

# Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society

## Power of Voices Partnerships

A framework for funding civil society organisations for 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2025

### Contents

- Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society..... 1
- 1. Strengthening Civil Society – Introduction..... 2
- 2. Strengthening Civil Society: policy objective, policy principles and core components..... 4
  - 2.1. Policy objective..... 4
  - 2.2. Principles ..... 4
  - 2.3. Core components ..... 5
    - A. Civic space ..... 5
    - B. Lobby and advocacy ..... 6
    - C. More ownership by local organisations ..... 6
    - D. Gender equality and inclusion..... 7
    - E. Strategic Partnership ..... 7
    - F. Flexibility..... 8
    - G. Mutual capacity strengthening ..... 8
    - H. Innovation ..... 9
- 3. Power of Voices Partnerships..... 10
  - A. Introduction..... 10
  - B. Assessment and selection procedure and criteria ..... 11
  - C. Timetable..... 20

### Annexes

- Annexe 1: List of terms
- Annexe 2:
  - 2a: ORIA form
  - 2b: Integrity update form
  - 2c: Questionnaire actualization ORIA
- Annexe 3: OECD country list
- Annexe 4: Corporate rates
- Annexe 5: Executive summary Theory of Change Strengthening Civil Society
- Annexe 6: Policy Document Women’s Rights and Gender Equality: Power of Women
- Annexe 7: Policy Document Women, Peace and Security
- Annexe 8: Theory of Change SRHR

# 1. Strengthening Civil Society – Introduction

A strong civil society,<sup>1</sup> in combination with legitimate, effective government and a private sector that does business responsibly, forms the basis for a well-functioning, inclusive society. Civil society organisations often not only strengthen and echo the voice of citizens, but also represents this voice both within and beyond political processes. Through lobbying and advocacy, civil society organisations<sup>2</sup> call on governments and the private sector to take responsibility to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an inclusive way, to comply with international human rights principles and to strengthen the social contract between government and citizens. In many cases civil society organisations address injustice and unequal power relations and hold political and economic institutions accountable for their policies. Strengthening civil society contributes to an open society and strengthens democracy and rule of law.

Support to civil society is still vital, particularly given the fact that civic space is under pressure in many countries. In over a hundred countries, freedom of association, assembly and expression are severely restricted, for example through bureaucratic restrictions or use of violence.<sup>3</sup> This affects not only civil society organisations themselves but also everything they stand for, such as their commitment to gender equality, clean drinking water, environmental protection and fighting corruption. To relieve the increasing pressure on civil society organisations, an approach is needed that is closely aligned to the local situation and which gives local organisations more say in how the Netherlands can contribute.

This new policy framework is based on the principles set out in the policy document ‘Investing in Global Prospects: for the World, for the Netherlands’.<sup>4</sup> This document devotes specific attention to civil society and the role it can play in achieving the 17 SDGs by 2030. Civil society organizations play a role in achieving the SDGs by focusing on poverty reduction and representing and strengthening people’s voice in conflict, post-conflict and more stable contexts. Since civil society has an independent role, it can hold governments and the private sector accountable for sustainable, coherent and inclusive policies. Consequently, civil society can promote communication and foster relations between the public, government and the private sector.

Within the broader SDG agenda, which is the main point of reference for Dutch government policy, the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation focuses on SDG 5 in particular, since investing in women means investing in development and growth. The Minister is therefore committed to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and has identified this as a goal of all components of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS) policy and thus of all components addressed in this policy framework. The focus on SDG 5 is essential to achieving an effective, inclusive foreign policy. Gender equality is not only a goal in itself, but also a means and prerequisite for achieving the other SDGs.

Strengthening Civil Society is the overarching policy framework for the grant instruments under policy article 3 of chapter XVII of the central government budget, which are discussed below. The focus of this policy is on civic space, to make it possible for civil society organisations to make their full contribution to achieving the SDGs. This policy is based on a common vision and goal, and aims to work with greater vigour and coherence on strengthening civil society in lobbying for and advocating human rights compliance, thus contributing to achieving the SDGs.

Two grant funds fall within this policy framework: Power of Voices and the SDG5 fund. Power of Voices encompasses three instruments: Power of Voices Partnerships, the extended grants policy framework for Voice (for a period of three years until 31 December 2023) and the Accountability Fund (an instrument implemented by the Dutch diplomatic missions,<sup>5</sup> specifically intended for local civil society organisations, to which this policy framework provides follow-up).

The SDG5 fund comprises the subsidy instruments Power of Women; Women, Peace and Security; the SRHR Partnership Fund and Leading from the South. The SDG5 fund underscores the Dutch government’s commitment to women’s rights and gender equality.

---

<sup>1</sup> See list of terms, annexe 1: civil society.

<sup>2</sup> See list of terms, annexe 1: civil society organisations.

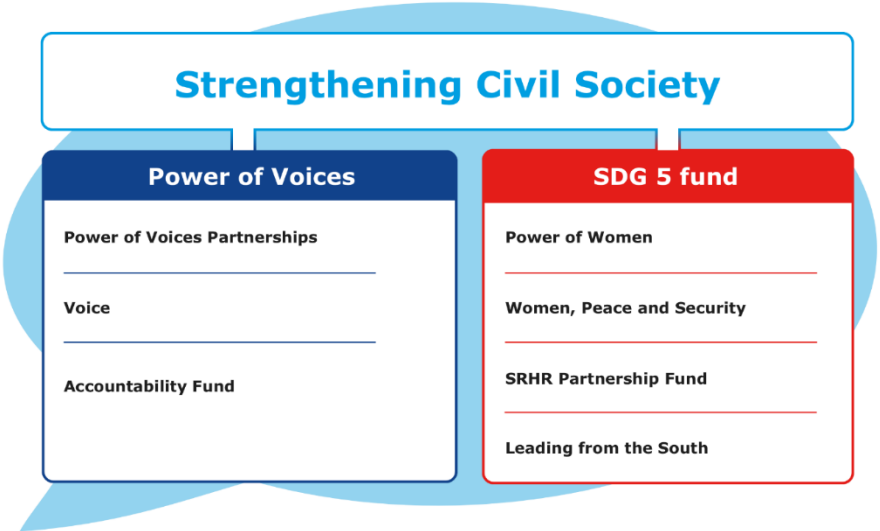
<sup>3</sup> CIVICUS State of Civil Society Report 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives, 2017/18, 34 952, no. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Hereafter ‘embassies’ or ‘missions’.

The new framework provides follow-up to existing grant instruments in support of programmes to strengthen civil society which expire on 31 December 2020. These are Dialogue and Dissent (followed up by Power of Voices Partnerships); Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women (followed up by the Power of Women); Women, Peace and Security (formerly called *Vrouwen, Vrede en Veiligheid* in Dutch, now followed up by 'Women, Peace and Security' in English) and SRHR partnerships (followed up by the SRHR Partnership Fund).<sup>6</sup>

The other three grant instruments – Voice, the Accountability Fund and Leading from the South – will continue in their existing form, in view of the results achieved and the nature of their objectives. The continuation of Voice and Leading from the South is based on Mid Term Reviews. For the AFund a review to be held in 2020 can lead to adaptations. The instruments listed above have all been incorporated into this policy framework to emphasise the cohesion between them.<sup>7</sup> See scheme:



Chapter 2 examines the overarching objective, policy principles and core components of the Strengthening Civil Society policy framework.

The Theory of Change on Strengthening Civil Society (annex 5 to this policy framework) describes the overarching framework. This Theory of Change also covers the Power of Voices Partnerships and is part of the policy rules of the Power of Voices Partnerships. Besides the overarching Theory of Change, there are separate Policy documents/Theory of Change attached for Power of Women; Women, Peace and Security and the SRHR Partnership Fund. These fall off course within and are an integral part of the overarching Theory of Change on Strengthening Civil Society and cannot be seen separately. These policy documents/Theory of Change have been included as an annexe to the corresponding grant policy framework and are part of the policy rules of the grant instruments.

This policy framework is also published in Dutch. In case of discrepancies or interpretational differences, the Dutch version is leading.

<sup>6</sup> See Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives, 2018/19, 34952, no.66 (Letter to parliament of 20 June 2019).

<sup>7</sup> For more information go to: <https://voice.global> and [www.leadingfromthesouth.org](http://www.leadingfromthesouth.org).

## **2. Strengthening Civil Society: policy objective, policy principles and core components**

### **2.1. Policy objective**

The main objective of this policy framework is to strengthen civil society organisations in their role of lobby and advocacy. With this, a strong civil society which stands up for citizens' needs and rights and in doing so contributes to improving the social contract between government and citizens as to an inclusive, sustainable society, is supported.

The social contract concerns the degree to which the state creates space for (or imposes restrictions) on citizens' individual and social development, and can be held to account for its actions. The role civil society can play in improving the social contract will differ from country to country. Civil society organisations in closed societies will of course need to use different strategies and interventions than organisations working in more open societies.

With this, the policy framework aims to contribute to social, political and economic development in those countries in which the programs are being implemented. For this purpose it is essential for civil society organisations to work together, for example through networks. This framework helps foster an environment in which civil society can work more effectively at local, national, regional and international level, with – importantly – a link between the different levels.

The various new grant instruments falling within this policy framework each have separate secondary goals identified in the specific grant policy frameworks applicable to them.

Organisations and/or individuals listed in international sanctions regulations are excluded from funding. Any organisation receiving funding under this framework will be required by the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation to take active measures to preclude organisations and/or individuals listed in international sanctions regulations from benefiting from Dutch support in whatever form (direct, indirect, participation in workshops, etc.). This obligation will be a transferable clause in the grant decision and thus also works through to agreements with third parties.

### **2.2. Principles**

The human rights approach and the SDGs are key elements in this new policy framework. Human rights are the foundation on which dignity and freedom are built. They form the basis for a free and open society. A smoothly functioning and inclusive society is a basis for prosperity, stability, economic growth and development. The ambition reflected in the SDGs is to improve the situation of the world's most deprived people. Given that achieving the SDGs is a worldwide goal and that many of the problems occur at local, national, regional and global level, cooperation between countries and regions is essential. Defending human rights and achieving the SDGs worldwide call for a strong civil society. This is crucial in order to strengthen and hear the voices of people who are seldom if ever heard, play little or an unequal part in society and can make little use of their rights.

Efforts under this policy framework will largely target countries in the focus regions, as well as countries that are mentioned in the BHOS policy note that have a development cooperation relation with the Netherlands.<sup>8</sup> Besides this focus, it is possible to a limited extent to work in other low-, lower-middle- and upper-middle-income countries (Annexe 3). An exception is made under Power of Voices Partnerships for the themes Climate mitigation and adaption and Trade and/or making value chains more sustainable, which can be deployed in all low-income, lower-middle-income and upper-middle-income countries. This will be elaborated on in chapter three of Power of Voices Partnerships.

It is essential for programmes to run in several countries at once in order to ensure connection, cooperation and synergy. Action may differ by country and/or region. Where civic space is limited, interventions will aim to preserve, improve or enlarge it. In other contexts, there can be a much greater focus on the role of civil society in lobbying and advocacy. In some upper-middle-income countries, considerable experience has been gained of lobbying and advocacy, resulting in a strong

---

<sup>8</sup> The focus regions are West-Africa/Sahel, Horn of Africa, Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The countries in the focus regions and the countries listed in the BHOS policy note are: Afghanistan; Algeria; Bangladesh; Benin; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Egypt; Ethiopia; Ghana; Iraq; Indonesia; Yemen; Jordan; Kenya; Lebanon; Libya; Mali; Morocco; Mauritania; Mozambique; Niger; Nigeria; Uganda; Palestine Territories; Rwanda; Senegal; Sudan; Somalia; Tunisia; Chad; South-Sudan.

civil society which could play a major role in sharing experience with organisations in countries where this is not or less the case.

This framework contains a number of core components that form the principles on which policy is based and apply to every instrument falling within this policy framework. They are as follows.

- A. Civic space
- B. Lobby and advocacy
- C. More ownership by local organisations
- D. Gender equality and inclusion
- E. Strategic partnership
- F. Flexibility
- G. Mutual capacity development
- H. Innovation.

### **2.3. Core components**

#### **A. Civic space**

Civic space refers to scope for citizens to exercise their democratic rights to freedom of association, assembly and expression. This space is open if these rights are enshrined in legislation and are respected. Civil society organisations need this space to promote the rights and interests of their constituency by participating as lobbyists and advocates in political, social and economic decision-making processes, and in debates, discussions and opinion formation.

Civic space is currently under severe pressure in more than half of the countries in the world. According to CIVICUS (2018) this manifests itself (both online as offline) in:

- Polarisation of the political landscape;
- Undermining of democratic institutions by authoritarian leadership;
- Increasing attacks on journalists who reveal corruption and public discontent;
- Increasing attacks on human rights defenders and activists, including environmental activists;
- Increasing restrictions on online freedom and manipulation of the internet and social media;
- Restrictive legislation and a heavy administrative burden on civil society organisations;
- Repression of civil society organisations, often with government support.<sup>9</sup>

For these reasons, civic space plays a more central role in this new policy framework than in its predecessors.

In countries where civic space is under pressure, preservation, improvement and enlargement of this space must be a component of programmes to be funded within the framework. This is essential not only to strengthen civil society as a goal in itself, but also to achieve the SDGs. Shrinking civic space has a negative impact not only on civil society organisations themselves, but also on everything they stand and work for. By working closely together at both national and international level, civil society organisations can give each other support and backing in the face of adversity and advocate better conditions for their work. Regional networks and global movements play a significant role here. By means of diplomacy, the Netherlands can contribute through its missions and by strengthening international networks that advocate for more democracy and civic space. The Minister also wants to work with the strategic partners<sup>10</sup> to defend online civic space and to also guarantee human rights online.

The reality is not just that civic space is shrinking and under pressure, but that the recognition that civil society receives and its scope for lobbying and advocacy differ from one country, theme and type of organisation to the next. In some countries the space may be shifting, so that some groups have less space while others gain more. In order to identify the space that exists in a specific situation, analysis is needed of the space available for the proposed programme and how it will be preserved and/or enlarged.

Social movements<sup>11</sup> play a special role with regard to civic space. Their network structure and informal nature enable them to operate more easily in situations where civic space is limited. The size and composition of social movements fluctuate and they seldom have a strong, central leadership, making them more difficult to suppress. Social movements' strength is their ability to

---

<sup>9</sup> Source: <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/state-of-civil-society-report-2018>.

<sup>10</sup> See list of terms, annexe 1.

<sup>11</sup> See list of terms, annexe 1.

mobilise groups of people behind a common goal. By taking collective action, a movement may claim certain rights, contest or reform repressive power structures, and challenge notions underpinning inequality. Social movement can be active at every level, from local to international.

## B. Lobby and advocacy

Lobby and advocacy is shorthand for various instruments and strategies that can be used to exert influence on political leaders, businesses and social actors. Their aim is to promote the interests of a specific group, movement, organisation or network in order to tackle the structural causes of poverty, inequality and injustice and to lastingly improve policy.

This entails influencing decision-makers' agendas, social and political debate, decision-making procedures, policy and legislation, norms and values, and existing practice with a view to bringing about social change. In this way, civil society plays a political role. How civil society works on lobby and advocacy is strongly dependent on the type of organisation, the local, national, regional and/or global context, and the space available to influence policy and work with other actors. Lobby and advocacy efforts can take place at various levels: local, national – including in the Netherlands – regional and international. Linkage between these levels is often needed for a sustainable impact. Lobby and advocacy are not linear processes, and it often takes time to achieve results. For groups that have unequal opportunities, are excluded from participating in society and/or are repressed, it is essential to query and change existing power relationships. This entails challenging the root causes of exclusion and marginalisation and launching a process of political, social and economic change.

A degree of legitimacy is crucial for lobbying and advocacy. Civil society organisations that have little or no legitimacy will have difficulty bringing about the changes they seek among decision-makers, their constituency or the public at large. Civil society organisation may acquire legitimacy from various sources, including their constituency, their expertise, their independence, the services they provide and their religious beliefs, and also from normative frameworks such as international human rights agreements. Within this policy framework, it is of crucial importance that civil society organisations have a clear vision of what legitimacy entails in representing their constituency.

## C. More ownership by local organisations

Power relationships play a role at various levels and in various ways. They exist in the consortia,<sup>12</sup> between the consortia and local partners and between the local partners themselves. Within a consortium, power relationships are related to who takes decisions, who receives and manages funding, who plans programmes, and who is involved in formulating a programme and deciding what form participation takes. The allocation of tasks and responsibilities between the Dutch and other partners in the consortium is significant. Power relationships also play a role in how partners work together with local partners outside the consortium. The question here is what role these partners play and how much say they have in designing, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and where necessary adapting the programme.

Power relationships at consortium level and with local partners can be significantly changed and adapted by the consortium itself; they are accordingly part of the power analysis. However, power relationships built into the society or context in which the programme is being implemented are usually beyond the consortium partners' control. Since they impact the programme they need to be identified.

Unequal power relationships may be caused by differences in capacity, where one organisation is the knowledge provider and the other its recipient. In the past, this was frequently the case in relationships between organisations in high-income countries and organisations in low-income, lower-middle-income and upper-middle-income countries. However, over the past several decades the capacity of organisations and movements in the latter countries has increased. The activities in the by the Minister subsidized various programmes implemented in the past few years have contributed to this (see Dutch results reporting for 2017-2018).<sup>13</sup>

More control and ownership for local civil society organisations is a major step towards establishing relationships on an equal footing and promoting the role of civil society. It increases their legitimacy and thus their ability to play a more independent role in their specific context. More ownership and control by local organisations also ensure that programmes can be embedded more effectively and more sustainably in the local context. For example, it enables support for local processes of change

---

<sup>12</sup> See list of terms, annexe 1.

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.dutchdevelopmentresults.nl/Home>.

that contribute to achieving the SDGs and to compliance with undertakings made in human rights agreements. The policy framework therefore encourages partnerships where local organisations have ownership and control.

Ownership and control by local civil society organisations from low-income, lower-middle-income and upper-middle-income countries should be made visible with a description of the roles and responsibilities of these partners in formulating and implementing the programme and in decision-making processes within the consortium. After all, genuine ownership is often only possible if it is guaranteed right from the start. This means that decision-making on goals, responsibilities, implementation, funding and distribution of resources is a joint responsibility, shared equally by every organisation in the partnership. This may lead to a different role for Dutch organisations working with local organisations, one that focuses more on innovation, linkages and lobbying at international level.

In this set-up, the Dutch organisations working with support of this policy framework can work complementary and support wider, worldwide processes of change, because they can also be active in international forums and can thus influence the international agenda. To fulfil this role, they have to keep track of Dutch and international policy and maintain contact with other national and international civil society organisations. They have a role to play in strengthening capacity for monitoring and evaluation, financial accountability and substantive reporting.

#### D. Gender equality and inclusion

Women's rights and gender equality are a cross-cutting theme in this policy framework. By promoting women's rights and gender equality, Dutch policy aims for equal rights, opportunities and outcomes for women and men, girls and boys. Development is only inclusive and sustainable if everyone has the opportunity to benefit from it and no one is left behind. This means actively involving people with a disability, LHBTI people and religious and ethnic minorities. Gender equality, women's rights and inclusion are thus closely interconnected. In all these cases, what matters is everyone's right to equal social, economic and political participation in society.

To achieve this, societies need to enable equal access for all to goods, opportunities, tools and rewards. This does not mean that there are no differences between individuals, but that every individual, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, wealth, family background, age, social position and disability, must have and benefit from equal opportunities and rights. Specific measures or guarantees are sometimes needed to ensure that planned interventions have no negative impact on women and girls.

Inclusion entails engaging with groups in decision-making processes that have been structurally excluded from participating in them. The problem analysis accompanying the programme proposal should therefore devote attention not only to dimensions of inequality and discrimination that affect structurally excluded groups but also to the impact of planned interventions on these groups. Explicit attention must also always be devoted to the specific position of women and girls and youth in general, regardless of the theme or target group. The analysis should also show how the programme will contribute to guaranteeing the rights of excluded groups. Gender equality and inclusion are integral components of this policy framework and should as such be addressed in the application. This means applicants should flesh out how they will put these principles into practice, and how the applicant or consortium will guarantee and account for results on gender equality and inclusion.

An individual's identity is made up of multiple elements, e.g. female and disabled, or member of an indigenous people and gay/lesbian. For this reason, gender equality and inclusion are clearly related to intersectionality. This term assumes that individuals who are members of interest groups, movements and organisations often face several problems and challenges. Their position in society is not one-dimensional. A focus on a single factor may work restrictively and prevent the intervention from being effective. Intersectionality also has implications for convergences between organisations and/or movements which share the same goals but whose primary thematic aims differ.

#### E. Strategic Partnership

##### **Partnerships**

The main principles and features of a partnership are reciprocity, complementarity, autonomy and shared goals. Organisations' proven qualities, past results and strategic potential of the organisations in a consortium serve as the basis for selecting a consortium as a partner for the Minister and for shaping the partnership. Both the consortia selected and the Minister have their own networks, experience, qualities and instruments. Within the partnership, each partner has its own

responsibilities, identity and autonomy to act. A partnership does not necessarily imply that the partners are always in agreement, but that the consortia and the Minister can call on each other to intervene or exercise restraint in response to events. Within a partnership, cooperation is not always possible or necessary on every issue. Dissent is part and parcel of a partnership in dialogue; it keeps partners focused, and friction can produce the energy needed to bring about change. The departure point is the purpose of the partnership to which the parties have committed, though situations may also arise in which they do not work in concert.

### **Strategic**

A partnership between a consortium and the Minister as part of the grant instruments under this policy framework is more than a grantor/grantee relationship. The selected consortia will work with the Minister to achieve a jointly defined strategic goal. The strategic element of a partnership comprises the way specific parties work together and the added value their partnership produces in achieving shared goals. The assumption is that cooperation leads to results that the partners could not achieve separately. Learning and benefiting from each other's qualities enhances scope to achieve the agreed goals. Pooling expertise and capacity can prove to be an effective way of creating added value. The ministry of Foreign Affairs' role in the partnership relates not only to finance but can also add value to the following:

1. Diplomatic support through its missions, both bilateral as multilateral (expressing Dutch political and/or policy priorities, (ministerial) travels, access to foreign governments and/or (multilateral) institutions/fora, facilitating/organising/attending meetings, advising (for example on local legislation), troubleshooting;
2. Access to (inter) national networks;
3. Access to knowledge, expertise, and (government) information (including Multi Annual Country Strategies);
4. Facilitating of monitoring (including field visits), learning and evaluation (internal and external);
5. Facilitating annual strategic policy dialogues.

The involvement of various departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, where possible, of Dutch embassies is a crucial element of the partnership. The extent of their involvement will vary from one partnership to the next, depending for example on capacity, alignment with Multiannual Country Strategies or other thematic priorities. Exact definition of the strategic character will be defined in close cooperation between the consortium and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### **F. Flexibility**

Flexibility is a major principle underpinning this policy framework, and it has several dimensions. It is closely linked to working with a Theory of Change, which is a flexible planning instrument. The Theory of Change describes the outcomes of the proposed programme and the process by which they will be achieved, including the assumptions on which this process is based. If during implementation it becomes apparent that certain assumptions are not correct, certain interventions are not leading to the envisaged results or contexts are changing radically, the interventions or strategies will need to be adapted, though continuing to be informed by the outcomes and objective set out in the Theory of Change. Flexibility also requires a reliable risk analysis which, in view of the changing context in which civil society works, will have to be reviewed on a regular basis in order to enable prompt identification and mitigation of new and changing risks. The flexibility that applies to the relationship between the Minister and the strategic partners must also characterise the relationship between the consortium partners and local partners.

### **G. Mutual capacity strengthening**

Capacity strengthening is a learning process in which every partner contributes expertise and knowledge and develops them further. The aim is empowerment: enabling individuals and groups to stand up for their own rights and interests. This joint process aims to improve cooperation, while at the same time strengthening the consortium and local partners in areas such as lobbying and advocacy and improving practical capacities and skills in, for instance, financial and other management. Ideally, requirements for financial accountability, monitoring and evaluation imposed by the consortium on local partners should be no stricter than or any different from those used by the Minister vis-à-vis her strategic partners. If local partners cannot meet any or all of the requirements for financial accountability and reporting, a good alternative must be sought, which must be agreed with the Minister. In this way, capacity strengthening can help find solutions.

Mutual capacity strengthening can take place at various levels: internally within the (local) partner organisation and/or consortium, in consultation with the Minister, in consultation with local partners



and target groups, or with other actors at country, regional or global level. A learning agenda should be an integral part of programmes to be funded under this policy framework and thus of monitoring.

## H. Innovation

In this policy framework, innovation is regarded as both creating new ways of working and introducing improvements or adjustments on the basis of lessons learned. This means that organisations need to be able to adapt to a changing context, for example through digitalisation<sup>14</sup>. Innovation thus goes hand in hand with flexibility and adaptability.

Innovation also means investing in social change and inclusion through the application of new (digital) technologies and new types of partnership and funding. Innovation may also result from new relationships with companies, or more informal groups, movements and organisations that are often left out of the picture. Experimentation with new ways of working will be encouraged in this situation, so that lessons can be learned from them.

---

<sup>14</sup> Digital Agenda for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (June, 2019).

## 3. Power of Voices Partnerships

### A. Introduction

The Power of Voices Partnerships grant instrument has a budget of EUR 825 million<sup>15</sup> and a duration of five years, beginning on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2021. Its aim is to strengthen civil society organisations so that they are capable of lobbying and advocacy in the interests of achieving all the SDGs and a more inclusive and sustainable society. Grants under this instrument are intended for consortia that are selected as the Minister's strategic partners. The Theory of Change of this grant instrument is attached to in Annexe 5 and is part of the policy rules.

To be eligible for a grant under this instrument, an application must focus on maximum one of the following themes:

1. Climate mitigation and adaptation
2. Trade and making value chains more sustainable
3. Food security, sustainable water management and/or WASH (including water, sanitation and hygiene)
4. Women's' rights and gender equality
5. Freedom of speech or Freedom of Religion and Belief
6. Equal rights LGBTI<sup>16</sup>
7. Security and Rule of Law

Women's' rights and gender equality is not only a stand-alone theme, but also a cross-cutting issue within all applications.

Applications on the themes Climate mitigation and adaptations and Making value chains more sustainable can be deployed in all low-income, lower-middle-income and upper-middle-income countries (annexe 3).<sup>17</sup>

Applicants working on the themes Food security, sustainable water management and/or WASH (including water, sanitation and hygiene); Women's rights and gender equality; Freedom of speech or Freedom of Religion and Belief; Equal rights LGBTI and Security and Rule of Law are encouraged to focus on the focus regions, as well as countries that are mentioned in the BHOS policy note that have a development cooperation relation with the Netherlands.<sup>18</sup> This aims at greater synergy between strengthening civil society on the ground and the implementation of the BHOS policy note.

Applicants can approach the theme from their own perspective, taking into account policy coherence, whereby connecting the main theme with other thematic areas is possible.

Service delivery activities are not eligible for grants under this instrument.

#### *Parties that may be eligible for a strategic partnership*

Only consortia of civil society organisations (CSOs) are eligible to become the Minister's strategic partner under the Power of Voices Partnerships. A consortium consists of several consortium partners, one of which acts as the lead party.

Consortium partners may be:

- CSOs with their head office in a low-income, lower-middle-income or upper-middle-income country, with proven quality and an established Track Record on capacity strengthening of CSOs in the area of lobbying and advocacy. Such a CSO may take the role of lead party or consortium partner;
- Dutch CSOs, with proven quality and an established track record on capacity strengthening of CSOs in the area of lobbying and advocacy. Such a CSO may take the role of lead party or consortium partner;
- International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) based in a high-income country other than the Netherlands, with proven quality and an established track record on

---

<sup>15</sup> The exact grant ceiling and method of distribution will be published following the selection of the recipients.

<sup>16</sup> This gives substance to the theme Equal rights LGBTI as agreed upon in the coalition agreement and the rainbow agreement.

<sup>17</sup> Given the current situation in Syria, Ministry of Foreign Affairs subsidy instruments are not open for activities within Syria. Activities regarding Syria but not within Syria are allowed.

<sup>18</sup> The focus regions are West-Africa/Sahel, Horn of Africa, Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The countries in the focus regions and the countries listed in the BHOS policy note are: Afghanistan; Algeria; Bangladesh; Benin; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Egypt; Ethiopia; Ghana; Iraq; Indonesia; Yemen; Jordan; Kenya; Lebanon; Libya; Mali; Morocco; Mauritania; Mozambique; Niger; Nigeria; Uganda; Palestine Territories; Rwanda; Senegal; Sudan; Somalia; Tunisia; Chad; South-Sudan.

capacity strengthening of CSOs in the area of lobbying and advocacy. Such an INGO may not take the role of lead party.

Each consortium partner must have legal personality.

Each consortium must include at least one consortium partner from the Netherlands and one from a low-income, lower-middle-income or upper-middle-income country.

Applications must be submitted by a lead party on behalf of the consortium. The lead party may be either a Dutch CSO or a CSO from a low-income, lower lower-middle-income or upper-middle-income country. If the application is approved, the lead party is the grant recipient and, as such, bears full responsibility for implementation of the proposed activities and compliance with the obligations in respect of the grant decision and partnership agreement.

A CSO is only eligible for one strategic partnership in the role of lead party under the Power of Voices Partnerships. If multiple applications are submitted with the same organisation as lead party, only the first application received will be processed and any application(s) submitted later will be rejected. However, a CSO acting as lead party for one consortium may additionally be a consortium partner in one other consortia under the Power of Voices Partnerships. If an organisation is not a lead party for any application, it may be a consortium partner in one or two consortia. If an organisation takes part in more than two consortia for which applications are submitted, only the first two applications submitted will be processed, and any application(s) submitted later will be rejected.

Acting as lead party or consortium partner for an application in a strategic partnership under the Power of Voices Partnerships however does not preclude involvement of these CSOs in consortia, both as lead party or as consortium partner, under the other grant instruments within the policy framework Strengthening Civil Society<sup>19</sup> provided that the applicable requirements under these grant instruments are met.

Applications for participation in a strategic partnership under the Power of Voices Partnerships should be submitted online at the latest at 12.00 CET on 12 March 2020, using the model application form stipulated by the Minister and made available online in the online application form and provided with the documents stated therein.<sup>20</sup> Applications received after 12.00 CET on 12 March 2020 will be rejected without being processed.

## B. Assessment and selection procedure and criteria

The provisions of the General Administrative Law Act, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2016 are fully applicable to the assessment of applications under Power of Voices Partnerships. Applications will be assessed in accordance with the above legislation and pursuant to the criteria set out in this grant policy framework.

Applications for a strategic partnership grant are assessed in three stages, resulting in a decision on which consortia are eligible for a strategic partnership and grant award.

1. The first stage consists of a check against the threshold criteria.
2. The second stage consists of an assessment of the quality of the consortium's Theory of Change, its vision on working with local organisations in the in the application proposed countries, and the quality of the track record of the consortium and the consortium partners.
3. The third stage consists of an assessment of the consortium's comprehensive programme proposal and budget.

---

<sup>19</sup> Power of Women, Women, Peace and Security and/or SRHR Partnership Fund.

<sup>20</sup> Applications submitted by email will not be processed. Submitting applications by post is not recommended, but if submitting an application online proves impossible, it may be sent by post to: Civil Society Division (DSO/MO), Social Development Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PO BOX 20061, 2500 EB The Hague. If an application is sent by standard post instead of registered post, the sender bears the risk of it being received late or not at all. Applications sent by post (apart from those using a 'postage paid' envelope) and postmarked on a date before the application deadline are considered to have been submitted on time, provided they are received no later than one week after the deadline for applications has passed. Applications sent by mail using a 'postage paid' envelope are considered to be submitted on time if they are delivered on time to the Ministry. An item is not considered received until it has been recorded by the Ministry's mail department. Incoming mail is not recorded in the evenings or at weekends.

In the first stage, applications are assessed against the threshold criteria listed in the threshold check. The threshold criteria are criteria which an application must in any case meet in order to be eligible for a grant.

An application that meets all the threshold criteria goes on to the second stage, where it is assessed on the basis of the quality criteria given in this chapter. If one or more threshold criteria are not met, the application is discarded and rejected.

For the first two stages of assessment, applications must include the following four parts:

1. The Theory of Change that forms the basis for the consortium's pursuit of its intended goal in the intended strategic partnership. The Theory of Change should contain a (proposed) choice of countries, and give reasons for the choice.
2. A description of the consortium's vision on working with local organizations in the application proposed countries, including the manner in which the consortium's structure will include mechanisms that guarantee that these local organisations have a voice.
3. A track record describing the consortium's experience with the proposed theme and in the proposed countries.
4. A partnership agreement signed by the lead party and all the other consortium partners.

Applications by consortia of CSOs seeking to enter into a strategic partnership with the Minister must (sufficiently) satisfy (minimum of 650 points) the following criteria:

1. Threshold criteria;
2. Criteria relating to the quality of the consortium's Theory of Change. A maximum of 550 points may be awarded for the Theory of Change. Applications are assessed as satisfactory if they receive 355 points or more;
3. Criteria relating to the quality of the consortium's vision on working with local organisations in the application proposed countries. A maximum of 175 points may be awarded on this part. Applications are assessed as adequate if they receive 120 points or more;
4. Criteria relating to the quality of the consortium's track record. A maximum of 275 points may be awarded for the track record. Applications are assessed as adequate if they receive 175 points or more.

In order to be eligible as a strategic partner, a consortium must attain at least satisfactory scores on each of the three parts mentioned above, the Theory of Change, a description of the consortium's vision on working with local organisations in the application proposed countries and the Track Record. If one or more of the parts turns out to be of insufficient quality, the application will be discarded and rejected.

If the application in the qualitative assessment achieves fewer than 650 points, the application will be discarded and rejected.

For applications under theme 3-7 that have obtained at least 650 points in the qualitative assessment, points will be assigned to the deployment in countries in the focus regions and the other countries mentioned in the BHOS policy note that have a development cooperation relation with the Netherlands.<sup>21</sup> Points will be assigned pro rata to the extent to which an application focuses on countries in the focus regions and the other countries mentioned in the BHOS policy note that have a development cooperation relation with the Netherlands.

The final score is determined by the sum of the score on the qualitative assessment and the points for the geographical deployment if applicable.

No more than 20 applications that meet the quality criteria may be selected for stage 3. However, if fewer than 20 applications meet the quality criteria, fewer than 20 will go on to this stage. If more than 20 applications meet the quality criteria, the 20 applications with the highest scores in the qualitative check will go on to stage 3. Taking into consideration Article 8, third paragraph, sub c of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree, account will be taken of the need for a balanced distribution of the different themes in selecting potential strategic partners.

The applications of consortia that are not selected will be rejected.

---

<sup>21</sup> The focus regions are West-Africa/Sahel, Horn of Africa, Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The countries in the focus regions and the countries listed in the BHOS policy note are: Afghanistan; Algeria; Bangladesh; Benin; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Egypt; Ethiopia; Ghana; Iraq; Indonesia; Yemen; Jordan; Kenya; Lebanon; Libya; Mali; Morocco; Mauritania; Mozambique; Niger; Nigeria; Uganda; Palestine Territories; Rwanda; Senegal; Sudan; Somalia; Tunisia; Chad; South-Sudan.

An external advisory committee monitors the quality, consistency and objectivity of the assessment procedures of all four grant instruments falling under the Strengthening Civil Society policy framework.<sup>22</sup>

### Stage 1: Threshold check

The threshold criteria are criteria which an application must in any case meet in order to be eligible for a grant. The threshold check will be carried out by Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff. Applications that do not satisfy all threshold criteria will be rejected and will not be considered further.

**Please note:** statutes and/or annual reports must be submitted in Dutch, English, French or Spanish. If statutes and/or annual reports are not available in above mentioned languages, the lead party must take care of a certified translation.

**D.1.a:** *The application has been submitted on behalf of a consortium by a lead party which is a CSO established either in the Netherlands or in a low-income, lower-middle-income or upper-middle-income country (see list of countries in annexe 3 to these administrative rules).*

'CSO' means: a not-for-profit organisation with a public interest, which possesses legal personality under civil law, is not connected to a public authority either de facto or under its constitution, and has not been established by a public authority or, after constitution by a public authority has been fully privatised.

An organisation 'established in the Netherlands' means: an organisation founded in the Netherlands under Dutch law and having had its registered office in the Netherlands for at least three years as of 1 January 2019.

An organisation 'established in a low-income, lower-middle-income or upper-middle-income country' means: an organisation that has its registered office in one of the countries listed in annexe 3 and is established there under that country's prevailing laws.

Explanatory note:

This must be clear from the lead party's statutes and from a partnership agreement signed by the lead party and all the other consortium partners which has been concluded with a view to entering into a strategic partnership with the Minister under the Power of Voices Partnerships and conducting activities using this grant.

**D.1.b:** *The consortium on whose behalf the lead party has submitted the application consists of CSOs, including at least one CSO established in a low-income, lower-middle-income or upper-middle-income country (listed in annexe 3 to these administrative rules) and at least one CSO established in the Netherlands.*

Explanatory note:

This must be demonstrated by enclosing a copy of the statutes of the lead party and of all the other consortium partners.

International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) established in a high-income country other than the Netherlands may take part in a consortium as a consortium partner but not as lead party.

**D.1.c:** *Each CSO may participate in no more than two consortia on behalf of which applications for a strategic partnership with the Minister under the Power of Voices Partnerships are submitted, and may act as lead party in only one of the two consortium.*

Explanatory note:

A CSO is only eligible for one strategic partnership in the role of lead party under the Power of Voices Partnerships. If multiple applications are submitted with the same organisation as lead party, only the first application received will be processed and any application(s) submitted later will be rejected. However, a CSO acting as lead party for one consortium may additionally be a consortium partner in one other consortia under the Power of Voices Partnerships. If an organisation is not a lead party for any application, it may be a consortium partner in one or two consortia. If an organisation takes part

---

<sup>22</sup> The Power of Voices Partnerships, Power of Women, SRHR Partnership Fund and Women, Peace and Security.

in more than two consortia for which applications are submitted, only the first two applications submitted will be processed, and any application(s) submitted later will be rejected.

**D.2:** *The application must include a partnership agreement signed by both the lead party and all the other consortium partners which has been concluded with a view to entering into a strategic partnership with the Minister under the Power of Voices Partnerships and conducting activities using this grant, laying down at least:*

- *how each of the consortium partners will contribute to the consortium's activities (its role, task and responsibilities);*
- *how decisions are made within the consortium;*
- *how costs and risks are shared among the consortium partners;*
- *how the consortium partners will ensure that the lead party fulfils the obligations towards the Minister in respect of the grant, including responsibility for the joint aggregated reports (including IATI-compliant reports).*

Explanatory note:

This must be demonstrated by producing a partnership agreement signed by the lead party and all the other consortium partners meeting above mentioned requirements.

**D.3:** *Both the lead party and all the other consortium partners work to achieve structural poverty reduction and inclusive development in low-income, lower-middle-income and/or upper-middle-income countries (see annexe 3) in cooperation with CSOs established in these countries.*

Explanatory note:

This must be demonstrated on the basis of the goals of the lead party and all other consortium partners, mentioned in the statutes and/or annual reports. Please specify the passage and/or page number you are referring to.

**D.4:** *With regard to the objectives indicated under D.3, the lead party has at least the preceding three years' experience in capacity strengthening of CSOs in the areas of lobbying and advocacy, in at least three of the in the application proposed countries as of 1 January 2019.*

Explanatory note:

This must be demonstrated by the statutes and/or annual reports of the lead party. Please specify the passage and/or page number you are referring to.

**D.5:** *The lead party must demonstrate that, in the 1 January 2016 – 31 December 2018 period, annually at least 25% of the consortium's total annual income came from sources other than grants and/or contributions derived directly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

Explanatory note:

In the 2016-2018 period annually at least 25% of the consortium's total annual income came from sources other than grants and/or contributions derived directly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (including missions). This criterion applies to the consortium as a whole. Consequently, if the lead party or one of the consortium partners derived less than 25% of its total annual income from sources other than grants or contributions derived directly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this may be offset by (an)other party (parties) in the consortium. This must be demonstrated by the last three annual accounts (2016-2018) of all consortium partners or reference to the relevant pages in the annual reports if the annual accounts are included in these reports.

Total annual income in 2016: EUR ....., of which not from MFA: EUR .....

Total annual income in 2017: EUR ....., of which not from MFA: EUR .....

Total annual income in 2018: EUR ....., of which not from MFA: EUR .....

## **D.6**

**A.** *The maximum remuneration of individual management and board members of a lead party or other consortium partner established in the Netherlands must not exceed EUR 189,000 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:*

1. *the total of periodically paid salary, profit shares and bonus payments;*
2. *taxable fixed and variable expense allowances;*
3. *payments made at set times of year, such as holiday pay, 13th month's salary, the employer's share of pension contributions, etc.*

B. This criterion also applies to consortium partners (other than the lead party) established in other EU member states. For consortium partners (other than the lead party) established in EU member states that do not use the euro, the amount of EUR 189,000 is converted into local currency using the Ministry of Foreign Affairs corporate rates (annexe 4) as at 1 January 2020.

C. With reference to the data on purchasing power published by EUROSTAT (comparative price levels 2018),<sup>23</sup> the following income ceilings apply to partners (other than the lead party) established in the following countries:

- Norway NOK 2.490.214;
- Switzerland CHF 278.675;
- Japan YEN 20.617.531;
- US/Canada USD 205,350.

D. From the start of the grant period, the maximum remuneration of individual managers and board members of a lead party or other consortium partner established in any other countries must be in reasonable proportion to the seniority of their position and to the organisation's geographical location, size and complexity.

Explanatory note:

Re A+B+C+D

The lead party must specify the remunerations (including allowances) of managers (including the CEO) and board members of its own organisation and of all other consortium partners, as of the start of the grant period:

Function	Total of periodically paid salary, profit shares and bonus payments	Taxable fixed and variable expense allowances	Payments made at set times of year, such as holiday pay, 13th month's salary, employer's share of pension contributions, etc.	Working hours per week

For consortium partners (other than the lead party) established in EU member states that do not use the euro, and for lead parties and other consortium partners from countries outside the EU, other than the countries under C., the euro is converted into local currency using the Ministry of Foreign Affairs corporate rates (annexe 4) as at 1 January 2020.

Re A+B+C

The lead party must specify the remuneration (total of periodically paid salary, taxable fixed and variable expense allowances, and other payments made at set times of year) paid to individual management and board members of the lead party and other consortium partners established in the EU, Norway, Switzerland, Japan and/or the US/Canada, and the number of working hours per week for which the remuneration is paid (see also **Please note**, below).

<sup>23</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tec00114&plugin=1>

For Dutch and other organisations that fall within the scope of the Top Incomes (Standardisation) Act (WNT) a reference to the WNT notification submitted digitally to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations will suffice, unless this data is no longer valid as at 1 January 2019 due to a change in remuneration.

#### Re D

The lead party must specify the remuneration (total of periodically paid salary, taxable fixed and variable expense allowances, and other payments made at set times of year) paid to individual management and board members of the lead party and other consortium partners established outside the EU, Norway, Switzerland, Japan and/or the US/Canada. Explain why these amounts are in reasonable proportion to the seniority of their position and to the geographical location, size and complexity of the organisation(s) in question.

#### **Please note:**

The maximum remuneration is linked to the remuneration of the Director-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who falls under the collective labour agreement for Dutch civil servants, under which a 36-hour working week constitutes full-time employment. If a management or board member is employed for less than 36 hours per week, the maximum remuneration of EUR 189,000 is reduced in proportion to the part-time factor and is equal to: their weekly number of working hours divided by 36, multiplied by EUR 189,000. If a management or board member is employed for more than 36 hours per week, the maximum remuneration remains EUR 189,000. If the part-time factor is included in the grant application, this will be used to calculate the prorated maximum remuneration. If no part-time factor is provided, it will be assumed that the remuneration is paid for a 36-hour working week.

**D.7.a:** *The lead party must be capable of proper financial management and its expertise must ensure effective and efficient implementation of activities like those for which grant funding is sought.*

#### Explanatory note:

The lead party should demonstrate this by submitting one of the following with the application:

- o Valid PARTOS ISO-9001 certification; *or*,
- o If the organisation has a positively assessed Organisational Risk and Integrity Assessment (ORIA): a completed ORIA update form (annexe 2c), referring to the activity number of the grant obtained or, if the application was ultimately rejected on grounds other than lack of organisational capacity, to the application to which the positive assessment applied; *or*,
- o If the organisation has a valid, positively assessed COCA (drawn up after 1 April 2017): a completed ORIA update form (annexe 2c), referring to the activity number of the grant obtained or, if the application was ultimately rejected on grounds other than lack of organisational capacity, the application to which the positive COCA applied; *or*,
- o A fully completed ORIA (annexe 2a).

**D.7.b:** *The lead party demonstrates that it and all other consortium partners have an integrity policy and procedures for implementing that policy. This integrity policy and these procedures should serve to prevent as far as possible any sexual misconduct and other serious forms of inappropriate behaviour towards employees and other individuals during the implementation of the proposed activities by the lead party, the other consortium partners and other parties they involve in the activities, and in the event of such incidents ensure that they are investigated and appropriate measures are taken to put an end as promptly as possible to the misconduct or inappropriate behaviour and mitigate the consequences. These procedures must be structured in a way that guarantees prompt reporting of any such incidents to the Minister.*

#### Explanatory note:

The lead party should demonstrate this by submitting one of the following with the application:

- o For the lead party and all consortium partners with a positively assessed ORIA: a reference to the activity number of the grant obtained or, if the application was ultimately rejected on grounds other than lack of organisational capacity, the application to which the positive assessment applied; *or*,
- o For the lead party and all consortium partners without an ORIA: a completed ORIA Integrity Update form (annexe 2b), to be submitted in English.



Stage 2: Assessment of the quality of the Theory of Change, the consortium's vision on working with local organisations in the application proposed countries and the quality of the track record

Strategic partners that have passed the threshold criteria are selected based on the substantive criteria as indicated in this paragraph for the qualitative assessment of the Theory of Change, the consortium's vision on working with local organisations in the application proposed countries and the Track Record.

This substantive assessment is carried out by an assessment committee consisting of members of staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and (an) external expert(s). For each theme, a representative of the thematic department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will join the committee to assist in assessing the applications concerning that particular theme.

## Stage 2 qualitative check criteria

The qualitative check in stage 2 is conducted on the basis of three sets of criteria:

1. Criteria for assessing the Theory of Change;
2. Criteria for assessing the consortium's vision on working with local organisations in the application proposed countries;
3. Criteria for assessing the track record.

### 1. Theory of Change

#### 1.1 Theory of Change

In order to assess the quality of the Theory of Change, the lead party and the other consortium partner(s) must draw up a Theory of Change, consisting of a graphic representation and a narrative of no more than 4,000 words (in Verdana 9 font and single line spacing). The *Theory of Change* should be written and submitted in English or Dutch.

The Theory of Change should be based on the core components elaborated in chapter 2 and include:

- a clear problem analysis resulting in a strategic programme objective, focusing on one of the themes and setting out the different intermediate steps needed to achieve this objective using a human rights approach;
- a strategy on lobbying and advocacy and the necessary capacity strengthening of civil society organisations to achieve above mentioned goal, with a link between these processes as described in the executive summary Theory of Change Strengthening Civil Society (see annexe 5);
- an analysis of the underlying assumptions that link up the different steps to achieve the strategic goal of the programme;
- a limited number of quantitative indicators for process, outcome and impact and/or qualitative descriptions;
- the region, countries or areas chosen on the basis of the problem analysis (at least three countries per application);
- a cross-cutting gender and inclusion analysis;
- an analysis of the available civic space for the proposed programme and the way in which this space will be safeguarded and/or expanded, taking account of:
  - political/social/economic factors, including risk factors
  - conflict sensitivity;
- an analysis of the main partners, organisations and groups that are relevant to the programme;
- a description of the way in which the Dutch consortium partner is connected with Dutch society;
- the grant amount requested in order to carry out the proposed interventions and a justification thereof.<sup>24</sup>

#### 1.2 Criteria

The quality of the Theory of Change is assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

1. The extent to which there is a clear problem analysis concerning one of the themes, resulting in a single strategic objective;
2. The extent to which there is a clear elaboration on the strategy of lobbying and advocacy and the necessary capacity strengthening of civil society organisations, and the extent to

---

<sup>24</sup> This indicative amount may in no way be viewed as binding.

which there is clear link between these processes as described in the executive summary of the Theory of Change Strengthening Civil Society (see annexe 5);

3. The extent to which the relationship between assumptions, planned interventions and results is logical and well-reasoned, and the way in which these results contribute to the strategic objective;
4. The extent to which the Theory of Change contributes to raising awareness of the rights of the project target groups and to amplifying the voice of these groups so that they can demand their rights;
5. The extent to which these results can be realistically achieved during the five-year grant period, and the way in which the goal will be pursued of ensuring sustainable results;
6. The extent to which the choice of regions, countries or specific areas within these countries follows logically from the problem analysis;
7. The extent to which gender equality and inclusion are an integral part of the Theory of Change, and the extent to which the Theory of Change specifically focuses on interventions to eliminate obstacles for excluded groups, women and girls, and young people in general;
8. The extent to which there is a clear analysis of the available civic space for the proposed programme and the (innovative) way in which this space will be safeguarded and/or expanded, taking account of:
  - o political/social/economic factors, including risk factors
  - o conflict sensitivity;
9. The extent of the consortium has insight into the organisations and groups that are most important for the programme, and can illustrate this using an actor analysis;
10. The extent to which the consortium can clearly explain its reasons for working with these specific organisations and groups in order to achieve the strategic objective, reflecting on their:
  - o legitimacy
  - o added value
  - o complementarity;
11. The extent to which the Dutch consortium partner is capable of drawing attention in Dutch society to the theme it is working on, and to place and/or keep this theme on the political and/or societal agenda.

## **2. Consortium's vision on working with local organisations in the in the application proposed countries**

### **2.1 Vision**

In order to assess the quality of the consortium's vision of working with local organisations in the application proposed countries, the lead party and the other consortium partner(s) must draw up this vision in the form of a narrative of no more than 1,200 words (in Verdana 9 font and single line spacing). The vision must be written and submitted in English or Dutch.

This vision should include:

- An analysis of the main power relations at various levels between the consortium partners and local partners and groups, taking into account gender and inclusion;
- A description of the consortium's plans for addressing these power relations so as to ensure that local partners and groups from the in the application proposed countries have a voice in designing and implementing the programme;
- A description of the way in which learning together and innovation will be given a place in the partnership.

### 2.2 Criteria

The quality of the consortium's vision on working with local organisations and groups in the in the application proposed countries will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

1. The extent to which there is a clear analysis of the main power relations at various levels between the consortium partners and local partners and groups;
2. The extent to which the various local partners and target groups are assured an equal say in decision-making processes on:
  - o roles and responsibilities
  - o mutual rights and obligations
  - o selection of partners
  - o budget allocation
  - o programme design (including the Theory of Change and monitoring and evaluation)
  - o programme implementation;

3. The extent to which learning and innovative ways of working within the consortium and with the local partners are a structural part of the partnership.

### **3. Track record**

#### **3.1 Track record**

The lead party and the other consortium partner(s) must draw up a track record in the form of a narrative of no more than 2,500 words (in Verdana 9 font and single line spacing). The Track Record must be written and submitted in English or Dutch.

The Track Record must briefly set out two case studies, citing verifiable sources where possible, from the three years preceding 1 January 2019, drawn from the experience of different individual consortium partners, the consortium as a whole or parts of the consortium. Each case study must include:

- demonstrable results achieved in the area of lobbying and advocacy and of (mutual) capacity strengthening for lobbying and advocacy over the past three years (reference date 1 January 2019);
- the countries relevant to the application where the lead party and other consortium partners were active;
- the knowledge that the lead party and other consortium partners have of the theme which the consortium's Theory of Change addresses;
- the way in which the partners have worked together with the actors concerned;
- the way in which the lead party and/or consortium partners regularly reviewed their Theory of Change or other planning instrument, and how this did or did not lead to programme modifications;
- gender equality and inclusion as an integral part of the programmes;
- in elaborating and implementing the programmes, the attention paid to the specific needs of groups relevant to the programmes, including excluded groups, and the specific interventions addressing their needs;
- the way in which sustainability of the programmes' results was ensured;
- the lessons learned in the area of lobbying and advocacy and the use made of these lessons.

#### 3.2 Criteria

The quality of the track record is assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

1. The extent to which the consortium and/or the consortium partners show that they have demonstrable expertise in (mutual) capacity strengthening in the area of lobbying and advocacy, and their capacity to achieve the intended results;
2. The extent to which the consortium and/or individual consortium partners have knowledge of and have worked effectively with relevant actors (government, business, civil society organisations and social movements) in the countries to which the application refers;
3. The extent to which the consortium and/or individual consortium partners were focused on learning and on exchanging knowledge and experience with the actors involved;
4. The extent to which gender equality and inclusion were effectively integrated into the analysis, implementation and intended results, and were reflected in the spending of financial resources;
5. The extent to which obstacles to opportunities for optimal participation in society by excluded groups, and women and girls, and young people in general, were identified and addressed and/or removed;
6. The extent to which the consortium and/or consortium partners ensured transparency concerning their actions, and the way in which they reported on their actions to local partners, governments, supporters, funders and any other appropriate actors;
7. The extent to which the sustainability of results was ensured.

### **Stage 3: Process after selection and elaboration of the programme proposal**

#### *Elaboration of the Strategic Partnership and linkage with MACS and results frameworks*

An overview of the alliances selected as a potential strategic partner, including the themes and an overview of the proposed countries, will be shared, after phase 2, with the thematic and regional departments, as well as the embassies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the same time, the Multi-annual Country Strategies (MACS) (for the countries which have such a strategy) can be requested by the potential strategic partners and will be made available by the regional departments. Through this information sharing, expectations regarding involvement in these strategic partnerships should be charted as early as possible. This information is important for the further implementation and elaboration of the program proposals.

Consortia that have been selected as potential strategic partner are invited to further elaborate on the strategic partnership in consultation with the relevant thematic department, regional department and the involved embassies, to formulate a joint strategic goal and to make agreements on roles, responsibilities, expectations and ambitions. Agreements will be made in joint consultation with regard to the connection of the Theories of Change, result frameworks and the countries proposed in the application. Making changes to this proposed country list is possible in joint consultation.

The degree of intensity of cooperation between the strategic partners and the Ministry depends on the current (policy) agenda and is also determined by pragmatic considerations, such as available capacity of the strategic partners and the Ministry and the number of partnerships per country.

The embassies' involvement and its intensity will be defined for each strategic partnership and per country, depending amongst others on their capacity and the extent to which the application corresponds with their MACS.

Where the theme of the application is a good policy match, the embassy may become more strategically involved in implementation. Where the theme corresponds little or not at all with the embassy's priorities, there will be little actual involvement in the activities, but the embassy should nonetheless be kept informed of the consortium's activities.

#### *Financial resources*

The definitive total grant ceiling and the allocation of resources over the different consortia will be announced within a month of the potential strategic partners being selected (see section C. of this chapter). This results in the maximum budget allocated to each alliance, of course subject to a positive outcome of the assessment of the full program proposal and budget to be worked out by the alliance.

Grants will be allocated on the basis of the quality of the application and the consortium's revenues over the past three years. This may mean that the application with the highest score will not necessarily be given the highest grant amount.

For each consortium, the minimum grant amount is EUR 3 million a year and the maximum EUR 20 million a year. The duration of the grants and thus of the programmes is five years. The partners will draw up a definitive programme and budget on the basis of the grant amount awarded. After stage 2, a budget format and criteria for the assessment of the full program proposal will be shared with the selected potential strategic partners.

#### *Programme proposal*

The selected consortium is always responsible for drawing up and implementing the programme proposal. The proposal must be submitted no later than 12.00 CEST on 16 October 2020. It should include the outline of an annual plan for the first year, including a budget and liquidity forecast, as well as a multiannual plan and a multiannual budget. If applicable, the completed questionnaire of the Partos ISO 9001 certification can be requested.

Being selected as a potential strategic partner is no guarantee of a grant award. A grant will only be awarded if the programme proposal proves to be of sufficient quality (satisfies sufficiently the criteria for assessing the quality of the programme proposal). The quality of the program proposal is assessed on the basis of criteria to be determined; in any case with regard to the elaboration of the Theory of Change presented in the application, a satisfactory risk analysis and mitigating measures, a results framework in compliance with the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and the logical connection between the intended results and the budget. If the quality of an elaborated proposal proves to be insufficient, the application will be rejected. The rejection of a programme proposal will not lead to any of the previously (stage 2) rejected applications becoming eligible for a grant.

### C. Timetable

The following timetable applies to the Power of Voices Partnerships application and selection process:

- Any questions about this document or other matters related to the drafting of an application should be sent by email to [powerofvoices@minbuza.nl](mailto:powerofvoices@minbuza.nl) no later than 17.00 CET on 11 December 2019, after which the questions will be anonymised and the answers published on <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/ontwikkelingssamenwerking/documenten/beleidsnotas/2019/11/28/beleidskader-versterking-maatschappelijk-middenveld> no later than 17.00 CET on 18 December 2019.

- Applications for a strategic partnership as part of the Power of Voices Partnerships may be submitted from 16 December 2019 until 12.00 CET on 12 March 2020 via the online application form provided by the Minister.
- Applications for a Power of Voices Partnership will first be checked against the threshold criteria. All the threshold criteria must be satisfied, otherwise the application will be rejected and not assessed further.
- Applications that satisfy all the threshold criteria will go on to the next stage, stage 2, the qualitative check.
- Based on the results of the qualitative check, a decision will be made on the potential strategic partners no later than 29 May 2020.
- Between the announcement of the selection and 16 October 2020 the potential strategic partners should design their comprehensive programme proposals, which must be received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs no later than 12.00 CET on 16 October 2020.
- No later than December 2020, strategic partnership agreements will be signed with, and grant award decisions issued to, consortia whose programme proposals prove to be of sufficient quality (that is, which have attained satisfactory scores on the criteria relating to the quality of proposals). Both the strategic partnership agreement and the grant decision are addressed to the lead party of the consortium, whereby the lead party acts on behalf of the entire consortium.
- The new programmes will start on 1 January 2021 and have a duration of five years, until 31 December 2025.