



VOICE FINAL EVALUATION REPORT 2023





Acknowledgments

This consultancy is supported by the Voice Programme and conducted by Scio team experts Antonino Faibene, Stefania Chirizzi, Allen Kwagonza, Dorn Bouttasing, Fatimata Bintou Diarra, and Henrik Looij.

Scio acknowledges the support of the Voice Global Coordination Team, Country Offices, Grantees and Rightsholders who actively contributed to this evaluation. In particular we would like to thank Ishita Dutta, Alex Loer, Peris Kariuki, Job Muriithi, and Inez Hackenberg for their continued support throughout the evaluation process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	6
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
INTRODUCTION	7
SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS	8
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	9
1. THE VOICE PROGRAMME: AN OVERVIEW	11
1.1 BACKGROUND	11
1.2 OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION	12
2. THE EVALUATION PROCESS	13
2.1 APPROACH	13
2.2 METHODOLOGY	15
LITERATURE REVIEW	15
PARTICIPATORY REVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY AND FOCUS AREAS	18
2.3 DATA COLLECTION	18
2.4 EVALUATION MATRIX & GUIDING QUESTION	20
2.5 EVALUATION SAMPLE	21
2.6 DATA ANALYSIS	22
2.7 VALIDATION AND REPORTING	22
2.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	233

ACRONYMS

ASEAN - Association of Southeast Asian Nations

AER - Assistance aux Enfants de la Rue

CBR - Conversation-Based Reporting

CGIC - Clinique de gestion et d'Innovation des connaissances

CEP - Center for Effective Philanthropy

CSOs - Civil Society Organizations

CPL - Circular Permanent Learning

CYAN - Center for Youth Advocacy and Networking, Inc.

DAC - Development Assistance Committee

FGD - Focus Group Discussion

KII - Key Informant Interview

LGBTI - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex

LGBTQIA+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Ally

L&L - Linking & Learning

MTR - Mid-Term Review

MSC - Most Significant Change

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

OH - Outcome Harvesting

PwDs - Persons with Disabilities

SRHR - Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

ToC - Theory of Change

UNSAAD - Uganda National Students Association for Democracy

WWD-LAN - Women with Disabilities Learning Advocacy Network

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Voice programme is an innovative grant initiative funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and managed by Oxfam Novib and Hivos. It operates in over ten countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, East and Southeast Asia, aiming to empower marginalised groups including: People with disabilities; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people; Women facing exploitation, abuse and/or violence; Vulnerable youth and elderly; Indigenous people and ethnic minorities. The programme seeks to challenge cultural norms and prejudices by providing tailored approaches to enable the rightsholders' access to resources, employment, citizen engagement, political participation, social services, health, and education.

Unlike traditional development methods, Voice emphasises the role of rightsholders as agents of change, not just as beneficiaries. It provides grants to promote diversity, inclusion, empowerment, and influence in decision-making. The programme also encourages collaboration among Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) at national and international levels, building their capacity and amplifying the voices of rightsholders.

The Voice Programme Final Evaluation, which took place between April and September 2023, covers the entire implementation period in the target countries since 2016. It serves as a knowledge-enhancing tool for stakeholders and addresses key questions about the programme's impact on grantees and rightsholders, the effectiveness of its structure, and how it compares to similar development programmes.

The evaluation process was guided by the fundamental principles of the Voice programme: (i) Legitimise the claims of people concerned by addressing them as rightsholders; (ii) Participation of the rightsholders; (iii) Attention to overlapping and intersecting vulnerabilities; (iv) Inclusion of diverse voices; and (v) Respect of the needs and identities of the rightsholders.

The assessment follows the Circular Permanent Learning (CPL) approach, which is adaptive, people-centred, and participatory. The CPL uses a phased approach to the evaluation process: (i) Calibration. (ii) Evidence gathering, (iii) Understanding and analysis. (iv) Sharing back.

The evaluation reached 548 respondents through qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including an Online Surveys, Key Informant Interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussions (FGD), Validation Workshops, and Participatory Podcasting.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The Voice programme has shown adaptability in diverse contexts across its focus countries, even during the Covid-19 pandemic and amid shrinking civic spaces, remaining relevant by updating its context analyses and approaches in response to declining fundamental rights.

The Theory of Change (ToC) has evolved since its inception in 2016, becoming more inclusive and representative as the second phase of Voice was designed in 2019. While the ToC may not always be clear to grantees, the Pathways of Change (Empower, Amplify, Influence) are better understood. The Pathways work together to achieve the main goal of the programme: Empowerment builds confidence and encourages individuals to speak up, creating a strong foundation. Amplifying provides tools and support to make voices louder, leading to a bigger impact when individuals come together. Influencing involves using various methods to drive change, such as engaging with leaders and utilising (social) media. Nevertheless, the Pathways are often perceived as rigid, not fully aligned with actual needs, and sometimes unrealistic due to political or legislative factors.

The categorisation of impact areas and rightsholder groups has also been questioned, as projects often span multiple areas and demographic groups which transcend strict classification.

Future discussions regarding the ToC will likely involve considerations about the nature of the Voice structure. Several potential alternatives were suggested, such as creating a completely new and independent organisation or hosting the programme under an existing organisation in the global South. Regardless of the direction taken, future success should build on the current programme's strengths, which include collaboration, inclusivity, flexibility, a rightsholder-centred approach, and support for grassroots organisations.

Voice's adaptability, participation, and open communication have been crucial for programme performance by prioritising collaboration over rigid doctrine, allowing grantees to propose projects based on their context. Inclusivity in language and redefining terminology has been important, but tailoring communication to different cultural contexts is still crucial. Open communication through various platforms has facilitated understanding and trust between Voice staff and grantee partners.

A significant adaptation has been the shift towards more inclusive representation in global and local programme leadership, aligning with the broader initiative to decolonise aid.

In terms of programme performance, Voice has excelled in learning from its experiences and collaborating with grantees and rightsholders through its Linking and Learning (L&L) facility. This approach has empowered smaller organisations creating a supportive community and fostering a sense of empowerment. Peer-to-peer learning has been transformative, allowing grantees to tap into collective knowledge, build networks, and be more effective advocates.

The Voice programme has effectively engaged diverse populations in marginalised areas, increasingly recognising overlapping intersectional vulnerabilities based on factors like gender, ethnicity, age, and disability.

The programme's grantmaking mechanism has allowed grantees to define their project goals aligned with their communities' needs, promoting self-reliance, and attracting attention from policymakers and donors. The Voice granting mechanism has evolved over time to better

support marginalised communities and their rights. It introduced various grant categories, each with its own eligibility criteria and purposes, to address different aspects of empowerment, influence, innovation, and sudden opportunities. Nevertheless, adjustments are required to ensure grants are readily accessible to a diverse range of rightsholders, allowing for extended implementation, streamlined decision-making, and flexibility in budget allocation.

In terms of reporting, there is a need for more straightforward language and requirements, especially for smaller grantees. The Conversation-Based Reporting (CBR) approach is praised for its effectiveness in facilitating meaningful engagement and collaboration between grantees and the programme.

Looking ahead, Voice's unique approach of amplifying rightsholder voices through various channels sets it apart in the development sector, with strengths lying in meaningful participation, diversified focus, a bottom-up approach, capacity strengthening, and support for grassroots organisations and movements. The programme has the potential to further enhance its visibility and influence on a global scale, with its ability to evolve, learn, and adapt based on feedback from grantees and rightsholders being a key strength that should continue to be leveraged for its future development. To stay relevant, Voice must be willing to adapt to the evolving situation.

**To stay relevant,
Voice must be willing
to adapt to the evolving
situation.**

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1: Update ToC framework to align with evolving ambitions of the Voice Programme. The ToC is a dynamic tool, and involving grantees and rightsholders in the process will ensure it accurately reflects progress and aspirations.

Recommendation 2: Establish a Knowledge Repository for universal access to information and learning. This repository should be continuously updated and serve as a resource for all partners.

Recommendation 3: Emphasise community-based approaches to navigate implementation challenges and mitigate risks. Engaging local communities effectively addresses complex issues and establishes sustainable solutions.

Recommendation 4: Streamline granting processes to accelerate project initiation and ensure timely implementation. Consider longer project durations, a flexible due diligence process, and allocate more funding for organisational development.

Recommendation 5: Include rightsholders in the grant-making process to increase ownership and relevance. Explore participatory grant-making and involve representatives from marginalised groups in evaluation and decision-making.

Recommendation 6: Broaden capacity strengthening to include both soft and hard skills. Provide comprehensive support in areas such as advocacy, networking, data collection, and more, primarily through peer-to-peer learning.

Recommendation 7: Adjust communication language to local needs for better understanding and engagement, especially when introducing new concepts.

Recommendation 8: Expand collaborations with diverse stakeholders beyond traditional NGOs to increase impact and visibility. Engage with private sector, local community groups, and academia.

Recommendation 9: Diversify funding sources to maximise sustainability and showcase programme impact. Reflect on different funding options and develop a visibility plan to promote programme successes.

Recommendation 10: Amplify cross-country advocacy for collective action and expanded influence. Allocate resources to support regional and global advocacy initiatives for greater impact.



1.

THE VOICE PROGRAMME: AN OVERVIEW

1.1 Background

Voice is a grant programme financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and overseen by Oxfam Novib and Hivos in ten focus countries and several other countries through multi-country grants spanning Sub-Saharan Africa, East and Southeast Asia. The programme centres on the empowerment of five marginalised groups: People with disabilities; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people; Women facing exploitation, abuse and/or violence; Vulnerable youth and elderly; Indigenous people and ethnic minorities. It seeks to tackle prejudice and cultural norms that adversely influence these groups by offering tailored approaches for their inclusion in social and political spheres.

Departing from conventional developmental methodologies, Voice highlights the role of the rightsholders as catalysts of change rather than as mere beneficiaries. The programme provides grants to advance diversity and inclusion, increase empowerment, amplify voices, and influence decisions. Moreover, Voice seeks to encourage collaborations amongst civil society organisations at national and international level, improving their capacity, amplifying their voices, and enabling the rightsholders' access to resources, employment, citizen engagement, political participation, social services, health, and education.

The Voice Programme Final Evaluation covers the whole implementation period in the ten target countries and beyond via the regional and global grants. Its intention is to serve as a knowledge-enhancing tool for the rightsholders, grantees, Voice teams, MoFA, and other stakeholders. The evaluation addresses key questions concerning (i) the programme's support for the empowerment of grantees and rightsholders, (ii) the effectiveness of its structure and procedures in achieving project objectives and maximising impacts, and (iii) how Voice stands in comparison to similar



*Click to listen
to the respondents'*

Central to Voice is the recognition of the rights of the individuals and organisations involved in the programme, and the inclusion of the rightsholders in decision-making processes.

programmes in the development sector and its potential for future implementation.

Throughout the assessment process, the fundamental principles of the Voice programme guided the development of the tools and their use. Central to Voice is the recognition of the rights of the individuals and organisations involved in the programme, and the inclusion of the rightsholders in decision-making processes. This means that the individuals who are directly involved in the programme are actively included and empowered to participate in shaping the decisions that concern them.

Furthermore, the approach adopted by Voice and shared by the consultants takes into consideration the diverse experiences, needs, and identities of the rightsholders, such as gender, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. By acknowledging fundamental rights, involving rightsholders, incorporating diverse perspectives, and showing consideration for distinct needs and identities, the programme strives to develop an inclusive and equitable approach that acknowledges and tackles the interconnecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage faced by individuals and communities.

1.2 Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The Final Evaluation was directed towards answering the following questions:

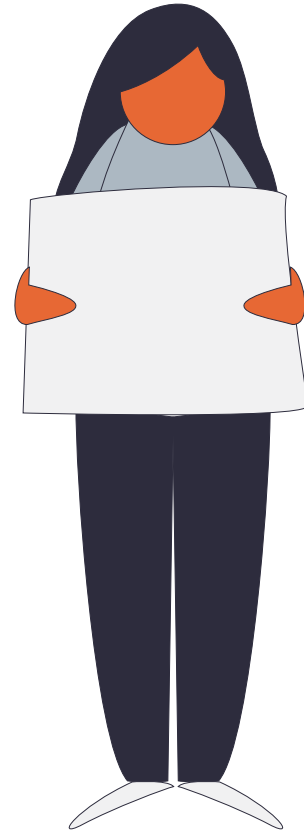
1. To what extent did the programme, through “Grant making” and “Linking & Learning (L&L),” support the empowerment of grantees and rightsholders in their ability to achieve their own goals?
2. How supportive and effective were the Voice structure and processes in sustaining project objectives and maximising results?
3. How is Voice positioned compared to similar programmes in the wider development sector, and what potential does Voice have to continue or improve the ways in which it supports rightsholder groups in the future?
4. The evaluation process from design to delivery, was steered by the key principles underlying the Voice programme, namely: (i) Legitimise the claims of people concerned by addressing them as rightsholders; (ii) Participation of the rightsholders; (iii) Attention to overlapping and intersecting vulnerabilities; (iv) Inclusion of diverse voices; and (v) Respect of the needs and identities of the rightsholders

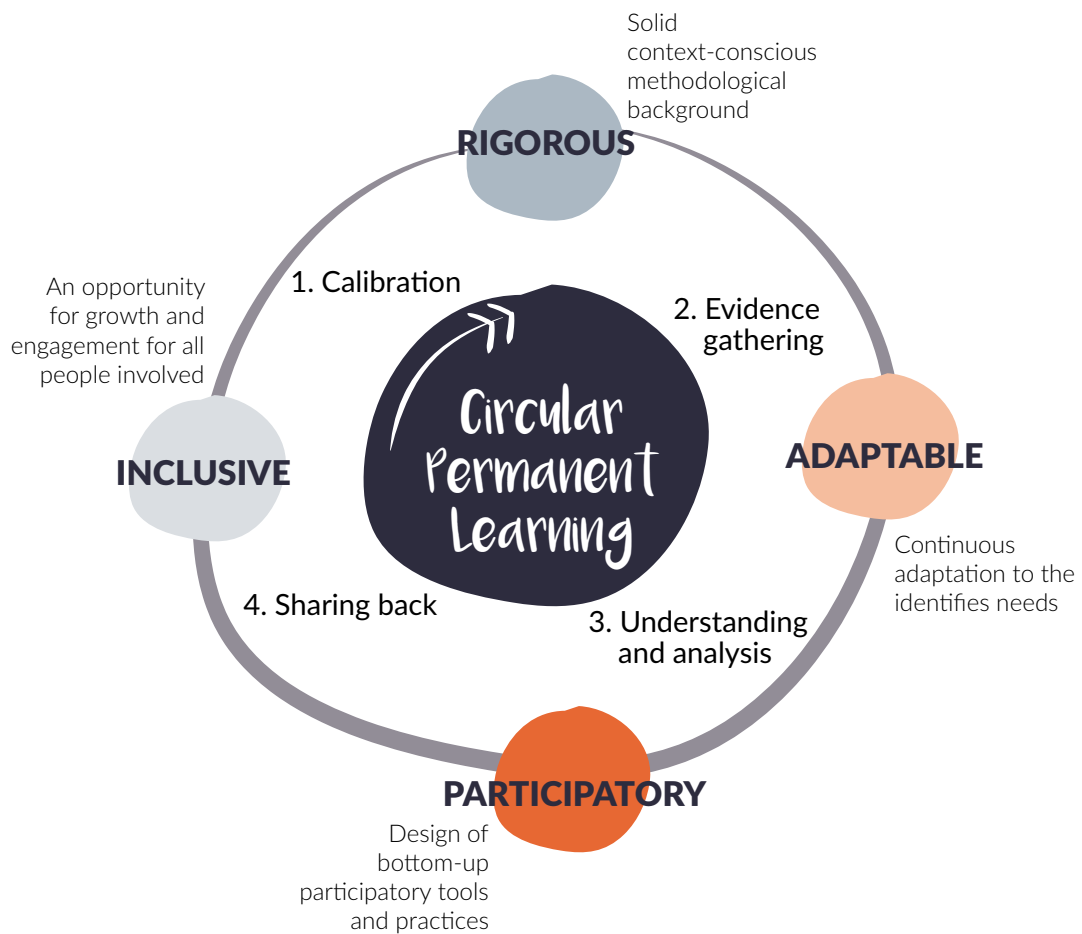
2.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

2.1 Approach

The approach to the final evaluation included several key elements. Firstly, it involved two primary levels of assessment: one focusing on examining internal and external processes, such as planning, resource utilisation, communication, networking, and accountability; and the other centred around evaluating the impact of the programme on grantee partners and stakeholders, with a specific emphasis on rightsholders. Recognising the importance of participation, the evaluation methodology was rooted in inclusivity, evident in the design and utilisation of evaluation tools guided by our signature methodological approach – the Circular Permanent Learning (CPL). This approach is adaptive, people-centred, and participatory. Grounded in years of field-based experience, this methodological framework is designed to embrace and unpack complexity while maintaining focus on continuous learning. CPL is both an approach - with its own innovative toolbox - and a way of thinking about all aspects of and interventions that influence people's lives. The methodological framework involves four main stages that build onto one another to sustain the learning process. Conceptual underpinnings that encompass inclusion, human rights, solidarity, and participation are an integral part of the evaluation framework and as such are streamlined through the four evaluation stages.





-
- 1** Putting people's (and organisations') needs and aspirations at the centre of the approach means that the process focuses, firstly, on agreed and relevant aspects to calibrate the research methodology. Much emphasis is put on this operational phase which aims to identify key areas of focus and relevant dimensions to be analysed in depth, avoiding the common risk of "cut and paste."

 - 2** Active listening and participation underpin the overall approach and clearly shows in the way research tools are designed and employed in the evidence gathering phase.

 - 3** To ensure in-depth understanding and analysis of the collected evidence, the third operational phase foresees a direct involvement of key stakeholders in an interactive feedback loop. Emerging findings are discussed through ad hoc meetings and validation workshops, to gather more insights and further nuances on the generated knowledge.

 - 4** Key learning is a resource that everyone should benefit from. With the sharing back phase (to end users, target groups and others) we believe that all the parties involved may take away relevant learning points - at different levels - through a process that is also a product in itself.

The consultancy was conducted in accordance with the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact. These were supplemented with the notions of adaptability and flexibility to better assess possible constraints that occurred throughout the lifetime of the project, including Covid-19 restrictions. Further, the evaluation incorporated several other important components. An intersectional approach which considers how gender and other variables intersect with various factors, acknowledging the diverse positions of rightsholders within power structures. Primary groups were identified as knowers and actors, with rightsholders viewed as partners in the evaluation process. The evaluation also took a multi-level analysis approach, recognising the individual, group, community, social, and institutional levels of action required for change. Lastly, a comprehensive learning approach guided the evaluation, examining the programme's impact on equality and equity for all rightsholder groups, as well as how knowledge was put into action, while identifying good practices throughout the process.



*We are not yet where we want to be.
Definitely, we are not where we used to be*
(Tanzania Grantee)

2.2 Methodology

Literature Review

During the inception phase (Calibration), the evaluation team reviewed relevant materials provided by the Voice team. In Table 1, we present an overview of key areas encompassing both institutional and programmatic focuses. These materials proved helpful in attaining a refined understanding of the scope of the consultancy and supported the development of the methodology for this assignment.

Alongside examining the materials provided by Voice, the evaluation team reviewed secondary resources generated by other stakeholders in the sector.

KEY AREA ↓

↓ DESCRIPTION

>> GOVERNANCE

Hivos and Oxfam Novib collaborate in the Voice consortium. A decentralised approach is used, overseen by a Steering Committee, and executed by a Coordination Team and country teams. The Coordination Team offers guidance and support to country teams and partner organisations.

>> FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Voice, funded with €86 million over eight years by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is divided into two phases. The budget allocation covers grants totalling €60.2 million for marginalised groups, €15.7 million for management, coordination, capacity strengthening, €8.1 million for linking and learning, and reserves €2 million for VAT.

>> STRATEGIC APPROACH

The Theory of Change (ToC) underpinning Voice was updated, focusing on pathways to empower, amplify, and influence change. Key impact areas include improved access to resources, social services, and political engagement.

>> CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Regular context analyses by country teams and partners provide updates on economic, social, political, and environmental conditions. Preselected rightsholder groups' situations and emerging needs are assessed. The situation of other rightsholder groups is also reported on to ensure an intersectional perspective.

>> LIST OF GRANTEES

A compilation of national and multi-country projects in priority areas, including grantees' names and website links, is provided.

>> PROPOSAL

Documentation includes Voice Proposal and Extension Proposal.

KEY AREA ↓

↓ DESCRIPTION

>> REPORTS

Annual Reports offer progress updates from 2017 to 2021 on the activities implemented through the Voice Programme, including highlights from national and regional undertakings and emerging trends and learning based on practice.

>> MIDTERM REVIEW

The 2019 midterm review focused on grant preparation, implementation, outreach, empowerment, Linking & Learning, communication, and governance. Findings inform the final evaluation.

>> GRANTEE PROJECT EVALUATIONS

Six project evaluations and a global review contribute valuable insights based on on-the-ground activities and experiences of involved individuals and communities.

>> STORIES OF CHANGE

Impact stories collected during project implementation highlight real-time changes at individual and collective levels.

>> VOICE ENPOWER

Learning through diaries capturing experiences of discrimination and empowerment offers insights from rightsholders' perspectives.

>> GRANTEE PERCEPTION REPORT

Results of a 2021 Perception Survey among Voice Grantees assess impact, grant-making, technical support, and more, aiding the overall programme assessment.

>> GLOBAL PERCEPTION BRIEF

An internal reflection initiated by the Voice Global Coordination Team to collect and reflect on feedback around the implementation of the programme.

>> BLOG/PODCASTS/ PUBLICATIONS

The Voice website features blogs, podcasts, and publications sharing stories of change and reflecting on emerging themes.

Participatory review of the methodology and focus areas

Our evaluation process required several consultations with the Voice team and other stakeholders to ensure the evaluation phases were carried-out in the most participatory and relevant way. Several steps were taken during the inception phase to collaboratively finalise the methodology. The consulting team took part in three meetings between April and May to ensure a wide range of voices were included in the process:

- **27/04: Voice Final Evaluation Pre-Inception meeting:** The discussion was held with the evaluation counterparts in the Voice global management team to determine expectations for the upcoming kick-off meeting.
- **03/05: Voice Final Evaluation Kick-off meeting:** Meeting with the Advisory Board, Steering Committee, country office representatives, and MoFA representative. This was the chance to iron out any doubts about the methodology, target countries for field work, to clarify focus areas, and also to review the timeline and priorities.
- **17/05: Voice Final Evaluation Co-creation Session:** Held with a larger group comprising participants from the previous meetings plus grantees from target countries, the session was designed to carry out a participatory review of the evaluation matrix to calibrate the guiding questions for each of the DAC evaluation criteria (see Annex 1), and to make a stakeholder analysis to be finalised by each country together with the Scio consultants during the upcoming planning stage. The consulting team used a mix of tools to engage the participants, including the interactive digital whiteboard [Jamboard](#).

The consultants and the Voice Global Management team met weekly or bi-weekly online to discuss the progress of the evaluation, to troubleshoot, and to constantly adapt the evaluation strategy to the circumstances.

2.3 Data collection

The evaluation employed a quantitative survey and several qualitative data collection tools designed to ensure in-depth reflection among the target audiences about the Voice programme (Evidence Gathering).

- **Online Survey:** All Voice staff from the Country Offices and the Coordination Team, Oxfam and Hivos management staff at the country level, and all grantees based in the ten focus countries or part multi-country grants, received an on-line survey early in the data collection process to investigate working processes and programmatic aspects. The specific quantitative questions were aligned to the evaluation matrix finalised during the co-creation session. The findings from the online survey were used to calibrate the questions used during the Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The response rate to the survey was around 50% of all active email addresses that received the invitation, in line with the estimated response rate in the inception

report. The survey was delivered in English, French, Indonesian, Lao, and Khmer through Google Forms with the Pretty Forms Designer add-on necessary to increase the number of languages.

- **27/06: Call-in during Voice annual reflection:** On the last day of the Voice annual reflection in The Hague, the consultants were invited to update the global management teams and country office teams with the evaluation process, and to present the findings from the online survey regarding the answers from the Voice team. Following the presentation, the participants were asked to reflect on key questions to support the consultants with the qualitative data collection phase of the evaluation. The activity was conducted for about 2 hours. Participants were split into six groups, with 5-6 people in each group. They were then rotated twice so that each question could be tackled by around half of all participants (See Annex 2 for more details).
- **Qualitative data collection:** the team used (i) KIIs, (ii) FGDs, (iii) Regional thematic meetings, and (iv) Participatory podcasting to collect qualitative data from the stakeholders. More specifically the first two tools were used for all respondents, the thematic meetings only included grantees involved in multi-country grants, while the podcasting tool was reserved for rightsholders.
- **KIIs:** were employed both remotely and in person to connect with individual stakeholders at various levels. Stakeholders were selected during the planning phase with each of the ten country offices based on relevance to the local context. Each KII took around 60 minutes and was semi-structured, following a set of pre-determined questions derived from the evaluation matrix guiding questions. The selection of respondents was initially aimed at stakeholders who had not directly received funding from Voice. To adapt to logistic issues and respondent priorities, the consultants also resorted to KIIs for interviewees from among staff and grantees.

In Mali, Kenya, Uganda, Laos, and the Philippines the consultants engaged face-to-face - whenever possible - with various stakeholders to gain perspectives on the impact of the programme, and to assess the positioning of Voice in the human rights and development debate. For Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania, Cambodia, and Indonesia, interviews were held online with a sample of stakeholders.

In Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania, Cambodia, and Indonesia, KIIs were also used to remotely interview key Voice staff.

At the global level, the team remotely interviewed regional and global Voice team members, the Dutch MoFA representative, and donors funding similar granting mechanisms.

- **FGDs:** In the ten target countries (5 remotely, 5 in person), group discussions were held with small groups of four to six respondents from a selection of grantees and/or stakeholders brought together to reflect on the three Voice pathways of change: To Empower, To Amplify and To Influence, as well as on the three Voice Impact Themes:
 - » Improved access to (productive) resources (finance, land, and water) and employment
 - » Improved access to social services, in particular health and education
 - » Space for political participation and citizen engagement

FGDs were also employed to interview Voice staff in Mali, Kenya, Uganda, Laos, and the Philippines.

- **Regional thematic meetings:** these sessions were held online and covered: East Africa, West Africa, and Southeast Asia (See Annex 4). These meetings, which were aimed at partner organisations involved in regional grants, took place towards the end of the data

collection phase, as the thematic areas were selected among relevant trends emerging from the national-level interviews. During these meetings, the consultants explored the following areas:

- Reflection area 1: What worked and what is missing in working with the five rightsholder groups.
- Reflection area 2: Empower, Amplify, Influence: Gaps and successful experiences in relation to the three pathways of change.
- Reflection area 3: Good practices from across the region in the following areas: access to finance, land, water, employment, social services (such as health and education), and to space for political participation and citizen engagement.
- **The voice of the rightsholders: Participatory Podcasting:** this methodology combines the Most Significant Change (MSC) approach with the podcasting methodology. Stories were collected with voice recordings and edited into full stories. Recordings were collected as part of the KII interviews or specifically for the podcasts. The selection of the sections for podcasting was made to assess, in the voices of the rightsholders, the intended or unintended impact the programme had on their lives.

2.4 Evaluation matrix & Guiding Question

The evaluation matrix was developed around the three Objectives of the evaluation:

- I. To assess the programme's performance based on if and how far the Grant Making and Linking & Learning (L&L) efforts of Voice (including direct/indirect, intended/unintended, and positive/negative contributions) led to empowered grantee partners and rightsholders that are able to achieve their goals.
- II. To assess the structure and processes of Voice, substantiating what the programme does and does not do well, analysing what supported Voice to pursue and live up to its values, and providing recommendations for maximising programme impact in a prospective future programming phase.
- III. To provide insights into Voice's current position and potential future positioning in the wider funding and development sector, compared and relative to other similar programmes, prospecting what distinguishes Voice and how relevant Voice's mandate is to continuing resourcing rightsholder groups and their organising in the future.

The guiding questions for the online survey and the KIIs and FDGs, while keeping in mind the overarching priorities of the evaluation objectives, followed the traditional breakdown of the OECD DAC criteria: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability. (See Annex 1 for more details on the questions)

The findings presented in the report were then once again recalibrated on the three overall objectives, in line with the evaluation logic as outlined in the ToR.

2.5 Evaluation Sample

The consultants collected data from 548 respondents using quantitative and qualitative tools as shown in Table 2 below (refer to Annexes 3, 4 and 5 for a complete list).

COUNTRY AND TYPE OF INTERVIEW	RIGHTSHOLDER IN FGDS	GRANTEES IN FGDS	RIGHTSHOLDER & GRANTEES IN FGDS	STAKEHOLDERS IN FGDS	VOICE STAFF IN FGDS	REGIONAL THEMATIC MEETINGS	VALIDATION WORKSHOPS	KIIS FOR STAKEHOLDERS	VOICE STAFF KIIS	KIIS FOR RIGHTSHOLDERS	KIIS FOR GRANTEES	WRITTEN REPLIES TO QUESTIONS	PODCAST STORIES	ONLINE SURVEY
Uganda	5	6			3			10					7	
Kenya	5		12	6	5			9					5	
Tanzania	5		6					5	3					
Laos		2			2		12			2	8		3	
Cambodia	5	4						2	2			3		
Indonesia			5		2			4			1			
Philippines			3		5			2				3		
Mali	13	4	6					5	4		5		5	
Niger					4							2		
Nigeria			7		3			3			3			
Global							32	4	5					
Regional						25	17							
Mix														239
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS														548

2.6 Data Analysis

The data derived from the survey and interviews was entered into a confidentially designed database (Understanding and Analysis). To analyse the qualitative data, thematic coding was applied. The evaluation utilised the most suitable software (e.g., Google Forms for online survey, Dedoose for thematic coding, Trint for Transcripts) to analyse the information derived from reviewed documentation, surveys, and interview transcripts with key informants. Once saturation was achieved, the lists of emerging trends and themes were finalised.

Given the involvement of mixed methods and the requirement for multiple levels of analysis in this external review, the triangulation of information played a pivotal role. By employing triangulation as a research technique, we aimed to enhance the credibility and validity of the study findings. Furthermore, it allowed us to construct a comprehensive narrative that incorporated various perspectives and stories.

Triangulation involved seeking areas of convergence, complementarity, and divergence within the data collected from diverse sources and through different methods. Its purpose extended beyond validation during the analysis and systematisation phase; it also served as a means to gain new insights throughout the evaluation process. Additionally, triangulation supported analysis focusing on intersectionality while examining the findings concerning the five rightsholder groups, as well as common patterns and emerging priorities across different geographical areas.

Triangulation involved seeking areas of convergence, complementarity, and divergence within the data collected from diverse sources and through different methods.

2.7 Validation and Reporting

We strongly believe in the empowering process of sharing key learnings with the individuals who contributed their valuable inputs to the evaluation (Sharing back). This approach fosters a culture of open and inclusive communication, strengthens the sense of ownership among all stakeholders, and provides tangible evidence to guide further actions.

A progress report with initial findings was drafted and sent to the Voice reference group members for initial feedback and as a basis for the more comprehensive draft report which was validated through validation meetings in accordance with the requirements outlined in the ToR.

The evaluation team organised three validation workshops in August: 1) country-level in Laos (Lao language); 2) Francophone Africa (French language) (Niger and Mali); 3) Global in the remaining target countries and with global/regional stakeholders (English language).

The purpose of the gatherings was to share back and validate the findings with Voice staff, Oxfam, Hivos, grantees, advisory board, Steering Committee, MoFA, and rightsholders. In order to enhance comprehension and retention, audio-visual materials were prepared and utilised during the presentations.

The feedback received from the validation workshops was carefully addressed, leading to the preparation of the final version of the evaluation report. The report is available in English and the executive summary is available in French.

Additionally, the final report includes links to the podcasts and an interactive infographic in English and French, to be translated by the Voice country offices in other languages and used for local dissemination.

2.8 Limitations of the study

1. The need for translations into various local languages (also sign language) required additional steps for the Online Survey and the conversations with grantees and rightsholders. The value of including people by using their language prevailed over technical issues, therefore despite some initial delays, the data collection process could be made more participatory.
2. The Voice Programme annual reflection in the Netherlands caused significant delays in the data collection at the country level. Nevertheless, it also presented an opportunity for the consultants to learn from the outcomes of the reflection and include considerations from the participants in the data collection.
3. Online data collection in Niger had to be postponed due to a series of unfortunate circumstances culminating with the ongoing coup in the country. This has meant that the data collection was postponed several times. Fortunately, this did not negatively impact the data analysis phase or the reporting phase.
4. The majority of the grantee participants in the interviews and validation workshops were recent (extension phase) grantees, with few of them having been part of Voice since the initial phase of the programme. This may partially have limited the consulting team's understanding of the evolution of the granting mechanisms through the experiences of the grantees themselves.

3.

KEY FINDINGS

Relevance and Adaptability to Changing contexts

The Voice programme has proven relevant to rightsholder groups across countries and has also demonstrated adaptability to changing contexts. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Voice shifted budgets from physical to online activities. In some countries - such as in Uganda - Voice's support enabled grantees to keep some of their activities running during lockdowns. Through online platforms grantees in Uganda and Nigeria extended their reach to distant areas, and through concerts on radio and television, they could raise awareness beyond expectations. Context analysis played a crucial role in understanding issues and policies, guiding project alignment with rightsholder needs. Responses to the online survey confirm the programmes' ability to understand and respond to changes, with 67% of overall positive answers.

However, the chart also indicates a level of dissatisfaction expressed by respondents, shedding light on the significant challenges faced by both the Voice team and grantees, especially during the pandemic. The consultation process revealed constraints related to management, communication, and activity implementation. Both the Voice team and grantees had to exert additional efforts to develop mitigation strategies, ensuring effective Covid-19 responses, adapting work approaches, and integrating wellbeing into programming and budgeting. While utilising online platforms helped expand participant reach, it also presented significant challenges, especially in terms of accessibility, particularly in remote areas and for certain rightsholder groups like elderly individuals or community members reliant on others for communication. This situation notably exposed rightsholders to increased risks related to isolation, power imbalances, and violence. Global data highlighted how isolation, restricted movement, and lockdown measures to contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus - for instance - had a particularly acute impact on women and girls.

Context analysis played a crucial role in understanding issues and policies, guiding project alignment with rightsholder needs.

» TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE VOICE PROGRAMME BEEN ABLE TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO THE CHANGING NEEDS?

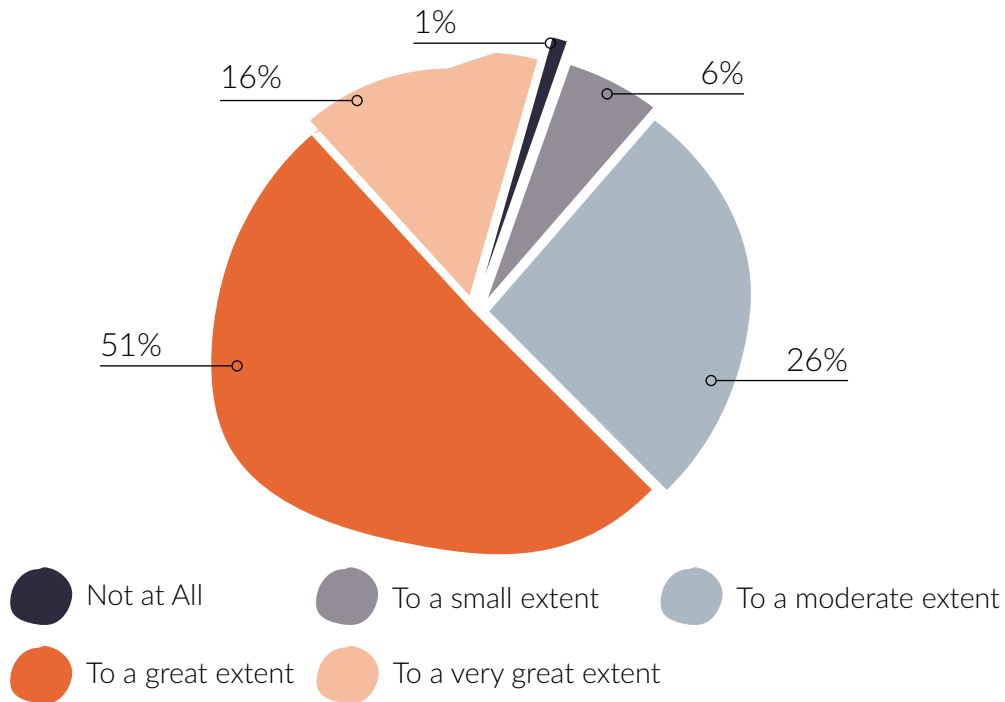


CHART 1 Source: Online Survey

The Theory of Change

There was limited involvement of rightsholders and stakeholders during the programme’s early stages, including the advisory board. However, Voice has since progressed by incorporating a more diverse and inclusive representation, both in the advisory board and in planning processes. This shift towards involving rightsholders in planning was a response to recommendations from the Midterm Review (MTR) of the Programme. The same approach was applied to the revision of the Theory of Change (ToC) in 2019, which was achieved through a workshop attended by representatives from the Voice programme, Oxfam/Hivos, and rightsholders. The evaluation consultation revealed that only a few key informants had participated in the ToC revision. Most people consulted were only partly acquainted with the complete ToC document that underpins the programme, although they were more familiar with certain aspects such as the rightsholder groups and impact areas due to their integration into the granting system. Instead, the Pathways of Change (Empower, Amplify, Influence) are well understood by staff and longer-term grantees. Participants in the Mali/Niger Validation Workshop recommended involving stakeholders and rightsholders from the inception of the ToC revision to ensure they could contribute important insights that would empower them and help them understand their roles in achieving set objectives.

Reflection on the Pathways of Change highlights that the grantees’ experiences vary. For some of them, evolving from empowerment to influencing is not an obvious progression, while for

others, the journey is not strictly linear. The Voice Programme's Pathways of Change provide different avenues for grantees to effect positive transformation. However, the transformative process is not uniform for all participants. The dynamic nature of these pathways underscores the complex and multifaceted nature of social change. Each grantee's unique context, resources, and capacities play a significant role in determining their specific trajectory within the Pathways of Change.

The concept of impact areas and their strict adherence were also questioned. The complexity arises as many projects span multiple impact areas, and specific demographic groups engage with various areas simultaneously. The attempt to categorise impact areas distinctly - although understandable from a management perspective - was seen as challenging due to significant cross-reference between them. Further, the allocation of grants per impact area or rightsholder groups does not always align with the actual needs of the countries and rightsholders. It was noted that in some cases, fewer grants were distributed in areas where they were most needed due to factors like political context or restrictive legislation. Impact areas are often used as entry points to support activities on more sensitive issues. A classic example is the use of healthcare as an entry point to work on LGBTI issues.

Similar considerations were brought up with reference to the partition of rightsholder groups, which may affect the full application of the intersectionality concepts among other aspects (please see *Working with the rightsholders*).

The ToC was described as a roadmap that becomes most effective when adapted to suit the unique needs of different communities. This involves considering power dynamics and involving community members in decision-making to amplify their voices and create focused plans. Concerns were raised about potential power imbalances when mixing grantees with donors or with the managing partners. Despite the participatory platform provided by Voice, power dynamics and decision-making authority remain. Grantees and rightsholders are likely to perceive power differentials when convening with decision-makers to discuss elements of the programme design such as the development of the ToC. It was suggested to establish dedicated creation spaces (for instance grantees reflecting on the ToC amongst themselves first) not only for developing the ToC but also for other events which require inputs from different actors where power dynamics may arise, aiming to ensure balanced participation and influence.

The ToC was described as a roadmap that becomes most effective when adapted to suit the unique needs of different communities. This involves considering power dynamics and involving community members in decision-making to amplify their voices and create focused plans.

3.1 Programme Performance throughout the implementation period

Working with the rightsholders

When asked how well Voice had reached out to various populations who live in out of reach/rural/marginalised areas and engaged them in the programme, 80% of the respondents to the online survey provided positive responses (ranging from 44% 'good' to 36% 'very good'). The in-depth consultation highlighted that the Voice programme's outreach strategy has produced varying degrees of success across different countries. Among the rightsholders, women and youth have been the most engaged due to alignment with country programming priorities and a prevailing emphasis on their empowerment. This resonates with the programme's database that offers an overview of the grants targeting the five rightsholder groups.

» PERCENTAGE OF RIGHTSHOLDERS GROUPS TARGETED BY VOICE FUNDED PROJECTS (SOURCE LIST OF GRANTEES)

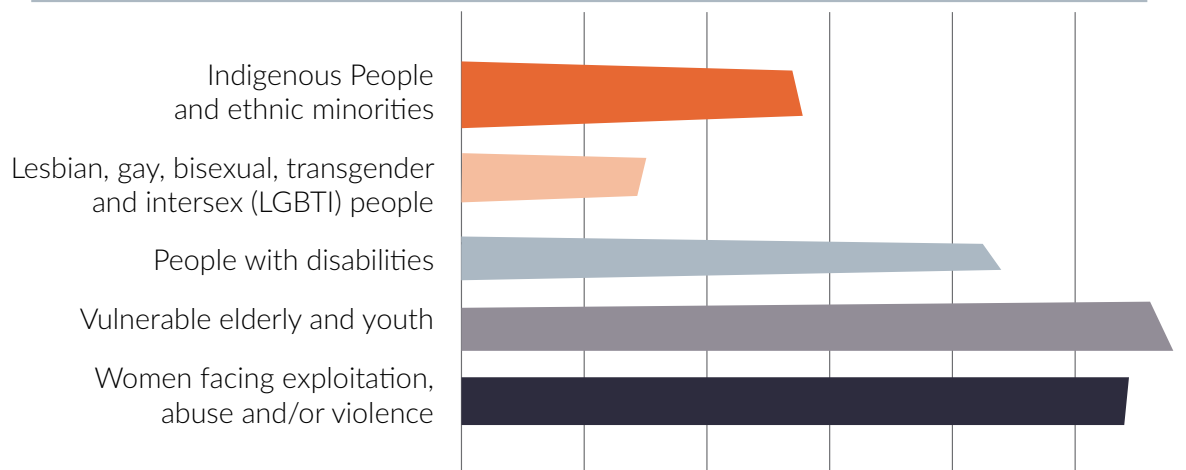


CHART 2 Source: Grantee database

While certain rightsholder groups, like the elderly and indigenous people, have received relatively less representation among rightsholder groups receiving grants, the Voice programme has strived for equitable engagement across all groups by incorporating targets into the annual workplan and the granting mechanism.

The feedback shed light on areas where further attention is required. Teen mothers, for instance, are still not “desirable” rightsholders across the regions. This can be attributed to the categorisation or even stereotyping of teen mothers as “grown women,” overlooking their unique needs as youths. More broadly, working with children is seen as a priority area indicated by key informants who participated in the online survey. Persons with intellectual disabilities remain somewhat overlooked

within the programme's outreach efforts. The feedback suggests the importance of ensuring that all forms of disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, are addressed to eliminate stigma and provide meaningful support. Additional efforts would be needed to engage intersex individuals, particularly in environments where distinct categories and preferences exist. In Uganda, the Voice programme recognises that intersex individuals prefer to be independent of broader LGBTI associations. This exemplifies the challenges of addressing diverse and nuanced identities while striving for inclusivity. Similarly, organisations focusing on autism highlighted that autism is not a disability and as such it should not be associated with the PWD group. Working with the elderly proved also challenging due to a combination of external (context) and internal (capacity, expertise) factors.

According to the Voice team in Niger, although they were unable to reach vulnerable groups such as sex workers and LGBTI individuals, they did observe progress between Phase 1 and the extension phase, as they managed to collaborate with organisations that they had not been able to work with during the initial phase.

The Voice programme is also attuned to the complexities of its operational environment. Key informants recognise that achieving comprehensive outreach to every vulnerable group within each country is a multifaceted challenge. Factors such as geographical dispersion, linguistic diversity, and cultural variations pose obstacles to ensuring a truly inclusive reach. For example, Laos, despite its small size, faces difficulties in reaching all segments of its diverse population, including various ethnic groups. To bridge these gaps, the Voice programme leverages its grantees as intermediaries, utilising their connections to reach out to harder-to-reach communities and ensure meaningful engagement. In Indonesia, the Voice programme's strategy employs an inclusive lens that recognizes the intersectionality of issues faced by different rightsholder groups. Collaborative efforts between organisations and activists, particularly those with established networks and credibility, are essential to reach out to marginalised communities, even in remote areas. Through strategic partnerships, the programme seeks to overcome the barriers that these groups encounter, ensuring accessibility to funding and providing a platform for amplifying their voices. This approach becomes particularly evident when addressing sensitive subjects. In Indonesia, for instance, the programme indirectly supports LGBTI rights through partnerships with human rights and women's rights groups. This tactful approach navigates government restrictions while ensuring effective support for LGBTI individuals. In Tanzania, potential conflicts regarding the term "Indigenous people" are avoided by using more neutral terms like "Pastoralists." This strategic choice not only prevents unnecessary clashes but also showcases the programme's sensitivity to contextual nuances. This approach is not just about empowering rightsholders—it is about doing so strategically, understanding, and navigating the intricacies of the operational landscape. By collaborating, bridging gaps, and managing risks, Voice grantees strive to operate in the most complex environments, leaving no one behind.

Note on Intersectionality Most projects involve multiple groups due to Voice's commitment to an intersectional approach, recognising how people's vulnerabilities overlap. Examining common intersections from 2017 to 2022, gender, ethnicity, age, and disability emerged as the prevalent factors across all regions. Some identities that stand out and overlap, leading to discrimination and marginalisation, include indigenous women, people with disabilities of different ages, women with disabilities, elderly women, young individuals with LGBTI identities, and young refugees. The evaluation highlights Voice's progress in integrating intersectionality as an analytical tool (context analysis), a programmatic lens (calls for proposals), and a learning journey (Linking and Learning). This has not only been a valuable process but an outcome in itself.

Intersectionality offers a new way to understand how organisations can work with various rightsholder groups simultaneously and address discrimination arising from overlapping identities.

Voice staff, partner organisations, and rightsholders have gradually grasped the importance of intersectionality both conceptually and practically. Examining some examples collected, a few points stand out for further reference:

- There are variations in how Voice staff and grantees understand intersectionality. This might be due to defining rightsholder groups as distinct categories.
- Intersectionality has primarily influenced individual-level efforts rather than systemic change, which is reasonable as it takes time for organisations to embrace complex intersectional dimensions.
- Key informants emphasised focusing more on certain groups like the elderly, teen mothers, children, and young LGBTI individuals. This suggests enhancing consideration for the age factor into programme design and implementation.
- The understanding of intersectionality may change due to staff turnover. Voice and grantees should be mindful of this, as maintaining consistent standards can be impacted. The concept of intersectionality remains dynamic, with Voice and grantees needing to adapt and sustain awareness, considering personnel changes that can influence organisational readiness.



Click to listen
to the respondents'

Linking & Learning: The Heart and Soul of Voice



It's really a community of Linking and Learning for grantees and rightsholders; it is also a safe space for sharing and learning on any topics we wish to share

(Laos Validation Workshop)

When asked to describe how Voice is different from other similar grant-making mechanisms, or to describe what the highpoint of their experience with the programme was, many of the grantees singled out Linking & Learning (L&L) as their personal and organisational highlight.

L&L is a collaborative process that involves sharing experiences and lessons from innovative initiatives, enabling successful methods to grow and develop. This includes learning from mistakes, embracing solutions beyond comfort zones, and promoting collaboration, exchange, and innovation to empower marginalised groups. The approach is guided by three principles: Leave No One Behind, nothing about us without us, and putting the furthest behind first. L&L centres

around grantee empowerment and independent progress, fostering connections and solidarity among grantees even after the programme's conclusion. It strives to create a community by facilitating communication and growth, with an emphasis on local ownership of learning agendas. Grantees actively contribute questions and drive learning, with facilitators promoting peer-to-peer education, enhancing practices, and nurturing relationships. Voice promotes learning through resource allocation, storytelling encouragement, and support for facilitators who capture stories and strengthen capabilities. The following L&L experiences were highlighted as the most meaningful:

- 1. The grantees praised the peer-to-peer learning approach as a collective and inclusive way to strengthen networks, exchange knowledge, and enhance communities of rightsholders ability to face challenges and make use of opportunities within countries and across borders.** While appreciating the “formal” learning opportunities offered by Voice, it is the opinion of several Voice staff and grantees that peer-to-peer learning should be the default capacity-strengthening methodology of Voice, as it empowers rightsholders, while also increasing future sustainability through sharing and learning.

A case illustrating cross-border peer-to-peer learning emerged through the account of a grantee in Mauritania collaborating with a regional movement across Niger, Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania to combat modern-day slavery. In the Mauritanian context, religious leaders were perceived as “enemies disseminating the belief that slavery is sanctioned by Islam.” Thanks to exchanges and learning promoted by Voice, Mauritanian grantees were confronted with a different perspective from their Malian counterparts, who were actively engaging with religious leaders. This proved transformative for the Mauritanian grantee, leading to the adoption of a new strategy involving dialogue and interaction with religious leaders.

- 2. Strength is often in numbers, as are opportunities to interact with a wide range of other organisations and rightsholders. Grantees confirmed that Voice had been very active in promoting initiatives and events for grantees and other stakeholders to network, connect, and learn from each other.** As illustrated in Chart 3 below, over 82% of respondents felt that the Voice programme enabled grantees to connect and share experiences.

When asked about the levels of connection, the majority of respondents found that these interactions happened mostly at national and sub-national level, with fewer respondents saying they happened regionally or globally. This is indeed not surprising, considering that only 8% of grants were regional or global, and that the majority of events are limited to the country level.

Almost 95% of all respondents as shown in Chart 4, felt that Voice had helped grantees and rightsholders feel part of a broader community where they were valued, empowered, and connected.

The number of collaborations the grantees had established thanks to Voice varied depending on how long they had been part of the programme and how exposed they had been to other grantees or external organisations and stakeholders. Overall, looking at Chart 5 below, 5.2% of respondents found that Voice had not been conducive to collaborations, while over 70% had between one and six new collaborations directly attributable to them being part of the programme. The remaining respondents estimated that the number of new connections was even higher.

» TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE VOICE PROGRAMME ENABLED GRANTEES TO CONNECT AND SHARE EXPERIENCE?

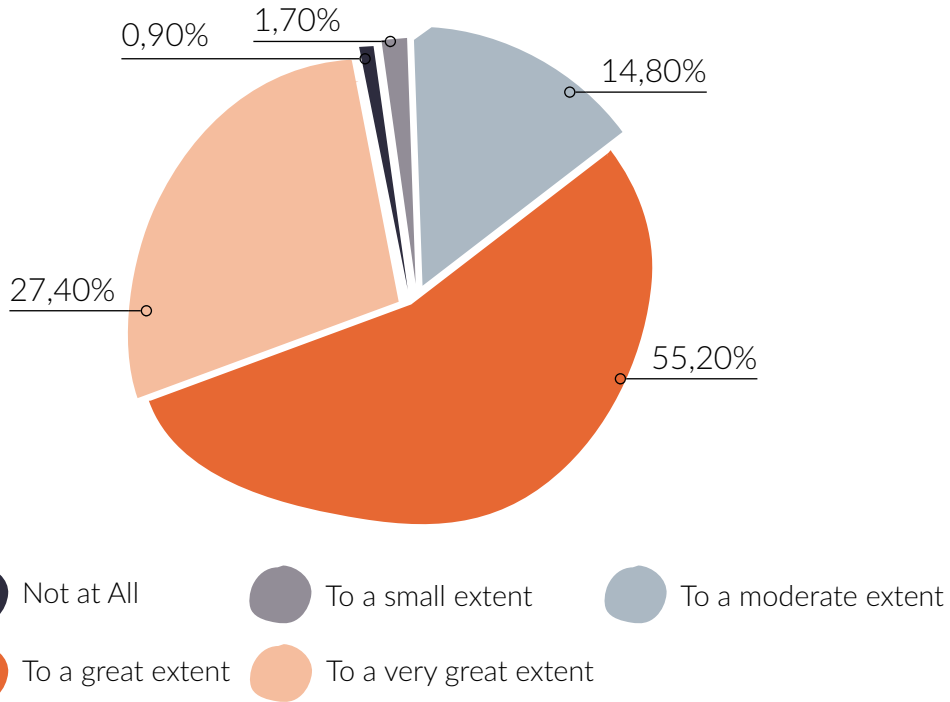


CHART 3 Source: Online Survey

» VOICE HAS HELPED GRANTEES AND RIGHTSHOLDERS TO FEEL PART OF A BROADER COMMUNITY WHERE PEOPLE FEEL VALUED, EMPOWERED AND CONNECTED

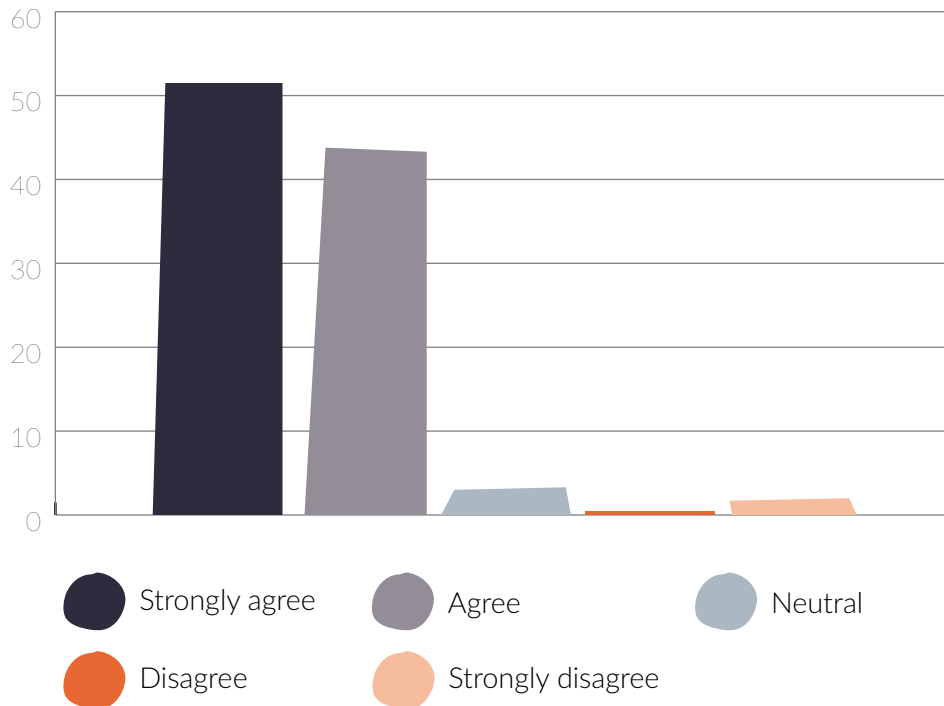


CHART 4 Source: Online Survey

In line with findings from the 2023 Global Perception Brief, the respondents preferred and asked for more in-person meetings as opposed to online events.

» NUMBER OF COLLABORATIONS ESTABLISHED BY YOUR ORGANIZATION AS A RESULT OF THE VOICE PROGRAMME

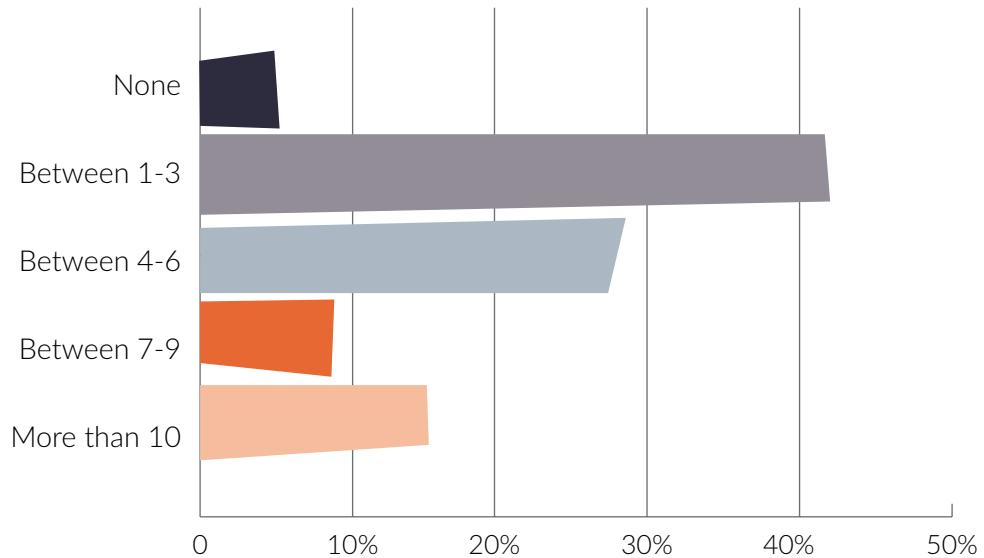


CHART 5 Source: Online Survey

3. In a few high-level cases, **the networks of Voice grantees transcended their initial purpose to become self-sustaining platforms.** Among these is Indonesia Inklusi,¹ which serves as a platform for cultivating networks through collaborative learning and connections among civil society organisations. The network has gradually evolved through the alliance of Voice grantees to foster knowledge exchange among diverse marginalised groups, empowering them to create their content or knowledge. Indonesia Inklusi has graduated from being a simple learning platform to become, in the words of a Voice staff member from Indonesia, “a place where different organisations unite for social change.”

It is worth mentioning that the learning from the programme and its L&L facility is not only aimed at grantees and rightsholders, but is valuable for both Oxfam and Hivos, and the other stakeholders. One respondent was particularly hopeful that the lessons learnt in Voice about reaching out to the rightsholders would go on to influence the policies of the Dutch MoFA to ensure that inclusion is mainstreamed throughout all the policies of the Ministry.

¹ <https://indonesiainklusi.id/>

Building the capacity of grantees and rightsholders to influence

The transformative power of the Voice programme becomes clear as it provides skill-building and capacity-strengthening support to rightsholders, empowering them to become influential advocates. This paradigm shift is best illustrated by the outcomes of the online survey in addition to various instances from different contexts.

» I BELIEVE THAT RIGHTSHOLDERS FEEL MORE CONFIDENT TO USE THEIR INFLUENCING CAPACITY AS A RESULT OF VOICE

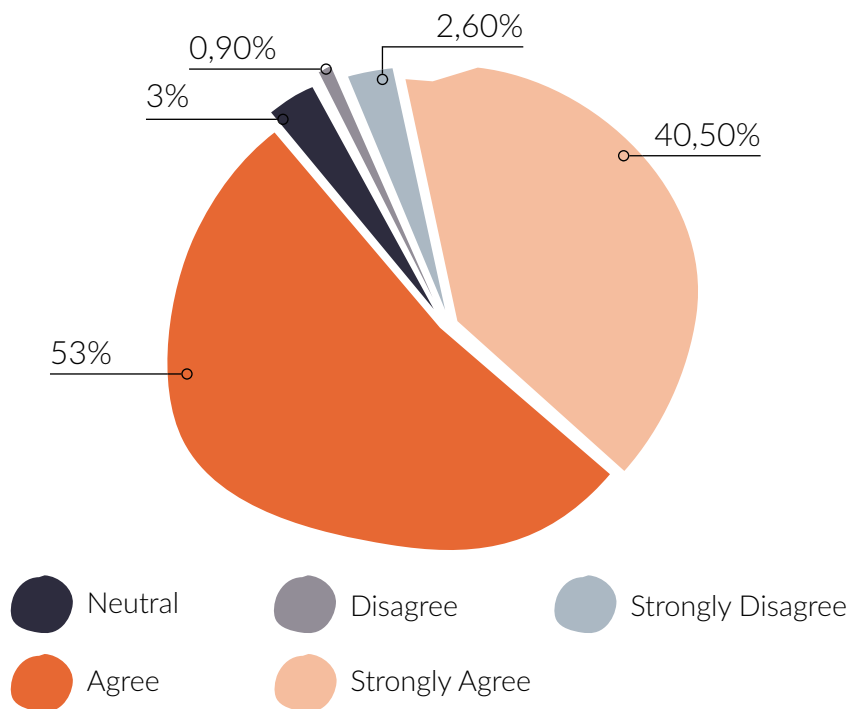


CHART 6 Source: Online Survey

In Uganda, young students were engaged in training on the importance of the electoral process, leading to political engagement dreams. While some aspirations met the harsh reality of constraints, positive changes took root within educational settings. Embracing democratic principles at school generated concrete outcomes such as the formation of the Uganda National Students Association for Democracy (UNSAAD).

Similar empowerment was observed among PWDs in Uganda, who were educated about protective policies. Although practical implementation remained a challenge, the groundwork was laid for future influence. In the same country, as a result of trainings for persons with albinism, the participants leveraged their influence to advocate for policy changes, aiming to alleviate tax burdens on essentials like sunscreen. Voice's support extended to women councillors in Uganda, who developed a caucus addressing women's issues. A savings scheme, fuelled by a monthly contribution, was established to aid women

in need. The empowerment process facilitated an active role in sub-country budget planning and prompted the installation of ramps at healthcare facilities for women with disabilities. Mali's case showcased gender-focused training that promoted transformation. Participants championed women's rights and intervened against early marriages, thanks to sensitisation efforts.

A regional dimension emerged in Southeast Asia, where marginalised women directly engaged ASEAN leaders, advocating in native languages to address language barriers. This strategy exemplified the complexity of accessibility challenges. In Cambodia, organisations like the Women with Disabilities Learning Advocacy Network (WWD-LAN) displayed remarkable growth, with expanding membership and structured leadership. Moreover, the Cambodian Elderly People Network, supported by Voice, was established to amplify the voices of elderly individuals.

These diverse narratives collectively underscore how Voice's funded interventions strengthened rightsholders' skills, translating into tangible influence and advocacy efforts.

Pathways of Change

The three Pathways of Change in the Voice programme—Empower, Amplify, and Influence—work together to achieve the programme's main goal. Through the empowering process people find their confidence and speak up. This is important because groups are made up of individuals, and when each person feels confident, it builds a strong foundation. The amplifying step helps people acquire the tools and support they need to make their voices louder. After feeling empowered, they can join together to create a bigger impact. The influencing step is about using different ways to make a change. This can involve talking to leaders, using media, and more. Grantees and rightsholders reported different experiences with these steps. Some moved from empowerment to influencing smoothly, while others had a more complex journey. The Voice programme's Pathways of Change offer different ways for people to make positive changes.

Groups are made up of individuals, and when each person feels confident, it builds a strong foundation. The amplifying step helps people acquire the tools and support they need to make their voices louder.

Empowerment at Individual/Organisational Levels The Voice programme had a strong impact on empowerment, creating significant changes both at individual and organisational levels. A notable example comes from Tanzania, where PwDs and particularly women, felt more confident to speak up in meetings at the district level. This newfound confidence came from them taking charge of their empowerment, allowing them to contribute meaningfully to important discussions. A similar story unfolded in Uganda, where the Albinism Umbrella

Group used their empowered voice to ask the government for tax reductions on skin creams. This act of advocacy showcased not just confidence, but also a clear understanding of how to make bigger changes, which aligns with the empowerment approach. In Cambodia, Women with Disabilities (WWD) members have actively participated in workshops and meetings related to the disability sector, collaborating with relevant ministries and organisations. This group is now confidently engaging with society, shedding their earlier shyness, actively seeking opportunities for personal growth, and bravely stepping out of isolation.

In Tanzania, students, including those with disabilities, gained skills in entrepreneurship and advocacy. They became active participants in school debates and even made their presence felt on social media. Their involvement went beyond regular studies to include activities like carpentry and tree planting, enhancing their employability. The number of students with disabilities joining school clubs dramatically increased from 423 to 900, demonstrating a major shift towards inclusivity. Other students recognised the importance of learning sign language, showing how individual empowerment can positively affect the whole community. In the Tanzanian city of Tanga, people with disabilities used their newly acquired skills to start income-generating projects. The emergence of indigenous voices in Tanzania was another example of the empowerment approach. These voices, once unheard, joined together to oppose forced evictions, standing up to so-called “investors.” A court case supported by 851 participants from 49 villages marked a significant change—a journey from past limitations to newfound empowerment. In Kenya, the Nubian community started speaking up for their rights. Before, they were dealing with significant restrictions without registration documents like national IDs and passports, but now the number applying for these documents has increased.



In the Philippines, Voice grantees collaborated with other champions to establish a community of practice where advocates and allies are working together to expand the political space for LGBTQIA+ people. This initiative offered a platform to amplify collective stories and rights advocacy, making previously marginalised voices more prominent.



These stories highlight how individual empowerment led to a variety of changes within organisations and communities.

Positive Changes at Family/Community Levels In the realm of families and communities, the impact of empowerment extended to create more inclusive environments. In Uganda, youth went beyond cultural norms to actively participate in elections and leadership roles. This shift was a direct outcome of the empowerment approach, promoting a culture of involvement. A similar change occurred in Kenya, where PwDs took up leadership positions, forming alliances and gaining employability skills. At the family level, parents of autistic children embraced understanding and acceptance, thanks to innovative approaches like using music for learning. The Nubian community in Kenya also witnessed some important changes as there has been a notable rise in the number of Nubian children attending school and successfully completing their national examinations. Additionally, many who have completed their education and have obtained passports were able to explore employment opportunities abroad. These cases illustrate how individual empowerment can lead to positive changes within the larger community. In Indonesia, a significant community change occurred when indigenous elders supported by grantees initiated the “Festival Kecil Musim Panen” (Small Harvest Festival). This festival was designed to acknowledge the vital role of reviving their nearly lost agricultural and culinary traditions. Through this event, the community had the opportunity to preserve their cultural heritage and transmit valuable indigenous knowledge to

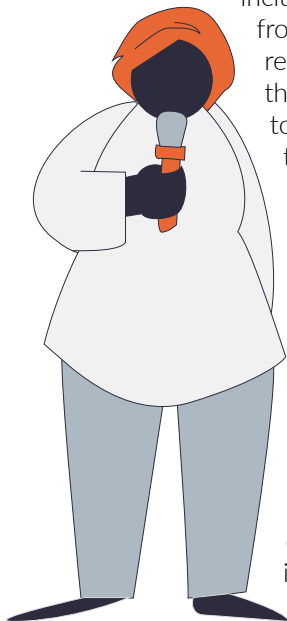


Click to listen
to the respondents'

the younger generation. In the framework of political participation, thanks to one of the grantees in Niger, women were elected as municipal councillors in areas where there had never been women in these positions before. Furthermore, people affected by leprosy were also able to vote for the first time.

Systemic Changes with Far-reaching Impacts On a larger scale, Voice's impact was reported by key informants in reshaping government policies and societal norms. In Uganda, local governments recognised the needs of marginalised communities, especially in health and education. They introduced ramps for PWDs in health centres and created policies to ensure fair treatment for them in public spaces. These changes went beyond basic adjustments and showed a broader societal shift by acknowledging PWDs as integral members.

Significant changes also occurred in Tanzania. Through a programme funded by Voice the number of specific needs teachers increased from 200 in the whole country to at least one in each school nationwide. Access to learning materials and accessories for PWDs has improved, including magnifying glasses, sunscreens, and sign language resources. Another grantee from Tanzania acknowledges that the Disability Act of 2010 - which involves the representation of PWDs in government offices - is being implemented. Further, 10% of the district council revenues were distributed to rightsholders, i.e., 4% to women, 4% to youth, and 2% to PWDs, in the form of loans. The push factors for the government to implement these changes were the rightsholder groups themselves after being empowered by funders like Voice.



A change in policy in Tanzania, allowing girls who left school due to pregnancy to return, highlighted the wider impact of Voice's efforts. The power of collective action was clear in the story of Nubians in Kenya, who challenged evictions through legal means, marking a significant shift in societal norms.

Empowered women's advocacy had a ripple effect on Uganda's political scene. Their involvement in grassroots leadership committees and subnational budgeting led to a change in gender dynamics. A similar change occurred in Kenya, where youth were no longer on the sidelines but actively participating in elections and more, driven by new confidence and skills gained through Voice-supported interventions. Voice's systemic impact extended to indigenous communities in Kenya. Their united resistance against forced evictions showed their determination and agency.

These instances highlight how Voice's empowerment approach aligned with the programme's impact areas, translating individual growth into larger shifts at systemic levels.

Good practices/Lessons learnt

- **Constructive collaboration helps navigate local constraints:** Working collaboratively with local actors, including governmental bodies emerged as a valuable lesson. The experience of grantees tells us that viewing the government and institutional parties as partners rather than adversaries is more likely to create a conducive environment for achieving common goals. This approach promotes cooperation and avoids a perception of opposition, as experienced in Uganda.

- **Prevention over cure for lasting impact:** The perception of rightsholders is that one of Voice's strengths is to focus on prevention rather than on response such as many other organisations. Voice does that by supporting the approaches chosen by grantees and thus trusting their methods of project design and implementation. This proactive stance, exemplified by initiatives like conducting activities prior to elections to prepare participants, proved more effective in mitigating potential issues. This approach not only empowers communities but also ensures they are ready to face challenges head-on.
- **Transparency in sharing failures enhances learning:** The willingness to openly share failures stands out as a relevant lesson. Embracing failure as a learning opportunity, rather than hiding it, creates a culture of continuous improvement. This practice not only prevents recurring mistakes but also fosters a culture of mutual learning and growth among stakeholders.
- **Regional approaches amplify impact:** The success of a regional approach, illustrated by the example of Albinism advocacy across Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, highlights the power of collective action in achieving desired outcomes, such as influencing national action plans. Building capacity and progressively uniting organisations under a common mission resulted in a more amplified voice.
- **Learning is a Dynamic Process:** The importance of continuous learning is highlighted. Indeed, this learning has very often happened when Voice has been able to bring together individuals and organisations with similar objectives to support collective learning and partnership-building.

3.2 Structure and processes influencing the programme performance

Adaptability, participation, and open communication

Solution-oriented engagement Voice's commitment to finding practical solutions is evidenced by its response to the unique and evolving needs of its grantees. This was exemplified in particular in its efforts to increase accessibility for people with disabilities. In Cambodia, Voice took proactive steps to address accessibility challenges by relocating workshops to wheelchair-friendly venues, ensuring that participants with disabilities could fully engage in the programme's activities. This commitment to adaptability is further highlighted by Voice's flexibility in supporting smaller, informal groups to secure funding through solutions like identifying registered host organisations willing to support these groups.

Prioritising collaboration over programme doctrine Collaboration and co-creation lie at the heart of Voice's approach, empowering grantee partners to contribute actively to the programme's

evolution, by engaging and encouraging partner ideas and feedback. Several grantees said that, unlike some other programmes, Voice allows grantees to propose their projects based on their view of the context, and not guided by the rigid administrative frameworks of the programme. While Voice's responsiveness to change and cooperation is acknowledged, the need to speed-up decision-making and approval processes was also emphasised. There were calls for increased trust in local Voice country teams to lead certain processes in order to streamline decision-making and operations.

Language and inclusivity Voice has tried to use an inclusive and empowering language that enhances the agency of rightsholders while also redefining terminology. Nevertheless, this has sometimes led to misunderstandings or calls for reassessing the words being used. Grantee partners from Mali share the challenge of adapting to new terminologies introduced by the programme, such as “détenteurs de droits” (rightsholders) and “personnes en situation de handicap” (persons with disabilities). This experience underscores the importance of tailoring communication to ensure understanding and engagement across different cultural contexts. The narrative shift suggested by one grantee from Uganda goes even further, advocating for autism to be recognised as “Neural Diversity” as a distinct category that does not fall under the disability term.

Communication Voice's commitment to open communication is demonstrated by its utilisation of diverse communication platforms. The effectiveness of these platforms is highlighted by several grantees who noted the positive impact of channels such as WhatsApp groups and e-meetings to increase regular, informal communication and understanding between Voice staff and grantees. These platforms also facilitated inter-grantee connectivity and sharing of learning experiences. The annual Global boot camp in the Netherlands also emerged as a key evaluation and networking platform. The programme teams have made use of equal communication and coordination between them as grantmakers and the grantees, regardless of their status. This approach has proven effective in fostering trust and mutual understanding contributing to a sense of partnership and shared responsibility. At a more practical level, participants in the global validation workshop found that while feedback and communication in general is good, providing more human resources and flexibility to adjust grant management systems would lead to quicker and better responses. Participants highlighted that “*open communication is only effective if it is translated into action.*”

Decolonising aid It is important to highlight one of the most striking adaptation strategies the Voice programme has undergone over its recent past, the “moving leadership to the South” towards a more inclusive and relevant representation in the management structures. In 2021 the Dutch Programme Manager stepped down from the position she was holding since the beginning of Voice in 2016 and was replaced by a Manager from the South. The change is correlated with the broader initiative to decentralise the global coordination team, given that, from April 2021 onward, the coordination team retains only three members in the Netherlands. These shifts in team composition align with the adjustments that were also made to the composition of the advisory board during the same timeframe and within the same strategic context. These, and other similar moves across countries and regions were not just symbolic gestures, but a strategy to decolonise aid and localise development that makes Voice stronger, more relevant, and closer to the rightsholders. At the same time the programme has also continued to benefit from the knowledge and expertise of development and human rights professionals from across the globe to ensure best practices and relevance in the changing development landscape. The decolonisation of aid approach adopted by Voice is a valuable foundation for the future of the programme and any discussions centred around the rightsholders.



This is the funding that makes me feel 'WOW' because they do not only give funding, they organise many capacity building training sessions for grantees and sharing sessions with other organisations which is different from other donors

(Laos Grantee)



Table 3 Source: Adapted from Now Us! Voice extension proposal, 2019

↓ GRANT MODALITIES	↓ ELIGIBILITY	↓ PURPOSE
<p>>> EMPOWERMENT GRANT</p> <p>Grant size: Currently 5,000-25,000 EUR Proposed change: Up to 25,000 EUR for single country, and up to 75,000 EUR for multi-country grants.</p> <p>Duration: Previously: 12-24 months Proposed Change: 12-36 months</p>	<p><i>Informal groups led by the rightsholders and individuals in partnership with or hosted by a formal locally registered organisation. The Ministry requires registration as legal criteria but is flexible on what level of registration.</i></p>	<p><i>Targeting (informal) groups or organisations led by rightsholders themselves to raise awareness, develop transformative leadership, build confidence and skills, strengthen already existing capacities, and work towards claiming their own empowerment process both at the individual and the organisational level.</i></p>
<p>>> INFLUENCING GRANT</p> <p>Grant size: Up to 200,000 EUR for single country, and up to 500,000 EUR for multi-country grants.</p> <p>Duration: Previously: 12-36 months Proposed Change: 18-36 months</p>	<p><i>Formal organisations and networks</i></p> <p><i>Informal groups and networks hosted by a registered organisation</i></p> <p><i>For multi-country grants, organisations registered in other countries can apply</i></p>	<p>Targeting organisations and networks led by rightsholders or their representatives who will use a range of lobby and advocacy tools to influence individuals, families, communities, private sector, religious leaders, (social) media, and other decisionmakers' policies, policies, practices, and behaviour.</p>

↓ GRANT MODALITIES

↓ ELIGIBILITY

↓ PURPOSE

>>

INNOVATE AND LEARN GRANT

Grant size:

Currently 5,000-200,000 EUR

Proposed change: Up to 250,000 EUR

Duration:

Previously: 12-24 months

Proposed Change: 12-36 months

Formal CSOs and networks are eligible

Inclusive research centres, think-tanks, social enterprises, and startups with social missions.

For multi-country grants, organisations registered in other countries can apply (e.g., international NGOs or platforms)

Targeting **rightsholder groups who want to work with organisations** to test, scale and share new approaches in addressing issues relevant to the rightsholders' empowerment and influencing process using **inclusive methodologies.**

>>

SUDDEN OPPORTUNITY GRANT

Grant size

5,000-200,000 EUR

Duration:

6-12 months

Formal organisations and networks and informal groups can be eligible with the same requirements around registration.

Creating flexibility to undertake collective action to address specific unanticipated opportunities to influence policy or deal with a threatened reduction of civil space which impacts one or more **rightsholders** in one or more impact themes.

>>

GRADUATION GRANT OR EMPOWERMENT ACCELERATOR

Grant size

Up to 50,000 EUR only national level

Duration:

12-36 months

Previous Voice Empowerment grantees.

Promote and sustain the participation of rightsholders where they can continue to deepen their empowerment processes at the individual, group, and/or organisational level

Granting mechanism

The analysis of the granting mechanism is based on the revised modifications suggested in 2019 as part of the approval of the extension proposal, nevertheless, several interviewed grantees have probably only experienced the previous, more limited mechanism. The 2019 modifications were developed in order to tackle and effectively respond to several key factors: the evolving landscape of civic engagement in numerous countries, input, and insights received from individuals and organisations with rights to these grants, input from previous grant recipients, and data collected over the course of the previous three years encompassing the process of awarding grants. In light of these considerations, the main change was the development of a novel grant category known as the “graduation empowerment grant.” Table 3 highlights the differences between the original granting system and the revised one.

Voice was described by a grantee from Tanzania as *“an incredibly inclusive programme that allows flexibility for grantees to submit proposals, for example, through written submissions, physical presentations, or audio deliveries. This kind of flexibility is not encountered with other donors.”* The Voice team from Indonesia felt that *“the programme does not impose predefined project themes but focuses on supporting projects that align with the rightsholder groups’ needs.”*

There were also calls to improve some of the granting mechanisms to increase efficiency in contracting and fund disbursement.

As already evidenced in the CEP Grantee Survey in 2021, the granting process can be rather long. According to 59% of respondents to the CEP survey, it takes between 4-6 months from proposal to clear commitment of funding, with only around a quarter receiving funding in under three months. Delays in the procurement process can disrupt project timelines and undermine the effectiveness of interventions. The Voice team in Uganda highlighted the need for revised procedures to minimise delays, ensuring that funding reaches grantees in a timely manner. Similarly, the Voice team in Kenya acknowledged the challenges posed by multi-step contracting processes and the need for more streamlined procedures to expedite project initiation.

Administrative processes, including due diligence and contracting, can often become time-consuming and challenging for smaller and grassroots organisations. The Voice team in Indonesia highlighted the need for increased efficiency through a more flexible due diligence process that considers the capacities and contexts of different organisations by reducing administrative burdens on smaller or informal organisations that are often the closest to marginalised communities. While using host organisations to reach smaller ones might offer a potential workaround for the formal registration requirement imposed by MoFA, it also increases the complexity and steps that informal organisations must undertake to secure funding. This places an additional burden on the host organisation, yielding minimal benefits in return, despite adjustments following the extension of the Voice programme in 2019, allowing for a maximum of 12% overhead, in addition to the proposed grant amount, to cover the cost for the host organisation.

Furthermore, not only did several grantees feel that delays in approval and disbursements were frequent, but that the process to access smaller “empowerment grants” meant for fledgling organisations, was similar to that to access the much larger “influencing grants” aimed at more established organisations. The allocation of funds, when delayed, can hinder progress, and hamper the ability of marginalised voices to make a substantial impact. Delays

in approval of grants are often quoted as one of the main reasons for the limited use of the Sudden Opportunity grant which relies on speed to ensure the relevance of the proposed intervention.



Voice should try working on the basis of trust, and simplify processes and due diligence, especially for existing partners

(Recommendation from the Global Validation Meeting)

There is a feeling among some respondents that once they are “labelled” by Voice as empowerment, innovate and learn, or influencing organisations, it is difficult for them to progress between grant types. The majority of grantees in the online survey only accessed one type of grant despite the introduction of the “graduation grant” or “empowerment accelerator grant” to support the transition from smaller to larger grants. Participants in the Laos Validation Workshop found that grantees needed longer-term support to progress between grant types, because it was not easy “to move from empowerment to the other pathways.” As the graduation and acceleration granting opportunities are relatively new, the programme may also have had few opportunities to roll them out and popularise them in full across the ten countries.

Along with the concerns regarding access to funds and disbursement procedures, there was a call from grantees worldwide for longer-term engagements and increased resources to allow for training, and the achievement of longer-term objectives. Currently grants are usually no longer than 24 months, an amount of time that is considered as falling short of achieving change in the areas of advocacy and behaviour change. Examples of grant continuity (repeat grants to the same grantee) highlighted the importance of long-term financial commitments needed to support and empower grantees to drive long-term change, regardless of the type of grant received. One repeat grantee from Kenya highlighted the importance of extended partnerships, “I would say that our grant was an influencing one that was needed to influence movement from open governance to inclusive governance. I wouldn’t say it was difficult to move from one grant to another, but we wanted to continue with the same kind of grant. Included in the programme was also Linking and Learning, and we felt that this was very important. We have a long-term engagement with the same grant type because we can enhance the voices of people with disabilities and women. The space of rights and the space of governance are something that takes a long time, we need a long kind of grant to realise the theory of change that we have and to realise the changes that we want. If it was short-term and we moved to another kind of grant, we would not be able to quite consolidate the impact.”

The 2021 CEP Grantee Survey confirmed that the average Voice grant was only 1.7 years as shown in the CEP Chart 7 below.

Average Grant Length

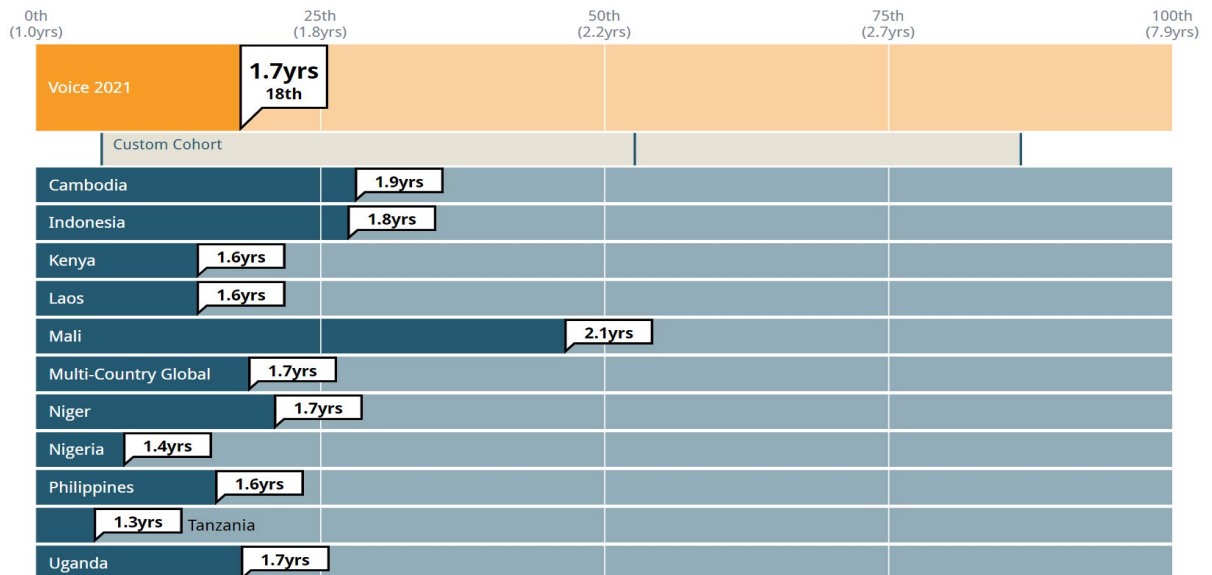


CHART 7 Source: 2021 CEP Grantee Survey

The 2023 Voice Global Perception Survey further confirmed that the administrative processes sometimes present obstacles, though some grantee partners noted that these processes, while complex, have equipped them with the skills to secure additional funding. The Survey also confirmed the need for streamlining internal travel processes to ensure timelier fund transfers, particularly for initial funding rounds.

Both Voice staff and grantees have emphasized the need for greater flexibility from Voice in terms of funding core expenses. According to them, this flexibility is essential as it offers grantees support for their overall stability, effectiveness, and long-term impact.

Approaches and Tools

Outcome Harvesting (OH) has emerged as a potentially powerful tool to facilitate the direct collection of data tied to precise project outcomes. This method, appreciated by several grantees, enables a nuanced understanding of how initiatives translate into real-world change. On the other hand, Voice staff expressed a degree of scepticism, noting that the approach had not gained substantial momentum and had not been widely adopted by grantees. According to the 2023 Perception Survey, just over 50% of respondents had already taken part in OH. Despite interest from many grantees, the approach appears to be quite challenging and time-consuming; this may have dissuaded grantees from using the tool in a consistent manner.

Reporting is complex in terms of language and requirements for smaller grantees. Conversation-Based Reporting (CBR) as a Voice methodology stands out as an effective approach to facilitate

meaningful engagement and collaboration between grantees and the programme. CBR was effectively used as an alternative to written 6-monthly progress reports and was appreciated by grantees and Voice staff. The Voice country team in the Philippines found that CBR was an additional burden for the team, but they recognised that the methodology was appreciated by grantees and rightsholders. This method, highlighted by multiple grantees, fosters open dialogue, strengthens relationships, and ensures accurate reporting that goes beyond the traditional, and perhaps obsolete, written report. This, together with the incorporation of storytelling and creative reporting methods enhanced communication and transparency, ensuring that the impact of the grantees' efforts is effectively communicated to the Voice country teams. During the Global Validation Workshop, it emerged that the new reporting template for the narrative report has indicators that are very strict and leave no room for localisation.

Overall, although issues could not always be solved, the respondents to the online survey found that the Voice programme teams were receptive to feedback and requests coming from the grantees and rightsholders (see chart 8 below). Adjustments following feedback included changes to the reporting, like the use of CBR, or the provision of technical training like finance, proposal writing, and reporting upon request.

» TO WHAT EXTENT WAS VOICE RECEPTIVE TO THE FEEDBACK AND REQUESTS FROM GRANTEES AND RIGHTSHOLDERS?

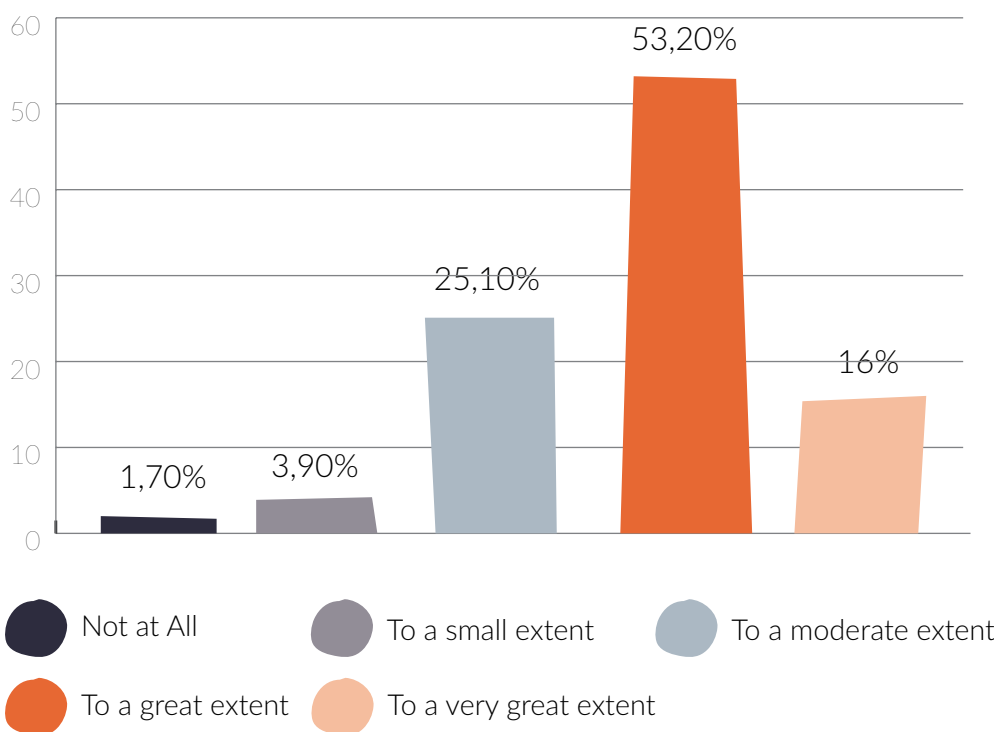


CHART 8 Source: Online Survey

Several grantees expressed the desire for more direct engagement by the Voice country office staff in their activities, suggesting that their participation in field activities could deepen

their understanding of on-the-ground realities. This firsthand experience would enhance MEL processes by providing a better perspective on project implementation, difficulties, and impact. Grantees from Laos stressed the importance of offline outreach and engagement, particularly to monitor those projects where internet access is unreliable. It is also important to recognise that the Voice team members often change, the teams are quite small and frequently overburdened. There may be scope to using creative monitoring tools such as online guided tours for virtual visits to increase the number of visits without adding to the workload.

Staff turnover is still quite pervasive as already noted during the MTR, hindering the continuity of relationships with grantees, and breaking the learning chain if knowledge is not properly systematised and transmitted. Voice seems to have followed the recommendation from the MTR to have less fragmented positions at the country-office level, in favour of more unified ones.

The consultants were also introduced to a “moving on package” proposed by Voice based on feedback which could be a valuable collection of lessons, insights, and best practices from the Voice programme designed to help grantee partners and others benefit from what was learned in Voice. This package offers practical guidance on improving communication, measuring impact, securing funding, and more. If properly developed and accessible, it could represent a useful resource for ongoing learning, relationship-building, and growth beyond the programme’s current phase.

Technical Capacity strengthening

The programme has been able to strengthen the operational capacity of its grantees, many, for instance, experienced significant growth through enhanced financial capacity. Voice’s guidance, for example, led to the adoption of a cashless payment system in parts of Africa, streamlining operations, and establishing a model of financial accountability. Others have acquired skills in procurement, monitoring and evaluation which have enhanced their operational efficiency. Beyond technical capacity, the learning the grantees have experienced has increased their confidence, enabling them to secure grants from various organisations and agencies, further amplifying their reach and influence.

Voice’s unique approach to technical support and supervision has, according to some grantees, fostered a unique relationship, enabling grantee partners to progress alongside the programme, facilitating shared learning, joint problem-solving, and a genuine partnership that is essential for sustainable and impactful development outcomes.

Technical learning on reporting, proposal-writing, fundraising, networking, and financial management was mentioned as a valuable asset by grantees to sustain their organisations and projects beyond the Voice implementation timeframe.



[Click to listen
to the respondents'](#)

3.3 The current position of Voice and its potential future positioning

Voice positioning in the wider sector development context

Although not unique in its individual components, Voice is distinctive in how it combines several approaches into one programme.

Like similar initiatives, it seeks to empower marginalised communities to actively engage in shaping their development trajectories. However, the Voice programme places a particular emphasis on amplifying voices through various channels and platforms, distinguishing it from the majority of programmes that focus mostly on the participatory implementation of activities on the ground. The Voice approach on amplifying the voices of marginalised and excluded groups sets it apart from more traditional development programmes. While participatory development programmes often aim for community involvement, the Voice programme goes one step further to ensure that these voices are not only heard but also influence policy and decision-making processes at higher levels. Indeed, while other programmes may prioritise immediate, localised impacts, the Voice programme, guided by its continuously updated country context analyses, and thanks to its engagement with rightsholder-centred grantees, seeks to leverage the collective voice of marginalised communities to drive systemic changes at national and international levels. Furthermore, several similar programmes have a narrower geographic focus, while the Voice programme allows it to have a broader, almost global reach, leveraging the presence and networks of its consortium members in various regions.

It is perhaps in its less tangible aspects that Voice is truly unique, fostering, in the words of a grantee from Tanzania a *“horizontal rather than vertical relationship where Voice walks hand in hand with their grantee partners”*.

Over 90% of the online survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Voice programme has been able to link up and work in synergy with initiatives implemented by other actors focusing on inclusion, innovation, and influencing initiatives in the target countries. This percentage was 100% among grantees who were mostly referring to links with other grantees initiated through the L&L facility of Voice, and not necessarily to Voice linking up with similar external initiatives.

According to some global partners, despite the quality of the Voice programme, it has not often managed to position itself among its peers on the global stage, falling short of demonstrating its full potential or influencing similar programmes and the donor community. According to the former director of a global network, the Voice programme was only known among a few stakeholders. The Partos Innovation Festival was mentioned as having played a crucial role in boosting the visibility and impact of the Voice programme in the Netherlands. Through the festival and similar initiatives, Voice gained exposure among a diverse audience, including ministry representatives and marginalised groups. This exposure empowered participants, enhanced their self-esteem, and showcased the programme's objectives. This kind of exposure has served as a marketing platform, effectively positioning Voice among its peers, and highlighting its support for vulnerable communities and rightsholder groups.

» TO MY KNOWLEDGE, VOICE HAS BEEN ABLE TO LINK UP WITH INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED BY OTHER ACTORS

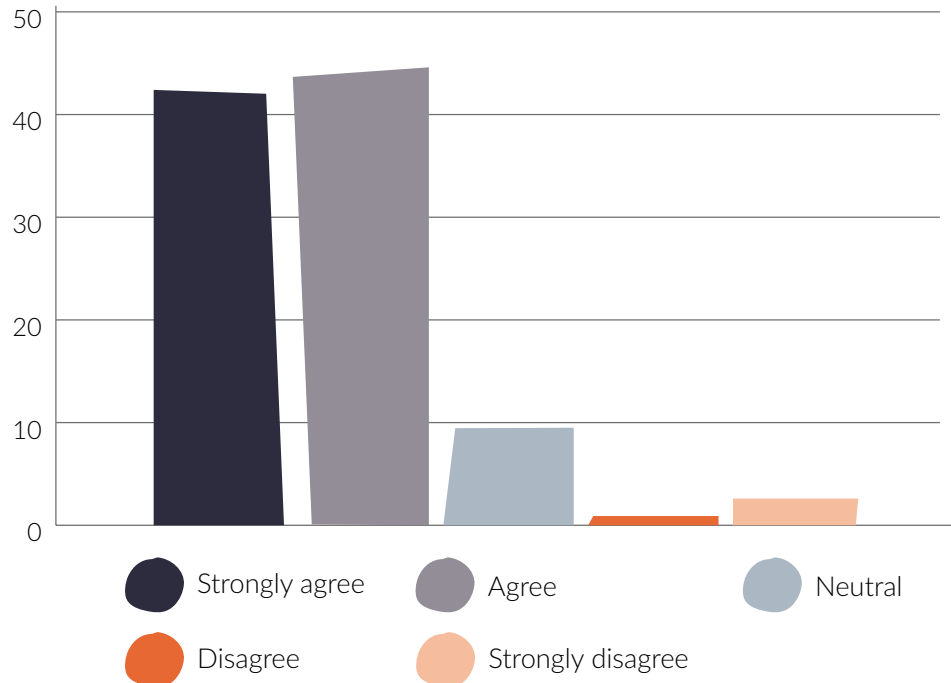


CHART 10 Source: Online Survey

In the opinion of participants in the Global Validation meeting, Voice could do much more to collaborate with peers who have similar values, but also engage and influence donors who do not share the same values and who do not reach the same rightsholders. It was suggested that Voice could map out a “visibility landscape” through a small study and link the findings to both grantee partner networking and Voice fundraising efforts.

It is worth looking at some examples of granting mechanisms that share commonalities with the Voice programme, and that may help reflect on the evolution path of Voice.

Amplify Change is a fund that supports civil society efforts to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) globally. The uniqueness lies in its focus on enabling grassroots organisations and individuals to drive change in their communities. It provides flexible funding, technical support, and networking opportunities, emphasising locally led initiatives for meaningful impact. Voice could learn from this organisation’s ability to emphasise collaboration among organisations and groups working in similar areas.²

EqualityFund is a collaborative initiative that combines philanthropy, investment, and advocacy to promote gender equality and women’s rights. Its distinctiveness is in its innovative financing model, leveraging public and private funds to support women’s organisations and movements. It aims to address systemic gender inequalities by fostering sustainable and transformative change. The Fund is a good example of collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and private sector partners.³

² <https://amplifychange.org/>

³ <https://equalityfund.ca/>

Mama Cash is a women's fund that supports feminist activism and women's rights movements globally. It stands out for its long-standing commitment to grassroots initiatives led by women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals. Mama Cash provides grants and capacity-building support to amplify marginalised voices and challenge gender-based injustices. Mama Cash offers interesting ideas to review evaluation processes to assess the effectiveness of projects and gather insights for improvement.⁴

Leading from the South is a grantmaking consortium that focuses on supporting feminist activism and women's rights organisations in the Global South. It emphasises locally-driven solutions and leadership. The fund recognises and empowers women leaders, enabling them to address complex social challenges within their communities. Although specific to women, the consortium offers an interesting insight into supporting and amplifying the leadership of women's rights activists and organisations in the Global South.⁵

The Voice comparative advantage

The Voice programme's uniqueness lies in its capacity to evolve and learn from experience, and from the grantees and rightsholders.



In Mali, there is nothing quite like Voice. Many big organisations have dismissed our proposals without even reading them. Voice has supported us with funding, guidance, and networking

(Mali grantee)

The following areas represent the strengths on which the programme has succeeded, and the basis for any future development of the programme.

Preparation and Engagement The Voice programme teams stand out for their strong preparation and active participation in (regional) workshops focused on different topics related to the five rightsholder groups. This was also the case for the workshops organised in the framework of this evaluation. The team effectively connects with the audience, focuses on goals, and handles questions well. For instance, attendees praised the team's clear communication and ability to

⁴ <https://www.mamacash.org/en/en-homepage>

⁵ <https://www.leadingfromthesouth.org/> The consortium is led by four leading women's funds: African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS), International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) / AYNI Fund (AYNI), and Women's Fund Asia (WFA).

answer questions during workshops. The knowledge and understanding of the topics at hand are often due to the inclusion of rightsholders and activists among programme staff and as events facilitators.

Collaborative Approach One of the programme strengths is its collaborative approach and the involvement of partner organisations in learning and implementation networks. The consortium which includes Oxfam and Hivos with their extensive global and regional connections, also contributes to a dynamic networking environment. An Indonesia grantee praised Voice's consortium approach for enabling collaboration among different organisations that would not have normally interacted. An example was the mutual learning between disability groups and LGBTI organisations on their influencing methodologies. This cooperative framework facilitates the exchange of insights and resources, amplifying the collective effectiveness of the programme.

Diverse Focus and Inclusivity Voice distinguishes itself for its broad thematic coverage, involving various thematic areas and marginalised groups that might otherwise be under the development radar. Some of the groups that were mentioned included the albino people of Africa, people of slave descent in West Africa, and the LGBTI communities of Indonesia. Additionally, Voice not only targets uniquely marginalised groups but is also open to supporting initiatives that often do not fall under traditional interventions, including support to youth group startups in Hoima, Uganda that might not qualify for grants from other funders. While other donors may focus on a rightsholder group or a particular activity, Voice tackles both aspects effectively.

Bottom-up approach The bottom-up approach is a foundation of the Voice approach, focusing on empowering marginalised communities through grassroots initiatives. This approach is different from several more traditional top-down methods. For instance, the Director of an Autism School in Uganda highlighted Voice's unique approach, underlining the programme's emphasis on grassroots-driven methodologies. By centring its efforts on the perspectives and needs of the communities it serves, Voice has helped to enable a sense of ownership and agency among rightsholders and grantees.

Capacity strengthening Voice goes beyond traditional funding by offering comprehensive capacity strengthening and sharing sessions through its L&L facility, significantly enhancing its support to grantees. This approach extends beyond financial assistance and recognises the value of equipping organisations with the skills and knowledge needed for their long-term sustainability. A grantee from Cambodia found that the Voice programme was different from other programmes because it provided the opportunity for small organisations with less capacity and ability to access grants, to learn from others and build their capacity with the support of Voice staff. According to a grantee from Tanzania "Voice funds capacity development as well as activities, which is not the case with the majority of other funders that limit their support to project implementation."

Supporting Small Organisations much of Voice's granting mechanisms are aimed at the growth and capacity development of small formal and informal organisations, often unregistered, in particular through its empowerment and graduation grants. Although often criticised for its complex granting processes, this targeted attention to the needs of small organisations is a definite added value of the programme. Voice's broad thematic scope is another feature which enables the programme to accommodate a wide range of themes, and therefore a diverse range of organisations, regardless of their specific focus area. According to a respondent from the small Nigerien organisation Assistance aux Enfants de la Rue (AER), "Thanks to the partnership with Voice we have gained significant recognition and credibility in our intervention areas. The rightsholders have taken over various activities initiated by AER like radio awareness broadcasts, civic initiatives, and involvement in municipal meetings. The Voice grants enabled AER to pursue our objectives and involve the rightsholders."



Click to listen
to the respondents'



Click to listen
to the respondents'

Activist Involvement: The Voice country office teams often involve activists among their staff, adding a valuable layer of understanding to the challenges experienced by the rightsholders and grantees. A notable case that underscores the significance of activist involvement comes from the Voice team in Indonesia. They highlighted how activists' participation contributes to a more radical and sensitive approach to addressing challenges and amplifies the voices of those directly affected by societal issues, fostering a deeper level of empathy, awareness, and advocacy.

4.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the Voice programme has demonstrated its adaptability to the diverse contexts of the ten focus countries, including during the Covid-19 pandemic, and in response to the often-shrinking civic spaces. It has also remained largely relevant to the needs of the rightsholders in the various national settings by updating its context analyses and adapting its ways of working to the continued decline in fundamental rights, including freedom of expression, assembly, and association. This deterioration is well summarised in the CIVICUS report titled “People Power Under Attack 2021” which highlights that approximately 89% of the world’s population resides in countries with significant limitations of civic rights. In 2022, CIVICUS found that there had been no improvement in nine of the Voice focus countries, with Mali’s status transitioning from “obstructed” to “repressed.” The context analyses updates conducted by the ten Voice country offices in 2022 also confirmed a prevalent trend towards shrinking space for civic engagement. A significant example comes from recent legislation in Indonesia and Uganda that increases the risks for LGBTI communities.

To a certain extent, the ToC has withstood internal and external changes since it was first drafted in 2016, adapting the approaches and ways of working of the programme. How the ToC was developed in 2016 and revised in 2019 is indeed indicative of how Voice may want to position itself in 2024. While the Voice programme initially had limited engagement with rightsholders and stakeholders, including in its advisory board, it has become more diverse and inclusive in its representation, also prompted by recommendations from the MTR, and the growing number of local partner organisations affiliated to the programme. This shift was evident in the revision of the ToC in 2019, which involved representatives from Voice, Oxfam/Hivos, grantees, and rightsholders.

While the ToC is not always clear to grantees, the Pathways of Change (Empower, Amplify, Influence) are well understood, although they are experienced differently by grantees and

Voice staff, depending on the unique national and sub-national contexts and capacities which shape the local trajectories of these pathways, highlighting the complexity and differences of social change. The Pathways are considered to be excessively rigid, as projects often flexibly span multiple areas and demographics, engaging with various areas simultaneously. The allocation of grants based on impact areas or rightsholder groups comes across as rather artificial and not aligned with actual needs due to factors like politics or legislation. When it comes to the Voice impact areas, these may serve as entry points for sensitive issues, such as using healthcare to address LGBTI concerns, but cannot guide the selection process.

Any future conversation about the ToC will necessarily have to be linked to discussions about the nature of the Voice structure. From the numerous interviews that took place for the final evaluation report, several possible alternatives, none of which contemplated keeping the current asset, were suggested. These are the three most interesting: (i) A completely new organisation which does not depend on either Oxfam Novib or Hivos, and that manages the whole programme from granting to implementation independently. (ii) A programme hosted under an existing different organisation based in the global South, for example as part of Yayasan Humanis dan Inovasi Sosial (ex-Hivos in Indonesia) which is distinct, but close to the original Voice structure. (iii) A hybrid of the previous two. An independent organisation oversees the programme's strategy, while its financial aspect is administered by an alternate grant provider like the Equality Fund.

In any of these scenarios, the future will need to rest on the strengths of the current programme: collaboration, inclusivity, participation, flexibility, peer-to-peer learning, bottom-up approach, activism, decolonisation of aid, and support to the empowerment of grassroots organisations and rightsholders.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS ALIGN WITH THE TOR QUESTIONS (OUTLINED IN 1.2) AND ARE GROUPED UNDER THREE FUNCTIONAL HEADINGS TO SIMPLIFY READING AND STREAMLINE A REFLECTION TRAJECTORY.

Programme Performance throughout the implementation period

The Voice programme has navigated the complex years since 2016 by leveraging its strengths and learning from its best practices and mistakes. Perhaps the most unique feature of the Voice programme lies in its adaptable learning approach, drawing insights from grantees and rightsholders through its L&L facility. Collaboration is fostered between partner grantees and the Voice offices, promoting networking, and learning opportunities particularly benefiting smaller organisations. This collaborative approach has been instrumental in helping them build a supportive community, fostering a sense of empowerment as they collectively address challenges and seize opportunities for advocacy. Peer-to-peer learning has proven transformative by enabling grantees to tap into the collective knowledge and experiences of their peers, equipping them to be more effective advocates for their rights. L&L has enabled subnational, national, and cross-border collaboration, exposing grantees and rightsholders to new perspectives and innovative strategies. This exposure empowered them to tackle issues that transcend the confines of their organisations and countries, drawing on diverse experiences. Facilitating collaborations among grantees has been a key driver of inspiration and independence for grantees, enabling them to work collectively towards common goals, significantly enhancing their impact, and amplifying their voices and influence in the pursuit of positive change beyond Voice.

The Voice programme has effectively engaged diverse populations in out-of-reach and marginalised areas through its outreach strategy, nevertheless, the division into rightsholder groups has come to lose much of its original significance as the Voice programme has shifted towards a more intersectional approach which recognises the overlap of vulnerabilities among diverse groups. Intersectionality has introduced a new perspective for Voice and grantees to engage with multiple rightsholder groups simultaneously and tackle discrimination stemming from increased vulnerabilities. Over time, Voice staff, partner grantees, and rightsholders have progressively recognised the significance of intersectionality in both conceptual understanding and practical application beyond the single rightsholder groups. This has allowed for wide thematic coverage and inclusivity, addressing marginalised groups that are often overlooked. Rightsholder-led grantees and the inclusion of numerous activists among the Voice ranks add depth to the understanding of local contexts and to address societal challenges.

RECOMMENDATION 1

REVISIT THE THEORY OF CHANGE (TOC) FRAMEWORK TO ENSURE IT ALIGNS WITH THE EVOLVING AMBITIONS OF THE VOICE PROGRAMME

While the current ToC, last updated in 2019, has effectively guided the Voice Programme, it is essential to recognize that a ToC is a dynamic tool designed to drive transformative change. To ensure it accurately reflects the progress and aspirations of the Voice community, the following considerations are proposed:

Methodological Level: Sustain a participatory approach in designing and developing the ToC by actively involving grantees and rightsholders. To mitigate power imbalances, consider structuring the process into building blocks:

- » Grantees and rightsholders collaborate to discuss key elements of the ToC at the country level, perhaps facilitated by the L&L grantees.
- » Outcomes from country-level meetings are shared with a larger group, including managing partners and key regional partners.
- » Representatives from various stakeholders collaborate to finalise the ToC, facilitated by an external expert.

This approach not only creates a safe place for grantees and rightsholders to autonomously elaborate their perspectives on the ToC but also optimises country-level engagement, promotes local ownership, and enhances skill-building strategies.

Content/Conceptual Level: Reevaluate the definitions of key ToC components to align them more flexibly with real-world experiences. While a conceptual framework is vital for operationalising the ToC, it is crucial to acknowledge that some categorisations may not fully capture the complexities of real-life experiences. This particularly pertains to the division by impact areas, the three pathways of change, and the rightsholder groups. These concepts are dynamic and should be reassessed with direct input from those actively involved in grant implementation. Given the central role of intersectionality in the Voice approach, we strongly recommend redefining rightsholder groups and placing more attention on the age factor to address the unique needs of specific groups, such as the elderly, teen mothers, young refugees, and young LGBTI individuals.

RECOMMENDATION 2

ESTABLISH A KNOWLEDGE REPOSITORY TO ENSURE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND LEARNING

Make sure that knowledge is passed on throughout the action to staff and grantees alike. Learning should be updated periodically to ensure new practices are included, while obsolete ones are excluded. Keep a record of failures and reasons for the exclusion of practices. Sustain awareness of intersectionality since this concept might evolve due to staff turnover and organisational changes. Both Voice and grantees should remain mindful of this dynamic nature, as consistent standards may be affected. Given the extensive scope of the programme, it is imperative to formalise and institutionalise a robust Knowledge Repository. This should be readily accessible to all partners, serving as a valuable and continuously updated resource. From a methodological stance, the Voice Knowledge Repository represents the learning memory of the programme, while the ways in which that learning is used should be rooted in what has worked for the grantees and the country offices.

RECOMMENDATION 3

CAPITALISE ON COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACHES TO NAVIGATE IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND MITIGATE RISKS FOR RIGHTSHOLDERS, GRANTEES, AND STAFF

The core of the Voice learning is in its communities of grantees and rightsholders. At subnational, national, and supranational level, these communities come together to learn, network, and implement approaches. A striking example is Indonesia Inklusi, a platform dedicated to fostering connections through reciprocal learning and collaboration among CSOs in Indonesia. This network evolved organically from the collaboration of like-minded Voice L&L grantees, employing an inclusive methodology for participation and knowledge exchange with diverse rightsholders. The initiative supports these groups in creating their own content and knowledge, while also assisting in the formulation of strategies to use their knowledge and (community-based) approaches safely. Viewed through initiatives like Indonesia Inklusi, community-based approaches can serve as model practices for Voice to overcome operational challenges on a national scale, highlighting the effectiveness of engaging local communities in addressing complex issues and establishing sustainable solutions.

Leveraging the insights of grantees through collaboration with local actors and strategic partnerships ensures comprehensive outreach and minimises risks. Voice should use the knowledge gained from these approaches to sustain regional advocacy efforts which align regional actions with grassroots realities. This commitment to good practices will enhance inclusivity, promote cooperation with local actors, and amplify the voices of rightsholders effectively.

Voice has supported various innovative approaches initiated and executed by grantee partners and rightsholders to minimise risks and maximise impacts at community level. These approaches are tailored to the unique local situations and the specific needs of the communities involved. For instance, the Clinique de gestion et d'Innovation des connaissances (CGIC) in Mali introduced a novel method to safely challenge traditional practices within their communities. Meanwhile, the Center for Youth Advocacy and Networking, Inc. (CYAN) in the Philippines developed a localised strategy to influence the first ordinance championing Young Farmers' rights.

Structure and processes influencing the programme performance

The nature of the Voice grantmaking mechanism allowed grantees to define project goals aligned with their community's needs, promoting self-reliance, without having to compromise on their organisational values. Recognition and experience gained through the Voice grants have also enabled grantees to attract attention from policymakers, media, and donors. The grants have allowed grantees to access funding that is not always available to them and their causes under more traditional granting mechanisms. Although open to smaller organisations, as well as established ones, not all could access the grants due to incompatibility with some of the stricter requirements of the calls such as registration, or because they did not clearly fall under one or more rightsholders groups or pathways. Although adjustments were made to the granting mechanisms, more are needed to improve the outreach and flexibility of the grantmaking to allow for the empowerment of a more diverse group of rightsholders.

Capacity strengthening complemented financial support, through training, mentorship, and technical assistance, equipping rightsholders with the skills to manage and execute projects independently. Technical capacity strengthening strengthened the grantees' operational capabilities to navigate administrative and logistical challenges effectively, improving operational efficiency, and boosting confidence.

To improve the Voice grantmaking mechanisms further, efforts are required to streamline the grant application process for efficiency and to prevent funding delays. Grantees are seeking more flexible granting options and longer-term engagement for better alignment with their organisations' needs towards long-lasting impact. Grantees have responded well to CBR as an alternative to traditional written reports, with the potential to explore more creative tools. Grantees would like to see more engagement by Voice country office staff in their activities, for them to better comprehend on-the-ground realities and improve monitoring and learning processes.

RECOMMENDATION 4

STREAMLINE GRANTING PROCESSES TO ACCELERATE PROJECT INITIATION AND ENSURE TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION

Duration: The project duration should be increased beyond the current (revised) timeframes. This is especially important for smaller organisations that are building their organisational capacity and sustainability. It is also essential for organisations working on long-term advocacy goals that need longer periods of time to assess results.

Flexibility: Consider a more flexible due diligence process that reflects the capacities and contexts of smaller or grassroots organisations, reducing administrative burdens while maintaining accountability. Voice could, for example, provide smaller grants (up to 50K) using a country-specific approach focused on local issues connected to Voice's broad priority areas. Country offices could handle the granting process for these smaller grants independently, without requiring lengthy decision-making. These "small" proposals could be drafted in local language or through innovative means such as video-proposals. For larger grants, Voice can add extra decision-making steps based on a threshold system.

Organisational development: The majority of Empowerment grants, and part of any other grant, should be destined to core funding, training, learning, and upgrading of systems. This is vital

for informal or unregistered organisations that often disappear soon after being founded due to lack of initial resources to build their organisation's capacities and positioning.

Grants: Consider having only two types of grants:

- I. Empowerment grants for grassroots/informal/unregistered organisations. These grants would be entirely assessed at the country-level, may be submitted in local languages, and are flexible in terms of how the budget is used.
- II. Programme grants to fund the entire spectrum of the grantees' work, not only specific projects linked to Voice. In this case, as Voice would be funding the organisation's programme, rather than its projects, there would be greater attention on the potential grantee's overall strategy, participatory approaches, and vision.

RECOMMENDATION 5

INCLUDE RIGHTSHOLDERS IN THE GRANT-MAKING MECHANISM TO INCREASE OWNERSHIP AND RELEVANCE OF THE PROCESS

Explore ways to transition towards participatory grant-making, involving representatives from marginalised groups in the evaluation and decision-making processes to enhance inclusivity, representation, and the effectiveness of the programme's impact. As rightsholders may also be (potential) grantees, it is important to find ways to include them, while also avoiding the risk of conflicts of interest.

One possible solution is to ask the rightsholders for regular support to determine the priorities of specific at-risk groups. These priority areas of engagement could then be part of a quality checklist to help the Voice teams and assessment panels make informed decisions during the grantee selection process. The priority list could also include considerations around intersectionality and cross-border potential.

RECOMMENDATION 6

BROADEN THE SCOPE OF THE CAPACITY STRENGTHENING TO INCLUDE SOFT AND HARD SKILLS

Strengthen the holistic empowerment approach of the programme by combining financial support with comprehensive capacity strengthening. There was a call from the grantees to receive trainings on: advocacy, innovation, networking, data collection and research, donor linkages and fundraising, financial literacy, organisational development, proposal writing, scaling up of projects, and strengthening communication strategies.

Although Voice is not a capacity-building programme, there are several ways for Voice to provide more learning for grantee partners:

- » Systematically fund (and facilitate when needed) peer-to-peer trainings as the default approach to learning, as this increases local ownership, the use of context-relevant solutions, and the strengthening of learning networks.
- » Include a capacity-building budget in the grants for grantee partners to seek knowledge independently when it cannot be provided through peer-to-peer learning.

- » Provide on-the-job coaching. Voice has already successfully offered capacity-building in various areas like CBR for reporting, technical and thematic exchanges among grantees, OH and M&E.

RECOMMENDATION 7

ADJUST LANGUAGE TO LOCAL NEEDS TO SIMPLIFY AND IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING

Tailor communication terminology to ensure understanding and engagement across different cultural contexts, especially when introducing new terminologies. Consider local adaptations to enhance clarity and resonance.

The current position of Voice and its potential future positioning

Voice occupies a unique position in the wider development sector by combining various approaches into one programme. While similar initiatives empower marginalised communities to shape their development, Voice stands out by emphasising the amplification of voices through multiple channels, setting it apart from those that mainly focus on implementing activities on the ground. Unlike traditional programmes, Voice ensures that these voices not only get heard but also influence policies and decision-making. Its broad geographic reach, magnified by existing Oxfam and Hivos networks, adds to its strengths. Perhaps what makes Voice unique in the development world is its ability to foster horizontal relationships with and among grantee partners and rightsholders. Voice has sometimes struggled to position itself globally, and efforts are needed to increase its visibility and impact.

Looking to the future, Voice can learn from similar programmes which emphasise collaboration, innovative financing, grassroots initiatives, and the amplification of marginalised voices. Voice will need to rely on its numerous strengths to build its future, including fostering meaningful participation, a diversified focus, its bottom-up approach, innovative capacity strengthening, support for small organisations, and activist involvement. These strengths, its ability to learn from grantees and rightsholders, and the courage to question its certainties, form the foundation for Voice's evolution in its quest to stay relevant in supporting rightsholders in the future.

RECOMMENDATION 8

EXPAND COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO INCREASE IMPACT AND VISIBILITY

Foster collaborations with diverse organisations beyond traditional NGOs to expand the programme's reach and impact. Engage with private sector entities, local community groups, and academia to create a more comprehensive and holistic approach.

For example, in Indonesia the Voice team reached out to the feminist online platform Magdalene and to local artists from the Jogja Biennale, to develop the "artivism" call for proposals on empowerment and art, that the Voice staff believe will allow them to reach out to a more diverse community than through traditional development stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION 9

DIVERSIFY FUNDING TO MAXIMISE SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPROVE VISIBILITY TO SHOWCASE THE PROGRAMME AND GRANTEE PARTNERS' WORK, TO INFLUENCE PEERS, AND INCREASE FUNDRAISING POTENTIAL

As already recommended in the MTR, continue reflecting on diversifying funding sources to ensure financial stability, flexibility, and to address accountability concerns. Unrestricted funds would also allow for direct funding to unregistered organisations.

As an initial action, it would be highly relevant for Voice to develop a visibility plan aimed at actively promoting the exposure of the programme's successes and learning outcomes. Showcase the impact of grantee initiatives, share best practices, and foster relationships with other donors to attract funding and partnerships.

RECOMMENDATION 10

AMPLIFY CROSS-COUNTRY ADVOCACY TO INCREASE COLLECTIVE ACTION AND EXPAND INFLUENCE

To enhance programme effectiveness, proactively allocate resources to support cross-country advocacy initiatives at both regional and global levels. Regional strategies have demonstrated the potential to magnify impact significantly. Notable examples from Voice include the Albinism advocacy efforts in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, as well as the Anti-slavery initiative in Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Mauritania. These initiatives underscore the value of collective action in reaching common objectives such as influencing national action plans.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

EVALUATION MATRIX

OECD DAC CRITERIA

RELEVANCE	COHERENCE	EFFECTIVENESS	EFFICIENCY	IMPACT	SUSTAINABILITY
-----------	-----------	---------------	------------	--------	----------------

KEY FOCUS AREAS

How relevant is the programme's design and implementation logic and scope to the identified needs and priorities?	How complementary was Voice with other interventions in the targeted countries, for the targeted thematic areas, and for the rightsholders?	To what extent has Voice achieved its objectives and its anticipated results?	How have the structures, processes, and ways of working of Voice influenced its performance?	To what extent has Voice generated significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, impacts on the lives of the rightsholders?	To what extent will the net benefits of the programme continue or are likely to continue beyond the programme period?
---	---	---	--	---	---

EVALUATION GUIDING QUESTIONS

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has this programme responded to the needs and priorities of the grantee partners and rightsholders, including changing needs as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic? To what extent has the programme intervention design and implementation been relevant to the civic spaces of the ten focus countries? To what extent are ToC assumptions contemporary and matching the current contexts? To what extent has the development and execution ensured engagement of key stakeholders, especially of rightsholders, throughout the programme development and execution process? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How did Voice manage to prioritise the needs and reach out to the rightsholders over incompatible government policies and practices?</i> To what extent does the programme build upon, amplify and align with existing rightsholder initiatives? organisations/ associations and or groups? <i>Has the programme been able to provide support to other inclusion, innovation and influencing initiatives aiming at civic spaces in the ten focus countries?</i> <i>Where is the programme located in the wider funding and development sector when comparing its reach, relevance and impact to similar programmes and funds?</i> <i>What strategies have been most successful in generating buy-in and engagement from rightsholders and grantee partners, and how can these be used to improve the relevance/positioning of Voice?</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How did the programme's thinking around three pathways of change (empower, amplify, influence) and emphasis on inclusion and innovation contribute to the work of grantee partners and rightsholders?</i> <i>How have the four types of grants worked in their respective areas? Have gaps, overlaps, synergies emerged based on implementation? To what extent have the approved projects been successful in reaching their empowerment, influencing and/or learning & innovation ambitions?</i> <i>How did the programme ensure that it was targeting the most vulnerable individuals and populations within the targeted groups? Were Voice activities and funding accessible to the rightsholders, including those with disabilities or those living in remote areas?</i> <i>To what extent did Linking and Learning create an enabling environment for grantees to connect and share experience (local, national and transnational dimension)? incorporated in any future action/ initiative?</i> <i>How was the programme able to define and adapt its approach to implementation based on emerging changes in the country contexts, regional and global changes?</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>In what way have the structures and processes of Voice supported the programme and grantees to realise its set timelines and goals?</i> <i>To what extent has Voice learned from challenges/ opportunities that emerged during programme implementation and were they applied to improve its structures and processes?</i> <i>How far were the Voice principles adhered to in its own ways of working?</i> <i>To what extent were Voice methods or tools (including technology and innovative approaches) suited to ensure secure and smooth communication both internally, and towards grantees/ rightsholders?</i> <i>What did Voice do to be responsive to the feedback, requests and priorities from grantees and rightsholders?</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>To what degree has the Voice programme contributed to achieving the impact goal in the following three areas: (i) Improved access to (productive) resources (finance, land and water) and employment; (ii) Improved access to social services, in particular health and education; (iii) Space for political participation and citizen engagement?</i> <i>Do rightsholders and rightsholder groups/ organisations feel more confident to use their influencing capacity for their voices to be heard, respected and included by authorities and society as a result of the programme experience?</i> <i>To what extent has the programme contributed to creating a sense of community and behavioural change among grantees and rightsholders? (Linking and Learning)</i> <i>To what extent has the programme contributed to promoting and sustaining local ownership by rightsholders and organisations?</i> <i>How have the grantees built sustainable networks and alliances among civil society organisations, social movements, and other stakeholders (government and private sector when possible) to amplify their impact and promote political change?</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Has Voice supported the development of the grantees' management capacity through training, mentoring, or other support when requested to do so by grantees?</i> <i>Have the grantees/ rightsholders been actively involved in the project planning, implementation, risk management and evaluation processes to ensure ownership and sustainability?</i> <i>Has Voice identified and addressed any potential barriers at local, regional and/ or global level to sustainability, such as financial, technical, or institutional constraints?</i> <i>What lessons were learned and integrated from similar projects, including projects of other Voice grantees, to ensure sustainability of Voice activities beyond the end of the project?</i> <i>Has Voice established sustainable partnerships with local and international entities to provide ongoing support and protection for rightsholders?</i>
---	---	--	---	--	---

ANNEX 2

CALL-IN DURING VOICE ANNUAL REFLECTION

62

QUESTIONS	DISCUSSION POINTS
<p>GROUP 1 We will be interviewing grantees and other partners in regional thematic meetings. The themes will be decided based on emerging patterns on regional similarities and differences: What do you think we should be focusing on in the regional thematic meetings?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engagements for stronger movements: Are there links to SDGs and regional institutions? ● What can we do to address “counter movements”? ● What has funding from Voice done to increase access to other resources among rightsholder groups? ● Perspectives of the grantee partners on sustainability. ● What is next for grantee partners: They have achieved impacts, but now what? ● How do regional/country level politics (treaties, conventions, alliances, etc.) affect the work/life of rightsholders?
<p>GROUP 2 What key learnings from your week together in The Netherlands should we keep in mind for the remainder of the evaluation process? Was there anything unexpected we should consider?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To what extent has Voice been flexible, and how did that flexibility help reach more informal groups? ● Collective care and well-being both for Voice staff and for grantee partners. ● What are the best platforms for sharing data, such as Impact Stories? How can data be used better? ● How do we look at staff transitions and turnover? ● How can these learnings be added to the planned Moving-on Package for grantee partners? ● Voice 2.0 should be “South-led”: How will we define “South-led”, or even “rightsholder-led”? ● What will be the future identity of Voice?
<p>GROUP 3 Where is the programme located in the wider funding and development sector when comparing its reach, relevance and impact to similar programmes and funds? Please use concrete examples to highlight what makes Voice unique in its approach and ways of working compared to other similar interventions, and what could complement Voice to enhance its efficacy and impact in the longer term.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Voice can link rightsholder groups regionally and across Asia and Africa. ● Intersectionality is strong. ● Strong focus on combining Capacity Strengthening with Linking & Learning. ● Voice funding (budget) is flexible. ● Impact documentation can be a little better: This is linked to the length of Voice funding. ● Voice is partly led by rightsholders. ● Voice is celebrating/highlighting grantee partners' work over various channels. ● The Communities of Practice through Linking & Learning is a unique feat for Voice. ● Voice can be an influencer in the funding sphere.
<p>GROUP 4 How can you effectively manage the programme's ambition to reach out to more groups while facing staff limitations? To what extent were the programme's staff and processes able to uphold the Voice principles (such as “Leave no one behind” and “Nothing about us without us”) in their work approaches?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We try to simplify processes and to reduce workload by reducing complex requirements. ● Virtual engagements with grantee partners and other stakeholders. ● Engage interns and volunteers to be part of the support teams. ● Digitalisation of induction and on-boarding processes, also via video. ● Use the Linking & Learning platforms to reach out and tap to networks of grantee partners. ● Is there any way that we can support a consortium type/collective-made proposals from informal groups? ● Instead of adding more rightsholder groups, have we reflected if we have already reached deeper in our current communities?
<p>GROUP 5 In what ways has the Voice Programme enabled partner organisations to take ownership of the Voice initiatives in the areas of capacity strengthening and Linking & Learning? Please highlight good practices based on direct experience. What could have been done differently to sustain longer term results?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The spaces we create helps our partners gain self-esteem and encourage them to speak up – and these may translate to leadership roles. ● Reasonable accommodation for application processes: How to localise, to allow rightsholders to fully express what changes they want to do? ● Liberty in doing/implementing activities. ● Funding for unique projects. ● Support for legal registration of informal groups. ● Hope-based narrative (language). ● Voice flexibility in the grant selection process.
<p>GROUP 6 The Voice Programme involves three pathways of change and three impact areas, while the grant making system includes four types of grants, and the Linking and Learning cuts across these areas of interest. Based on your experience, have gaps, overlaps, synergies emerged based on implementation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Linking & Learning: There is less focus on access to resources. ● Potential gap in national, regional, and global Linking and Learning. ● Limited use on the Sudden Opportunity grants, or too delayed approval of grants. ● Flexibility of our systems are too limited. ● Difficult to separate some grant types like Empowerment and Influencing grants. ● Why are there separate grant types for Innovate & Learn grants? Why is not integrated? ● How about issue-based approach regarding the Call for Proposals process? ● We need more core grants instead of project funding. ● It is difficult to document the projects' results due to the short project periods.
<p>REFLECTION (AFTER GROUP WORK) How can Voice make use of the evaluation findings to get the most out of them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do we learn from our experiences (including failures) and what to do with them in other (future) settings (platforms)? ● We can use the information gathered from the grantee partners to adjust our perspectives. ● Looking at the results, what can be implemented immediately? ● Data-driven decision as a basis for the future Voice 2.0 program: These may be used by other stakeholders for replication, or improvement of other programs (in case Voice 2.0 does not come through). ● To be used for future fund-raising. ● Email the results back for sharing to the respondents and other stakeholders.



International Cooperation Redefined | www.scio.net

Scio Network GmbH & Co KG

Neue Rothofstrasse 13-19, c/o WeWork

60313 Frankfurt am Main, Germany

info@scio.net