



# Meeting with the Advisory Board, Steering Committee and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

27 June 2023

## MEETING MINUTES

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Present:

*Advisory Board (AB)*

1. Aapurv Jain
2. Caroline Kouassiaman
3. Christine Kandie
4. Devi Leiper O'Malley
5. Dumiso Gatsha
6. Maureen Ava Mata

*Steering Committee (SC)*

1. Nicolette Matthijsen
2. Tunggal Pawestri

*Voice Global Coordination Team*

1. Alex Loer
2. Clemens Wennekes
3. Inez Hackenberg
4. Ishita Dutta
5. Job Muriithi
6. Kahlille Seranilla
7. Kayla Lapiz
8. Kelly Imathiu
9. Kenneth Jura
10. Oumaima Ouaisa

*Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)*

1. Mirjam Horstmeier

Following the Voice annual reflection meeting from 19 to 26 June 2023, the Voice global coordination team held a joint meeting with the Voice advisory board and the Voice steering committee. Additionally, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs focal point for the Voice programme, Mirjam Horstmeier joined the second half of the meeting. This meeting aimed to provide an operational update on the status of the Voice programme as of June 2023. Moreover, it was an opportunity to gather feedback and advice from the three stakeholders on key operational and strategic issues.

The first part of the meeting involved an internal discussion among the Voice advisory board on **their own role, the various forms of engagement with the Voice programme since their selection, and an exchange on forms on engagement that have worked well and recommendations to improve engagement**. Following this internal discussion, the Voice steering committee and the Voice global coordination joined the meeting. The following reflections and recommendations were shared by the Voice advisory board:

- General reflections on the role of the advisory board
  - The reference groups (final evaluation, future of Voice) have been working well as a clear way to engage with Voice processes,
  - The AB understands that its role is to offer critique, be a radical voice and create space for reimagining,

- An important question remaining is how to translate the advice offered to the Voice programme into practice, and how to monitor any changes being made,
- The AB supports the conceptualization of the future of Voice, particularly in terms of the aspirations to be participatory and being Southern-led,
- Recommendations for the Voice global coordination team:
  - Increase the AB's involvement in the annual reflection meeting- they can support the planning and facilitate strategic discussions and support making the meeting more inclusive, for instance by preparing checklist of items on certain principles,
  - Structure feedback sessions with the AB throughout the year- The AB can support uncomfortable conversations by standing in for grantee partners, team members on certain topics,
  - Clarify the role of the advisory board to all team members, including country team members,
  - Keep increasing communication- provide a heads up on activities, particularly at the country level where certain AB members are based,
  - The AB can support Voice through any upcoming transition moment and is open to new people being included in the future. The current AB can make a commitment to being involved for the next 1-year as well as commitment to any future programme and the transition to any future programme. Important to plan for this in advance and have clear terms of reference.

The second part of the meeting consisted of a **detailed operational update** from the Voice global coordination team, followed by questions and answers. The presentation made by the Voice team is [available here](#) on Box. This was complemented by [a separate presentation](#) that provided an update on the regional grant making by Voice in Asia, available here:. This was followed by a round of questions from the AB, SC and MoFA to the Voice GCT, as noted below:

- On the low rate of approval of Sudden Opportunity grants, why is this a gap for Voice?
  - The eligibility criteria that place an obligation on applicants to propose a consortium approach to addressing the 'sudden opportunity', as well as the slow pace of response make it difficult for this grant to be taken up more by rightsholders.
- What is the plan to manage the remaining uncommitted grant budget given the timeline and current context?
  - The remaining uncommitted grant budget will be allocated to extend the grant contracts of the Linking, Learning and Facilitator organisations up to June 2024, meeting exchange rate losses of partners and grant making to partners as part of the collaboration with ISDAO.
- When talking about linking and learning at the national level you said activities happened without 'our involvement'. Who is referred to here, the Voice teams generally or someone else?
  - Here we mean the global coordination team. A key development of linking and learning in the extension phase is the organic and energetic way national linking and learning work is happening.

- What can be done in terms of managing the anticipated staff transitions creatively? It would be important for instance to start discussions with country leadership teams to be on the same page regarding the potential staffing changes corresponding to the end of Voice and discuss with them how programme continuity can be maintained, for example through sharing staff, etc.
  - This recommendation will be followed up by Ishita. It is worth noting that some country leadership teams have also undergone transitions in the past year.
- What is the difference between the moving on series and guidance series? Is it developed by the Voice teams or grantee partners?
  - The guidance series was built into the original programme plan as resources supporting grantee partners as they implement the Voice programme. However, for various reasons this work has not taken place so far. Given that we are in the last year of programme implementation now, the proposal from the Voice global coordination team is for it to take the lead in developing a set of resources that can be shared with grantee partners for their ongoing and future sustainability as a way to consciously close the relationship.
- On communications, what about discussions on how the findings of the final evaluation will be communicated?
  - Some discussions on this topic started on the final day of the June meets 2023. We would appreciate support from the final evaluation reference group and the advisory board on this topic.
- Particularly having followed the discussion on the impact story documentation, there are some questions about how Voice can ensure that the documentation makes sense and helps other even beyond Voice? How are we connecting all the learning emerging from the documentation?
  - The discussions to streamline the impact story documentation process are based on the lessons learned from undertaking documentation in phase 1 which became quite stressful for the teams. We are thinking of ways to make the impact story documentation meaningful for partners by involving them in the process and considering what data already exists that can be harvested as-it-is as an impact story.
- Is there a communication plan?
  - There is a weekly social media plan and a narrative on the communication priorities for 2023.

The final part of the meeting was focused on **strategic partnerships** Voice should focus on building and nurturing with a view to enhancing visibility of the work of grantee partners and to contribute to sectoral discussions and share its learnings. Due to shortness of time, this discussion requires follow-up. Below is a summary of the key points discussed:

- It would be important to further define the objectives behind driving strategic partnerships or the strategic positioning of Voice. Some entry points that might be interesting for Voice are:
  - How funders are dealing with shrinking civic space,
  - How to make bilateral funding go the distance- this could be of specific interest to other bilateral funders,
  - How to ensure sustainability of rightsholders ongoing initiatives/ organisations.
- Some concrete recommendations:

- Be realistic particularly in planning participation of Voice teams at external events given the workload. Prioritise 2-3 events. Current venues for engagement:
  - Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy Conference, Netherlands, Nov 2023,
  - Shift the Power Conference, Colombia, Dec 2023,
  - The Human Rights Funders Network Conference, Georgia, Apr 2024.
- Develop a set of key messages and also share them with country teams to further take them forward with strategic partners at the country level.
- Have one-on-one meetings with peer funders who have similar portfolios to share information about Voice grantee partners.
- The evaluation findings and moving on package could be shared in collaboration with/ could be of interest to academic institutions, for e.g., Lien Center for Social Innovation. Voice in the Philippines is already planning some **exit-oriented** activities with academic institutions. In that sense, it is important to get a complete picture of what is planned at the country level and complement that at a global level.
- Potential funders/ stakeholders to connect with: Nordic funders, IDA Ireland, Leading from the South, Black Feminist Fund, She Decides. Mirjam confirmed that she could connect Voice to She Decides.

As next steps, particularly in relation to the Advisory Board, it was agreed that:

- A follow-up meeting will be set up at the end of August/ early September to take forward the discussion on strategic partnerships concretely.
- In the meantime, the minutes will be shared by email so that conversations can take place.