

VOICE(S) (UN-)FINISHED

PROUDER AND LOUDER



ANNUAL REPORT 2020





Linking and Learning continues throughout 2020. Photo from Voice in Mali.

WITH GRATITUDE

The year 2020 was (un-)finished for Voice. The duality lies in the fact that the first phase finishes in April 2021 and with it the many projects that were funded during it. Unfinished also refers to the continuation of Voice as a programme until 2024. But perhaps its most striking meaning is that the year 2020 is simply unfinished. Covid-19 up-ended our lives (and hence work) and many planned activities ran into delays or were replaced with virtual (smaller) gatherings -at times organised at short notice. And the rightsholders -especially the Linking and Learning community- showed Voice once again the way -with some early adopters -for which we are grateful.

And while we exceeded our overall objectives for the first five years, we decided to not add another rightsholder to the air balloon basket on the cover- simply because we are unfinished!.

Throughout the report, you will find examples, statements and quotes from grantees and rightsholders. Most of them stem from the [Magic of our Voice\(s\)](#), a narrated photo album where rightsholders graciously accepted the invitation to share the Magic of five years of their Voice(s) - in anticipation of our fifth anniversary on April 7, 2021. A grateful sign that we are becoming #ProuderandLouder.

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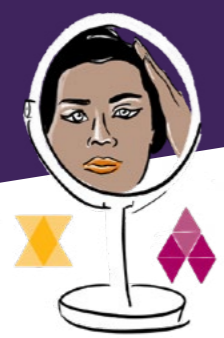
WOMEN WITH ALBINISM

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





UNFINISHED CHALLENGING RESOURCEFUL

Word Doodle based on Voice reflection held at the end of 2020.

“Disguised blessings amidst chaos and uncertainties”

REFLECTION ON THE YEAR 2020 FROM A VOICE COUNTRY TEAM MEMBER

Three words that sum up the year 2020 for Voice. We started off the year beautifully with the signing ceremony of the Extension Phase contract between the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oxfam Novib and Hivos. Injecting a further Euro 36 million into Voice, it will enable the programme to continue until 2024.

But then Covid-19 pandemic hit the world, upending our lives and our work. Our carefully crafted plans for 2020 had to be adjusted from month to month. Unfortunately we were not able to meet physically with all the teams or organise any (face to face) regional or global Linking and Learning activities. Due to a shrinking Gross National Product in the Netherlands, the Ministry was obliged to request a three-month commitment stop on Calls for Proposals and grant selection which impacted the way Voice as a programme was able to strategically respond to the crisis. Because

one thing became crystal clear – even more so than before- the pandemic deepened the already deep inequality rift. The impact of the crisis on the Voice rightholders and grantees was felt profoundly, even tragically at times. For example, the [Confederation of Older Persons Association in the Philippines \(COPAP\)](#), an Empowerment grantee in the Philippines run by and for vulnerable elderly, lost five members. Gender-based violence soared (it became known as the “hidden” pandemic) and within this group, gender and indigenous minorities were hit even harder. The Asia Indigenous People Pact – a global Influencing grantee issued a statement to protect the [lives of indigenous women](#).

And amidst of it all we saw already authoritarian regimes become more repressive, using the pandemic as an excuse to repress civic space further. A multi-country Sudden Opportunity grantee, the coalition [Tournons La Page](#) struggled with 20% of its 250 members in Francophone Africa being arrested in 2020. In Uganda, the [Center for Constitutional Governance](#), worked on reclaiming civic space through a Sudden Opportunity grant, by putting in place diverse platforms such as [Civic Space TV](#) with the tagline, “Freedom Always”. The TV show is a safe haven for citizens to air out sentiments that are not usually permitted. In general, it is important to note that many CSOs and NGOs have been obliged into digital advocacy as a result of the pandemic. This is not ideal, as it limits participation of the intended audiences due to connectivity issues. However, digital advocacy offered civil society an opportunity to address heads of state and policy-makers to whom they would not normally have had access.

And our response? With the Ministry, we wrote messages of support, issued solidarity statements, were more flexible in contractual obligations, allowed investments into digital mobilisation and issued new Calls for Proposals once the stop was lifted. But at times we simply felt inadequate.

Yet amidst all the “bad and the ugly”, we also saw the “good”. We exceeded our overall objective of 339



Voice in Uganda made sure participants were well prepared for Linking and Learning during Covid-19 pandemic.

grants by sixty-one 400 in total and counting! The investments we made in the Linking and Learning infrastructure paid off and we saw a spur of activities at local level – in most cases virtually. We drew inspiration from the resilience and resourcefulness of people – both within the team as well as among and between rightholders. We were amazed how quickly people adapted and supported one another. For example, Empowerment Grantee [San Julian Pride](#) from the Philippines changed their office phone to a COVID-19 hotline, providing information/updates on the virus and psychosocial support to those who felt isolated due to social distancing including but not limited to the LGBTI community.

Or, Innovate and Learn Grantee [Street Project Foundation](#) from Nigeria was in the middle of their bi-annual creative bootcamp for social transformation with twenty-five youth. Once the camp had to be halted, they worked with participants on how they can further their talents online. An example is a [video of Michael Uhene](#) rapping and singing about guidelines on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19, something which was shared widely within their networks on social media.

Perhaps the quote subtitled in this chapter sums up the spirit perfectly.

The 2020 annual report differs from previous years, as based on your feedback, we decided to split the report in two parts. This part focuses on the down- and upward accountability towards our rightholders, grantees, donors and ourselves. It gives an overview of our results -both financial and programmatic-, our achievements and our challenges against the plan we set for 2020. As an innovation this year, there will be a more detailed report forthcoming with a reflection on the Linking and Learning – and in particular on what we learned and how that learning has impacted people. After all, five years of investment into the Linking and Learning Infrastructure merits a deep dive and hence a separate report.



From physical to virtual: the bootcamps organised by Nigerian partner Street Project Foundation moved online.



WHO WE ARE

... AND BECOMING

“The letter [from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs] was very encouraging, I used it as a talking point to some donors to show how humane Voice is- I was shocked that they will go to that extent to really care...”

RESPONSE FROM IRENE OJIUGO PATRICK-OGBOGU, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVOCACY CENTRE, NIGERIA AFTER WE CIRCULATED A LETTER OF SOLIDARITY FROM THE MINISTRY IN APRIL 2020.

A HUMANE AND CREATIVE VOICE

In our commitment to the rightsholders Voice stands for, and at the same time staying within our mandate, we tried as much as possible to be flexible with our grant management processes. We encouraged for activities to be conform local COVID-19 regulations and allowed for investments in protective gear for workshops and face-to-face gatherings. Where it wasn't possible to meet in person, we encouraged grantees to move activities online, investing in their digital capacity. The Ministry also wrote the above-mentioned letter of support -which was hugely appreciated- in addition to our regular updates. We developed and maintained a [COVID-19 page](#), showing how the pandemic impacted

us and the grantees in more detail, and how resilient we were as an example of a continuous source of inspiration. But we were not able to meet requests for food packages or other acute humanitarian needs, which may have impacted on our relevance as a responsive grant-maker. Understandably, most grantees ran into delays and we honoured 115 No-Cost Extensions to a later deadline, most of them to 31st of March 2021 (and in some cases beyond). This impacted the closing process of the first phase as well as our ability to sign on new grantees

Yet amidst it all, we also tried to keep a momentum going. Where possible we moved Linking and Learning activities online, especially at national level. In the case of the Call for Ideas [From Open to Inclusive Governance](#) -jointly executed with the Transparency and Accountability Initiative and the Hewlett Foundation- we invited the Canadian Coady Institute to Livening the Linking and Learning as an alternative to the proposed physical meetings. Well renowned for their (certificate) courses in [Citizen-led Accountability: Strategies and Tools](#), we co-designed a special module for the six grantees involving seventeen organisations. A brilliant collaboration unfolded with the Institute agreeing to facilitate a virtual learning platform by adapting this course to the specific needs of the grantees and offering them coaching sessions to move from design to implementation. As a great added-value, all participants received an academic certificate from the Coady Institute that they can apply towards their own professional and organisational development. In short, a win-win-win scenario!, which the [Coady Institute](#) also writes about.

And finally, we invested more time and energy in updating the context analysis, an exercise done in close collaboration with the national Communities of Stakeholders to analyse the state of affairs of the five rightsholder groups per country. Parallel to the official written sources and the big trends we deliberately focused on the dreams and aspirations of each rightsholder group, which then informed the new Calls for Proposals published after the commitment stop ended. A summary for each country is available online



CAMasean, an LGBTI partner in Cambodia

and downloadable via for example <https://voice.global/country/cambodia/#context>.

One of the key observations from all context analyses, is the need to foremost support **equality, rights and voices of women, adolescent girls, transgender women and intersex persons** all around. **Elderly citizens** requesting visibility and recognised in several countries as a group Voice needs to focus on more. Furthermore, Covid-19 implications seem to reverse gains thus far, requiring specific responses. The analyses also re-affirmed that rather than more policies, in many countries it is about the implementation of existing policies and legal frameworks. Through actions like strategic litigation -where there is a sufficiently independent judiciary system - or demanding political representation this can be promoted.

At the same time the **radicalisation in the world** like religious fanaticism, radicalisation in the social and political realm, violence and jihadism asks from Voice to support addressing the root causes and bring in a positive discourse. Similarly, the upcoming elections in most countries requires actions to **guard against the erosion of gains in the run-up to elections**. In this light, there is an increased attention for the **Human rights defenders (HRDs)**' protection and well-being (including HRDs in the indigenous people's space). Human rights defenders, particularly those that defend LGBTI+ rights, have faced increasing challenges to their work, health, and daily life as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Kakamega County, Kenya, Widows Empowerment Project rightsholders march during the International Human Rights Day.

DIGITALISATION, ACCELERATED

One of these buzzwords that took on a whole new meaning in 2020, especially for the (rightsholder) groups that Voice stands for. Due to not being able to travel, grantees were encouraged to invest in their digital capacity, allowing them to reallocate budget lines. The digital acceleration was most evident during the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, in short IDAHOT 2020, which we devoted a part of in the May [VoiceMail](#). Or, ASEAN SOGIE Caucus, a multi-country grantee who moved their [South East Asia Queer Festival](#) to an online extravaganza, reaching many more people than they would have with an offline event.

As Cosam Mc'Oveh, ICT officer with PEMA Kenya, a regional Empowerment grantee said:

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us to get out of our comfort zones.

*"Because between the curfew and the lockdown...
Our projects have been confined
And we, in the smoke
We can no longer see the right path..."*

AMINATA TRAORE, PRESIDENT OF AMPA IN MALI, SLAMMING DURING THE DIGITAL VISIT WITH HE MINISTER KAAG.

The increased online activity is the result of four years of investment into the Linking and Learning structure, cocreating deeper understanding and space for trust and openness to share. So when Covid-19 hit the world, the grantees were already connected and at ease to show vulnerability and to seek each other's support. A feeling of family. A place to find information, ideas, to remember we are not alone and to be inspired.

And we as Voice followed the grantees' lead! At the end of June 2020, Voice was honoured to host Dutch Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Her Excellency Ms Sigrid Kaag, who paid a digital work visit to the Malian Association for People with Albinism (AMPA), a Voice partner based in Bamako. It was the first digital work visit of its kind, for both Voice and the Ministry and we were glad to [Make it happen](#) despite some technical hitches.

Voice further strengthened our own digital capacity when the Ministry invited us to be a principal partner in the virtual [Youth@Heart Forum](#) held on 2nd of November 2020. We organised a digital conversation titled [Youth@heart, Inclusion@Soul](#) featuring four young African women. Unique. Different. Bold. Powerful, who shared loyally their lived realities on



Members of AMPA with Dutch Ambassador to Mali Mr Jolke Oppewal just after the digital visit between HE Minister Kaag and AMPA.

MAGIC OF VOICE

In the last full year before the Extension Phase starts, we reflected a lot on who we are, how we have evolved since the 2016 start and who we want to be. Adopted in late 2019, this year the hope-based narrative was fully integrated into our Linking, Learning, Amplification and grant management processes. Despite the global pandemic, we rooted for hope. We chose to change the narrative into a positive one: Voice is a fund for diversity and inclusion (rather than exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination), rightsholder groups (rather than target groups) to indicate the innate and legitimate claim people can make to demand their roles and rights for an inclusive society, solution-oriented rather than only focusing on problems and saying what we do want and stand for (also in our grant management). The emphasis on a positive narrative is also linked to opening up (civic) spaces, indicating what we do want rather than reacting to what we don't. We reflected the principle and power of NOW-US! (Nothing about us Without Us) fully on our new home-page, including the creative haiku below

what inclusion/exclusion meant to them. The session was among the top three of highest number of viewers and included sign language, and French/English subtitles. The two events -among others- helped us to bolster our own vision of virtual and accessible events, galvanising us to organise a virtual Voice@5 celebration scheduled for April 2021.

And in addition to events, we also advanced on digitalising the Voice application process on Smartsheets.

Yet in our desire to become fully digitalised we should never forget who we are leaving behind. Listen for example to the [Voice-Talk\(s\)](#) with the [Nubian Rights Forum](#) a grantee in Kenya- who is challenging the digitalisation strategy the Government wants to pursue for its public services due to it excluding ethnic minorities.

**OUR OFFER
CREATES SOLUTIONS
LEADING TO CHANGE
WHERE WE WORK**



The winners of the Ms and Mr Albinos pageant 2020 organised by AMPA in Mali. Credit to AMPA in Mali.

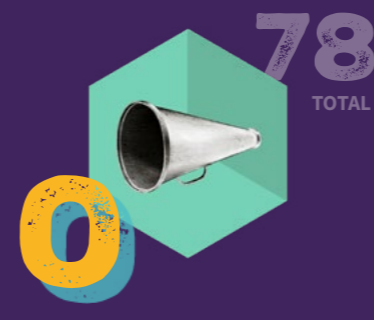
WHO WE FUND

Over the five years, Voice has supported a total of 400 projects jointly implemented by 1075 organisations, informal groups and networks across the ten Voice focus countries in Africa and Asia. This is only 55 more new projects compared to 2019, but 61 more than our overall initial objective of 339 for the first phase of Voice. As 2020 was meant to be a transition and low grant-making year and combined with the impacts of the pandemic, we only signed on 55 new grants. They comprised 26 Empowerment, 14 Innovate and Learn (8 plus 6 funded as part of the TAI/Hewlett Foundation collaboration) and 15 Sudden Opportunity grants to address and respond to the shifting civic space exacerbated by Covid-19.



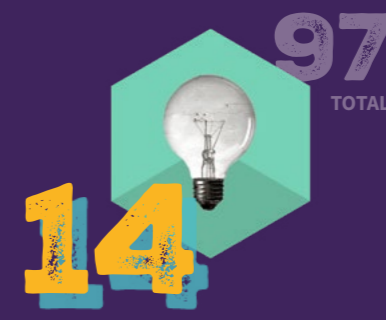
EMPOWERMENT PROJECTS

led by small rightsholder groups to raise awareness, invest in their own leadership, and build the necessary (self)-confidence, which they may find or 'Come to Voice'. 48% of our total portfolio is made up of Empowerment grants. In 2020 we also signed on 6 regional Empowerment grants based on [Twinning is Winning](#) in efforts to support Empowerment journeys across neighbouring countries.



INFLUENCING PROJECTS

to strengthen lobby and advocacy or rather influencing capacities of organisations to better represent, include, and amplify, the voices of rightsholder groups. As these are multi-annual projects, no new ones were signed on in 2020 – rather lots were closing. We launched 13 new Influencing Calls for Proposals, to start in the Extension Phase.



INNOVATE AND LEARN PROJECTS

which allow grantees to test, learn from and potentially scale-up new ideas and approaches. This includes organisations who act as the Linking and Learning facilitators or grantees for each country.



SUDDEN OPPORTUNITY PROJECTS

were approved in most countries with rapidly changing civic space contexts. For example, [Accountability Lab](#) in Nigeria is working towards improving the gender and inclusion accountability in the multi-stakeholder Open Government Partnership. Or in Cambodia, a [CSO collective](#) are pushing for a National Social Protection Policy Framework inclusive of pregnant women, persons with disabilities and elderly, further marginalised during Covid-19.

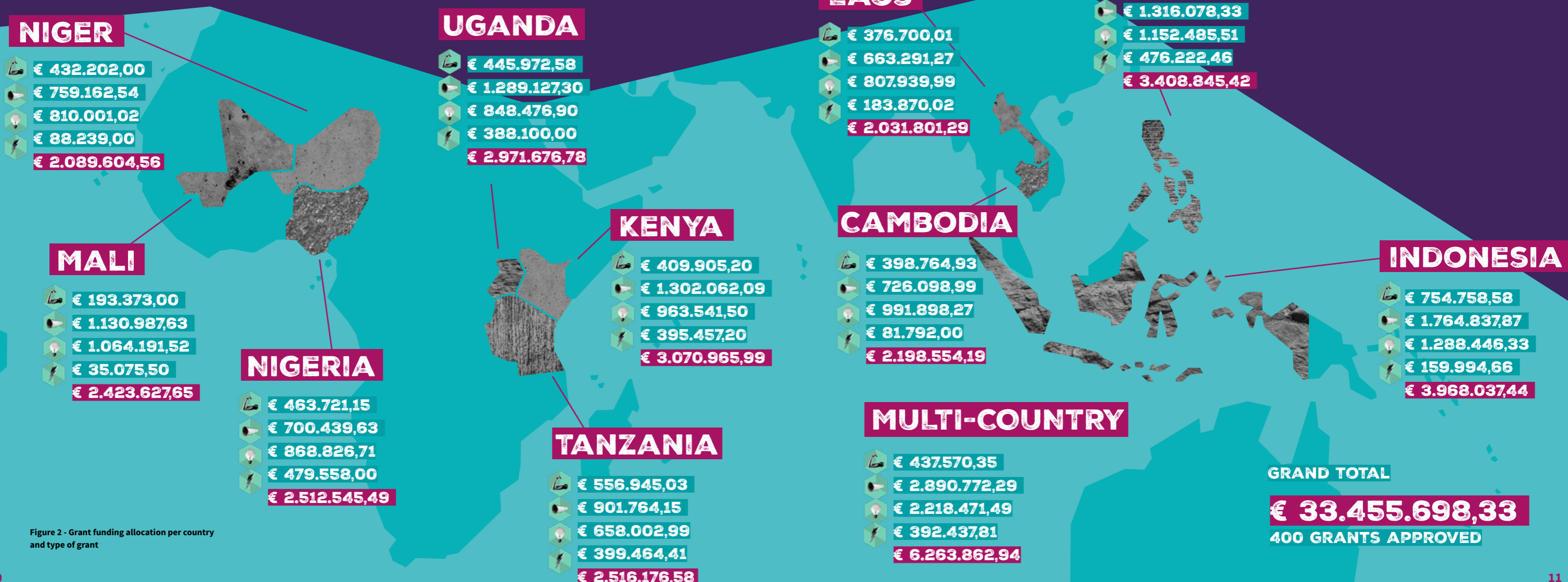


Figure 2 - Grant funding allocation per country and type of grant

A CLOSER LOOK

This section provides a closer look at where we are, comparing targets set versus achieved disaggregated by grant type, rightsholder groups and impact themes.

Overall, Voice priorities and grant allocations per year are kept flexible in order to adapt to the ever-changing context at local, national, regional and international level. The grant-making performance is linked to the continuous engagement with our Communities of Stakeholders and the updated context analyses to analyse the state of affairs of the five rightsholder groups per country, and being able to respond strategically.

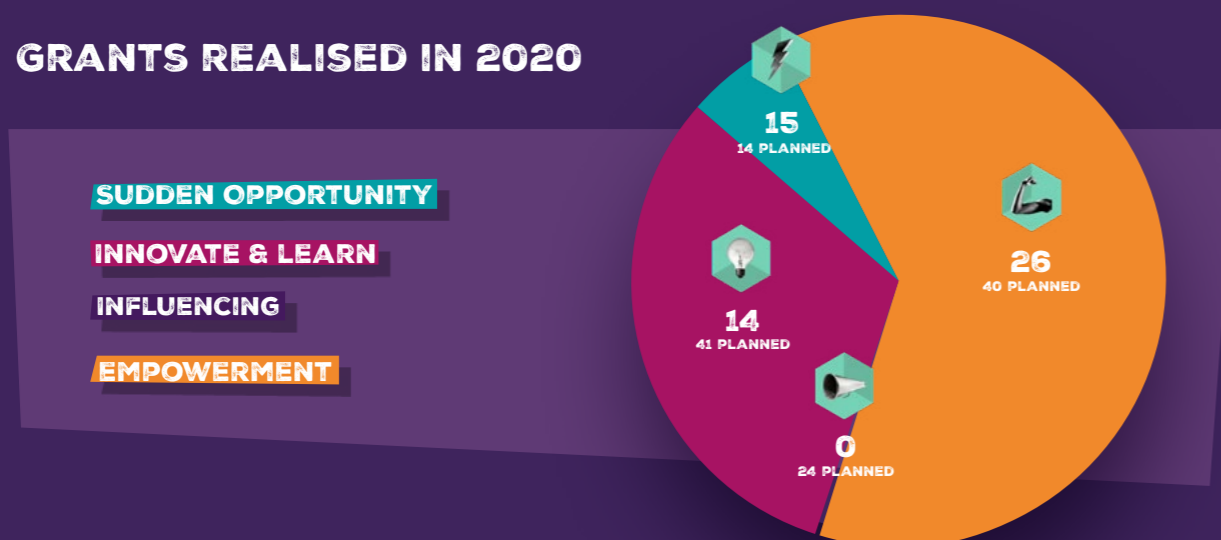
These analyses, despite annual fluctuations and shifts in the funding priorities, support Voice in keeping track to achieve the original objectives and targets of the programme set forth in the original Voice Programme Document.

400 GRANTS REALISED VERSUS 339 PLANNED

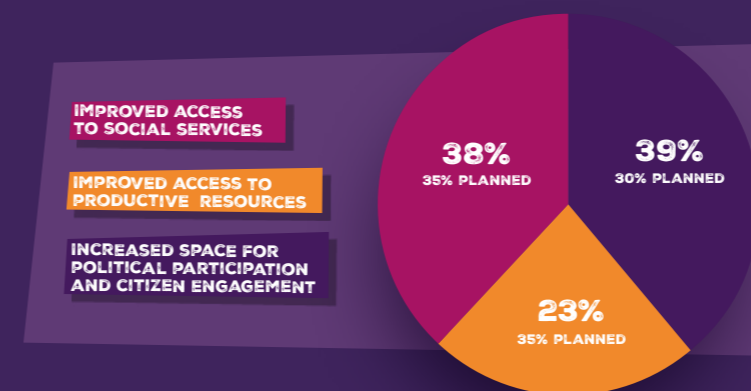
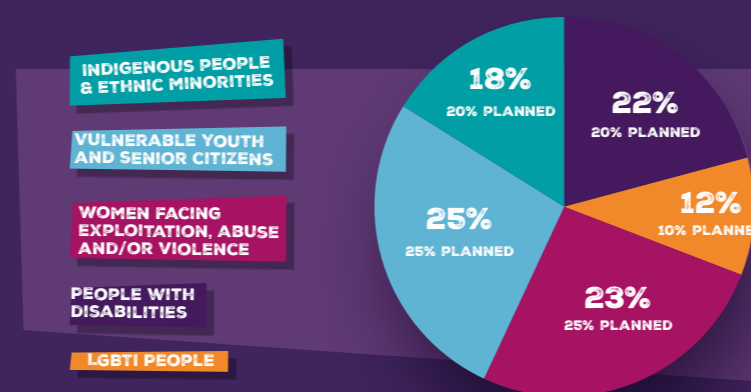
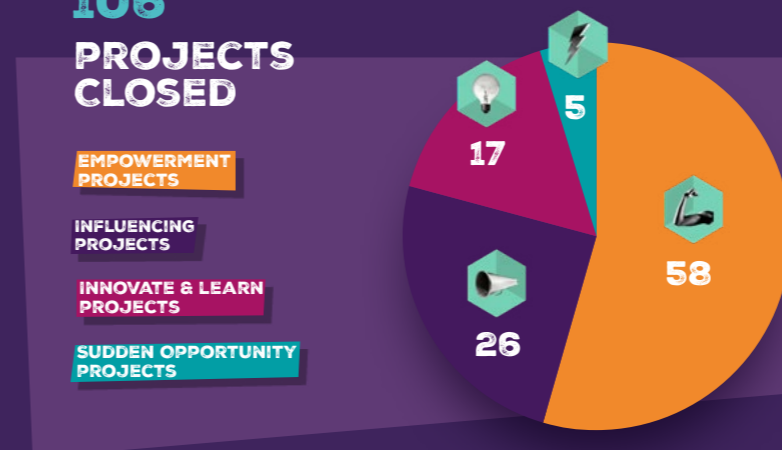
The overall grant portfolio has grown significantly, exceeding the total planned number of grants. **400 grants realised versus 339 planned**. 48% of these are Empowerment grants in line with our focus on emerging voices, supporting processes of thus far unheard rightsholders coming to voice. We have exceeded our goal for Innovate and Learn grants at 26% versus 25%, also because of the national Linking and Learning facilitating grants, as well as the 6 grants co-funded with TAI/Hewlett Foundation. In general Innovate and Learn grants prove popular as they allow for testing new human-centred approaches (such as the NOW-Us! Awards) and learning from (reasonable) mistakes. Sudden Opportunity grants have picked up significantly as we are doing more active outreach, have lightened the application process and perhaps in line with the saying ‘*never waste a good crisis*’ they proved popular in 2020.

In 2020 we also piloted a new sub-grant type allowing for current and previous empowerment grantees to graduate in [Indonesia](#) and [Tanzania](#). Empowerment Accelerator grants acknowledge and celebrate milestones achieved in order to promote and sustain the participation of rightsholders. The selected projects will only start in 2021. To simplify the application process, we designed a two-stage approach with a simple project idea and then full proposal. However, there was a slow uptake due to Covid, and not as many previous Empowerment grantees applied as anticipated. We will roll out it to all countries in 2021.

GRANTS REALISED IN 2020



106 PROJECTS CLOSED



For multi-country projects, and in particular Influencing Grants, Voice made a deliberate decision of issuing a Call for Proposals to allow for repeat multi-country grantees. Launched late 2020 with the title, [It's Still Our Turn to Talk!](#) its aim is to support Voice achieve its strategic priorities as well as the long-term sustainability of proven initiatives of Influencing grantees. The approved grantees will start their work as soon as their old contracts have been completed, as part of the Extension phase.

2020 equally meant the closure of many projects -106 thus far- and we have been adding the individual results to the grantee profiles on our website. At the same time, 115 projects were granted No Cost-Extensions to the end of March 2021 (and in some cases beyond).

The administrative requirements related to closing projects and contract amendments, combined with the Covid-19-related commitment stop have resulted in only 55 new grants rather than the 106 planned.

RIGHTSHOLDERS

It is important to note that most projects involve more than one group - due to the intersectional nature of discrimination. A deeper dive into the most common intersections in 2020 showed that gender, ethnicity, age and disability were most prevalent across all regions. Examples of these are women with albinism in Mali and Niger, young indigenous women in Kenya, Indonesia and the Philippines and transgender sex workers in South East Asia. Across the groups we are generally on track with what we planned except for our engagement with indigenous groups and ethnic minorities which remain slightly below target.

IMPACT THEMES

Also here it is important to mention that groups work on more than one impact theme. The 55 Voice grantees contracted in 2020 work towards improved access to social services in particular health and education (cumulative this percentage is 38%). This cuts across all the three grant types and can be attributed to the fact that access to basic services is a top priority among the rightsholders and continues to be a huge challenge. Interestingly, if you compare the percentage of projects working on political participation to last year (33% in 2019 versus 38% in 2020) the politically-savvy Calls for Proposals we launched in countries where elections were held have paid off! Also here we are roughly on track against all the cumulative targets (2016 – 2020).

HOW WE'RE DOING



“Voice will not change the world, but it will be world-changing for some...”

VOICE PUBLIC LAUNCH, 1 SEPTEMBER 2016, THEN-MINISTER FOR FOREIGN TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION, HER EXCELLENCY LILIANNE PLOUMEN

This chapter shows the cumulative results against the overall Voice results framework. It is divided into two sections in line with the Voice core components:

(1) Capacity strengthening in influencing, supported through grants while contributing to three outcome areas (capacity strengthening processes related to (own) empowerment, alliance building and increased ability to influence)

(2) Linking and Learning, a process centred on grantees and rightsholder groups creating opportunities to interact and learn with each other in an enabling environment where grantees and rightsholders lead the way.

In general, we've made big strides in changing the narrative on inclusion, especially in the use of inclusive language and practices, flowing from a

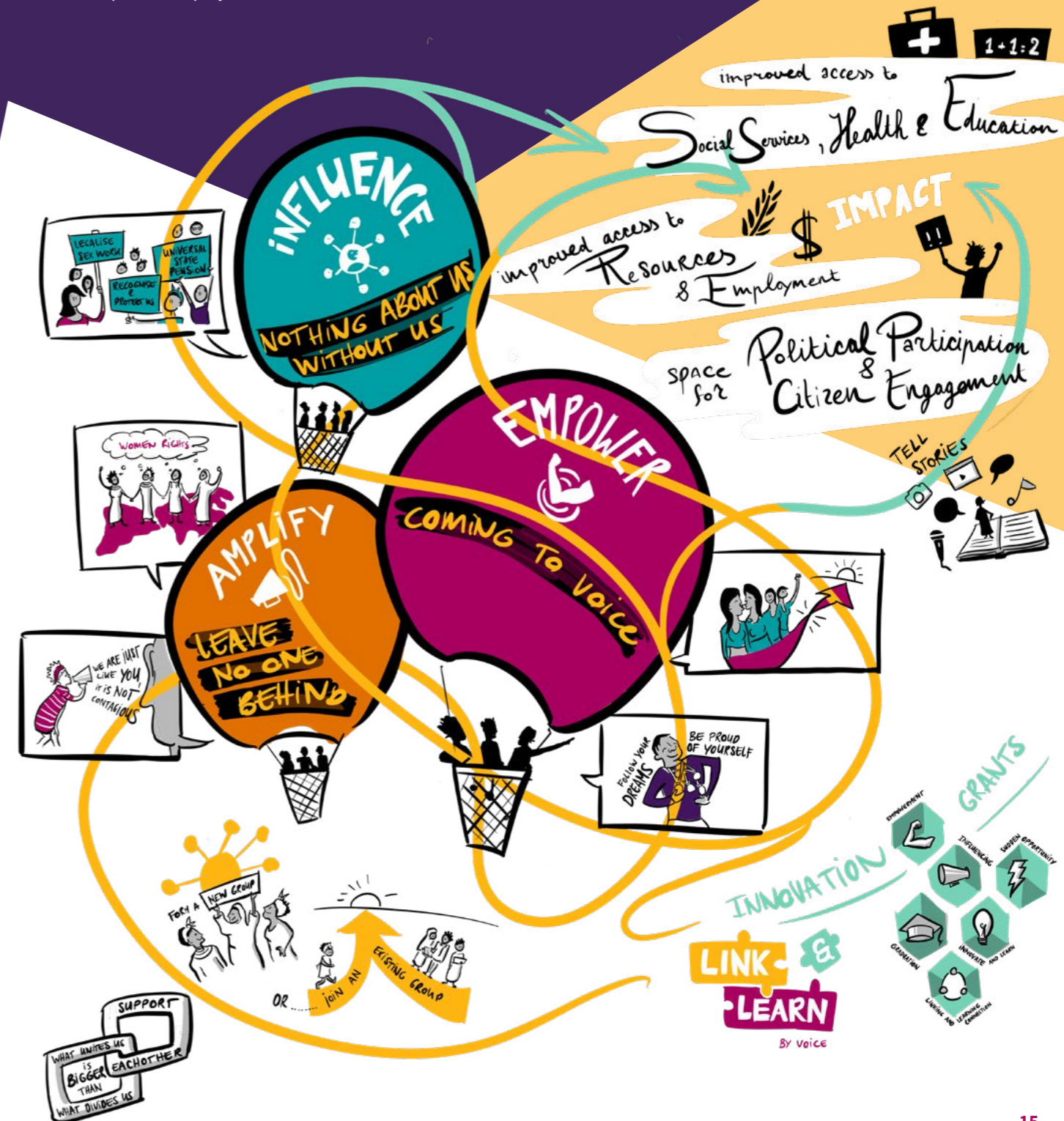
growing awareness of the effect of what and how issues are addressed on the outcome. As a consequence, Voice also contributed to putting inclusion strongly on the strategic map of both Oxfam and Hivos, relating to questions of power and participation. Also at country level, the reflections and experiences within Voice inspired for instance Oxfam in Cambodia to strengthen the inclusion focus for their entire country programme. In addition the feedback we received from other departments within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is that inclusion is also stronger in people's minds in designing programmes and events.

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Our overall goal is to live in a world where empowered rightsholders are able to express their views and demand their rights for responsive and inclusive societies. The different grantees navigate through the three distinct yet interconnected pathways in our Theory of Change. These are Empower, Amplify and Influence.

Introduced in 2019, the revised Theory of Change was further popularised in 2020 during various online and offline events to engage grantees and rightholders groups.

Obviously, we also had to adapt our Monitoring and Evaluation approach during the pandemic. Instead of face-to-face interviews or workshops, we used online communication or telephone interviews to monitor progress.



Credited to the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre in Laos



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.

AT A GLANCE

193 EMPOWERMENT PROJECTS SUPPORTED

2017-2020

789 RIGHTSHOLDER GROUPS HAVE A SAFE SPACE

to convene, share concerns and exchange ideas and experiences

1075 (INFORMAL) GROUPS PRESENTED THEIR OWN CHANGE AGENDAS

to external stakeholders



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

The reason why we grouped these pathways together is because we are starting to observe something interesting. Some of the people that have been part of Empowerment projects are taking leadership to amplify their voice to influence – for political cloud, to mobilise the community or to show the way. In last year's Annual Report *Voice(s) Untamed* we explained that the link between the two depends on the context, and in any case is not a linear causal process. But the examples below show it is possible in beautiful and bold ways.

For example, HandSpeak Vietnam -the first organisation for and by the deaf community in Vietnam, was the winner of the first *NOW-Us! Awards*, organised by Partos in 2018. Taking back to Vietnam an *Empowerment grant*, the organisation's lead, Thuy Tien and her team used the grant to register the organisation – first in Vietnam and with a subsequent regional *Empowerment Grant* used the acquired knowledge to organise the first ever Now-DEAF! Awards in Vietnam. In her own words as expressed during her *Magic Moment* "We applied our experience and learnings into organising the NOW-Deaf! Awards in Vietnam. I am so proud to see the deaf youth confidently voice up their challenges, raising solutions and initiatives for their communities. That is the spirit of Nothing about Deaf without Deaf".

Moving to Indonesia, the journey of young Morgan Maze is one that moves from individual Empowerment to the Amplify pathway, and showing promising steps into Influencing, especially attitudinal. As part of the *Let's Speak Up* project, two time Empowerment grantee, YAPESDI (Down Syndrome Care Foundation Indonesia) takes an unconventional, non-medical approach to help youth with Down Syndrome to stand and speak up for themselves. Morgan's journey has taken him from the Voice Indaba in Kenya in 2019, to the United Nations during World Down Syndrome Day, to be featured in Oxfam Novib's publication on the *Power of Narratives*. "Being a self-advocate is about presenting or explaining to others what we need and what we want to do. We must show people that we can decide what is best for us. We are no different from others. Yes, we need help, but we want to decide what kind of help we need." And to top it off: 7 other self advocates have now joined him!

AT A GLANCE

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

initiating an agenda to amplify rightsholders' voices

271 ONLINE AND OFFLINE CAMPAIGNING ACTIVITIES

undertaken

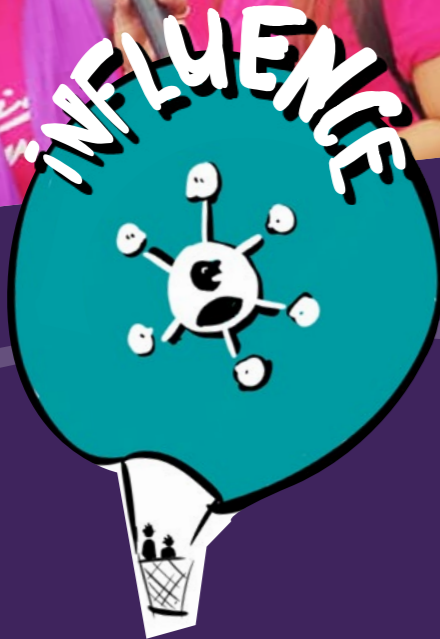
152 PUBLICATIONS LINKED TO INFLUENCING

such as the Divinity of the Clitoris in Kenya in the fight against FGM, a Disability Magazine in Nigeria and in Oxfam Novib's Power of Narratives.

And in Mali, *Sira Samoura*, a young woman with albinism, shows #beautybeyondtheskin by becoming a national and regional model. Winner of the first ever Miss Albinos Show, organised by the *Association Malienne pour la Protection des Albinos* (AMPA) in Mali, a repeat Voice grantee, she went on to become the 1st runner-up in the Miss Mali and eventually ran the catwalk in regional fashion shows. "In the beginning, I did not imagine at all that I would be elected, because, as you know, we people with albinism face all kinds of discrimination. Therefore I was scared, but I had the support of my whole family as well as a Malian costume designer. He was a real moral and physical support from the beginning to the end, providing me with all kinds of training. I dare say that he, my family and the members of AMPA, were my major source of motivation."



Oriang Women's Group in the Philippines march to stop contractualisation of workers.



AT A GLANCE

334 RIGHTS HOLDERS, GROUPS, CSOS AND NETWORKS REPORT A BENEFIT

by using a diverse set of lobby, advocacy and campaigning tools

UP FROM 126 LAST YEAR

183 VOICE GRANTEES HAVE DEFINED A CHANGE PLAN

to strengthen their capacity to influence decision makers.

UP FROM 80 LAST YEAR

131 EXPERTS AND 79 PLATFORMS HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED

to strengthen social innovation and influencing capacities.

UP FROM 92 EXPERTS AND 76 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.

The influencing approaches and tools employed to help bring about change vary according to the socio-political context, rightsholder group needs and capacities and the type of change envisioned to be achieved. We reported already extensively on this in last year's report, due to the high number of Outcome Harvesting events organised. This year we saw twenty-six multi-year influencing projects closing in late

2020. We developed guidelines external evaluations and in some cases supported of the most strategic projects that will help contribute more evidence to our outcomes. The information from these evaluations will also be incorporated to update the results of the latest Outcome Harvesting sessions held in 2019.

For this report we like to showcase four key results of projects funded with an Influencing or Sudden Opportunity grant.

The informal [Oriang Women's Group](#) in the Philippines was supported with a Sudden Opportunity grant with the overall goal to [end the contractualisation](#) (sub-contracting) of especially female workers in some major companies providing services and supplies to, for example, Jollibee's – a major fastfood chain in the country. The group's aim is to advocate for worker's rights and to stand up for labor unions across the Philippines. During International Women's Day the group mobilised workers to organise a protest from Quezon City to Manila, approximately 12 kilometres, to demand an end to the contractualisation, discontinue the move toward federalism and end violence against women. While the ultimate goal was not achieved (yet) the group scored a major victory by obliging the companies to pay a thirteenth month as well as improve labour conditions.

The advocacy and lobbying efforts of the [Zanzibari Association for Retirees and Older People](#) (JUWAZA) have paid off on the island off the coast of Tanzania! The group – an Empowerment grantee- advocated tirelessly for a modest increment of the monthly pension from US\$ 9 to US\$ 15 for every elderly person in Zanzibar aged 70 and above. Additionally, they got free hospital treatment and care in case of illness and the need to access health services. The proposal was accepted by the local authorities and a [bill was signed](#) into law by October 2020.



Mwanamke na Uongozi, a Tanzanian Empowerment grantee working on women's political participation.

Kenyan Sudden Opportunity partner, [Men for the Equality of Men and Women](#) aims to engage more men in the fight against Female Genital Mutilation which continues to be a challenging topic despite laws against it. Its Executive Director [Reverend Njoya](#) authored a book as part of the project called the "[The Divinity of the Clitoris](#)" in which he makes strong claims that the clitoris should stay where it is. The book was used as part of a legal challenge against the constitution that sought to legalise FGM in Kenya. In March 2021 Kenya's High Court upheld that FGM remains illegal, also reported on [ALJazeera](#), news channel.

Taking strategic litigation to the next level is the Laotian Sudden Opportunity partner [Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre](#) (TAEC) seeking recognition for the Oma ethnic handmade clothing line. MaxMara, the Italian fashion campaign sells the clothes without their acknowledgement. TAEC partnered with the Cultural Intellectual Property Rights Initiative to strengthen their claims, working with the Oma in Nanam Village to document their traditional motifs, holding workshops with the Lao Handicrafts Association, LHA, to raise awareness among other artisanal groups, creating educational videos, and developing a model [campaign](#) to defend cultural intellectual property rights. TAEC and LHA sought a commitment from the Laotian Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Industry and Handicraft in pushing their case against Max Mara which they obtained in early 2021. <https://laotiantimes.com/2021/03/26/lao-government-and-handicraft-stakeholders-pledge-to-protect-traditional-designs-of-laos/>.



The Road to Power, Leadership Challenge, a partner in Niger working on women's political participation.



Linking and Learning activity in the Philippines.

LINKING AND LEARNING

2020 was meant to be a vibrant Linking and Learning year, with three (smaller) global Knowledge Exchanges, two Indaba's, and an encounter of the global Linking and Learning community planned. At national level, festivals, summits, and many other face-to-face exchanges and events were foreseen.

And it was a vibrant year, yet so different from what any of us could have imagined. Where face-to-face gatherings became the exception, the online connections became a lifeline to trustworthy and accessible information on Covid-19. A space to share stories, support each other's work, organise peer-to-peer sharing of skills and knowledge, to do un-conferencing and open space work, to check in with each other and to expand our imagination. Furthermore, more ways of working have been explored and tested, among others in the Philippines where they have been working along four pathways of learning.

We saw an increase in the participation of other stakeholders in grantee events and [Communities of Practice](#). In general, there was a lot of learning on Communities of Practice, leading to changes in their set-up and in the active engagement of grantees in shaping them.

Besides this, several surveys took place among grantees and rightsholder groups, to listen to their views on the Linking and Learning so far, to gather ideas what we can do better together. For example, Voice in Nigeria published guidelines on Linking and Learning. These insights inform incoming Linking and Learning facilitators.

And in the course of 2020, all ten Linking and Learning Facilitation grants have closed and the selection of new organisations for the Extension Phase is in full swing. Further, our current team of mostly parttime colleagues will change into a team of ten fulltime Linking, Learning and Amplifier officers. Some were already onboard in late 2020, and the remaining ones will join in 2021.

So 2020 has been a year of transition, of finishing projects and deep learning, and of bringing new insights alive in how we want to work and inspire the Linking and Learning from April 2021 onwards. Yet also a year of exploration, testing and learning while we go, how to organise inspiring and participatory online moments to share, learn, seek guidance or just to talk with one another.

A year of amazing resilience and adaptability and creativity, a year to remember. That is why we decided that it merits a deep-dive and a separate report while we only give the high level numbers here.



2020 IN NUMBERS

Some of the most important data are presented here, as compared to 2019. The change in type, place and duration of online versus offline events make comparisons a bit challenging that is why we added some explanation. For the Extension Phase a revised data inventory will be developed.

| | 2019 | 2020 | |
|--|------|------|---|
| KICK OFF /INCEPTION MEETINGS ON LINKING AND LEARNING | 19 | 10 | Temporary stop on Calls for Proposals combined with final year of first phase grant-making led to fewer new grantees |
| FACE-TO-FACE ANNUAL LINKING AND LEARNING EVENTS | 17 | 11 | Although only few annual events took place, participant numbers are reasonably high due to # of grantees |
| COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE | 32 | 40 | After a slow start and trials, now quite some active CoPs |
| ENCOUNTERS OF GRANTEES WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS | 102 | 113 | After a sprint in 2019, still somewhat increasing. Simultaneously there is an increase of participation of stakeholders in CoPs |
| ENCOUNTERS AMONG GRANTEES | 61 | 120 | More countries are having frequent encounters between grantees |
| CONSULTATIONS - ONLINE | 123 | 248 | As expected, the number of online consultations increased more than offline. Overall consultations are starting point with new grantees. |
| - OFFLINE | 116 | 126 | |
| OVERALL AVERAGE PARTICIPATION GRANTEES IN A LINKING AND LEARNING ACTIVITY | 152 | 209 | On average 209 grantees out of 283 active grantees participated in some Linking and Learning activity = 74%. Yet, as good as all grantees participate in at least 1 LandL activity over the course of their project. It is interesting that most ex-grantees stay in the LandL community. |
| ONLINE LINKING AND LEARNING SESSIONS | 129 | 370 | Some of these events reach hundreds of participants, leading to increased opportunities for grantees and rightsholder groups to be involved. Of course huge challenge to make it accessible to all. |
| ARTICLES AND BLOGS PUBLISHED | 149 | 418 | Enormous uptake, both both at national and global level. Increasingly written or produced directly by the storyteller or grantee. |
| LEARNING CALLS BETWEEN COUNTRIES | 6 | 16 | Several countries have started these initiatives. E.g. Mali/Niger, Kenya/Tanzania, Niger/Indonesia/ Philippines. |

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

69 ORGANISATIONS, INFORMAL GROUPS AND NETWORKS

report the use and effects of new insights and innovative approaches

Global cumulative
TARGET 200

One great example is the [collaboration between two organisations](#) in the Philippines: the [UP Babaylan](#), an LGBTI student organisation (and 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 Organisation, 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.

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

74% OF ALL GRANTEEES report use of the Linking and Learning infrastructure

Global cumulative
TARGET 70%

In 2020, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, Voice grantees participated in 10 linking and learning kick-off gatherings, 11 face-to-face and 386 online learning calls, 40 Communities of Practice among grantees started, 233 facilitated encounters between grantees and between them and other stakeholders, 109 capacity and skills-building workshops (18 peer-to-peer), and 374 online and offline consultations. All grantees participated at least once in Linking and Learning during their engagement with Voice. This is thanks to the amazing work of the Linking and Learning facilitators.

Across Voice, grantees shifted from an initial wait-and-see attitude to active use of the Linking and Learning infrastructure. By now grantees actively participate in the agenda setting and take leading roles in capacity strengthening or facilitation. For instance, from the latest learning event in Cambodia, [This Life Cambodia](#), Linking and Learning facilitator, [wrote in their blog](#): "We chose to do an un-conference to give space for grantees to take the lead, to make decisions and to create their own agenda. It was a renewal as well, of their commitment to creating a culture of sharing."

Following a **Let them perform** role-playing methodology, one participant said: *"I like the idea. I believe we can better convince them (local authorities) using this as they will clearly understand what challenges people with disabilities face. I am sure that they will begin to consider our proposals to them such as building an accessibility ramp for people using wheelchairs in public spaces."*

"Linking and learning is a library of knowledge and a space of sharing, love, friendship, value and networking"

NOTED MR. VONG VUTHY FROM THE RABBIT SCHOOL, INNOVATE AND LEARN GRANTEE, CAMBODIA



TARGETED OUTCOME 3

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

69 IDEAS AND APPROACHES DEVELOPED /tested/prototyped and evidence of those ideas published

Global cumulative
TARGET 20

The [CAMELEON Association Inc.](#), an Innovate and Learn grantee in the Philippines, shared poems [written by youth advocates](#) about their experiences with online sexual abuse and exploitation. The poems were testing a new way to create awareness, combining sharing the experiences of young women and girls through creative actions, enabling peer to peer engagement and doing research on the attitudes towards sexual abuse.

Training Maasai women in sexual health and rights by the Kilimanjaro Clinical Research Institute, an Innovate and Learn grantee in Tanzania.

66 EFFECTIVE IDEAS AND APPROACHES DOCUMENTED

(including through Innovate and Learn grants)

Global cumulative
TARGET 20

An example is the [Hapo Zamani](#) za Kale [Once Upon a Time] cultural storytelling project in Tanzania. Realising the challenges facing art and artists as a result of the pandemic, renowned cartoonist and media personality Masoud Kipanya teamed up with Hapo Zamani za Kale, the [winning initiative](#) of the Tanzania NOW-US! awards supported by a Voice Innovate and Learn grant. Masoud used his journey as an artist to support, mentor and inspire young Tanzanian artists, exposing them to new art practices beyond the canvas.

HOW WE SPENT

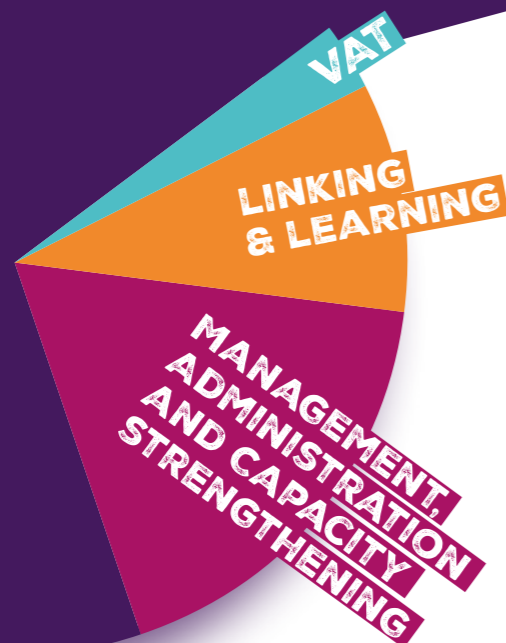
Voice is an eight-year fund (2016-2024) totalling **Euro 86.5 million** of which Euro 86 million comes from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Euro 500,000 comes from the Hewlett Foundation -whom we signed on in 2019. Administratively we need to keep the first (2016-2021) and the Extension (2021-2024) Phase separately although it was agreed that we could take any balances forward to the Extension Phase.

Overall the budget is broken down into the following components:

GRANTS

70%

€ 60.550.000 grant fund, for grants to (local) organisations of marginalised and discriminated rightsholders



3%

€ 2.386.168 is reserved for VAT

9%

€ 8.035.072 is set aside to Linking and Learning strongly focused on south-south

18%

€ 15.478.760 for Programme Management and Administration and capacity strengthening in the Voice focus countries

FINANCIAL REPORT 2020

The data and numbers on this page are a summary from the unqualified audit report 2020, which is available on the website and on request.

OVERALL EXPENDITURE

IN 2020

| | 2016-2019 | 2020 | Cumulative 2016-2020 | Overall Budget | %-spent |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Grant Commitments | € 30.651.805 | € 2.801.484 | € 33.453.289 | € 60.597.500 | 55% |
| Programme Management and Administration | € 5.662.259 | € 1.792.757 | € 7.455.016 | € 15.718.318 | 47% |
| Linking and Learning | € 2.148.146 | € 975.388 | € 3.123.534 | € 7.685.185 | 41% |
| VAT | € 1.178.956 | € 229.232 | € 1.408.188 | € 2.396.497 | 59% |
| TOTAL 2020 | € 39.641.166 | € 5.798.861 | € 45.440.027 | € 86.000.000 | 53% |



Oralite Plus in Niger

FINANCIAL REPORT

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2020

| | Operational budget 2020 | Expenses 2020 | Variance Budget versus Actuals | % spent (budget depletion) |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| A. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION | | | | |
| Context, gender and actor analyses | € 23.346 | € 25.752 | € 2.406 | 110% |
| Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting | € 1.011.169 | € 706.212 | € -304.957 | 70% |
| Administration (including of the subsidy facility) | € 1.166.209 | € 1.031.275 | € -134.934 | 88% |
| Advisory board | € 20.412 | € - | € -20.412 | 0% |
| B. LINKING AND LEARNING PROCESS | | | | |
| Linking and Learning process and activities | € 1.372.405 | € 975.388 | € -397.017 | 71% |
| C. COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION OF THE FUND | | | | |
| Outreach, publications, website and translation | € 124.929 | € 29.518 | € -95.411 | 24% |
| Sub-total Management and Administration, Communication and Promotion of the Fund | € 2.346.066 | € 1.792.757 | € -553.309 | 76% |
| Sub-total Linking and Learning process | € 1.372.405 | € 975.388 | € -397.017 | 71% |
| Totals per year | € 3.718.470 | € 2.768.145 | € -950.326 | 74% |
| VAT / 21% budget / expenses also 0% | € 780.879 | € 229.232 | € -551.647 | 29% |
| TOTAL OVERALL | € 4.499.349 | € 2.997.377 | € -1.501.973 | 67% |

MONETARY COMMITMENTS

PER GRANT TYPE

| | 2017 + 2019 | 2020 | Totals 2017-2020 | Revised budget 2016-2023 | %-spent |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Empowerment | € 4.243.964 | € 690.956 | € 4.934.920 | € 9.915.000 | 50% |
| Influencing | € 13.680.244 | € -237.479 | € 13.442.765 | € 26.350.000 | 51% |
| Innovate and learn | € 11.241.938 | € 753.455 | € 11.995.393 | € 20.782.500 | 58% |
| Sudden Opportunity | € 1.485.659 | € 1.594.552 | € 3.080.211 | € 3.550.000 | 87% |
| GRAND TOTAL | € 30.651.805 | € 2.801.484 | € 33.453.289 | € 60.597.500 | 55% |

Notes: *There is a small difference (of Euro 2408.92) between the grant commitments on this page and the total breakdown on the Who We Fund page. This is due to technical difficulties in the system with three projects.

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 Voice, maintain a zero-tolerance policy to both fraud and safeguarding- and the organisational processes will be invoked pending on the country where a potential integrity issue takes place. At the request of the Ministry we have developed a [whistleblowing page](#), 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 serve the groups we stand for, it is inevitable that



Credit: Street Project Foundation, Nigeria.

issues occur. Also here and as much as possible we take a learning approach, resulting in a strengthened due diligence process, grant agreements, 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. Such as for example the case of a Filipino Influencing grantee who reported and resolved the issue in close collaboration with Voice in the Philippines as per <https://voice.global/blog/valuing-the-well-being-a-response-to-a-fraud-case-in-the-philippines/>. In 2019, five cases were reported (total value at risk Euro 40,000) to us, two of which were satisfactorily resolved in 2020 with closing the relationship and agreeing to reimburse the ineligible costs. Two new cases were reported in 2020 (total value at risk Euro 130,000) which are still under investigation.

WHAT'S NEXT

#FULLSTEAMAHEAD



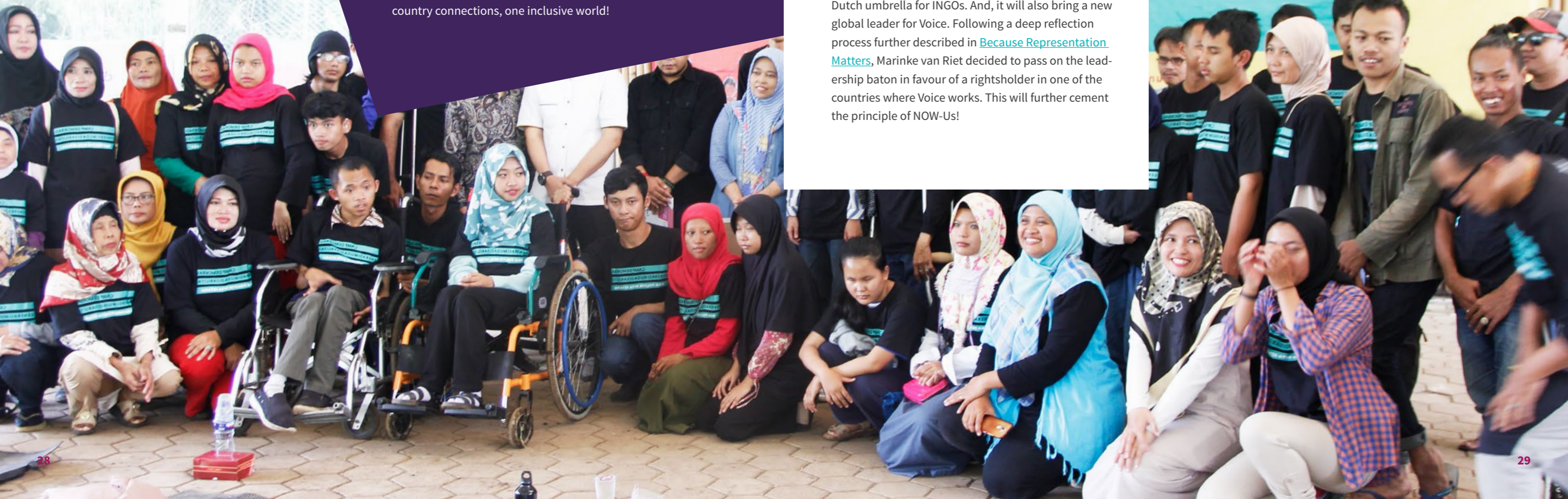
Just like most of you, we cannot wait for 2021 to start and to leave 2020 behind. Some of the Voice magic happens when organising face-to-face events at regional and global level and we have not been able to do so in 2020, beyond some smaller digital ones. While a full-scale face-to-face event may have to wait a little bit longer, we are gearing up for a Voice@5 celebration on April 7th, 2021, whereby we will connect the digital with the personal worlds. Eleven country connections, one inclusive world!



Outgoing Programme Manager Marinke van Riet. Credit: Hivos East Africa.

While we will be closing the first phase of Voice we are also in the full swing of preparing for the Extension phase. This includes recruiting fulltime Linking, Learning and Amplifier Officers in the ten Voice focus countries, with the aim to deepen these aspects at national level. The Coordination Team also decentralised the role of the Voice MEAL Officer into two Regional Roving Monitoring and Evaluation Officers for Africa and Asia respectively. Working together with the Communications hub, a process to further align the information flows between Linking, Learning and Amplification and Monitoring and Evaluation is en route. The year 2021 will also see a new Advisory Board made up of rightsholders and the head of Partos – the Dutch umbrella for INGOs. And, it will also bring a new global leader for Voice. Following a deep reflection process further described in [Because Representation Matters](#), Marinke van Riet decided to pass on the leadership baton in favour of a rightsholder in one of the countries where Voice works. This will further cement the principle of NOW-US!

And finally, we are ready for you! We will be launching a whole set of [Calls for Proposals](#) based on the changing context. We have started already and we encourage you to look at the growing list of open [Calls](#). For example the Calls for Proposals in Laos, Nigeria and Cambodia focused on senior citizens in line with the updated context analysis. In Cambodia, this involved a focus on social protection schemes especially for elderly women while in Nigeria it's about sensitisation on elderly rights to stop attacks on them. Or what about movement building in [Coming Together, Moving Forever](#) addressing cross-border emerging issues. Or [I-Rant](#) for Nigeria – because Nigerians deserve a good rant, providing an opportunity to transform words into action.



Youth Disability Camp from Indonesia



Colophon

Voice

C/O Oxfam Novib
PO Box 30919
2500 GX The Hague

T +31 (0)70 342 16 21
hello@voice.global
www.voice.global

Concept & Design

Lennart Veenendaal

Text

Voice Coordination Team

Photos

Grantees, Country and Coordination
Teams (credited where relevant)

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and is executed by a consortium between
Oxfam Novib and Hivos.

