016-2024) totalling Euro 86.8 million of which Euro 86 million comes from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in two phases: phase 1- Euro 50 million and extension phase- 36 million. Administratively, we need to keep the two phases separately although it was agreed that we could take any balances forward to the Extension Phase. All balances for Phase 1 have been closed as of January 2022. Voice receives an additional Euro 800,000 from the Hewlett Foundation, following a grant renewal in 2021.

Overall, the budget is broken down into the following components:



## FINANCIAL REPORT 2021

The data and numbers on this page are a summary from the unqualified audit report 2021, which is available on the website and on request.

### OVERALL EXPENDITURE

IN 2021

	2016-2020	2021	Cumulative 2016-2021	Overall Budget	%-spent
Grant Commitments	€ 33,453,289	€ 14,946,652	€ 48,399,941	€ 60,847,500	80%
Programme Management and Administration	€ 7,455,016	€ 2,020,588	€ 9,475,604	€ 16,412,833	58%
Linking and Learning	€ 3,123,534	€ 935,910	€ 4,059,444	€ 8,060,977	50%
VAT	€ 1,148,584	€ 197,068	€ 1,345,652	€ 1,476,190	91%
<b>TOTAL 2020</b>	<b>€ 45,180,422</b>	<b>€ 18,100,219</b>	<b>€ 63,280,641</b>	<b>€ 86,797,500</b>	<b>53%</b>

# FINANCIAL REPORT

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2021

	Operational budget 2021	Expenses 2021	Variance Budget versus Actuals	% spent (budget depletion)
<b>A. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION</b>				
Context, gender and actor analyses	€ 25,000		€ -25,000	0%
Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting	€ 1,139,432	€ 963,952	€ -175,480	85%
Administration (including of the subsidy facility)	€ 1,120,583	€ 1,017,904	€ -102,679	91%
Advisory board	€ 21,000		€ -21,000	0%
<b>B. LINKING AND LEARNING PROCESS</b>				
Linking and Learning process and activities	€ 1,428,086	€ 935,910	€ -492,176	66%
<b>C. COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION OF THE FUND</b>				
Outreach, publications, website and translation	€ 175,000	€ 38,732	€ -136,268	22%
Sub-total Management and Administration, Communication and Promotion of the Fund	€ 2,481,015	€ 2,020,588	€ -460,427	81%
Sub-total Linking and Learning process	€ 1,428,086	€ 935,910	€ -492,176	66%
Totals per year	€ 3,909,101	€ 2,956,498	€ -952,603	76%
VAT / 21% budget / expenses also 0%	€ 820,911	€ 197,068	€ -623,843	24%
<b>TOTAL OVERALL</b>	<b>4,730,013</b>	<b>3,153,567</b>	<b>-1,576,446</b>	<b>67%</b>

Notes: Small discrepancies in overview are caused by rounding differences. In early 2019 a 0% VAT rate was approved for all costs outside of the Netherlands. This means that more funds are available for Voice.

# MONETARY COMMITMENTS

PER GRANT TYPE

	2016 + 2020	2021	Totals 2017-2021	Revised budget 2016-2022	%-spent
Empowerment Accelerator		€ 880,786	€ 880,786		39%
Empowerment	€ 4,934,920	€ 452,634	€ 5,387,554	€ 9,915,000	54%
Influencing	€ 13,442,765	€ 8,530,348	€ 21,973,114	€ 26,350,000	83%
Innovate and learn	€ 11,995,393	€ 4,693,993	€ 16,689,386	€ 21,032,500	79%
Sudden Opportunity	€ 3,080,211	€ 388,891	€ 3,469,101	€ 3,550,000	98%
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>€ 33,453,289</b>	<b>€ 14,946,652</b>	<b>€ 48,399,941</b>	<b>€ 60,847,500</b>	<b>80%</b>

## INTEGRITY

Voice is committed to providing safe spaces filled with integrity and respect for ALL people as well as for financial resources. The consortium partners, Oxfam and Hivos - which make up the Voice implementation consortium, maintain a zero-tolerance policy to both fraud and safeguarding. The organisational processes are invoked pending on the country where a potential integrity issue takes place. At the request of the Ministry, we have developed a webpage sharing our [whistle-blower policy](#) and explaining what happens when an issue is reported. This is obviously in addition to all the information that is available on the websites of Hivos and Oxfam. As Voice, we also have a reporting obligation to the Ministry directly.

Considering our size, complexity and the (reasonable) risks Voice takes in its grant-making approach to



Key project officers from the Association for Mutual Assistance in Laos discussing their workplan for the Gender Equality for Women Employment project.

serve the groups we stand for, it is inevitable that issues occur. Also here, we take a learning approach and as much as possible, resulting in a strengthened due diligence, grant management, and monitoring processes. This same learning approach we also encourage among our partners, even encouraging them to be open about it without compromising personal safety and confidentiality. There are currently a total of 7 (open) integrity cases being dealt with by Voice. Of these, 5 cases have been pending closure from past years and 2 are new cases identified in 2021.

# WHAT'S NEXT

We are thrilled and hopeful for what 2022 holds for Voice! Our intention to decentralise the Voice team and be led by rightsholders in our governance structures has largely been fulfilled in 2021. Riding strong on these changes, we will seek to be more mindful, reflexive and trust-based in our approach to grant-making, linking, learning & amplification and monitoring & evaluation.

We are buoyed by the energy of the Voice community that was on full display at the first global knowledge exchange organised in February 2022. We hope to replicate more of these moments of connection and reinvigoration at regional and sub-regional events bringing together grantee partners and rightsholders with Voice. We are also excited to share with you the Voice@5

Learning Document: Journeying Towards Stronger Voices, that gathers stories, observations, and lessons from the first five years of Voice. We hope you will stay in conversation with us as we share our experience of creating a grant-making facility that centres diversity, inclusion and innovation. What we have done so far. What we have not been able to do. And most importantly, what we hope to do in the future.

We are also preparing to carry out the final context analysis update for the countries Voice works in and based on this, launch the final calls for proposals for Voice in the extension phase! We have already started publishing the calls and encourage you to check them out. In Cambodia, Voice is seeking to support civil society efforts to safeguard digital rights and digital citizenship. In Niger & Mali, Voice is calling out to innovators who are testing approaches to enhance inclusion for their communities of rightsholders.

Soon, we will launch the second round of the NOW-Us! Awards in 7 Voice countries. We will also continue our linking & learning efforts with a focus on enhancing the continued sustainability and viability of the efforts of our grantee partners. We will continue to explore new partnerships and maintain existing ones that enable us to strengthen systems of support for the Voice rightsholders. A lot is in store, we hope you will come along on the Voice's onward journey to stronger voices.



#ShareTheRoadWithHER campaign intended to raise awareness of violence against women in the Philippines including violence against women migrant workers



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