

## **PLEASE NOTE:**

*This is the English translation of the Dutch publications in the Staatscourant of September 16 2016, November 11, 2016 and February 5, 2018. The translation has been reviewed thoroughly to assure compatibility with the Dutch text. In the unlikely circumstance a discrepancy with the Dutch text arises the latter text will prevail.*

### **Order of the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of September 8, 2016, no. MinBuZa-2016.56930, laying down administrative rules and a grant ceiling for grants awarded under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 (Voice Fund 2016-2020).**

The Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation;

Having regard to articles 6 and 7 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Decree; and

Having regard to article 5.1 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006

Decides:

#### **Article 1**

The administrative rules appended as an annexe to this order apply to grants awarded under articles 5.1 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 within the framework of the Voice Fund 2016-2020, with a view to financing activities aimed at participation of marginalised and discriminated people in mainstream development processes.

#### **Article 2**

1. A ceiling of €35 million applies to grants as part of the Voice Fund 2016-2020 awarded from the date of entry of force of this Decision to 31 December 2020. The annual ceiling is as follows whereby it is understood that if the ceiling in any year is not allocated, the remaining funds are available for applications submitted in the following year:
  - a) 2016: €1.0 million;
  - b) 2017: €12.7 million;
  - c) 2018: €13.425 million;
  - d) 2019: €5.375 million;
  - e) 2020: €2.5 million.
2. Of the total ceiling mentioned in clause 1, up to €8,75 million is available for global multi-country calls and €26,25 million for national calls in the ten Voice focus countries as listed in the administrative rules.
3. The allocation of the ceiling among the various grant modalities is as follows:
  - a. Empowerment grants (national and regional): up to € 4.9 million;
  - b. Influencing grants: up to € 16.1 million;
  - c. Innovate & Learn grants: up to € 9.1 million;
  - d. Sudden opportunity grants: up to € 4.9 million

If funds remain of one or more of the grant modalities the remaining funds can be divided proportionally among applications of the other grant modalities, provided that such applications meet the criteria laid down in this Decision.

4. The funds will be allocated in accordance with an assessment based on the criteria set out in the annex to this Order, with the understanding that only applications that meet the grant criteria will be eligible, taking into account the quality of the applications in question and with due regard for the need for an even distribution as referred to in article 8, paragraph 3 (d) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree.

### **Article 3**

1. Applications for grants meant in article 2, paragraph 3, sub a, c and d will be processed in order of receipt. Applications may be submitted from the date on which this order comes into force until Friday 30 June 2020, 23.59 hrs Dutch time.
2. Applications for grants for activities meant in article 2, paragraph 3, sub b, may be submitted in response to a call for proposals at national or global level via [www.voice.global](http://www.voice.global).

### **Article 4**

Grant applications must be submitted using the model application form as stipulated by the Minister and accompanied by the documents stipulated in the form.<sup>1</sup>

### **Article 5**

This Order enters into force on the day after the date of the Government Gazette in which it will be published and lapses with effect from 1 January 2021, with the proviso that it continues to apply to grants awarded prior to that date.

This order and its accompanying annexe will be published in the Government Gazette.

*On behalf of the Minister of the Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation,*

*A.C.C. Rebergen  
Deputy Director-General for International Cooperation*

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<sup>1</sup> The application form will be made available via [www.voice.global](http://www.voice.global)

## Annex

### 1. Introduction and background

Voice is a programme complementary to the policy framework Dialogue and Dissent of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. The overarching goal of this policy framework is to strengthen the capacity for lobby and advocacy of civil society organisations in low- and lower-middle-income countries. This enables these organisations –in collaboration with their international partners and networks- to play their lobby and advocacy role at local, national and international level to contribute to sustainable inclusive development for all and fight against poverty and inequality. Voice is aimed specifically at capacity strengthening for lobby and advocacy of civil society organisations and representatives of the most marginalised and discriminated groups. These groups are often the most hard-to-reach.

Therefore innovative approaches to capacity strengthening of lobby and advocacy as well as empowerment to have their voices heard are essential to Voice. A linking and learning process encourages sharing of lessons learned, and provide a forum for mutual learning and empowerment of the most marginalised and discriminated groups. Voice is initially a five-year programme, for which €50 million is available for programme management including grants and linking and learning costs. For the awarding of grants within the scope of Voice €35 million is available, the Voice Fund 2016-2020.

Voice exists parallel to two other components connected to the policy framework Dialogue and Dissent: the Strategic Partnerships and the Accountability Fund. The Strategic Partnerships are collaborations between 25 (alliances of) established NGOs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the goal of capacity strengthening for lobby and advocacy of civil society organisations in low- and lower-middle-income countries. The Strategic Partnerships started on 1 January 2016. The Accountability Fund is being facilitated by Dutch embassies to work with local civil society organisations directly and has the same goal as the Strategic Partnerships, but operates on a smaller scale. Voice focuses specifically on inclusivity. It thereby forms part of the inclusivity-action plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as described in the letter to parliament (Letter of 28 September 2015 from the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation to the House of Representatives on inclusive development in Dutch foreign trade and development cooperation programme, ref. 33625-182).

The Minister has decided that Voice will be managed and facilitated by a fund management agent. Through a tender, the Ministry has chosen Oxfam Novib and Hivos in consortium as the Voice fund management agent (herein referred to as the “Fund Manager.”) The Fund Manager will be granted a mandate to implement the Voice Fund 2016-2020 on behalf of the Minister.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) have an indispensable role in development processes. Empowered citizens can exert great influence in decision-making processes at different levels through lobby and advocacy. CSOs operate at the interface between state, citizens and market. Owing to their independent position and their roots in society, they link and represent the interests of a wide range of groups. Many local civil society organisations in low- and lower-middle-income countries have become stronger in recent years, whereas the pressure under which they have to do their work has also increased because of a shrinking and shifting “enabling environment”.

In Voice, three types of civil society organisations are referred to:

1. Umbrella organisations and thematic networks: (inter)national associations, regional networks, diaspora organisations, thematic coordination bodies, alliances of organisations that combine their knowledge, ideas and strengths and work together to pursue a common goal.
2. Organisations formally constituted: Legally registered organisations with approved statutes working mostly for the direct benefit of their constituencies or in service delivery at national, regional and/or international level, sometimes in collaboration with grassroots organisations.
3. Informal organisations (grassroots organisations and community-based organisations): Informal groupings or ad hoc organisations, working in the immediate context with limited geographical or thematic dimension.

In general capacity strengthening consists of activities strengthening the expertise, management and financial management of civil society organisations, as well as developing the core capabilities and skills needed to remain relevant in a changing context and to achieve results. Capacity strengthening for lobby and advocacy aims at empowerment and strengthening those capabilities needed for effective lobby and advocacy. For lobby and advocacy, a variety of instruments and strategies can be used to put or keep issues on political and corporate agendas, with a view to tackling the structural causes of poverty and injustice and bringing about sustainable policy change. Lobby and advocacy can be linked to several themes, since groups lobby and advocacy for a variety of objectives.

Effective lobby and advocacy is based on research, analysis and lessons learned (i.e. it is evidence based) and on collective experiences. What instruments, or combinations of instruments, are deployed – such as advice, advocacy, lobbying and activism – depends on the country-specific context, the current phase of change in policy processes, the balance of power and the actors involved.

The most marginalised and discriminated groups are those groups in society that have little or no opportunity to have their voices and interests heard and respected. Voice aims to create and/or improve these opportunities. In this context, a group is defined as a number of individuals that have a common goal and/or interest and come together in a more formal or informal setting to organise themselves (formally or informally) to stand up for their interests and rights. In case those groups are not yet organised, Voice aims at organisations representing interests of these most marginalised and discriminated groups, with the condition that they thereby include members of those groups in the whole process. Voice focuses primarily on those groups that are neglected and ignored by society and in the existing political system and are thus in some cases invisible and/or politically sensitive target groups, such as people with a disability, women facing exploitation, abuse or violence, indigenous people, LGBTI, landless peasants, and the age-discriminated.

Marginalisation is linked to social, cultural, economic and political status and/or exclusion. It can be defined as a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities. Marginalisation often occurs as a result of a combination of different discriminated identities, including but not limited to ability, age, ethnicity, economic status, gender, geography, health (physical and mental), language, marital status, race, religion, sexual orientation and/or social status. Marginalised groups (involuntarily) often fall out of the mainstream of productive

activity, socio- reproductive activity, political power and/or cultural power. They are at the core of exclusion from fulfilling social lives at individual, interpersonal and societal levels. People who are marginalised have relatively little control over their lives and the resources available to them; they may become stigmatised and are often at the receiving end of negative public attitudes. Their potential to make social contributions may be limited and they may develop low self-confidence and self-esteem.

Discrimination is defined as follows. Discrimination is any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on gender, race, color or ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social class, age (subject to the usual conventions on retirement), marital status or family responsibilities, or as a result of any conditions or requirements that do not accord with the principles of fairness and natural justice, which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.<sup>2</sup>

Lobby and advocacy by and for the most marginalised and discriminated groups should be directed by the principle of legitimacy. The 'nothing about us without us' principle is at the core of the Sustainable Development Goals and perceived as essential for the implementation of Voice. This means that attention should be paid to how civil society organisations and representatives of the most marginalised and discriminated groups are rooted in their context and in these groups to ensure that their legitimacy is locally-based and genuine. The process of lobby and advocacy results in a sense of ownership of changes achieved, when people are encouraged to participate and play an important role in the development and implementation of law, policy and practice. They can experience a change about their place in the community and recognise that they have rights that can be claimed. They are encouraged to challenge the traditional roles of government and society, and be convinced that they have both responsibilities and rights in society.

Empowerment is a process by which people gain power over their own life and can take their own decisions. Power is described in terms of people's individual and collective capacity to make strategic choices and the degree to which these choices have impact on their lives. It is important to recognise that other criteria such as gender, caste, ethnicity, affluence, family and age can have a major influence on individuals' power, depending on the context. The character and the success of empowerment strategies are therefore highly dependent on context.

The most marginalised and discriminated groups play an important role in identifying and lobbying for the removal of barriers that hamper inclusion. People who are excluded often lack self-esteem and are not sufficiently confident to claim their rights. This means that marginalised and discriminated groups should be empowered by convincing them that they have the right to speak in public and have the right to be heard. They need support to organise themselves, so they can lobby and advocate for their own inclusion and claim their rights.

Through empowerment, these groups are able to participate more directly in decisions affecting their lives. Voice focuses both on the individual and collective process of empowerment. The individual process includes building self-esteem and is a condition for collective empowerment; the collective processes focus on the ability to use the rights to freedom of speech, freedom of

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Article 1.

association and freedom of peaceful assembly in order to raise their voices and have influence in decision-making processes.

## 2. Policy principles of Voice

### 2.1. Aim and policy themes

In recent years, a considerable number of low- and lower- middle-income countries have enjoyed substantial economic growth, but this has not resulted in the same level of development for all. Often the gap between rich and poor has widened. Reducing inequality – not only economic, but also in the social, political, religious and ethnic domains as well as inequality based on gender and sexual orientation – and **leaving no one behind** are key objectives of the policy agenda on the Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation agenda of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

Different actors are relevant for reducing inequality and assuring the inclusion of those that are marginalised and discriminated. First of all, national governments have an important role in ensuring that inclusion of the most marginalised and discriminated groups is anchored in all national policies. Developing and implementing inclusive policies (in low- and lower-middle income countries) requires awareness, financial commitment and a willingness to change amongst decision-makers in these countries.

Another important actor is civil society. Civil society organisations play a multitude of different roles in inclusive and sustainable development, such as humanitarian assistance, service-delivery, watchdog through lobby and advocacy and innovation. Especially pertinent here is the role of civil society organisations with respect to inclusion. Some civil society organisations are particularly effective at reaching or representing the poor and socially excluded, mobilising community efforts, speaking up for human rights (including gender equality), lobbying decision-makers within national governments and helping to empower constituencies.

Addressing inequalities that hamper inclusive sustainable development prospects requires acknowledging, creating and protecting a conducive and **enabling environment** for civil society with respect to inclusion, in particular its capacity to reach and empower marginalised and discriminated groups. The concept of an enabling environment refers to the idea that civil society organisations can only operate effectively if certain preconditions are in place in the sociocultural, political, economic, financial and legal domains. It is vital that society recognises the importance of pluralism and the role of civil society organisations as advocates and watchdogs as part of a democratic process. This distinct role must be enshrined in legislation, implying that the governments should recognise and respect the freedom of speech, association and assembly.

The objective of Voice fits with one of the five most prioritised and internationally recognised strategies for inclusive development: putting an end to discrimination and marginalisation. This means that no one should be left behind. Inequality and marginalisation are closely interlinked. Marginalisation and barriers for full participation in society can result in situations in which the human and economic potential of groups of marginalised and discriminated groups are not used to the fullest. These groups are excluded from political positions and their voices are often not heard or respected. Exclusion and marginalisation undermine social cohesion and increases the

risk of conflicts, extremism and violence, for example when certain ethnic or cultural groups are not engaged in the policy- and decision-making of issues affecting their lives.

Inclusion of the most marginalised and discriminated groups has been part of development cooperation policies for many years, but has not been very successful to date. Specific measures that include flexibility to experiment and learn and the possibility to fail are necessary. Innovative approaches and instruments are needed. As such, ample space should be created for innovation and learning. In Voice, this space is created through the linking and learning process, but also incorporated into the different components of the grant facility, such as the monitoring and evaluation system, the selection procedure and the capacity strengthening methodologies.

Reaching and empowering the most marginalised and discriminated groups effectively require innovative, non-traditional and uncalibrated methods and instruments. What is defined as innovative differs per context. Innovation can comprise, among others, involving non-traditional actors, making use of new technologies, engaging in different partnerships, making use of new scientific knowledge. Research institutes can also play a role in supporting and facilitating an innovative learning process.

Voice will focus on five marginalised and discriminated groups, selected based on a review of research and country analysis (see the table below). Key criteria for selection:

- Groups most affected by poverty or making least progress towards development outcomes (Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals);
- Groups most affected by social, economic, spatial and political exclusion;
- Groups that are currently ignored or not reached through development cooperation;
- Groups and their representatives at risk of repression or violence for speaking out for their rights.

The table below shows the groups of beneficiaries selected and the reasons why.

Group	Key considerations <sup>3</sup>
People living with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The World Bank estimates 20% of the world's poorest are disabled.</li> <li>• Children likely to be out of school: 90% in developing countries (UNESCO).</li> <li>• Women and girls particularly vulnerable to abuse (context analysis).</li> <li>• In developing countries, 80-90% of working age unemployed (UN).</li> <li>• Development actors are paying more attention the rights of people with disabilities (e.g. SDGs), now there is a need to find effective strategies.</li> </ul>
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gender, intersex (LGBTI) people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hundreds killed and thousands injured in attacks since 2011 (UNHCR).</li> <li>• Consensual conduct criminalised in over 70 countries (context analysis).</li> <li>• In most countries organisations of LGBTI people are illegal.</li> <li>• Rejection by families leads to homelessness and harmful "therapies".</li> </ul>
Women facing exploitation, abuse, violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-thirds in developing world work informally or unpaid at home (UNDP).</li> <li>• Unpaid work, few assets means vulnerability to extreme poverty (USAID).</li> <li>• 35% worldwide have experienced physical / sexual violence (WHO).</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Key references used in this section are: World Bank, World Report on Disability, 2011 and World Development Indicators, 2015; UN Enable, 2015, UNESCO EFA Flagship Initiative, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; Report on discrimination and violence against LGBT, 2015, World Health Organisation; The WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women and country context analysis in the 10 countries of the Voice consortium.

Group	Key considerations <sup>3</sup>
Age discriminated vulnerable groups notably the young and elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young and old are numerous in developing countries (20% youth in Africa).</li> <li>• 100 million older people live on less than a dollar a day and 80 per cent of older people in developing countries have no regular income (Helpage).</li> <li>• 45% of youth globally (515m people) live on under 2 dollars a day (UN).</li> <li>• Not well represented by political parties or CSOs (context analysis).</li> </ul>
Indigenous groups and ethnic minorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4.5% of global population but 10% of global poor (World Bank).</li> <li>• Worse average on e.g. under-5 mortality, adult literacy, school enrolment, completion, achievement, gender equity, child nutrition (World Bank).</li> <li>• Livelihoods hugely affected by illegal land grabs (context analysis).</li> </ul>

These groups are also among those most at risk in their freedom to organise and raise their voice, according to the UN Special Rapporteur on Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association.<sup>4</sup>

### *Inequality; gender and youth*

Women and youth in these groups often face additional disadvantages, e.g.:

- Traditional (social, cultural, religious) beliefs limit freedom of choice and educational opportunities;
- Limited access to already scarce productive resources;
- Lower representation in decision making bodies and exclusion from development agendas;
- Exposure to gender-based violence and extreme exploitation such as human trafficking.

Women and youth are often targeted by development actors but without real ownership. They generally do not have a say in the design, characteristics and quality of interventions. This ignores the huge change making potential of youth and women – e.g. youth can be more open to change, less hindered by traditions, more energetic, persistent and creative in pursuing development.

Voice will focus on three specific impact themes.

- **Improved access to (productive) resources (finance, land and water) and employment:** A barrier to economic inclusion particularly for women, youth and indigenous groups; many are in exploitative or vulnerable employment. People with disabilities face barriers to decent work.
- **Improved access to social services, health and education in particular:**<sup>5</sup> Quality services are often inaccessible for marginalised and discriminated groups because of language barriers (e.g. ethnic minorities), distance (rural populations) or neglect. This particularly affects youth and women, who often lack the information and tools to demand better services
- **Space for political participation:** Civil society space is under threat, and marginalised and discriminated groups often face particular obstacles to participation in public debate, e.g. lack of information or organisation. Indigenous groups and LGBTI community face most repression.

The themes coincide with the economic, social, political and spatial dimensions of marginalisation. The themes are relatively open, to allow grantees to come up with their own particular focus in

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Council Report 2014.

<sup>5</sup> This includes (but not exclusively) budget monitoring, open contracting, citizens' monitoring of services, open data, lobby and advocacy.



specific country contexts. Note that (empowerment) grants can also include activities to break out of isolation, build self-acceptance and confidence.

Voice focuses upon three regions: West Africa (Nigeria, Niger and Mali), East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda), and South East Asia (Cambodia, Laos, Philippines and Indonesia).

## **2.2. Grant Modalities**

The proposed grant scheme is designed to support informal groups as well as formal organisations and networks, though the applicant needs to possess legal personality.

The grant modalities are as follows:

- **Empowerment grant:** Targeting (informal) groups or organisations to raise awareness, develop transformative leadership, build confidence and skills and work against stigmatisation of marginalised and discriminated groups. Smaller grants with average one to two year timeframe, accessible for informal groups through for example a partnering with formal organisations. Voice offers also regional empowerment grants to allow for neighbouring countries to embark on a joint learning trajectory. Empowerment grants are available from €5,000 to €25,000 at national level and up to €75,000 at regional level.
- **Influencing grant:** Targeting organisations and networks to strengthen their lobby and advocacy capacities and to amplify the voices of marginalised and discriminated groups. Influencing grants that are country specific are available from €25,000 to €200,000; influencing grants that have a multi-country focus may be provided up to €500,000.
- **Innovate and learn grants:** For groups and organisations to test and scale new approaches. Innovate and learn grants are available from €5,000 to €200,000.
- **Sudden opportunity grant:** 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 of the Voice target groups in one or more of the impact themes. Grants responding to a sudden opportunity are available from €5,000 to €200,000.

Funding modalities, eligibility and application windows are summarised in Appendix A.

For each modality of grant, there will be different approaches related to making applications, assessing grants and reporting against grants. Empowerment grants and smaller grants designed to address sudden opportunities will be more flexible and contain fewer requirements. For grants above €25,000 stricter conditions and reporting responsibilities apply to mitigate the risk and to promote accountability, in line with the administrative rules regarding grants and subsidies as outlined in the Uniform Subsidie Kader and the Raamwerk voor uitvoering van subsidies.<sup>66</sup>

Voice will stand out from other grant-making programmes by developing a grant application and reporting process that is accessible, user-friendly and innovative adapted to the target groups and grant type.

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<sup>66</sup> Order of the Prime Minister, Ministry of General Affairs, 15 December 2009, nr 3086451 pertaining decision of Regulations of Subsidies. Stcrt.2009, nr. 20306.

### **2.3. Providing grants in Voice**

Applications can only be submitted by organisations which possess a bank account in the applicant's name. In addition the applicant has to be legally registered or recognised as a non-profit or as a small community-based organisation. Organisations can independently submit a grant application or form part of a consortium in a joint application. A consortium is a cooperative of two or more civil society organisations, which implements a joint, integrated project in which all parties contribute to the total. They draw up a cooperative agreement for this purpose. In this case, a consortium representative (known as the 'lead party', which needs to possess legal personality) submits the grant application on behalf of the consortium as a whole. If the application is granted, the lead party is responsible for implementing the consortium's project. Applicants may form a partnership with other not-for-profit organisations or private companies to implement the project or certain of its components, however, such partnerships must be identified within the grant application.

Grant funding is earmarked to Voice focus countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Kenya, Laos, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Philippines, Tanzania and Uganda. The emphasis will be national level grants, but with a window (up to 25%) for global and regional proposals

Consortium Partners of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Strategic Partnership within the policy framework of "Dialogue and Dissent" are ineligible for funding from Voice. This applies to lead and co-lead organisations. Organisations that are not "Dialogue and Dissent" Strategic Partnership Consortium Partners, but receive funding from the policy framework via a Consortium Partner are eligible for a Voice grant, provided that the Voice grant application concerns different activities than those for which a contribution is already received.

## **3. Assessment Procedure**

### **3.1. Assessment Criteria**

Organisations applying for grants under Voice must meet certain criteria in order to qualify for a grant. There are three types of criteria:

1. Threshold criteria: criteria which all applications must meet. If an application does not meet all of the threshold criteria, it will be rejected.
2. Criteria relating to the quality of the project proposal (project check).
3. Criteria relating to the quality of the applicant organisation or the lead party of the consortium (organisational check).

Applications and proposals which demonstrate insufficient quality, will be rejected.

These criteria are explained in more detail in chapter 4.

Please note that especially for the small grants (empowerment grants up to €25,000) a lighter / adapted version of these types of criteria will apply.

## **3.2 Assessment**

The provisions of the General Administrative Law Act, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 are fully applicable to the assessment of applications and the grants that are ultimately awarded. Applications will be assessed in accordance with the above legislation and pursuant to the requirements set out in these administrative rules.

The assessment of grant applications for activities meant in article 2, paragraph 3, sub b, and the award and allocation of the available funds will take place by means of a call for proposals: the quality of all applications will be assessed according to the same criteria. Only applications that meet the threshold criteria (see 3.1) set in these administrative rules will be considered. The extent to which the applications are granted depends on the quality of the project proposals made in the applications in question. The Fund Manager will decide on the grant applications within six weeks of the closing date of the call.

The assessment of grant applications for activities meant in article 2, paragraph 3, sub a, c and d, will take place on a rolling basis. The applications will be assessed according to the criteria set in these administrative rules, including the threshold criteria. Only applications that meet the criteria will be eligible for funding, provided that the funds have not yet been exhausted for the benefit of applications received earlier. The Fund Manager will decide on the grant applications within thirteen weeks of receipt of the complete application.

The assessment of applications for Voice grants will take place in stages although stage 2 and 3 can run in quick succession. The first stage consists of a threshold criteria check. The second stage will assess project proposals, but only those of applications that meet the threshold criteria. Parties that have submitted applications that have successfully passed the project check will undergo an organisational check in the third stage.

### *3.2.1 Checks in stage 1: threshold criteria*

The threshold criteria are criteria that applications for Voice grants must meet. No points are awarded; applications that fail to meet all of the threshold criteria will be rejected by means of a letter of rejection, and will not be assessed further.

### *3.2.2 Checks in stage 2: project criteria*

Stage 2 involves screening the quality of the project proposal. If the quality of the project is judged to be insufficient, the application will not qualify for a Voice grant and the applicant will receive a letter of rejection.

### *3.2.3 Checks in stage 3: organisational criteria*

Stage 3 consists of an organisational check, which is an assessment of the quality and efficiency (prior history and track record, governance and integrity, financial management, human resources and programme and project management) of the applicant organisation. Organisations which are determined to be high risk as a result of the organisational check are ineligible for funding. Acceptable shortcomings will be communicated with the applicant so that

an appropriate capacity development plan can be incorporated within the grant agreement to mitigate risk. The scope of the organisational assessment depends on the modality of grant application.

### *3.2.4 Allocation of available resources*

The resources available for empowerment grants, innovate and learn grants will be allocated on a first come first serve basis on the basis of annual calls for proposals. The resources available for sudden opportunity grants will be allocated on a first come first serve basis as from the entry into force of these administrative rules

The resources available for Influencing grants will be allocated on the basis of annual calls for proposals. Proposals that show sufficient quality on the project proposal and on organisational capacity are selected according to the quality of the project proposal. If insufficient resources are available for all satisfactory applications to receive a full grant, these applications will be ranked according to their results in the project check. The size of the grant they receive will depend on how well they meet the criteria, within the framework of article 8, third paragraph, sub-section d for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Resolution.

If the quality of the applications is insufficient, as measured by the criteria in this policy framework, to allow the available funds for that modality to be exhausted, the remaining funds will be allocated evenly to the ceilings for the other modalities. If funds remain for a specific year they will be carried forward to the overall grant funds for the following year.

## **3.3 Application procedure**

Applications for grants from Voice must be submitted using the model application formats as stipulated and made available by the Fund Manager.<sup>7</sup> Applications should be complete and without reservations and submitted via the online application system, Smartsheets. Please notice that the maximum file size of mails that can be received is 10.0 MB.

Calls for proposal with a strict deadline will be published annually via [www.voice.global](http://www.voice.global). For example the first global call for proposals will be published on 1 September 2016 and grant applications in response must be submitted by 16.30 (Dutch time) on Friday 15 October 2016.

Questions about this policy framework or other matters may be submitted by email or during consultative sessions. The questions will be anonymised and published with answers on the internet where appropriate. Questions can be submitted by email to: [question@voice.global](mailto:question@voice.global). Answers will be updated on the website on a regular basis. Consultative meetings will be held in September and October or other appropriate months in all of the Voice focus countries. Details of the time and venue will be posted on the website [www.voice.global](http://www.voice.global).

## **4. Assessment of Applications**

### **4.1 Threshold criteria**

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<sup>7</sup> The model application format can be downloaded from <http://www.voice.global/>

Applications that fail to meet all the criteria below will be rejected and will not be assessed further. These criteria are listed below and explained where necessary.

- a. The proposed grant addresses one or more of the following impact themes:
  - improving access to (productive) resources (finance, land and water) and employment
  - improving access to social services, health and education in particular
  - fostering space for political participation:and for the benefit of one or more of the following target groups
  - People living with disabilities
  - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gender, intersex (LGBTI) people
  - Women facing exploitation, abuse and/or violence
  - Age discriminated vulnerable groups notably the young and elderly
  - Indigenous groups and ethnic minoritiesin one or more of the Voice focus countries: Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Cambodia, Laos, Philippines and Indonesia.
- b. As a sudden opportunity or threat cannot be influenced by one organisation or entity exclusively, an application to address a sudden opportunity must include collective actions.
- c. The applicant (or lead applicant if the application is made by a consortium) must be based in Africa or Asia.
- d. The applicant (or lead applicant if the application is made by consortium) must operate in one or more of the Voice focus countries.
- e. The application or the lead party (if the application is made by a consortium) is a legally registered not-for-profit civil society or community-based organisation with an operational bank account in the applicant's name.
- f. The applicant or the lead party substantially works with the most marginalised and discriminated groups in society (particularly those of the Voice target groups) to build their capacity to lobby or advocate for their interests or to have their voices heard. For organisations with broader objectives it is also possible to demonstrate this on the grounds of the organisation's track record and/or internal policy items.
- g. The applicant (and all co-applicants, if the application is made in consortium) is an organisation which has core values similar to the objectives of Voice, being the equal treatment and equal rights of every human beings, particularly regardless of gender identity, race, colour of skin, nationality or ethnicity, religious belief, disability, sexual orientation, social class and age.
- h. The applicant, lead applicant and/or co-applicant is not a (Consortium or Alliance) Partner of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Strategic Partnership within the policy framework of "Dialogue and Dissent".
- i. With exception of Empowerment Grants and Innovate and Learn Grants, the applicant must demonstrate that, as of 1 January 2018, grants awarded from Voice derive no more than 50% of the total annual income of the applicant organisation. For large multi-country grants this is maximum 40% of the total annual income. The applicant can demonstrate this is plausible on the basis of income over the preceding year. If the applicant is the lead party, this criterion applies to the whole consortium. Consequently, if one organisation derives more than 50% (40% for large multi-country grant applicants) of its annual income from awards granted from Voice, this may be offset by another party in the consortium.
- j. (1) The maximum remuneration of individual management and board members of the applicant/lead party and any co-applicants established in the EU does not exceed €168,000 per calendar year for a 36-hour working week, as from the start of the period for which the

grant is being requested. This amount includes not only the total of periodically paid salary and bonuses, but also taxable fixed and variable expense allowances and amounts payable at a future date, such as holiday pay, a 13th month's salary and the employer's share of pension contributions. For organisations established in EU member states that do not use the euro, this amount is converted into local currency using the Ministry corporate rates as of 1 January 2016 (see Annex 2).

(2) With reference to the data on purchasing power published by EUROSTAT (GDP PPS)<sup>21</sup>, the following income ceilings based on a 36-hour working week apply to the senior management of applicants/lead parties and any co-applicants established in the following countries:

- a. Norway: NOK 2,153,538 - EUR 228,275
- b. Switzerland: CHF 227,547 - EUR 207,750
- c. Japan: JPY 22,192,867 - EUR 168,000
- d. US/Canada: USD 207,205 - EUR 189,800

(3) From the start of the grant period, the maximum remuneration of the managers and board members of an applicant/lead party and any co-applicants established outside the EU, Norway, Switzerland, Japan, the US and Canada must be in reasonable proportion to the seniority of their position and to the organisation's geographical location, size and complexity.

- k. A grant application must be for funding of one of the following grant modalities and must apply for an amount and duration corresponding accordingly:

Grant Modality	Minimum Amount	Maximum Amount	Minimum - Maximum Length
Empowerment	€5,000	€25,000 (single country) €75,000 (regional)	12-24 months
Influence	€25,000	€200,000 (single country) €500,000 (global multi-country)	12-36 months
Innovate & learn	€5,000	€200,000	12-24 months
Sudden Opportunity	€5,000	€200,000	6-12 months

- l. Notwithstanding the above all activities for all grants must be completed before 31 December 2020. This guideline will determine the proposed duration in each call for proposals for each grant type. In addition this guideline will determine the contractual duration.
- m. The proposed grant does not start earlier than 1 September 2016.
- n. The proposed grant does not relate to the funding of commercial services, investment or other commercial activities.

## 4.2 Project assessment

If the quality of the project is insufficient, the application will not be considered for the awarding of a grant. The project check assesses the quality of the project on the basis of the following generally quality criteria, with specific criteria listed for each grant modality:

### 4.2.1. General Criteria

*Context analysis:* the extent to which the proposal, especially the defined problem and objective, reflects context analysis findings.

*Project Success analysis*

- a. Details of envisaged outcomes, outputs, activities and resources: the extent to which the project provides a description of outcomes, outputs, proposed activities and resources, and a clear link has been established between the outputs to be achieved and the resources necessary to do so.
- b. Risks, monitoring and corrective action: satisfactory risk management is in place, consisting of a satisfactory risk analysis and a satisfactory system for monitoring and corrective action.

*Value-for-money:* the degree to which the project will efficiently utilize resources to undertake the activities and attain the outputs.

*4.2.2. Empowerment grants*

In addition to the general criteria, Empowerment grants will be assessed with the following criteria:

*Target Group Representation:* the degree to which the project and organisation involves, represents and effectively raises awareness, develops transformative leadership, builds confidence and skills of the target group.

*4.2.3. Influencing grants*

In addition to the general criteria, Influencing grants will be assessed with the following criteria:

*Target Group Representation:* the degree to which the project and organisation involves, represents and effectively amplifies voice and builds the influence of the target group(s).

*Advocacy and Lobby:* the degree to which the project will support target beneficiaries to influence stakeholders to implement new procedures and policies and create new and unexpected connections and partnerships.

*4.2.4. Innovate and Learn grants*

In addition to the general criteria, Innovate and Learn grants will be assessed with the following criteria:

*Target Group Representation:* the degree to which the project and organization involves and represents the Voice target groups.

*Innovation and scalability:* The degree to which an idea is new, given the context, and lead to the empowerment and amplification of one or more Voice target group(s). Includes an analysis of the applicants' capacity to implement, scale up and sustain.

*4.2.5. Sudden Opportunity grants*

In addition to the general criteria, Sudden Opportunity grants will be assessed with the following criteria:

*Target Group Representation:* the degree to which the project and organisation involves and represents the Voice target groups.

*Meeting Opportunities:* the degree to which the project analyses and responds to a new opportunity to raise awareness, develop transformative leadership, build confidence and skills of one or more Voice target groups and/or amplify voice and build the influence of the target group(s).

### **4.3 Organisational assessment**

For organisations to be awarded a grant within Voice the organisational assessment needs to be satisfactory in terms of quality. The organisational check must be completed satisfactorily and its entirety. Deficiencies found through the organisational check will be communicated with the applicant to develop a capacity development plan that may be funded by the Voice grant. Organisations which are determined to be high risk as a result of the organisational check are ineligible for funding. The organisational assessment will be a review of the following: Governance and Integrity, Financial Management and Procurement, Human Resources and Program and Project Management. The scope of organisational assessment is dependent upon the type of grant applied.

#### **Empowerment Grants**

Applicants for Empowerment grants will be assessed with the following criteria:

##### *Governance and Integrity*

- The applicant has a clear purpose and acts on decisions collectively.
- The degree to which the leadership is respected by the target group.

##### *Financial Management:*

- The quality of financial and administrative management is adequate to safeguard payments and purchases.

**Influencing Grants and Sudden Opportunity Grants** (one country grant of more than €25,000 (€5,000 for Sudden Opportunity) and less than €200,000). *In addition* to organisational assessment criteria of applicants of empowerment grants, applicants of one-country influencing or sudden opportunity grants will be assessed with the following *extra* criteria:

##### *Governance and Integrity*

- The applicant has a coherent and realistic strategic plan. (review of the quality of formulation of objectives, intended results and indicators; explanation of strategic choices)
- The applicant is accountable to and communicates effectively with its primary constituents/ beneficiaries. The applicant (management) encourages and supports internal learning and reflection processes.



#### *Procurement and Finance Management*

- The quality of financial and administrative management is adequate to ensure financial accountability. (Budget, funding plan, financial management, financial report)

#### *Programme and Project Management*

- The applicant has an appropriate monitoring and evaluation process (documentation & data collection, involvement of stakeholders, quality of analysis and learning)

#### *Human Resources*

- The number, composition and expertise of staff is adequate in view of the applicant's objectives and programs.

### **Innovate and Learn Grants (at least €5,000 and maximum €200,000 for single country and global grants), Influencing Grants (multi-country grant of more than €200,000 up to €500,000) and Sudden Opportunity grants (at least €5,000 and maximum €200,000 for global grants).**

*In addition* to organisational assessment criteria of applicants of Empowerment grants, (single and multi-country) Innovate and Learn Grants, multi-country Influencing Grants and multi-country Sudden Opportunity Grants will be assessed with the following *extra* criteria:

#### *Governance and Integrity*

- The applicant has a coherent and realistic strategic plan. (Context and problem analysis; Theory of Change; quality of formulation of objectives, intended results and indicators; explanation of strategic choices)
- The applicant is capable to mobilise sufficient financial resources, and (where relevant) non material resources from members/ supporters.
- The applicant is internally transparent and accountable. (Relations between staff, direction and board; quality of decision-making process)
- The applicant maintains relevant institutional relationships with external stakeholders and is seen as credible and legitimate.
- The applicant is capable to maintain consistency between ambition, vision, strategy and operations. The management is able to deal strategically with external pressure and conflicting demands.
- The applicant formulated objectives with regard to the position of women and issues of gender equality.

#### *Procurement and Finance Management*

- The quality of financial and administrative management is adequate to ensure financial accountability and transparency. (Budget, funding plan, financial management, financial report)
- The organisation maintains annually audited accounts

#### *Programme and Project Management*

- The applicant has an appropriate monitoring and evaluation process (documentation & data collection, involvement of stakeholders, quality of analysis and learning) and uses it for accountability and learning purposes.

- The applicant (management) responds adequately to trends and changes in the context and uses up-to-date strategies and knowledge.

## APPENDIX A: GRANT MODALITIES, ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION WINDOWS

Grant and modalities	Eligibility	Purpose	Application Procedure
<p><b>Empowerment grant</b></p> <p><b>Grant size:</b> € 5,000- 25,000 for national level and up to €75,000 for regional level</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> Min 12 months Max 2 years</p>	<p>Formal organisations</p> <p>Informal groups and individuals in partnership with or hosted by a locally registered organisation</p>	<p>Targeting (informal) groups or organisations to raise awareness, develop transformative leadership, build confidence and skills and work against stigmatisation of marginalised and discriminated groups.</p>	<p><b>Rolling grants</b></p>
<p><b>Influencing grant</b></p> <p><b>Grant size:</b> €25,000 - 500,000</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> Min 12 months- Max 3 years</p>	<p>Formal organisations and networks</p> <p>Informal groups and networks hosted by a registered organisation</p> <p>Also organisations registered in other countries can apply provided they are based in Africa and/or Asia</p>	<p>Targeting organisations and networks to strengthen their lobby and advocacy capacities and amplify voice of marginalised and discriminated groups.</p>	<p><b>Open call</b></p>
<p><b>Innovate and learn grant</b></p> <p><b>Grant size:</b> €5,000-200,000</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> Min 12 months- Max 2 years</p>	<p>Formal CSOs and networks are eligible</p> <p>Also organisations registered in other countries can apply (e.g. international NGOs or platforms) for global Calls.</p>	<p>For groups and organisations to test and scale new approaches</p>	<p><b>Rolling grants</b></p>
<p><b>Sudden opportunity grant</b></p> <p><b>Grant size</b> €5,000-200,000</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> Min. 6 months - Max 1 year</p>	<p>Formal organisations and networks and informal groups can be eligible</p>	<p>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 of the Voice target groups in one or more of the impact themes.</p>	<p><b>Rolling grants</b></p>