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| ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL OFFICE |
| **3rd ASIA DIRECTORS’ RETREAT**  **February 19 – 20, 2015**  **Siem Reap, Cambodia** |
| **PARTICIPANTS (alphabetically by last name)**  **Asia Directors**  Maureen Aung-Thwin, *Burma Program Director*  Martin Hala, *Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO) Regional Manager*  Tom Kellogg, *East Asia Program Director*  Ezra Kaban, *TIFA Foundation (Indonesia) Acting Executive Director*  Binaifer Nowrojee, *APRO Regional Director*  Jargal Perenlei, *Open Society Forum (Mongolia) Executive Director*  Hari Sharma, *Alliance for Social Dialogue (Nepal) Executive Director*  **Guests**  Johanna Chao Kreilick, *OSF Strategy Unit Director*  Nadia Gomes, *OSF Strategy Unit Associate Director*  Julia Toffoli, *OSF Strategy Unit Program Coordinator* |
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| Day 1  Thursday, February 19, 2015 |

**Welcome – *Binaifer Nowrojee***

The meeting opened with a brief welcome by Binaifer Nowrojee and a round of introductions to the OSF Strategy Unit colleagues. The floor was opened for any additions to the agenda, and on Hari Sharma’s request, a brief update on the January 2015 APRO Core Team meeting was added to the agenda.

**Taking Stock of the APRO Transition: Where are we? – *Binaifer Nowrojee***

Binaifer Nowrojee opened the floor for reflection on the changes that the prior year had brought with the creation of APRO in April 2014. She encouraged directors to openly share their thoughts on whether or not APRO’s presence was too acutely felt, the impact on the work load, and on the overall developments made during the prior year.

Tom Kellogg expressed that he initially had concerns that APRO would bring in too many bureaucratic processes, but that he has experienced the increase in meetings and structure as a positive change. Jargal Perenlei also stated that she felt the previous year was a very good year, and that Forum-Mongolia now feels reunited with the OSF network, which the foundation had begun to feel alienated from. Maureen Aung-Thwin highlighted that the Burma Program feels protected and supported by Binaifer Nowrojee in the role of Regional Director, and also applauded the introduction of the annual Progress Report, which was a very useful document for the program and a reference guide to the work that other APRO Programs are doing.

A number of concerns and anxieties were also raised. Martin Hala expressed concern about the number of APRO meetings being too heavy and the past year being overly inward-looking, and it was pointed out by Maureen Aung-Thwin that this has been an overall trend in the OSF since the recent transition. Hari Sharma shared some anxiety about the upcoming transition at the ASD to a national foundation, but noted that he also felt very engaged and supported by his colleagues. Ezra Kaban stated that the past year was very challenging at TIFA in light of the exit of previous executive director and the board’s decision to undertake major restructuring, and expressed a wish that APRO play a supportive role to help TIFA in the coming year.

Binaifer Nowrojee then provided some clarity on the intention behind the changes that are being introduced and how the priorities for the APRO Director’s Office were emerging. Binaifer Nowrojee recounted that upon taking on the role of Regional Director in April 2014, a Survey Monkey was sent to all 70+ Asia colleagues to gauge what staff wanted from the new APRO office, from which a number of identified activities emerged. The survey results identified the following needs:

1. **Increased Collaboration** –Asia colleagues said they had limited and sporadic interaction and knowledge of each other and the work in Asia.

To address this, Binaifer Nowrojee introduced one all-staff retreat and two Asia Directors’ meetings annually to increase collaboration. The meeting venues circulate around the region and serve multiple purposes: APRO team members get to know and learn from each other; Asia staff travel and learn about the work being undertaken around the region; and the convenings provide a training space that will over time put into place consistent standards of excellence across the region. In addition, the Directors’ retreats provide a space for the directors to collectively discuss management vision and direction.

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1. **Bridging the Information Gap between Asia and OSF** – Asia teams felt isolated from the OSF network and starved of information.

Binaifer Nowrojee created an APRO email distribution list and regularly shares important network updates with the entire APRO team, including OSF colleagues in other departments who cover Asia. Team members can self-filter for relevance. A KARL community was created and an APRO What’s App group shares informal updates and photos.

1. **Standards and Trainings** – A number of APRO staff are struggling with the new procedures introduced at OSF and are unable to access the trainings available in the central offices.

The introduction of the annual APRO Retreat will help to set common standards across all the Asia programs by providing opportunities for sharing and training. For example, at the upcoming 2015 all-staff retreat in Mongolia, the focus will be on improving our grant making practice (with assistance from OSF’s Grant-Making Support Group). The content of the annual all-staff retreat each year is determined by a “Core Team” of 9 APRO representatives from various Asia units to ensure relevance for the entire team. The core team meets annually in advance of the all-staff retreat.

1. **Staff Development and Career Growth** – This was largely requested by younger APRO colleagues who feel there are limited opportunities for skill development and continued growth given the lack of attention to this issue by their supervisors in the midst of many deadlines and heavy workloads.

The annual performance appraisals that are now required for all APRO staff will better inform the types of staff development opportunities (individual and collective) that APRO should provide in the future.

In response to the concerns about too many APRO meetings, Binaifer Nowrojee confirmed that the current schedule (one all-staff retreat preceded by a core team meeting and two directors’ retreats) is flexible and can be scaled back according to needs and workloads. She noted that the inclusion of other smaller APRO-sponsored trainings, such as the recent strategy training, will ultimately be a time-saver by helping relevant staff to build their competencies and to create consistent standards of excellence across Asia. At the moment, due to the previous lack of regional cohesion or standard-setting, there are wide differences in capacity and delivery by different APRO units.

**Taking Stock: 2014 Progress Reports and Performance Appraisals – *All Directors***

All directors were in favor of the newly introduced annual APRO Progress Report (a 5-page summary of the achievements of the previous year, the lessons learned, and a summary of the budget vs. spend).

The directors confirmed that it was a useful exercise which demanded reflection on the progress of the previous year, something which has historically not been done. Since the close of the year is a period of heavy deadlines, directors emphasized that preparation of the document was a great amount of work, and some directors noted that the document was compiled in a haphazard and rushed manner this year. Directors confirmed that they are in a better position to prepare this document now that they are aware of its due date each year. However, all recognized the value of having one comprehensive document that captures the year’s work which can then be distributed within APRO as well as to OSF Global Board, senior management and thematic program directors.

Jargal Perenlei flagged that the end of January deadline is quite difficult for Forum-Mongolia because this time of the year coincides with the project memos due to their board. She requested that the date be set slightly earlier or later in years to come, if possible. Other directors were in agreement not to shift the date earlier due to the many deadlines already in place each December. Tom Kellogg highlighted the security concerns with circulating such a document on programmatic work, and noted that a redacted version of the East Asia Progress Report was finally settled on as the best solution for mitigating this. All directors agreed that preparation of the Progress Report was a valuable opportunity for reflection and now that the requirement is on their radar, it can be better planned for and prepared in the years to come.

All directors found annual staff performance appraisals to be very useful, with some directors noting that this particular process will take some time for staff to get used to and become comfortable with. Jargal Perenlei noted that staff members typically evaluate themselves on the basis of delivery of defined work objectives – therefore the additional element of self-evaluation and personal development goals is a new process that may take staff a while to become comfortable with.

Directors acknowledged the value of the 2014 bonuses received and the benefit to staff morale. Binaifer noted that the OSF bonus system policy, which is only in place for central OSF office staff, does not extend to the entire network. This past year, to eliminate this disparity, Binaifer Nowrojee used the Asia Director’s reserve to ensure that bonuses were paid to all APRO teams, even those not covered by the OSF policy (foundations and Asia-based program staff).

The inaccessibility of the new Work Day database system to non-central office APRO staff was identified as problematic by the directors, particularly those that have part of their team in Work Day and others excluded depending on their employment status with OSF.

**Taking Stock: Chris Stone visits to Nepal and Indonesia – *Hari Sharma & Ezra Kaban***

Ezra Kaban and Hari Sharma provided updates on OSF President Chris Stone’s visits to Indonesia and Nepal in January 2015 where he met with staff, boards, grantees, and representatives of government among others. Although the visit came at a time of internal restructuring at TIFA, it nonetheless reinforced the value of OSF’s presence in Indonesia. In Nepal, among other meetings, Chris Stone attended a convening of the district-based grantees operating outside of Kathmandu. A noteworthy highlight was a meeting with a former Nepal Army General who oversaw the integration of the Maoist fighters into the Nepal Army, which resulted in a Voices blog by Chris Stone on the OSF website.

In conclusion, Binaifer Nowrojee encouraged other APRO Programs when planning a visit for Chris Stone to think about including an inspiring grantee site visit outside of the capital city if possible. Similarly, the ASD’s model of grantees delivering a series of brief presentations clustered by theme in their native language and in front of a power point summary in English (with photos) was hugely impactful – the grantees communicated a huge amount of information in an efficient and powerful way in their own voices and the non-Nepali speakers were able to understand without much time lost on translation.

**Taking Stock: Transitions to Foundations – *Maureen Aung-Thwin & Hari Sharma***

Maureen Aung-Thwin opened the conversation on the Burma Program’s shift to becoming a foundation in the midst of the political transition in Burma. The weak legal and banking regulatory systems have created uncertainty about the best way to proceed on the form of registration and the dispersal of grant funds. A local law firm is investigating options and will advise on how to proceed with official registration. Additionally, board members are being identified for the creation of a board. Maureen highlighted that although their more overt and exposed status as a foundation will come with more risks, the more pronounced presence will also make it more difficult for authorities to kick out OSF out of the country. For the moment, the plan is to retain all grant funds off-shore and only bring program administration and operational funds into the country.

Hari Sharma then gave an update on the Alliance for Social Dialogue (currently an OSF grantee) shift to an OSF foundation. The ASD already has a board, but its roles and responsibilities will need to shift. The ASD Board continues to play an active role in guiding the ASD under the transition and determining next steps (such as registering under the NGO Registration Act of Nepal), as well as taking leadership in the public sphere on ASD’s programmatic work. The primary challenge for the ASD will be the synchronizing of operational systems with OSF’s systems and institutionalizing the re-granting process. The ASD team will spend a week in New York in May 2015 to receive an orientation training before being incorporated into Foundation Connect.

Although both are aiming for the same goal, the situations and needs of each are different. ASD is well established in Nepal but not within the larger OSF networks; whereas the Burma Program is well established in the OSF but does not have an independent board and identity in Burma. For the moment, both will remain in Foundation Connect for grant-making given the problems currently underway following the upgrade of the GMS databased used by most OSF foundations.

**Taking Stock: TIFA Transition – *Ezra Kaban***

Ezra Kaban who is serving as acting Executive Director of TIFA provided an overview on the past year. This year is a major transition year for TIFA with a budget reduction of some $800,000 (25 percent of its overall budget), the dissolution of the “Democracy and Development” Program and the resignation of their executive director in October 2014. While the new office interior is under construction, the TIFA staff have no central, physical office and most staff are working from home. TIFA’s board has decided as part of the strategic planning exercise to initiate a major restructuring and downscaling of the organization. Recruitment for the new executive director will be opened in June 2015 after the strategy process is completed. TIFA will be submitting a new strategy to the OSF Global Board in June 2015, and has hired a consultant to help lead this process. In all likelihood, TIFA’s operations will remain limited for the next year and a half during this major transition, and the entire grants portfolio will require reevaluation and reformulation.

**Taking Stock: Office Registrations – *Binaifer Nowrojee, Maureen Aung-Thwin, Tom Kellogg, Martin Hala***

Updates on various office registrations and work permits, including for the upcoming APRO Regional Office, were discussed. Additionally, since the dissolution of the Southeast Asia Initiative, the need for an office space in Chiang Mai, Thailand has diminished. Accordingly, the office lease will lapse at the end of March 2015 and the affected staff will work from home.

**Taking Stock: Budget Codes – *Binaifer Nowrojee***

Binaifer Nowrojee has been working with Kevin Hsieh in the OSF budget office to put logic into the 5-digit Asia budget codes. Moving forward, most Asia Program codes will start with the numbers 41. The next digit following the 41 will indicate the sub-region: South Asia (1), South East Asia (2) or East Asia (3). The following digit is the country code, indicating the relevant country, and the final digit will indicate the expense/cost type (Grant, Admin or Learning & Evaluation Code). This new coding structure will allow us to more easily generate various analysis reports on how we are allocating our funds.

**Taking Stock: Creating a Continuous Learning Environment and 2015 Staff Retreat – *Binaifer Nowrojee***

Responding to Hari Sharma’s request for an update on the Core Team meeting in January in preparation for the 2015 all-staff retreat in Mongolia, Binaifer Nowrojee gave an update.

In 2015, the APRO all-staff retreat aims to do two primary activities: 1) to finish up work from the APRO 2014 Retreat, including solidifying the APRO core values and operating principles, a task which the core team worked on extensively in the Istanbul retreat, and 2) to spend time thinking about different grant making approaches and practices in order to become more thoughtful grant-makers. The Grant Making Support Group (GMSG) will be present at the APRO staff at the retreat for the training. In addition, since we will be in Mongolia, the Open Forum Mongolia will spend some time discussing the situation and their work. Binaifer Nowrojee also appraised the Asia directors of Chris Stone’s planned attendance for part of the staff retreat in Mongolia.

The Core Team will continue to be the APRO representative body tasked with putting together the annual all-staff retreat, with assistance from the APRO Director’s Office. Each year, there will be some rotation to ensure that different APRO staff have an opportunity to serve on the Core Team.

**The Role of Directors at OSF: Reviewing a Working Draft – *Binaifer Nowrojee***

Binaifer Nowrojee referenced the “Role of Directors” document in the packet of materials provided, which is an OSF working draft. Binaifer updated the Asia Directors on the role alignment process taking place at the OSF central offices. Currently, the network has hundreds of different job titles, all interpreted differently for different roles. The goal of the role alignment process is to standardize and consolidate these titles over time, and ensure that position titles directly correlate to scope of work.

Time was spent discussing the draft document on the role of directors at OSF, which is proposing that directors should essentially have 4 major skillsets:

1. **Expertise in a Field/Geographic Area**
2. **Competencies in tools that OSF use:** Directors should have vision how grant-making should be conducted, and knowledge of the appropriate tools to use
3. **Vision** : Run the strategy process and deliver strategies
4. **Team Management**: Ensure and foster professional growth of a team with manageable workloads and professional development opportunities

Binaifer Nowrojee explained that directors should be concentrating their attention on two ends of the spectrum: strategic vision/direction and evaluating progress and impact. The implementation of the strategy, which falls between these two roles, should be undertaken by the team’s program staff. However, she acknowledged that currently this is not the practice. Workloads are often heavy and a majority of Asia Directors undertake tasks that should be designated to program officers. For example, in Foundation Connect, directors are not infrequently listed as the program officer leading and monitoring the grant, which should be the exception and not the rule. In other cases, program assistants are undertaking program officer level roles – while some opportunity for learning and growth should be provided to program assistants – again, this should not be the norm.

Martin Hala pointed out that the blurring of roles was due to understaffing. Jargal Perenlei mentioned the impossibility of this aspiration in the current reality, especially since Forum-Mongolia is heavily operational and overseeing its own programs and material outputs, which require her supervision, editing and quality control. Binaifer Nowrojee acknowledged that that the document is aspirational and that understaffing is a serious concern in some cases. However, in other cases, she noted the manner in which the grant-making was being undertaken (with multiple one year grants) was unnecessarily creating heavier workloads for the teams. She expressed the hope that when the role alignment process was complete, there would be an opportunity to properly task and staff according to the workload. She also acknowledged that staff needs for each team would differ and must be driven by the needs on the ground – for example, if an approach required small grants to remote and rural grantees, this workload would be more work-intensive for a program officer. The priority for the APRO Director’s Office at the moment is to properly align the workload and staffing before any expansion work begins.

Ezra Kaban noted an omission and suggested the addition of the responsibility of foundation directors to manage a board be added to the list of responsibilities. Maureen Aung-Thwin added that there should be some responsibility for directors to ensure staff health and growth. The discussion then transitioned to the responsibility of geographic directors to provide advice and strategic focus to thematic program interventions as well as the management and monitoring of their entry and work in Asia. After a brief discussion, the Asia directors decided to move forward with drafting a guiding memo for thematic program work within Asia. Johanna Chao Kreilick shared the approach that the Latin American Program (LAP) has taken towards overseeing thematic program work as part of its core strategic responsibilities, and encouraged APRO to be in conversation in order to compare experiences.

**2015 Strategy Process and new Categories of Work: What to expect from OSF and what will be happening in APRO – *Johanna Chao Kreilick and Martin Hala***

Johanna Chao Kreilick opened this session with a broad overview of the role of the Strategy Unit and its team members to provide tools that can help staff with their strategy and to strengthen the link between the strategy and the budget processes. Strategy and budget are essentially two sides of the same coin: The strategy is the narrative articulation of our work, while the budget should tell the same story with numbers.

The strategy-budget link further ties into the new Categories of Work system that is currently being developed. The revised Category of Work system was work-shopped at the APRO Strategy Jam 2015 in Phnom Penh which had representatives from every APRO program. The Strategy Unit is hopeful that the revised categories of work system will achieve: 1) Strategy and Budget Linkage 2) Clear communication about programmatic work 3) Generation of useful active reports that can be used for project management and strategic analysis.

The Strategy Unit also works on “New Enterprise Support” that which is looking at the 400+ spin-off organizations that were seeded within OSF over the years and then became independent organizations. The Strategy Unit is seeking to identify lessons learned and develop best practices for new entity creation at the OSF. Finally, the Strategy Unit has an in-house librarian available to assist programs with any research needs.

The conversation then shifted to Asia Directors’ questions on the Category of Work process, and the level of granularity that should be struck, as well as program accountability to applying and moving funds between categories. Martin Hala provided an explanation on the role of the Categories of Work within the APRO strategy drafting process, updating Asia Directors on the Strategy Jam 2015 training in Phnom Penh in February. According to Martin Hala, the Categories of Work are largely a communication device and a methodology for coding strategic thinking into a commonly-shared language that it is communicable across the network.

Martin Hala gave an update on the planned strategy planning sessions for APRO programs submitting new strategies this year. He also emphasized the usefulness of thinking ahead by linking the Categories of Work at the outset to the subsequent Portfolio Review processes. Martin Hala concluded with the message that the Asia teams do not have to alter the way they conceive of strategy, but rather think of it simply as a way to translate different thinking into a common template for a common understanding across OSF. Binaifer Nowrojee urged the Asia directors to ensure that the needs on the ground informed the selection of the category of work and not the other way around. Categories of work are to allow OSF to aggregate its work at the higher levels, not to dictate priorities on the ground. If an area of work does not appear to fit within the current categories, the Strategy Unit will help the program to ensure that the nature of the work is accurately captured in the system.

**APRO Strategy – *Martin Hala***

Martin Hala provided an update on the APRO strategy and walked the Asia Directors’ group through the upcoming deadlines for the strategy-budget cycle. He reiterated that programmatic work in Asia will continue to be locally driven by country programs, and that regional work would only be undertaken by APRO in select areas where the country offices cannot work, namely cross-border initiatives and sensitive issues. Martin Hala gave an update on the proposed APRO policy work on migration, which had originally been envisioned as a partnership between the International Migration Initiative and the Think Tank Fund (TTF). However, the TTF’s mandate was changed by the Global Board to have a limited geographic focus that will no longer extend to Asia, requiring a rethinking of the proposed initiative. Martin Hala also introduced the idea of APRO playing a role in building up the organizational capacity of key Pan-Asian regional organizations. Regional organizations in Asia could play an important role, but are typically very weak.

**Building a regional advocacy structure – *Tom Kellogg & Hari Sharma***

As the head of the team working on developing a regional advocacy strategy for APRO, Tom Kellogg opened the discussion. To date, the working group (Tom Kellogg, Hari Sharma, and Sana Ghouse) have been examining the current state of play for advocacy work in Asia, the work of our OSF advocacy colleagues in Brussels and Washington DC, and where we might go from here. The team is looking at a number of issues including the role of our grantee partners as mechanisms for advocacy. For example, are there ways to pursue advocacy through partnerships? How will we select our issues of concern to advocate on and through what methodology? What is the potential role of sub-regional groups such as ASEAN and SAARC? Should we expand our targets beyond governments to extend to the private sector and the market (which is playing an increasingly influential role particularly in the resource extraction industry in Asia)? It was suggested that the Reserve Fund could a viable option to support an exploratory convening between grantees across the region working on the issue. Directors discussed the idea and will take initiative if they feel this is useful and could have outcomes.

In addition, should we develop advocacy plans to influence the foreign policy of key Asian nations? The group identified the following countries as targets: China, India, Japan, Indonesia, Taiwan and Singapore. The Asia Directors agreed that grantees could possibly be used to carry out this work, and that a grantee organization could be charged with carrying over our grantee entities to the United Nations for consolidated advocacy efforts. Directors also agreed that work with multinational companies, largely in extractive industry, could be built up on a regional level by adding this to the portfolios of existing program staff that could incorporate this into their work. Asia Directors then brainstormed the best approach to multinational companies.

The regional advocacy team plans to have a draft document for incorporation in the APRO strategy submission to the Global Board this year. The team believes that the building-up of APRO advocacy efforts will be a gradual process, building on prior advocacy successes (for example, Burma). The process of drafting will be and open and consultative and the team will circulate the draft to all Asia colleagues once ready. Binaifer Nowrojee reminded the team to also consider the need for staffing and budget in addition to the strategy and some conversation focused on the possibilities.

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| Day 2  Friday, February 19, 2015 |

**Grant-making patterns in APRO –*Binaifer Nowrojee***

Binaifer Nowrojee opened this discussion sharing her findings on the grant making practices and patterns across Asia that are observable based upon data pulled from Foundation Connect. Unfortunately, foundation offices on GMS (TIFA and Mongolia) are not included or captured in this analysis. Binaifer Nowrojee expressed the hope that one day all APRO programs would be in the same database systems.

The findings show that programs in Asia tend to give small, one-year grants over a course of many years (the longest period being 18 years). Depending on the unit, 60-80% of grants are made in the fourth quarter, with virtually no grant being made in the first quarter. This timeline results in a deluge of APRO grants in November and December with a downstream effect for the departments that process the grant: Grants Management, Legal and Budget, making their workload even heavier in December and encroaching upon their holiday.

Similar to the grant dockets, programs leave their eligibility assessments to the end of year and are often writing and submitting them in parallel to the grant docket, indicating that there is no opportunity for meaningful assessment. A majority of the eligibility assessments contain information rather than analysis (for example, the number of board members and rotation schedule, but no analysis of the effectiveness of the board). Some programs adopt the approach that more information is better and sometimes an assessment contains 7-8 pages of information, devoid of much analysis. Eligibility assessments should be 3-4 pages. Sometimes, the documents are not properly edited, and it can be easily seen that the submitting program has copied and pasted information directly from the grantee’s writing into the eligibility assessment form. There is little analysis of what the findings of the eligibility assessment mean in the long-term for the organization, nor how we as OSF funders can best assist this organization in its mission. Since our eligibility assessments are not meeting the requisite standards, they often receive short time periods (often less than a year), which means that we have to write more eligibility assessments the following year. Lastly, weaknesses identified in the eligibility assessment are not being translated into the grant support. Our teams are not linking the eligibility assessment to their grant-making approach nor helping our grantee organizations to redress their weaknesses. This means that even if we support an organization for 10 years, at the end of that decade the grantee organization will not be in an optimal position to have become a stronger and more independent organization.

Lastly, she noted that there is seldom any reference to the program’s strategy in the grant docket write-up. Going forward, Binaifer requested that in the Rationale for Funding section, there always be a brief reference made to how this particular grant fits in within the exact objective of the program strategy, emphasizing that it can simply be one line. Binaifer encouraged the Asia directors to think through these observations, and collectively work to ensure that our grant making approach is connected to our strategy and is striving to be more effective and more impactful.

Essentially, the Asia programs are running in a hamster wheel, overburdened with one-year project activity grants that are all processed in the last quarter of the year without concern for strengthening our grantee organizations, only to repeat the same cycle the following year. Our approach means that we double the paperwork for ourselves, which contributes to the staff overload, and the lack of institutional support keeps our grantees weak and dependent. Most of our program staff spend their time processing a large number of dockets each year rather minimizing the paperwork so they can be outward looking and better analyze how their interventions can be more innovative and effective.

Binaifer urged Asia Directors to shift their understanding of success from amount of money spent annually to the quality of our grant-making. She noted that we have made grant-making an end in itself, rather than a vehicle for an objective that we are trying to achieve. Binaifer emphasized that moving forward across Asia, there should be a shift to granting multi-year funding which builds in earmarked funds for organizational development strengthening for our grantee partners. Martin Hala raised the point that this issue is largely due to understaffing and heavy workloads, which feeds into a vicious cycle of rushing to catch up. Binaifer agreed, and segued into how some of this overload is self-inflicted (not all) and could be diminished if we took a different approach to our grant-making. In addition, we have varying and inconsistent portfolio sizes being monitored by our staff members. This year, Binaifer Nowrojee will be tracking the grant loads of the Asia program staff to ensure that program officers are overseeing no more than 20-30 open grants at any given time. In the case of small grants to rural-based organizations, the program staff member must have a lighter grant load in order to have the time needed to monitor these grants properly. In summary, Binaifer identified a few areas for easy fixes:

1. Shift grants to multi-year cycles
2. Write eligibility assessments in the first and second quarter of the year
3. Build in earmarked funds for organizational development into grants
4. Provide training for APRO staff on writing strong Eligibility Assessments
5. Connect the grant to the strategy in “Rationale for Funding” section of docket write-ups
6. Move up end of year deadline: Nov. 6 is the last date for Asia grant approvals.

Upon opening the floor for feedback, the Asia directors commented that these changes are logical and will serve to help them in the longer-term. The issue of staff work load and portfolio size was compared between directors. Asia directors agreed that work load calibration was useful but would take some time to fix, considering the hiring freeze and overall OSF restructuring. Tom Kellogg requested the APRO Director’s Office to help identify resources in the Pan-Asian region that could work on grantee capacity building and institutional development, which has been difficult to locate in the East Asian context. Tom Kellogg also raised the issue of understaffing and overloading of program staff. Asia directors shared experiences with capacity building, with monitoring small grants, and with “tying-off” grantees with a final two-year grant. The power dynamics of being a funder were also discussed, and program staffs’ difficulty with navigating this relationship at times, particularly when it is time to end the grant support. The conversation then shifted to the need for more IT and Operations support in security training and briefings, particularly in digital security. Binaifer expressed her commitment to bring Mary Cadagin to the region so she has a better understanding of our context, and to develop a security-specific course on data security with Denis Reynolds.

**Diversity and Inclusion within the OSF Network –*Binaifer Nowrojee***

Binaifer opened a discussion on diversity and referenced the Memo on Inclusion included in the Asia Directors Retreat packet. She encouraged Asia Directors to begin to be aware of the issue of inclusion and to be cognizant of diversity as they build their teams and grantees, noting that diversity has a different lens in the different regions. For example, diversity in the Burmese context might be diversity of religion, while in the Nepali context it might be diversity of caste or ethnicity. Binaifer encouraged reflection as a whole, and noted that diversity should be a consideration in recruitment when two candidates with similar merits are finalists for a position. Directors then shared experiences on the difficulties of recruiting competent staff in the context of “brain drain” from different countries and the increasingly competitive private sphere which is drawing away candidates from the public sphere. The discussion then turned to diversity in ability and considerations of disability rights and ensuring that our disabled staff members and grantees are accommodated in our office access and our meeting set-ups. It was emphasized and agreed that we should practice what we preach and invest in infrastructural upgrades to ensure that all our offices are disability accessible.

**Evaluation of the directors’ retreat and any other wishes – *all Directors***

All directors agreed that they find the Directors’ Retreats being held twice a year a useful exercise. Directors appreciated the coinciding of this retreat with another meeting so that travel is consolidated, although it was noted that this will not be the case with upcoming October retreat in Kathmandu. If this timing proves difficult for some directors, it can be further discussed later in the year. Asia Directors also appreciated the value of the Core Team, and the rotation cycle so that different staff members have the opportunity to serve. The expressed their continued commitment to having a staff representative on the Core Team.

**Summary Action Points**

* Binaifer Nowrojee to be in touch with Denis Reynolds re: the development of an APRO-specific data and cyber-security training, and issues such as apprehension by state actors
* Binaifer Nowrojee to be in touch with Asia Directors in further drafting of Network Program Interaction Memo and next steps
* Strategy Unit Team to circulate notes from upcoming Program Sub-Committee meeting in which Thematic Program Directors discuss their anticipated geographic areas of work
* Binaifer Nowrojee to be in touch with Asia Directors by mid-year to review the workloads of program staff, the number of grants they are handling, and to clarify the role they play within the team

**2015 Upcoming APRO Deadlines**

**March 6** Strategy Memo due to Global Board Strategy & Budget Committee

**March 15**  2014 Performance Appraisal Deadline

**March 25-26** Binaifer Nowrojee (BN) Presenting before Global Board Strategy & Budget Committee

**March 31**  BN to circulate APRO Thoughtful Grant-Making Guidelines to Asia Directors for input

**April 1** Draft APRO Advocacy Strategy circulated to Asia Directors for input

(Advocacy Working Group: Tom Kellogg, Hari Sharma, Sana Ghouse)

**April 3** Headcounts due to BN for review

(Group A: TIFA, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, APRO)

**April 10** Headcount Deadline to Human Resources

(Group A: TIFA, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, APRO)

**May 1** Draft APRO Advocacy Strategy Budget and Headcount due to BN

(Advocacy Working Group: Tom Kellogg, Hari Sharma, Sana Ghouse)

**May 5** Headcounts due to BN for review

(Group B: ASD, Forum Mongolia, Burma Program, East Asia Program, India Program)

**May 12** Headcounts due to Human Resources

(Group B: ASD, Forum Mongolia, Burma Program, East Asia Program, India Program)

**May 13** ProposedAPRO Strategy narratives due to BN

(Group A: TIFA, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, APRO)

**June 3** APRO Strategy Deadline to the Global Board

(Group A: TIFA, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, APRO)

**July 3** Proposed 2016 Work Plans and Budgets due to BN and MH for review

(All Asia Directors)

**July 10**  2016 Work Plans and Budgets due to Global Board

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