



voice

**THE
VOICES
WE
UPHOLD**

ANNUAL REPORT, 2023

For the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

GLOSSARY OF TERMS, ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

COP: Communities of Practice

CSO: Civil Society Organisation

Grantee Perception Survey:

A confidential online survey carried out with Voice grantees by the Centre for Effective Philanthropy, to assess areas in which Voice grant making facility is doing well and areas it needs to improve on.

ISDAO:

Initiative Sankofa d’Afrique de l’Ouest

INGO: International Non-Governmental Organisation

ILO: International Labour Organisation

LGBTQI: Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgenders, Queer, and Intersex People

L&L: Linking & Learning

LLAO: Linking Learning Amplifier Officers

LLF: Linking Learning Facilitator Organisation

MATD: *Ministère de l’Administration Territoriale et de la Décentralisation* (Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation)

M&E: Monitoring & Evaluation

**Nothing About Us Without Us/
NOW-Us! Awards:**

An annual initiative being implemented in the Voice focus countries that honours innovation in inclusion.

OH: Outcome Harvesting

PMER: Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

ROTAB: Réseau des Organisations pour la Transparence et l’Analyse Budgétaire (the Organisation for Transparency and Budgetary Analysis)

SoC: Stories of Change

TAI: Trust, Accountability and Inclusion Network

ToC: Theory of Change

TABLE OF CONTENTS

05

INTRODUCTION

11

WHO WE FUND
AND HOW WE
FUND

20

HOW WE
ARE DOING

54

WHAT WE ARE
LEARNING AND
HOW WE ARE
USING IT

62

HOW WE SPENT

An illustration on a dark purple background featuring several hands in various colors (orange, yellow, green, blue) holding and nurturing small plants and seedlings. One hand holds a seedling with soil, another holds a seedling with roots, and others hold individual seeds or small plants. The style is hand-drawn and colorful.

Sometimes you win,
sometimes you learn. Just
be strong, you never know
who you are inspiring.”

– Sitthadeth CHAMPASITH,
Founder, Skillbender

“By collaborating, bridging
gaps, and managing risks, Voice
grantees strive to operate in
the most complex environments,
leaving no one behind.”

Voice Final Evaluation Report, 2023

01

INTRO DUCTION



Snapshots from Voice grantee partners across Asia and Africa shared over the course of 2023 through the 'Country in Focus' campaign

WE ARE BECAUSE YOU ARE

We are proud and humbled to present the Voice annual report 2023, our seventh and penultimate report. As ever, this report is dedicated to civil society movements worldwide, including Voice grantee partners and rights holders, who continue steering all of us towards just and equal futures. We are because you are.

Throughout 2023 we had to grapple with immense negative shifts in the political, legal, social, and economic contexts in the countries and regions where we work. Starting from the adoption of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MATD) regulations impacting INGO operations in Mali and the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act in Uganda, to the increased red-tagging of indigenous rights defenders in the Philippines and the military coup in Niger, the attacks on civic space continued unabated. The results are palpable for many grantee partners and rights holder groups, influencing both their organisations or movements and their private lives. Far from being deterred from action, grantee partners and rights holders continued to surmount these and other obstacles with creativity, alacrity, and fortitude.

In Tanzania, WoteSawa activated a network of domestic workers to seek the ratification of ILO Convention 189 Domestic Workers Convention and achieving formal status under national laws. Similarly, in Indonesia Perempuan Mahardika and their partners built connections with trade unions, journalists and workers in all their intersectionality, to ensure improved protection against work place violence particularly through the ratification of ILO Convention 190 Violence and Harassment Convention. In Niger, ROTAB implemented the Publish What You Pay campaign to bring transparency to the extractive industry in the Agadez region. In East Africa, Data4Change empowered grassroots organisations working at the intersection of LGBTQI, women's and young people's rights to use data, design, and storytelling to build and strengthen community, inspire action, and hold power to account. In Southeast Asia, the International Drug Policy Consortium-Asia applied intersectional approaches to strengthen and build upon the relationships established among women and young people affected by punitive drug policies to increase their capacity to advocate for gender-sensitive and harm reduction-oriented approaches.

Participants at the Laos NOW-Us! learning workshop organised by STELLA and RDA, Bangkok, December 2023.



Participants at the Winning Together! Regional Knowledge Exchange, Bangkok, December 2023.



4TH Voice Global Indaba in Benin, Africa

Speak Up, Stand Out! The Suso Program event in Nigeria



Voice Nigeria grantee partner COSROPIN organising an older persons hang out.



Elderly women participating at an older persons hang out organised by COSROPIN, Nigeria'

IDAHOBIT in Laos, 2023



CONSOLIDATING OUR GAINS

2023 brought to fruition several important programmatic milestones for Voice. **We reached a total of 745 awarded grants** (compared to the original target of 631 grants) filling significant gaps in reaching among others the LGBTIQ+ community in West Africa and adapting to the significant contextual shifts highlighted above. Linking and learning, as before, continued to provide us with the platform to build solidarity, community, and connections with and among grantee partners. The most significant linking and learning event of 2023 being the **4th run of the Voice Global Indaba in Benin**. This year, we also finalised the final programme evaluation report. We implemented the 'Country in Focus' initiative that provided a global reach to the stories of Voice grantee partners and rightsholders. Finally, we came together as the Voice teams at the annual reflection meeting 2023 also with the Voice steering committee, advisory board, and focal point at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to lay the groundwork for the extensive reflection and documentation process we will undertake in the final year of the programme to consolidate our learnings to inform future programmes.

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

2023 was a significant year for Voice in terms of sharing and exchanging learnings on grant making and linking and learning with actors in the funding, development and civic space ecosystems. Throughout the year we sought out opportunities to connect with external stakeholders who share Voice's vision of empowered rightsholders demanding their rights for an equal society. We were privileged to learn strategies from peer funders at UHAI EASHRI's Changing Faces, Changing Spaces VIII conference on how to show up more meaningfully for the LGBTI movement in Africa. We also participated at the 4th Inclusive Africa conference and gathered learning on the innovations arising from the movement of people with disabilities. Finally, we engaged with philanthropic sector actors at the WINGS philanthropy forum to exchange examples of integrating a gender and social inclusion perspective in funding. We also continued to dialogue with Oxfam, Hivos and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the implications of shifting power in partnerships.

While 2024 will bring closure to the Voice programme in its current iteration, our focus remains on the future. We are organising a series of close-out events between February and September 2024 at national, cross-regional, and global levels to commemorate and celebrate this journey. As we bid farewell to this chapter, we are keenly aware that the work of rightsholders to build just and inclusive societies is far from complete. We are committed to working collaboratively and exploring ways to contribute to the sustainability of the projects and organisations that have been empowered by the Voice programme.

In this annual report, we invite you to join us in reflecting on our shared accomplishments, learning from our experiences, and embracing the possibilities that lie ahead. We invite you to connect and converse with us, once you finish turning the last page, so that we can bolster the systems of support for Voice grantee partners and rightsholders to continue their onward journeys.



Post-covid it is even more critical that movements find their way to each other. This could either be through social fora, convenings or through interpersonal networks Crucial to note is providing spaces for the movement to showcase its achievements, current programming, key challenges and, lastly, hopes for what the future holds for differently-abled persons”

Kelly Imathiu

Voice Regional Roving Grants Officer- Africa, reflecting on their participation at the 4th Inclusive Africa conference



02

WHO WE FUND AND HOW WE FUND



Overview of Grants Data

As Voice moves even closer to its sunset phase, the programme continues to reach more rightsholder groups globally amidst shrinking civic spaces and various sociopolitical crises. By the end of 2023, we had supported a total of **745 grantee partners**, adding from last year the much-awaited projects from West Africa.

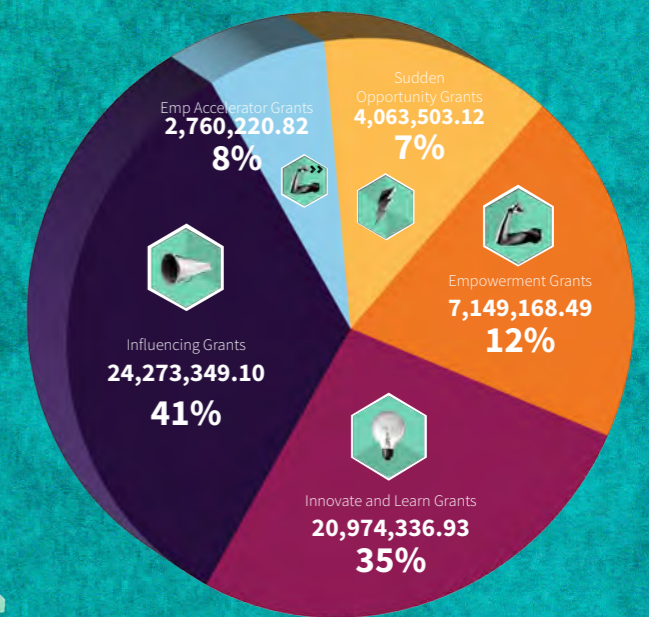
We have **43 confidential grantees** presently, which includes irregularity cases. In terms of budget, this portfolio translates to just under **60 million euros** in approvals, of which 93% have already been transferred to the partners.

When it comes to our granting windows, a similar pattern has been observed from the preceding year: we continue to disburse the largest portions of funding in terms of value to the Influencing and Innovate & Learn Grants, at around 24 million and 21 million euros, respectively, or 40% and 36% of the total grant budget. In contrast, we enter a significantly higher number of contracts through the Empowerment Grants, consisting of 351 grants or 47% of the total projects supported. The data below gives us the breakdown of contract value in the ten countries and global.

GRANT APPROVAL DISTRIBUTION OVER GRANT TYPE AND TEAM



GLOBAL DATA



GRAND TOTAL
59,220,578.46

10 Focus Countries

INDICATIVE GRANTING TARGETS

The closure of projects is also an ongoing endeavour in 2023; a definite pain point that we are gradually managing to address. There are 28 projects from phase 1 that are unfortunately not yet closed, which includes eight pending irregularity cases. We have also started the closure process of some phase 2 projects, now with six projects formally closed in the system and another 29 prepared for closure. More of the indicative granting targets are shown in figures below:

GROUPS

CATEGORIES	TARGET	REALISED 2023
People with disabilities	20%	21.73%
LGBTI people	10%	11.61%
Women facing exploitation, abuse and violence	25%	25.52%
Vulnerable Youth and Elderly	25%	24.42%
Indigenous people and ethnic minorities	20%	16.73%

GRANT MODALITIES

CATEGORIES	TARGET	REALISED 2023
Empowerment grant (including Emp accelerator grant)	14%	17%
Influencing grant	46%	41%
Innovate and learn grant	26%	35%
Sudden Opportunity Grant	14%	7%

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

CATEGORIES	TARGET	REALISED 2023
Informal organisations (grassroots & CBOs)	23%	10.48%
Formal organisations	50%	74.49%
Platforms and networks	27%	7.49%

THEMES

CATEGORIES	TARGET	REALISED 2023
Access to productive resources and employment	35%	24.83%
Access to improved social services	35%	36.45%
Space for political participation	30%	38.72%

The data above presents an overview of the initial targets set for the Voice programme in terms of percentage distribution of the overall grant budget as disaggregated by the key criteria outlined on the left. As seen above, there is consistency in key trends across all the criteria as seen from year to year. This concerns not only those criteria where there are minor variations from the set targets, such as the rightsholder groups but also those where there are significant differences such as grant modalities and types of organisations. Regarding grant modalities the variations can be attributed to the focus that has developed within the Voice programme to supporting local, emergent initiatives led by rightsholders. The variations concerning types of organisations can be attributed to the contractual requirement placed upon Voice to not make grant agreements with unregistered organisations. Finally, regarding themes it is important to mention that the final context analysis update was carried out by Voice teams in the first semester of 2022. Some calls for proposals were released prior to the finalisation of the context analysis update keeping in view the impending close of the overall programme. As a consequence, all thematic priorities highlighted in the context analysis update may not have been addressed by the calls for proposals.

ADAPTATIONS TO GRANT MAKING IN 2023

MEETING GRANTEE PARTNERS WHERE THEY ARE

The Voice final evaluation report describes the programme as having a 'solutions-oriented engagement' marked by adaptability, participation, and open communication with grantee partners. The immense socio-political, legal, and economic changes in the Voice focus countries came to bear strongly on Voice grant making in 2023, putting the programme adaptability to the test. In Mali, the Voice teams in consultation with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oxfam Novib and Oxfam Great Britain adopted a new way of working to ensure compliance with new governmental regulations addressing financing of international NGOs. This required us to keep signing off new grant contracts in Mali in abeyance for a period of 6-months. We are grateful for the reserves of patience and understanding of our grantee partners in Mali, and the cooperation of the Oxfam in Mali team that enabled us to resume programming.

Both in East and West Africa, the socio-political and legal arenas were marked by an increase in homophobic attacks, including most notably the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act in Uganda. The law passed on the heels of purported government scrutiny and media reports targeting organisations working to protect sexual and gender minorities, as well as their supporters. The programme had to devise new tactics to continue standing in solidarity with LGBTQIA+ rightsholders and their movements, including maintaining confidentiality and seeking out allies to strengthen cooperation.

Since the start of Voice in Laos, grantee partners have had to grapple with strict governmental compliances, requiring the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the government to govern the implementation of any donor-funded project. While the time frame required for seeking and receiving this approval has always been somewhat variable, over 2023 we encountered instances of grantee partners only receiving approvals for their projects at the very end of their project period. The project-based funding modality of Voice collided with the national regulations impacting local civil society to give rise to one egregious situation in which a grantee partner could only carry out one project activity in the approved time period. Staying open and empathetic to the situation of the grantee partner and brainstorming on solutions to navigate this major contingency was the only form of support that the Voice team could offer to ameliorate the situation.

COLLABORATIONS TO DEEPEN GRANT MAKING IMPACT

In the Africa portfolio, Voice stretched its collaborative muscle and continued to work with the Hewlett and the Trust Accountability and Inclusion (TAI) Network. It also forged a new partnership with a peer funder in West Africa, the Initiative Sankofa d'Afrique de l'Ouest (ISDAO), an activist-led fund dedicated to building a West African movement that advocates for sexual diversity and sexual rights. Both these partnerships have brought forth unique approaches and models of learning in relation to grant making strategies and partner relationships. In addition, recognising the rapidly changing context for sexual and gender minorities in Uganda, we used confidential and safeguarding principles and approaches to granting thus supported further three organisations in solidarity with the movement.



Participants at the Africa Link & Learn Festival organised by the Constellation, Nairobi, July 2023.

FROM OPEN TO INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE: LEVERAGING SUPPORT FROM THE HEWLETT FOUNDATION AND TAI COLLABORATIVE

As we reflect on the past reporting period, our ongoing collaboration with TAI and the Hewlett Foundation continued to inspire and deepen the work with six partners. The partners tested new approaches and techniques to programming, increasing their interactions with each other through our proud culture of Linking and Learning and celebrated their achievements, successes, and shortcomings.

The six projects have recorded a greater capacity for leadership including national/regional advocacy efforts through the Linking and Learning collaborations with and between the multi-country Linking & Learning Facilitator organisation, the Constellation, and the Coady Institute. The projects have been able to use amplification tools on social media and programmatic accountability tools such as the Community Scorecard (CSC) to increase inclusivity in non-traditional spaces for the under-served communities they serve. This synergistic partnership between Hewlett, Voice, TAI and Coady has flourished to an extent to which the Hewlett Foundation granted the six projects an additional twelve months to continue and upscale their work further. While support for local LGBTI rights activists is steadily increasing, West Africa

STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY: LESSONS IN ACTIVIST-LED FUNDING FROM THE INITIATIVE SANKOFA D'AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST (ISDAO)

as a region remains far under-resourced when it comes to funding for LGBTI movements. Despite being active in the region since 2016, Voice as a programme could not serve the LGBTI community appropriately. The additional challenge of lack of physical and social safe spaces, lack of support from broader movements for human rights, and discrimination in access to education and employment opportunities are among some challenges currently preventing the growth and sustainability of LGBTI organising in West Africa.

In this context, Voice entered a technical partnership with the Initiative Sankofa d'Afrique de l'Ouest (ISDAO) to co-create joint calls for proposals, carry out a participatory grantee selection process, receive technical support in grantee partner management, and strengthen its own capacities to be in stronger solidarity with the LGBTI movement.



Voice Niger Commemoration of the
Day of the Elderly, 22 July 2023



Voice PH Annual Linking
and Learning Event, April 2023



FROM THE GLOBAL TO THE LOCAL: THE NOW-US! AWARDS TRAJECTORY

The Nothing About Us Without Us! (NoW-Us!) Awards, originally launched as a granting innovation at the global level in 2018 through a collaboration with the Spindle of Partos, have been localised in seven countries since Voice entered its extension phase in 2021. It offered an exciting, refreshing way of reaching inclusive self-led initiatives of rightsholders groups by offering them bootcamps with a human-centred design process, allowing for a more reflective and supportive project development process.

The NOW-Us! Awards have been positively and enthusiastically received by organisations, showing how it might be used as a standard granting procedure for small, informal groups and organisations. This is evident in the following examples: the multi-country DeafLoud project, for instance, integrated a NOW-Deaf Awards in their activities for 2022 and 2023 to foster a culture innovation within the deaf community in the Mekong Region. The Linking and Learning Facilitator in the Philippines, YGOAL, also used the awards mechanism as inspiration for their Innovation Studio, which is a small fund meant to support joint actions and solutions by the grantee partners and rightsholders in the country.

In Asia, the final rounds of NOW-Us! Celebrations in 2023 also encouraged the four Voice countries to learn together and delve deeper into how we might better support rightsholder-led initiatives while using an intersectional approach. A regional knowledge exchange with select grantee partners and NOW-Us! Winners in Laos was organised in Bangkok for this purpose.

03

HOW WE ARE DOING

Capacity strengthening through grant making

Capacity strengthening processes engaging rightsholders groups contribute to three outcome areas related to (i) the empowerment of rightsholders, (ii) alliance building, and (iii) increased ability to influence. These processes are supported through the projects that are implemented by grantee partners. Voice grantee partners navigate through the three distinct yet interconnected pathways in the **Voice Theory of Change: Empower, Amplify and Influence.**

EMPOWER

AT GLANCE



292

Rightsholders groups have a safe space to convene, share concerns and exchange ideas and experiences

157

Empowerment and Empowerment Accelerator projects supported by Voice in 2023.

225

Formal and informal groups presented their own agendas for change to external stakeholders

EMPOWER

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

In 2023, grantee partners and rightsholders continued to build confidence, skills and strengths leading to their own development and contributing to the empowerment of their communities. As before, we witnessed the circle of empowerment start from an individual or small group and radiate out to the wider community. When it comes to rightsholder groups that are living in or emerging from particularly fragile and precarious contexts, the criticality of measures to enhance financial empowerment as an entry point to enhancing social, cultural, and political empowerment cannot be overstated. Additionally, creating spaces for rightsholders with shared lived realities to come together and find support has also been crucial to the success of the empowerment journeys.

INCOME GENERATION AS A BYPRODUCT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Association des Jeunes pour l'Environnement et l'Education Civique au Niger (AJEEC Niger) has been training women with disabilities in sorting, recycling and processing plastic waste to enable them to have access to revenue while contributing to environmental protection. Through this project, the women participants have started generating income from the sale of the different products that they have been making using the plastic waste, hence reducing plastic pollution.



This business that we've just learned about recycling plastic bags that are thrown all over the city is a new practice for us. Frankly, if it wasn't for this initiative, we would never have known that simple plastic waste could have other uses. Now that we've had this training, you can see the outcome for yourself. We've designed key rings that come directly from plastic bags, which we used to think of as rubbish. But with a bit of work, we can produce several types of utilitarian items such as key rings, pouches, and bags, all made from plastic waste. Now we know what we're doing. Before, some of us didn't have a job to do, but now we're all working. This training has also taught us how to better manage waste through collection, sorting and processing."

Mariama Amoumane,
a rightsholder engaged
in the project





Representatives of Namunyak Lepolosi Women's Group along with other participants at the 5th Voice Global Indaba, Cotonou, May 2023.



A rightsholder sewing sanitary pads in one of the custodial centres. Photo source: FIRC progress report 2023.

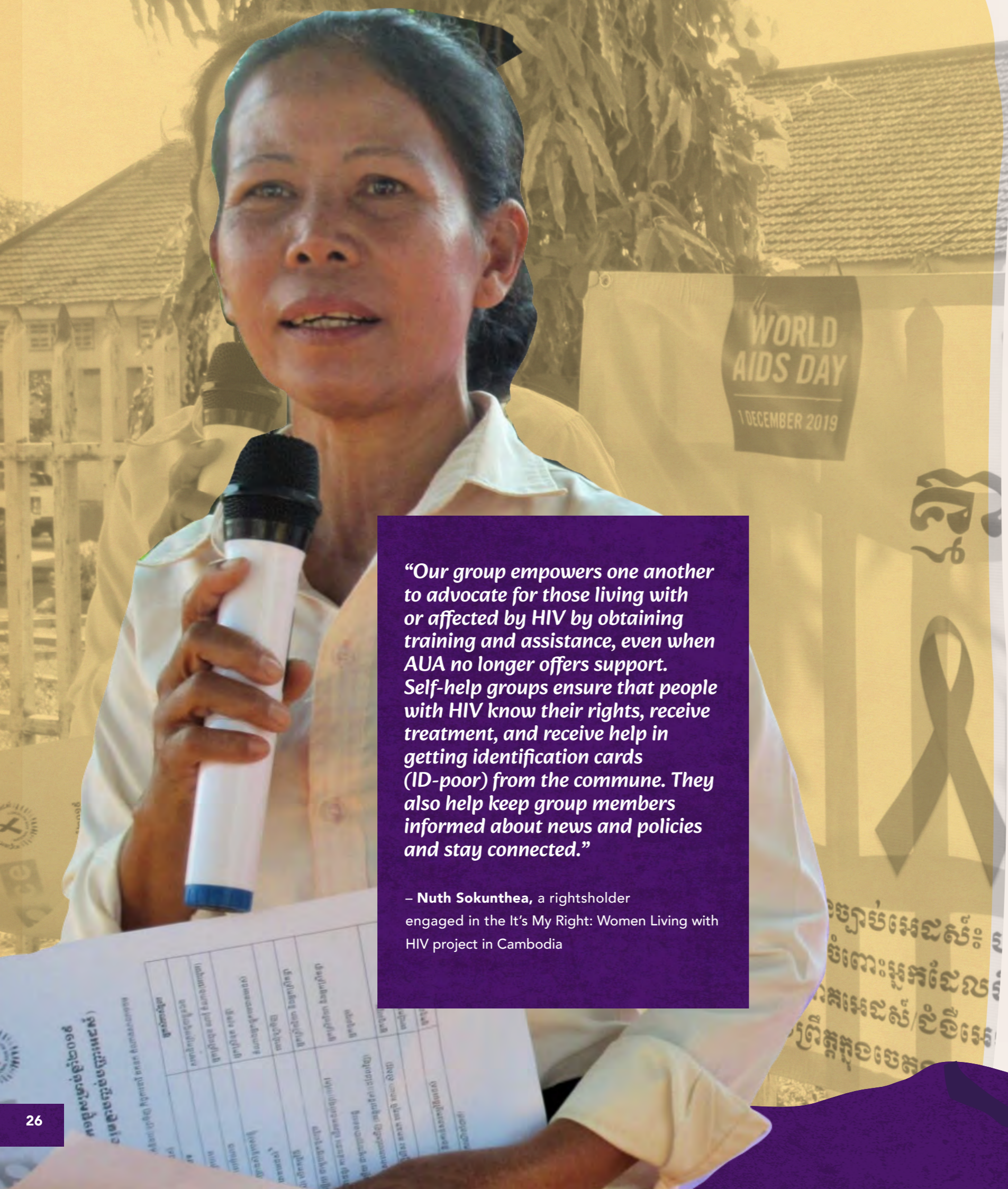
DEFYING CULTURAL NORMS TO ENSURE WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS

Namunyak Lepolosi Women's Group, a Voice grantee partner in Kenya has been working to raise awareness among Maasai women on their land rights. In June 2023, three Maasai women from Namunyak women group successfully obtained their property land title deeds from the Kenyan Ministry of Lands. This was significant because women in the Maasai community are themselves considered men's property, as such they do not have a right to own land as per their customs.

Nonetheless, these indigenous women courageously defied patriarchal norms prevalent in their culture and advocated for their access to land. They now have full ownership and control over their land which they are using for farming to feed their families as well as sell the surplus to address their families' financial needs.

ENHANCING SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND MENSTRUAL HYGIENE FOR WOMEN INMATES AND RETURNED CITIZENS

Female Inmates and Returned Citizens (FIRC), a grantee partner in Nigeria has been working to contribute to enhancing access to healthy rehabilitation while promoting the independence of Female Inmates and Female Ex-Inmates. In May 2023, 47 female inmates at Enugu and Kirikiri custodial centres produced reusable sanitary pads. These women rightsholders had previously undergone training within the framework of the project. This initiative was important because access to sanitary pads remains a challenge for female inmates in Nigeria. The inmates often depend on donations from individuals and organisations which are not always forthcoming. This therefore fosters their independence while ensuring access to ecological sanitary products for the management of their menstrual health and hygiene.



“Our group empowers one another to advocate for those living with or affected by HIV by obtaining training and assistance, even when AUA no longer offers support. Self-help groups ensure that people with HIV know their rights, receive treatment, and receive help in getting identification cards (ID-poor) from the commune. They also help keep group members informed about news and policies and stay connected.”

– Nuth Sokunthea, a rightsholder engaged in the It’s My Right: Women Living with HIV project in Cambodia

AN INTERSECTIONAL AND INCLUSIVE SELF-HELP GOUP FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV FACILITATES IMPROVED ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

The ARV User Association, a grantee partner in Cambodia has been working with women, youth, elderly people, people with disabilities, and entertainment workers living with HIV to promote their access to good health care. An inclusive self-help group created by the project has created a platform for rightsholders to help each other and exchange knowledge and experience to voice out their collective needs and concerns. This peer-support- peer platform has encouraged most members to disclose their identity and collectively voice their needs and concerns to local authorities. As a result, rightsholders have received social assistance support from local authorities which enables them to access free health care and monthly allowance from the government. This demonstrates courage and willingness by rightsholders to take the initiative to address the challenges they face.





AMPLIFY

AT GLANCE

241

(Informal) groups, organisations and networks have built diverse alliances, initiating an agenda to amplify rightsholders' voices

155

Rightsholders groups have a safe space to convene, share concerns and exchange ideas and experiences

1550

Formal and informal groups presented their own agendas for change to external stakeholders

AMPLIFY

The process of acquiring the means and support to express and raise your voice.

Amplification, essential for social change, is the process by which rightsholder groups raise their voices stronger and higher by acquiring support and building critical alliances. Voice selects grantee partners to enable rightsholders to amplify their voices through various dimensions, leveraging personal networks, public authorities, societal leaders, and organisations. The Voice Linking and Learning community, with the Linking, Learning Facilitator Organisations and Linking, Learning, and Amplification Officers, facilitate local and national amplification efforts, while the Communications Hub extends this reach globally, primarily online. Across the Voice focus countries, rightsholder groups are tirelessly organising to demand recognition, influence policies, and promote active citizenship. The examples below showcase diverse initiatives to effect change through use of art and media, strategic alliance building and collaborative efforts within civil society.

BUILDING A COALITION TO ADDRESS STATELESSNESS IN ASIA

For the more than 14 million people affected by or at risk of statelessness across the Asia Pacific region their voice and identity are denied. Often characterised as 'invisible' to authorities and the local population, they face high levels of exclusion, discrimination, and persecution. Acknowledging the presence, talents and capacities of stateless leaders and communities to be a driving force in the development of solutions for stateless people is the purpose of the Count Us In! project. The project has provided vital resources in the creation of the Regional Coalition on Statelessness, which is the first of its kind in the region. At the 2023 ASEAN People's Forum in Jakarta, Indonesia, the project consortium worked together to present the issues of stateless communities with members of civil society in the region, ahead of the ASEAN Summit. During the Summit, the human rights commissions of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines signed an MOU extending their cooperation in providing solutions to statelessness, focused on defence, security, law enforcement, and human rights mechanisms.

RADIOING-IN ALLIES AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

VOHARO, an empowerment grantee conducted a radio talk show to create awareness on the rights, roles and responsibility and reduction of abuse, violation and exploitation of young people and women in Lira City and beyond. The radio talk show is panel of discussants were Madam Mary Akao, the Officer-in-charge (OIC) child and family protection unit of Lira is accompanied by two rightsholders, two VOHARO Uganda staff members and Hon. James Acela, councillor representing the people of Omito ward in Lira City West division.

Some of the themes discussed during the radio talk show include women and skills for self-reliance, the abuse, manipulation and exploitation of women

and girls in workplaces and the safety of women in business. The radio talk show yielded the following notable results: 1) The OIC child and family protection unit of police pledged to support women facing abuse and exploitation by quickening investigations, follow-up on progress and offering guidance and protection of rightsholders in Lira City. Forty (40) phone calls and thirty (30) office visits have been registered while youth and young women from all over Lango are now calling and coming to VOHARO Uganda's office for more information and reporting cases of abuse, exploitation and manipulations. A survivor of SGBV (Sexual Gender Based Violence) contacted VOHARO Uganda and was referred to the child and family protection unit of the police (CFPU). Police followed up and arrested the abuser who was at large. He faced court and was sentenced to serve a jail term.

REVIVING COMMUNITY THEATRE TO RAISE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIGENOUS CULTURES AND THEIR CONTINUING STRUGGLES

The Cordillera Youth Center and DKK, an Empowerment Accelerated grantee partner, staged "Macli-ing" in Baguio City, Philippines. It's a revival of community theatre composed of local and indigenous first-time actors and production people. This production was very timely and more relevant than ever in the context of increasing attacks on indigenous human rights defenders, as Macli-ing narrates the story of an indigenous leader who fought against the World Bank-funded Chico Dam under the Marcos dictatorship in the 1970s and died defending the indigenous community.

The production is a highlight of their project Timek ti Umili (Voice of the People): Advancing peoples' welfare through social media and arts. Through these culturally appropriate and creative advocacy campaigns, it raised awareness about human rights issues faced by the indigenous peoples and human rights defenders in the Cordillera. Additionally, the media coverage and social media campaigns, have helped in amplifying the event and the voices of the indigenous peoples which resulted to additional runs of the production and was funded by the City Government of Baguio. These runs were sold-out. There are also proposals to bring the production to other provinces of the Cordillera and the whole country.

"Many of them didn't need to learn the movements to a community dance; they have danced those dances just as they have chanted those chants and have had to defend their land and their way of life all their lives,"

Karlo Marko Altomonte, Director of the play the play Macli-ing, quoted in the Northern Dispatch

A Still Photo from the Theatre Production- Macli-ing
Photo courtesy of CYC narrative report.



INFLUENCING

AT GLANCE

207

rightsholders groups, CSOs and networks report a benefit by using a diverse set of lobby, advocacy and campaigning tools.

184

Voice grantee partners have defined a change plan to strengthen their capacity to influence decision makers.

86
experts

have been deployed with the support of Voice grants to strengthen grantees' and their implementing partners' social innovation and influencing capacities.

96
Platforms

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.

In 2023, the in-person training, knowledge sharing, and outreach work of grantee partners continued to put rightsholders in the centre of attention. In many cases, their campaigns culminated in actions of local activists, communities, and leaders as well as decision-makers on the national level and the wider public. The following examples from Cambodia, Kenya and Niger show how grantee partners and the rightsholders they work with successfully influenced key actions being taken by these stakeholders, while a further example from a multi-country grantee partner shows the importance of regional networks and coalitions when pushing for LGBTQIA+ rights in Southeast Asia.

LOCAL URBAN FORUMS ENHANCE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN GOVERNANCE

The "Smart Governance Project" by United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK) enhanced the participation of people with disabilities in governance and political processes in Narok County by activating and empowering inclusive Local Urban Forums (LUFs) in 5 urban centres. By cultivating close engagement between the rightsholders and the Narok County government, the project fostered effective participation of people with disabilities in Narok County planning and governance processes. The approach focussed on reducing barriers to the inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream development agenda and on their increased representation in Narok County governance structures and decision-making spaces. In practice, the empowerment of the five LUFs led to active participation of people with disabilities in Narok County governance and planning processes. Trained in social planning and supported to develop simplified county budgets, the LUFs took up a vibrant and meaningful oversight role over the performance of public governance institutions. Bringing government closer to the citizens, matters important to the inclusion of people with disabilities were brought forward and included in the County Integrated Development Plan of Narok County as well as other budget and development planning processes.

YOUTH AND WOMEN SPEAK UP FOR THE JUST USE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES

The **Niger Youth Climate Change Network (RJNCC)** is the national representation of the **African Youth Initiative on Climate Change (AYICC)**, which is the largest African youth platform on environment and climate issues. The RJNCC designed the project “Actions for Inclusive Governance and Accountability” to improve the effectiveness of public service for youth and women’s participation in local governance and environmental leadership initiatives. As its main objective, the project wanted to increase the empowerment of youth and women CSOs in four communes in the Tahoua and Maradi regions to ensure that youth and women’s voices are represented in the development of policies or policy reforms, particularly about the just use of public resources.

The RJNCC empowered eight grassroots organisations working at the intersection of women’s and youth’s rights to use the data and stories of change from women and youth leaders to build and strengthen community, inspire action, and hold power accountable.

With a focus to strengthen women’s and young people’s capacities in areas such as advocacy, associative life, and leadership, the project’s activities have given a boost of confidence to the participants, who now have access to the mayors of their communes and to commune meetings. The project stimulated public discourse by supporting women’s and youth CSOs with platforms and tools to take ownership of public space and improve access to public infrastructure.

“A year ago, we sent an emissary to the town hall and the canton chief to ask for a suitable plot of land on which to build a work centre, a request that was turned down several times, according to our emissary. But after capacity strengthening on advocacy, we realised that we did not need an intermediary to make our own demands. So, a group of representatives was formed and sent to the chief of canton, who praised our courage and granted us the requested land. We also like to point out that thanks to the initiatives of the project, exchanges with young people have been made easier, which has enabled us to better coordinate our activities together, such as sanitation and outreach. This has enabled us to reorganise and expand our activities,”

- **Baraatou Moussa**, a member of a grassroots community organisation in Bambaye.

Learning Session on SOGIESC
inclusion with the ADB
Photo courtesy of APCOM progress
report.



Kick-off meeting in Mali
with new grantee partners

A REGIONAL APPROACH PROMOTES LGBTI RIGHTS ACROSS THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The project “(IM)PART: Advocating for LGBTQI Social and Economic Inclusion” was started by the APCOM Foundation in 2021 with an exploratory approach in breaking through entry points of engagement with financial and business sectors in Southeast Asia. Aiming to contribute to the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of leaving no one behind, the main objective and change is for increased awareness of diversity and inclusion issues, reflected as policies, practices, spaces, and activities in the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the private sector/businesses in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Now, APCOM and its partners have become leading civil society actors in pushing for the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ rights in the Safeguards Policy of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), providing safeguarding criteria when ADB assesses loan or project applications from the member states. In

recent collaborations, ADB has proudly presented their allocated resources targeted for LGBTQIA+ in different parts of Asia. Other regional networks and coalitions belonging to the LGBTI movement, such as the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA) in Asia, the ASEAN Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Caucus, and Intersex Asia (IA), among others, have also picked up the advocacy and they formed a loose cooperation to move the efforts forward. In the countries, the partners have also tapped the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) entry points to cultivate relationships with various businesses.

INTER-GENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIP TO ENSURE ACCESS TO FREE HEALTH CARE FOR THE ELDERLY COMMUNITY IN MALI

The organisation Droit de l’Homme au Quotidien (DHQ) is a youth volunteer-led collective that seeks to enhance good governance and inclusive citizenship in Mali. Recognising that the elderly and other marginalised communities in Mali face specific barriers to accessing social services, including health care, despite the existence of legal and administrative frameworks, they have come together to mobilize members of the elderly community to advocate with the National Agency for Health Insurance (ANAM). Specifically, they are seeking to both create awareness about the Régime d’Assistance Médicale, (RAMED) scheme and support them to register and access free

medical aid. Over 2023, DHQ laid down the groundwork to sign a partnership agreement with ANAM for direct referral of rightsholders under the RAMED scheme. The Director of ANAM was also present at a session organised for rightsholders to learn more about the RAMED scheme and stated the following:

Executive Director of DHQ with the
Director General of ANAM
Photo courtesy of ANAM progress report



“On behalf of the Minister of Health, I would like to thank DHQ and its partner Voice for this initiative, which contributes to supporting ANAM in the achievement of its missions. I assure you that all participants here will be registered as long as their files are complete.”
- Director General of ANAM

Linking and Learning

One of the highlights of the year was the 'Leading the Way' Indaba in Cotonou, Benin, West Africa, from 9-12 May. Grantee partners, rightsholders and civil society representatives gathered to delve into emerging thematic areas from Voice's journey thus far. How do different groups and organisations develop leadership? What are their takes and practices on intergenerational learning? How do these affect their lobbying and advocacy? All sessions were facilitated by the Linking and Learning team and the event was supported by Tournons La Page, a multi-country grantee partner with a member organisation in Benin, our first global event in West Africa.

Some feedback comes from Thogori from Kenya, who wrote a blog, Erlangga from Indonesia wrote a blog and a passionate poem, while Nak Thaikleak from Cambodia shares her main takeaway. Additionally, Thogori Ng'ang'a (Usikimye Welfare Group, Kenya) wrote in her blog that the Indaba 2023 was such a great experience to learn and also to share experiences. It was an opportunity to sit with all age groups from different cultures, countries, continents and the like. The days were thoughtfully curated with amazing topics around leadership, intergenerational learning and need to implement existing policies. The unconferencing brought more conversations on GBV, Mental Health, Digital Media, Storytelling, Sex Workers and many other inspiring tales.

Looking at the national linking and learning processes, we have really advanced in promoting and facilitating Communities of Practice (COPs). For instance, the total number of active COPs have doubled from last year to this. There is a varied way in which the countries approach the Communities of Practice, some are formed around different rightsholder groups, others in a thematic way for instance facilitation, community engagement, project management, or gender justice. Others collaborate on advocacy campaigns. By now, cocreation, being guided by the grantee partners' agenda and priorities, and supporting their self-organising, has helped overcoming some of the challenges and has increased ownership and agency within the groups. In some countries Communities of Practice are being experienced as an innovative way for peer-to-peer sharing, collaboration, or joint actions. A successful innovation is the collaboration around international and national commemorative days and the 16 Days of Activism. Most countries see the communities of practice also as contribution to greater sustainability of the advances made by the grantee partners interventions and as a further consolidation of the relationships among them. Cambodia is one of the countries with a strong trajectory on growing Communities of Practice.

A new linking and learning 'instrument' introduced after the Mid Term Review is what is internally called the 50K fund. This is a special amount within the Connecting Voices grant of the Linking and Learning Facilitator grantee partners, meant to support the realisation of joint grantee-partners initiatives and ideas, or to explore joint learning questions, that emerged in or out of the different linking and learning spaces.



Participants at the 5th Voice Global Indaba
Photo courtesy of Voice documentation.

These activities could be about inclusion, collaboration, joint campaigns, advocacy, joint learning, or innovations in empowerment, influencing, or amplification. For five countries and for the multi-country grantee partners, the communities of practice was the space most used for the incubation of joint action.

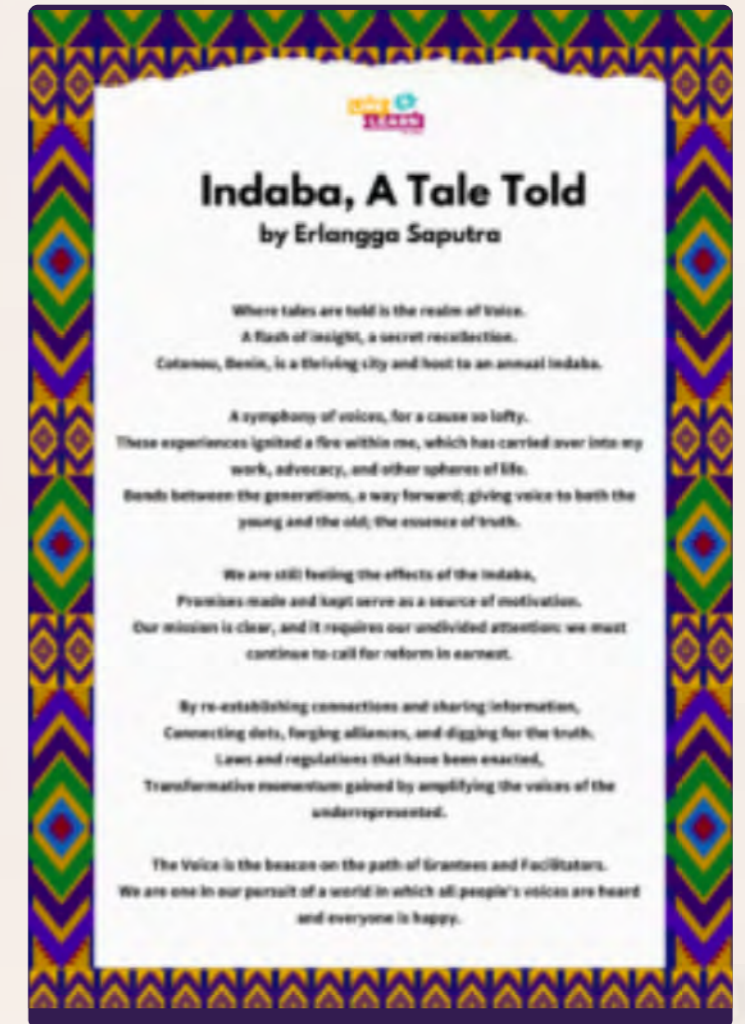
To give an example of different approaches, in The Philippines they started the INNOVATION STUDIO, a Linking and Learning initiative that aims to support grantee-led innovations beyond their Voice projects. To be able to spot and support innovations, the Linking and Learning team intentionally groups grantees based on emerging interests and aspirations and encourages collaborations through the Linking and Learning activities. Collaborating grantees then pitch their innovation ideas. This is the link to the Innovation Studio brochure: <https://tinyurl.com/bdd64fyv>. Another example comes from Nigeria. Here, the Linking and Learning team expended the 50k fund supporting the activities of 4 Communities of Practice:

Social Justice, Gender Justice, People with Disabilities and Elderly. They have held both monthly virtual meetings and training sessions within their thematic areas and all organized physical stakeholder learning events aimed at addressing specific aspects of their learning and advocacy agendas.

Some of the Linking and Learning activities and ways of working, highly appreciated in the countries, are the use of art, activism and creativity. Among them, the use of music, dance, and theatre. But also, the making of a film, documentaries, participatory videos, and visual journeys are supporting the grantee partners for their own learning, amplification, and advocacy goals. And when seeking new partnerships or funding these products are extremely valued. The Indonesia Linking and Learning facilitator and partners share how they organised a photovoice workshop, leading to amazing stories, posted on the Indonesia Inklusi photo gallery. "A photo captured by a camera can tell a story", shared Aa Fuad from Kota Kita.

Another activity mentioned by several countries is the use of exhibitions to show and share the work and the influencing agendas of the grantee partners. The Kampung katong Festival in Indonesia, organised by Rimbawan Muda Indonesia (RMI) and its consortium, sought to position local reality as the main reference in solving problems faced by the community. By involving young people, women, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, and local citizens as key actors they enable cross-generational contextual learning. The festival contained an exhibition, local food, and an art installation showcasing traditional local narratives and information on rich and diverse local food turned into audio-visual forms.

Peer to peer learning remains popular and promotes collaboration. Furthermore, innovation remains a thread throughout the linking and learning work.



Erlangga's Passionate Poem about the Indaba Photo courtesy of Voice documentation.

Voice Tanzania Annual Linking and Learning Event, December 2023



Years in Numbers

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

After the entrance of many new grantee partners in 2022, only 17 new grantee partners were introduced to Linking and Learning during inception over 2023.

2022: **31** 2023: **17**

OVERALL AVERAGE PARTICIPATION GRANTEES IN A LINKING AND LEARNING ACTIVITY

2022: **324**
2023: **335**

On average 200 grantees out of 335 active grantees participated each quarter in some Linking and Learning activity = 60%. Yet, all grantees participate in at least 1 L&L activity over the course of their project, and 88 former grantees stay active in the L&L activities, and more on the platforms.

FORMER GRANTEE PARTNERS

2022: **30**
2023: **88**

ENCOUNTERS OF GRANTEES WITH OTHER

Besides the participation of stakeholders in CoPs, 2022 still had effects from the COVID pandemic and a focus on adapting the work to new realities. In 2023 the number of events were grantee partners participated with other stakeholders doubled.

2022: **42** 2023: **84**

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

Annual events continued to take place face 2 face, both in 2022 and 2023. Many countries had several linking and learning activities online, besides the annual event.

2022: **11** 2023: **12**

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (COP)GATHERINGS ONLINE

2022: **49** 2023: **89**

On average some 40 to 50 Communities of Practice are active and steered by partners in the ten focus countries and at multi-country level. Over 2023 they met 44 times face to face and 89 times online.

AND FACE TO FACE

2022: **24** 2023: **44**

ARTICLES AND BLOG PRODUCED AND PUBLISHED

2022: **329** 2023: **524**

Over 2023 the teams elaborated and shared an ever growing number of blogs and articles, videos and advocacy poster, Stories of Change and case studies. Blogs and articles can be found at Voice website, IndonesiaInklusi, and Voice and partner Facebook pages.

2022: **7** 2023: **6**

LEARNING CALLS BETWEEN COUNTRIES

2022: **7** 2023: **21**

ONLINE AND IN-PERSON

As expected, more learning calls in 2022 after grantees started implementation of their projects. And 2023 saw a huge increase in in-person learning encounters.

L&L CONSULTATIONS

The number of online consultations remained higher than offline. The data reflect a period with maximum # grantee partners & new linking and learning processes.

ONLINE		OFFLINE	
2022:	2023:	2022:	2023:
169	169	47	111

Results at a Glance

Targeted Outcome 2.1:

Marginalised groups, CSOs and other key stakeholders and implement innovative and effective strategies to empower and strengthen influencing capacities of rights holders groups.

2.1.1: # Organisations / informal groups / networks report the use and effects of new insights and innovative approaches

GLOBAL CUMULATIVE TARGET 2021-2024: 150
GLOBAL CUMULATIVE VALUE AS AT 2022: 55
GLOBAL CUMULATIVE VALUE AS AT 2023: 113



Participants of the Jiajiri project, by Come Initiative, Kenya.

SUPPORTING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN FACING VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION

Come Initiative, a grantee partner in Kenya has been implementing a project titled Jiajiri (self-employed in Swahili) which translates to “employ yourself” which aims to empower girls and young women who are facing abuse and exploitation in informal settlements. It specifically seeks to enhance their socio-economic growth by training them in tailoring, dressmaking, and entrepreneurship. To mark the end of 16 Days of Activism last 2023, COME INITIATIVE commemorated Human Rights Day by holding the ‘Mr. and Miss Haki Kisumu’ County pageant where rightsholders were able to exhibit their work through modelling and performing arts and presenting themselves as catalysts for advocacy against gender-based violence (GBV). This demonstrates the transformation that is taking place in their lives as well as emphasises the use of creative approaches to empower and raise awareness of challenges

PURSuing THE OVERALL WELL-BEING OF THE ELDERLY

Grantee partners in Nigeria through their Community of Practice (CoP) focusing on the advancement of the overall wellbeing of the elderly in Nigeria, facilitated the adoption of the 'how-to guide for eldercare in Nigeria'. This manual was produced by the CoP member organisations including Confidence Aged Care Home, Dewdrop Foundation, Pietan Caring Mission for the Poor, Alzheimer's Disease Foundation, LEADIN Africa, Lift Saxum, and Care for Adolescents and Women Development Initiative (CAWDI). This initiative is important as it is contributing to the creation of a framework

that will guide and inform improved care for elderly persons in Nigeria while fostering innovation and standardization in eldercare practices. Moreover, the sharing of experiences and best practices as well as their documentation contributed to enhancing the capacity of these organisations to provide better care for the elderly in their communities. It also signifies a step towards the overall welfare of the rightsholders even beyond the work with these organisations.

COFFEE-MAKING AS A PATHWAY TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION

Skillbender, a Laotian social enterprise, works to empower people who have been excluded from work opportunities for various reasons such as learning disabilities, disadvantaged youth and seniors, including women, and minority groups. In October 2023, two young coffee-making trainers from Skillbender, Noy and Ming, were invited to participate in a very exciting event and celebration: the International Coffee Day. As young women, Noy and Ming felt proud to be a part of the coffee-making event. They felt that it was a great opportunity to showcase their skills and break down gender stereotypes in the coffee industry.

The event was inclusive in many ways. It brought together coffee professionals from all over Laos, regardless of their gender, race, or nationality. The event also showcased the importance of inclusivity in the coffee industry, with many speakers discussing the need for fair trade and sustainability in coffee production. Most significantly, Noy and Ming took leadership in advancing disability inclusion at the event by incorporating a sign-language teaching activity, teaching the visitors how to order coffee in sign language.

Participants at Skillbenders' Coffee Making Workshop, Laos.



Results at a Glance

Targeted Outcome 2.2:

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

2.2.1: % of Voice grantees report use of the L&L infrastructure

GLOBAL CUMULATIVE TARGET 2021-2024:	VALUE FOR 2022:	VALUE FOR 2023:
70%	100%	100%

Linking and learning spaces have become vital hubs for strengthening grantee partners' skills, discussing important topics, and finding creative ways to bridge gaps in understanding. Through this process, they have been able to champion diversity, inclusion, and equality while ensuring that every voice is heard and valued. They have not only managed to address shared challenges; they have also been able to celebrate shared experiences and found innovative solutions.

COLLABORATING TO ENHANCE INFLUENCE AT LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

In East Africa, grantee partners engaged in cross-regional learning, particularly with regional grantees facing similar challenges or working around the same thematic issues, as well as enabled collaborative awareness raising and activism. For instance, grantee partners from Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya came together during the 16 days of activism to conduct joint awareness raising and activism through their social media platforms. They have been collaborating and sharing valuable insights and strategies for addressing common challenges. Linking and learning has also enabled them to enhance their understanding of contextual challenges while widening their networks and alliances.

FOSTERING ALLIANCE BUILDING THROUGH LIFELONG LEARNING

Grantee partners in Laos grouped in different communities of practice engaged in lifelong learning as means to ensure continuity in their growth and learning journeys long after the programme ends. Lifelong learning is a concept of self-developing through exploring possibilities and initiating new experiences. It is the belief that learning is not limited to formal education or a specific stage of life, but rather is ongoing and essential for development. It often starts with what one is interested in, how to learn about it and how one unpacks that experience. When this process becomes

habitual, one can keep trying new ideas to solve the existing problem(s). With passion and time, one would likely be able to figure out the solutions, or at the very least: progress toward the solution. This approach enables grantee partners to come together to exchange tools, share experiences and explore new solutions for existing problems.

CONTINUING REFLECTIONS ON LEADERSHIP AND INTERGENERATIONAL MOVEMENT BUILDING

TEMEDT along with the Sahel Foundation and AfricaJom Center has been campaigning for over 20-years to end descent-based slavery in West Africa. The consortium partners have been involved in the linking and learning activities for multi-country grantee partners facilitated by the Constellation. With support from the Constellation, TEMEDT hosted a virtual learn visit to Mali for other Voice grantee partners on how they have broken the taboo of slavery. This was the first time that the rightsholders of TEMEDT in Mali participated in an online exchange and shared their views. Moreover, the consortium shares the following reflections following their participation at the Voice Global Indaba in Cotonou, Benin:

Participants during a monitoring visit with WWDA, Laos



Results at a Glance

Targeted Outcome 2.3:

New ideas and approaches have been developed, tested and prototyped as well as evaluated, shared and potentially adopted by grantees, rightsholder groups and other key stakeholders.

2.3.1: # ideas and approaches developed, tested, and prototyped through innovative processes

GLOBAL CUMULATIVE TARGET 2021-2024:

10

GLOBAL CUMULATIVE RESULTS AS AT 2022:

127

GLOBAL CUMULATIVE RESULTS AS AT 2023:

142

The aspirations of grantee partners around championing diversity and inclusion, empowering rightsholders, amplifying voices, and influencing decision-makers drive innovative approaches across the programme. Several projects focused on developing, testing, and prototyping approaches that better engage rightsholders in meaningful discussions, that allow for exchanges on ideas from diverse perspectives, and that foster processes towards achieving common goals together. Below are selected grantee partners who have used their projects to pilot new innovative approaches to reach, empower, and strengthen the capabilities of rightsholders.

ART HELPS TO EMPOWER RIGHTSHOLDERS AND CHANGE ATTITUDES

Art and Mental Health, one of the winners of the NOW-US! Awards in Cambodia, implemented its project to promote single women’s and girls’ empowerment on self-independence and combat gender stereotypes that pressure women who want to live independently. The project challenged gender inequalities with media campaigns based around podcast and songs on different platforms and two in-person interactive workshops and events. The Art Exhibition “This Is ME” was attended by around 300 participants, mostly youth and adults from 16-40 years of age. As a result of the project, it was observed on social media that audiences started changing their perspective not to follow the social norm of pressuring women to get married and have children early. Based on the end project reflection among the team and volunteers indicated that they have a better understanding of the rights of decision-making and developed their soft skills, hard skills, and leadership through experience of working, training, and communication. They start using the project slogan “Marriage is an option, not an obligation!”

“This Is ME signifies freedom of choice and connection to each of our long-term future. We are beyond what others think and are different from what they see.”

- Ra Seyha,
Art and Mental Health team.

A similar approach of utilising art for awareness raising was championed in the Philippines by the Tri-People Youth Collective for Peace of Mindanao. The empowerment accelerator project used the Artivism approach to engage youth from the three main societal groups in Mindanao (Christians, Muslims, and indigenous people). The youth were enabled to effectively incorporated music, art, poetry, storytelling, and other forms of expression to raise awareness and promote human rights in an intersectional approach covering LGBTI issues, gender equality, peace and conflict, and climate justice.

Street parade including indigenous transgender community in Maumere, NTT, Indonesia



In Indonesia, Sanggar Seroja working with a women’s rights group facilitated the use of theatre as a tool for advocacy by the transgender community. They gained support from art communities and other rightsholders. Their involvement with Linking and Learning also resulted in a greater awareness of the quality of the script, which was made sensitive to disability issues, gender issues and generally more inclusive.

DESIGN THINKING STRENGTHENS COLLABORATION AMONG RIGHTSHOLDERS AND DUTY BEARERS

United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK) adapted the innovative strategy of Design Thinking for its Smart Governance Project to increase mutual acceptance of solutions and their implementation between rightsholders and duty bearers. The project facilitated the creation of empathy maps to understand the needs of rightsholders and the potential ways of addressing them, followed by bringing on board diverse stakeholders to design solutions using prototyping and testing. Using Design Thinking resulted in a solution that responded to the needs of all stakeholders, while reduced attitudinal barriers towards people with disabilities based on interaction with government officers in the design process.

The project then adopted regular roundtable meetings with rightsholders and duty bearers, while moving away from previous approaches that had been more confrontational without utilising any knowledge products for advocacy. Overall, the new strategy proved to be more effective by improving the relationship between rightsholders and duty bearers.

ADVOCACY CHAMPIONS PROMOTE WAYS TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Two projects in Nigeria tackled Gender-based Violence (GBV) with an innovative approach based on advocacy champions. The Motherhen Development Foundation (MDF) used them to launch the campaign “Yaki Da Cin Zarfin Jinsi” in two states to create awareness on GBV in communities and on how women and girls can better deal with incidences of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG). MDF leveraged already existing social networks in the communities – the Matasa Majalisa (or youth groups), Mata Majalisa (women’s groups), and Maza (men’s groups). To identify community members that could become advocacy champions to other rightsholders, MDF approached these groups while also strengthening their capacity on reporting cases of GBV to security agencies. Through this approach, MDF was able to establish 13 active safe spaces for rightsholders based on a diverse group of peer mentors, including several men acting as “He for She” champions.

In a similar way, the Gender Mobile Initiative (GMI) based its Campus Safety Initiative on advocacy champions by mobilising 50 young women at the University of Abuja. These women led the formation of a loose network of campus ambassadors against GBV. After capacity enhancement

sessions, the ambassadors started to lead on advocacy campaigns and conversations on the campus. To further ensure the rights of young girls are secured on the campus, one of the campus ambassadors ran for the student union vice president position and emerged victorious. As a final step, GMI alongside the campus ambassadors co-created a toolkit on community organising and advocacy to ensure that all students can be involved by the network and receive the same training that the campus ambassadors had received.

The A.G.I.L.A. initiative is one of the initiatives born out of the above-mentioned Innovation Studio in the Philippines. It’s a collaboration between people/youth with disabilities, carers, and (young) parents (initially led by ULIKID and YKBI). They organise online and offline sessions in a journey to empower people with disabilities, to keep their hearts beating strong with hope, to reach for the skies. Activities like Curating Art Workshops, storytelling sessions, and other cultural activities bring out strong and hopeful voices. Looking at the AGILA Facebook page or their you-tube channel, one can feel the vibrant interactions showing how the agency of young people brought this joint purposeful, visionary and enduring grantee partners initiative alive. Or listen to the AGILA soundtrack “I have a vision”.

A.G.I.L.A, A VISION OF HOPE, A JOINT GRANTEE PARTNERS INITIATIVE TO ADVOCATE FOR THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES





04

WHAT WE ARE LEARNING AND HOW WE ARE USING IT

The Final Programme Evaluation

The Voice Final Evaluation brought to light several invaluable insights, reinforcing the profound impact of the collective efforts of grantee partners, rightsholders, and Voice as well as other key stakeholders. Beyond the assessment of what worked, what did not work and what could be improved lies a narrative of empowerment, collaboration and systemic change that has unfolded in the lives of the communities of the rightsholders engaged by the programme. The different capacity-strengthening and linking and learning initiatives have fostered a newfound confidence in those who once felt unheard. Through the testimonies of rightsholders, we witnessed not just individual growth but a ripple effect that resonates through communities from diverse backgrounds and contexts within the countries Voice has been operating in.

The collaborative spirit has proven to be the catalyst for lasting change. Grantee partners and rightsholders have formed networks that transcend their initial purpose, evolving into self-sustaining platforms for knowledge exchange and collective action. By fostering partnerships and connections through linking and learning, the programme created avenues where diverse voices were able to unite for a common cause ultimately contributing to human rights advancement in various contexts. Constructive collaboration with local actors has proven to be a guiding light, emphasising partnership over opposition. A proactive approach focusing on prevention, as opposed to reactive responses, stands out as a strength. Transparently sharing failures cultivates a culture of continuous improvement, while regional approaches amplify impact. The importance of learning as a dynamic process is evident through various testimonies shared by grantee partners and rightsholders. As we navigate the final year of our programme, the insights from the evaluation pave the way for a strategic, impactful closure.

WHO IS VOICE

Voice is an innovative grant programme empowering rightsholders groups, such as **people with disabilities, LGBTI individuals, women facing exploitation, vulnerable youth and elderly, and indigenous people**, to enhance their influence in accessing services and political participation. The programme seeks to tackle prejudice and cultural norms that adversely influence these groups by offering tailored approaches for their inclusion in social and political spheres.

FUNDED BY
DUTCH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MOFA)

OVERSEEN BY
OXFAM NOVIB AND HIVOS



We gathered feedback from **548 individuals** on how Voice could be improved.



Was conducted from **April to September 2023** to comprehensively assess the implementation period in focus countries since 2016.



It serves as a knowledge tool for stakeholders, addressing critical questions about the programme's impact, structural effectiveness and comparisons to similar development initiatives.

Annual Grantee Feedback Survey

As part of our commitment to enhancing understanding and collaboration among Voice teams and between Voice teams and grantee partners, we organised a series of discussions and rolled out feedback surveys. The following are the highlights from the survey, conducted in English and French, that received **130 valid responses from Southeast Asia, East Africa, West Africa, and multi-country regions.**

Respondents indicated that their projects with Voice promote the **rights of Women facing exploitation, abuse and/or violence (28.3%), followed closely by Vulnerable youth and elderly (24.2%), and People with disabilities (21.7%).** Projects focusing on promoting the rights of Indigenous people and ethnic minorities (15.1%) as well as LGBTI people (10.6%) were less well represented. A large majority of respondents (83.0%) have worked in partnership with Voice for one year or more, and almost half of respondents (46.9%) have been with Voice for two years or more. Only a minority of respondents (16.9%) have been with Voice for less than one year. The survey also asked grantee partners about their perceptions of the “effectiveness” of their projects, with around 95% rating them as “highly effective” or “effective,” while around 5% rated them as “somewhat effective”, indicating high confidence among grantee partners in their projects with Voice.

Respondents expressed satisfaction with support received on Grant Management (around 90%), Linking & Learning and Amplification (around 95%), and Monitoring & Evaluation (around 80%), while a minority expressed neutral, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied opinions. The survey revealed that around 95% of respondents would recommend Voice as a grant facility to other organisations, while only around 5% would be neutral or unlikely to do so. Voice also asked grantee partners for feedback on actions to improve as a funder, their replies informing the production of a global perception brief that identifies recommendations agreed on action points for improving the programme's implementation through 2024.

WHAT DID WE WANT TO KNOW?

PERFORMANCE

How does the programme's support empower grantee partners and rightsholders?

STRUCTURE

How supportive and effective were the Voice structure and processes in sustaining project objectives and maximising results?

POSITIONING and POTENTIAL

How is Voice positioned compared to similar programmes in the wider development sector, and what potential does Voice have?



Linking and Learning Insights

Reflecting on our collective journey over 2023, the linking and learning community posed the questions to itself: Since our joint reflections and writings for the Voice@5 learning in 2021-2022, what has happened? What have we been learning about Linking and Learning as practice, and about what happens in the Linking and Learning spaces? What themes or areas are surfacing that hold the wide variety of our experiences? We came to the following five areas:



Co-creation and Collaboration

This tells both a story of the linking and learning teams becoming better at co-creating and holding the spaces where grantee partners and rights holders interact. The rapport that develops over time between the facilitators and the partners as well as between the partners creates space for better listening and understanding of the other, agency, networking, recognition of common interests or synergies, and openness to learn and appreciate diversity. It also tells the story of the grantee partners and rights holders who see opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, see that all have something to bring and something to learn, that cocreating and having collaborative actions can lead to better results, and a stronger voice. The Communities of Practice are one approach that supports cocreation and collaboration.



Transformative learning

Our linking and learning practices promote transformative processes, facilitating innovation and creativity and ownership over the changes or solutions a group wants to make. As important, it is about understanding contextual learning and making space for these contextual differences and commonalities. Linking and Learning is seen as a space for (self-) reflection, deep listening and putting the lived experiences at the centre of all we do. Learning was also agreed to be a non-linear process over time. All actions, sharing, connecting, listening, coaching, and more, contribute to personal and organisational empowerment and a stronger base for influencing. It contributes to openness to explore and reflect on the positive and the challenging, from new perspectives, broadening our gaze and going beyond our comfort zones, with respect and holding of a mindful and supportive space.



Inclusion and Intersectionality

What did we do to leave no one behind and to create inclusive spaces? Linking and learning spaces can be a brave space for dialogue and dissent, for getting to know the other and for breaking some of the silos our society and the development actors promote. It is about attention to and intentionally putting in place what is needed for all participants in the any linking and learning space to feel they are welcome, (supported to) have full access and understanding of the process and the ability to feel safe and open to others, too. Another aspect of this learning is how we translate the Voice principles and values into practice, how we challenge ourselves and become curious about bridging diversity while being in diversity. As one person said: it is all about practicing the art of working with people.



Innovative practices

There are many innovative practices employed by the grantee partners related to all three pathways (empower, Influence and Amplify). Examples are given throughout this report, among others how a harshening environment requires changing the how. Yet also on the linking and learning facilitation the search for and application of innovative practices is a source of wealth.




Trust (-building)

An increased awareness about the role that trust and rapport play in the relationship between the grantee partners and the Voice programme and how this can be intentionally supported through ways of working, openness, flexibility and listening. We are learning the importance of flexibility, of not assuming (for instance that all participants have respect for each other and want to interact). Mindful communication and practices in general were also seen as an important area that the community can grow in, agreeing to incorporate such learning and practices not only during events but in our ways of working in general.

Mindful inclusion

In 2023, we organised two regional workshops centred around the mindfulness of our internal ways of working, team dynamics, embodiment, and interaction at personal, team and society level. It brought practical tools that can be used individually or as part of partnership and linking and learning work. The workshops were the most palpable aspects of the planned trajectory. The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted this internal capacity strengthening process initiated in 2019, and changed our ideas on additional online gatherings. Whether it was wise to deprioritise the mindful inclusion is debatable, especially seen the enthusiastic embrace of what was offered in November 2023, the high staff turnover, and the challenging workload. The participation of members of the Linking and Learning Facilitator organisations was crucial to open the conversation in the Linking and Learning community of practice and to integrate the tools and learning in our linking and learning processes and practice. In hindsight, it is a missed opportunity that we did not start interweaving these ideas and tools more consciously in the linking and learning work.

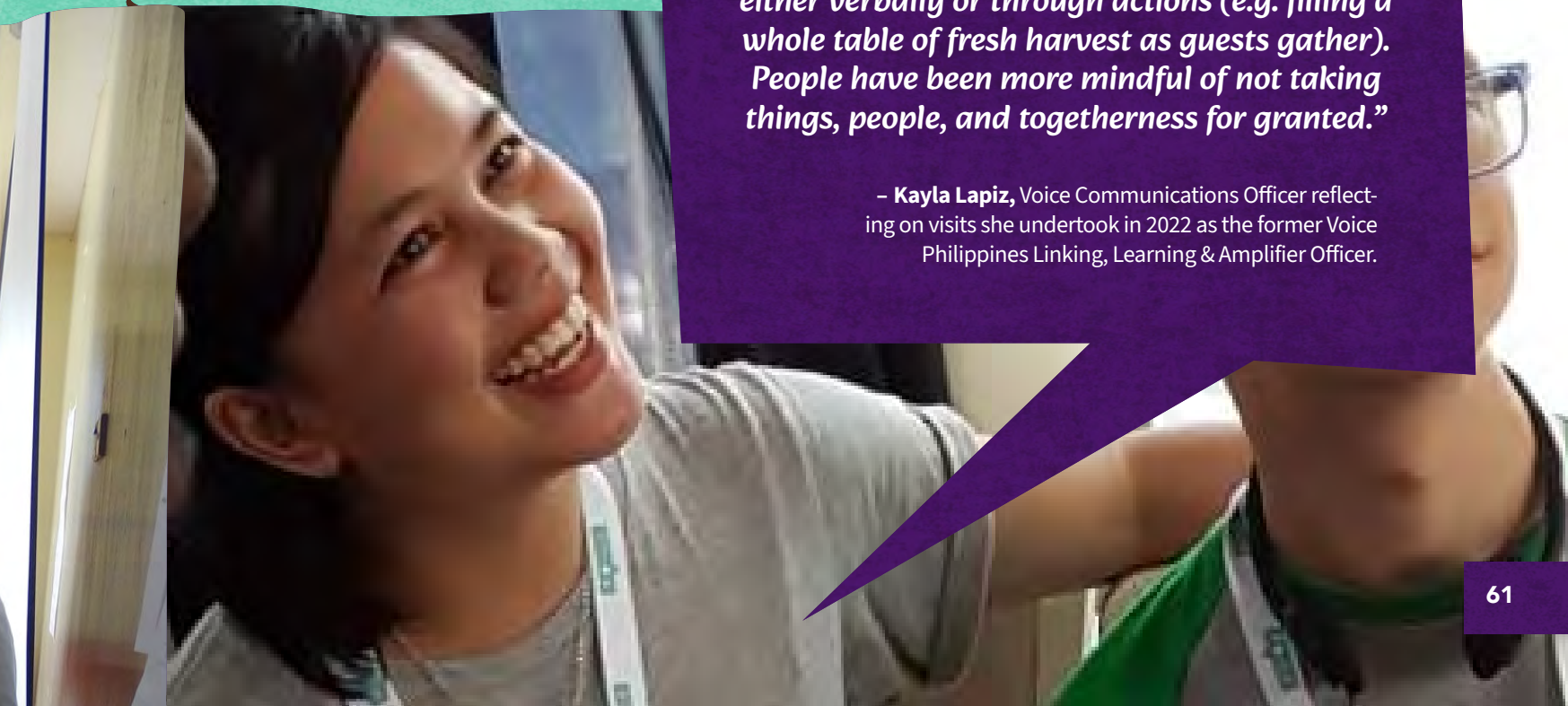
The work at the different levels, the personal, organisational, and societal, is core to open our attention to mindful behaviour and intentions in all different situations. It's an open door, we know, but it requires time to work at the different levels and time to process the experiences and translate them to our daily work and life. And therefore, it should be included in the programming as an intrinsic part of the work and not as an add-on. And again, the influence of the context and culture we live and work in and the languages we work in versus the languages we use and identify with, were important factors that led to misunderstandings as well as great conversations about what different members in the group understood or how they struggled to translate a certain idea or concept in their mother tongue.



Kenneth Jura shares his Magic moment where he discovered his blind spots during a Mindful Inclusion Workshop in East Africa.

Meaningful and open engagement as the cornerstone for building relationships with grantee partners

At the start of the extension phase in April 2021, as Voice teams we had planned to conclude all grant approvals latest by the end of December 2022. In reality however, we have had to make final grant approvals well into 2023. While in some cases this was the consequence of negative contextual shifts and new ways of working. In others, it was due to the reality that our grant making processes remain highly detailed and time-consuming. It is the immense fortitude and commitment of Voice team members that allows us as a programme to mitigate the fallout of these delays and remain in right relationship with grantee partners. The strategy most useful in managing this risk, as identified through various internal reflections and validated by the Voice final evaluation report, is meaningful and open engagement with grantee partners. In 2023, we picked up speed on in-person conversation based reporting and monitoring visits with partners, that allowed us to start leaving behind some of the fatigue and disconnection of the pandemic years.



“I observed how people listen better (after months and months of muting and unmuting). I have also seen how people became more appreciative of each other’s presence, shown either verbally or through actions (e.g. filling a whole table of fresh harvest as guests gather). People have been more mindful of not taking things, people, and togetherness for granted.”

– **Kayla Lapiz**, Voice Communications Officer reflecting on visits she undertook in 2022 as the former Voice Philippines Linking, Learning & Amplifier Officer.



05

HOW WE SPENT

How We Spent

Voice is an eight-year fund (April 2016-March 2025) totalling Euro 89.2 million of which Euro 88.4 million comes from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in three phases: phase 1- Euro 50 million and a first extension phase- 36 million. In 2022, a second extension phase of 2.4 million was approved to allow for projects to run until 30 June 2024 and enable fund management until 31 March 2025. Administratively, we need to keep the first phase and the extension phase separate, although it was agreed with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign

Affairs that we could take any balances forward to the Extension Phase. The extension to the extension phase was requested and approved based on lessons learned from closure of phase 1, where we found a significant number of partners to require a longer than planned project duration to complete their activities.

Voice receives additional funding from the Hewlett Foundation. In 2023, a third Hewlett grant was received for the amount of Euro 591,950.



2016

50 million Euros and a first extension phase of 36 million.

2022

A second extension phase of 2.4 million was approved to allow for projects to run until 30 June 2024 and enable fund management until 31 March 2025.

2023

Third Hewlett grant was received for the amount of Euro 591,950.

BUDGET BREAKDOWN

GRANTS
€ 60,200,000

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION
€ 17,496,198

LINKING AND LEARNING
€ 8,621,503

VAT
€ 2,119,833

TOTAL
€ 88,437,534

FINANCIAL REPORT 2023

The data and numbers on this page are a summary from the unqualified audit report 2023, which is available on the website and on request.

OVERALL EXPENDITURE	2016-2022	2023	CUMULATIVE 2016-2023	OVERALL BUDGET	% SPENT
Grant commitments	€ 55,267,665	€ 4,742,099	€ 60,009,764	€ 61,336,864	98%
Programme Management and Administration	€ 12,181,716	€ 2,504,850	€ 14,686,565	€ 17,569,538	84%
Linking and Learning	€ 5,425,105	€ 1,359,731	€ 6,784,836	€ 8,792,629	77%
VAT (1)	€ 1,537,139	€ 282,298	€ 1,819,437	€ 2,119,833	86%
Total up to 31 Dec 2023	€ 74,411,625	€ 8,888,977	€ 83,300,602	€ 89,818,864	93%



FINANCIAL REPORT ON PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND LINKING & LEARNING (January – December 2023)

A. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION	OPERATIONAL BUDGET 2023	EXPENSES 2023	VARIANCE BUDGET VERSUS ACTUALS	% SPENT (BUDGET DEPLETION)
Context, gender and actor analysis	€ 0	€ - 98	€ -98	0%
Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting	€ 1,475,245	€ 1,301,224	€ -174,021	88%
Administration (including of the subsidy facility)T	€ 1,197, 235	€ 1,146,649	€ -50,586	96%
Advisory Board	€ 30,000	€ 20,192	€ -9,808	73%

B. LINKING AND LEARNING PROCESS	OPERATIONAL BUDGET 2023	EXPENSES 2023	VARIANCE BUDGET VERSUS ACTUALS	% SPENT (BUDGET DEPLETION)
Linking and Learning process and activities	€ 1,606,418	€ 1,326,806	€ -279,612	83%
C. COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION OF THE FUND				
Outreach, publications, website and translation	€ 85,000	€ 22,771	€ -62,229	27%
SUB-TOTAL MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION AND OTHER DELIVERABLES	€ 2,787,480	€ 2,490,739	€ -294,241	89%
SUB-TOTAL LINKING AND LEARNING PROCESS	€ 1,606,418	€ 1,326,806	€ -279,612	83%
TOTALS / YEAR	€ 4,393,898	€ 3,817,544	€ -573,854	87%
VAT / 21% budget, expenses also 0%	€ 260,415	€ 282,298	€ 21,883	108%
TOTAL OVERALL	€ 4,654,313	€ 4,099,842	€ -551,471	88%

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

	TOTALS 2017-2022	2023	TOTALS 2017-2023	REVISED BUDGET 2016-2025	% SPENT
 EMPOWERMENT ACCELERATOR	€ 2,256,681	€ 503,540	€ 2,760,221	€ 2,500,000	110%
 EMPOWERMENT	€ 5,989,954	€ 1,159,214	€ 7,144,168	€ 7,415,000	96%
 INFLUENCING	€ 23,808,141	€ 465,208	€ 24,273,349	€ 26,350,000	92%
 INNOVATE AND LEARN	€ 19,268,878	€ 1,997,971	€ 20,974,337	€ 21,147,500	103%
 SUDDEN OPPORTUNITY	€ 3,447,337	€ 616,166	€ 4,063,503	€ 3,550,000	114%
TOTAL	€ 54,770,992	€ 4,742,100	€ 59,220,578	€ 60,200,000	98%

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 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 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 nine (open) integrity cases being dealt with by Voice. Of these, four have now been proposed to the Ministry to be closed upon their request. A fifth case has been proposed for closure in 2023. Two new cases were identified in 2023.



COLOPHON 2023

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
Mariannel Crisostomo

Text and Photos
Voice Teams

Voice is an initiative by
the Netherlands Ministry
of Foreign Affairs and is
executed by a consortium
between Oxfam Novib
and Hivos.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands



OXFAM

