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| **2ND ASIA DIRECTORS’ RETREAT**  **Tuesday 5th August – Wednesday 6th August, 29114**  **Inle Lake, Myanmar** |
| **PARTICIPANTS (alphabetically by last name)** |
| **Asia Directors**:  Maureen Aung-Thwin – *Burma Project, Director*  Martin Hala – *Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO), Asia Regional Manager*  Tom Kellogg – *Northeast Asia Program, Director*  Irman Lanti – *TIFA Foundation (Indonesia), Executive Director*  Binaifer Nowrojee – *Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO), Asia Regional Director*  Jargal Perenlei – *Open Society Forum (Mongolia), Executive Director*  Hari Sharma – *Alliance for Social Dialogue (Nepal), Director* |

**Minutes:**

Brittin Alfred – *Asia Office, Program Associate*

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| Tuesday, August 5, 2014  Overall Facilitator: Binaifer Nowrojee |

**Welcome – *Binaifer Nowrojee***

The 2nd Asia Director’s Retreat opened with a welcome by Binaifer Nowrojee, noting that this was the first meeting at which all directors were present, and thanking everyone for arranging their schedules to attend. Binaifer Nowrojee also thanked all of the staff for their invaluable support in organizing the retreat.

**Updates: Foundation Directors Meeting in London – *Irman Lanti & Hari Sharma***

Irman Lanti and Hari Sharma jointly presented a summary of the Foundation Directors’ Meeting in London in May. The meeting was one of the first to bring together the foundation directors from across the network. They described the meeting as an opportunity for Chris Stone to provide an in-depth explanation of the logic behind the 2013 transition year and to discuss with foundation directors the successes and challenges faced. The meeting also provided the opportunity for foundation directors to discuss the shared difficulties they face in their work as democracy and open society values are increasingly challenged across the globe, and to exchange notes with one another on their approaches to these challenges.

**Updates: Network Program Directors’ meeting in London – *Binaifer Nowrojee***

Binaifer Nowrojee provided an update on the Network Program Director’s meeting held in New York in June. The meeting agenda was different from the foundation directors’ meeting and the agenda touched on issues such as the new grant-making policies that have affected the network programs. As with the foundation directors’ meeting, the network program heads were able to discuss the successes and challenges they had faced in weathering the transition.

**Updates: Asia Portfolio Review – *Martin Hala &* *Hari Sharma***

Martin Hala and Hari Sharma shared their experience of the Nepal Program’s Portfolio Review focusing on the topic of Transitional Justice and held in London on 23 May, 2014. Martin Hala emphasized that the preparation of the List of Portfolio Elements and the Portfolio Review Document was the most time consuming and laborious part of the process, and advised that the diligent preparation of the necessary documents was crucial to a successful conversation. Hari Sharma recommended directors to know their selected portfolios very well, and to be prepared to rank the grants in terms of their success, as well as provide an honest evaluation of each grant’s performance. Martin Hala also advised that the portfolio topic be thoughtfully selected, and recommended that a substantial and intellectually stimulating topic be chosen. Hari Sharma shared his experience in conducting a Portfolio Review internally with his own staff, and all directors were encouraged to undertake Portfolio Reviews within their staff teams and boards as a valuable exercise to prepare for the eventual Portfolio Reviews with Chris Stone.

**Action Point:**

* Martin Hala and Hari Sharma to circulate the Nepal Program’s Portfolio Review documents (attached to this email)

**Updates: TIFA Strategy Process *– Irman Lanti***

Irman Lanti provided an update on TIFA Indonesia’s 2014 strategy process. TIFA’s 2013 strategy was approved for one year and they were asked to submit a new strategy for 2014. Irman described the inherent difficulty of writing a programmatic strategy in advance of major elections with significantly different outcomes for Indonesia’s political trajectory depending on the results. He noted TIFA’s grant-making strategy and programmatic priorities will have to change based on the election results. Irman expressed his wish that the Global Board take the time to understand Indonesia’s political history and dynamics in order to provide substantive feedback on the wisdom of the strategy.

**Updates: Legalizing our Offices – *Binaifer Nowrojee (India), Maureen Aung-Thwin (Myanmar), Tom Kellogg (Hong Kong), Martin Hala (Thailand)***

Binaifer Nowrojee announced the Asia Office’s goal to register all Asia offices and legalize all Asia staff in order to legitimize our work and conform with OSF’s efforts to secure longer-term and sustainable presences in our countries. Binaifer recognized the problematic implications of being legally registered and acknowledged that in some cases legal registration has simply not been an option. The Asia Regional Office is looking at a range of options, including hosting arrangements, contracting out companies who can serve as employers , as well as filing for registration.

**Updates: Burma: Moving from Project to Foundation – *Maureen Aung-Thwin***

Maureen Aung-Thwin updated the meeting on the progress of the Burma Project (BP)’s transition to becoming a national foundation. Maureen also highlighted that the BP will face difficulty with stretching the flat budget to support the heightened running costs after necessary office and IT systems upgrades are made. The BP is working hard on a time line to be submitted at the beginning of 2015.

**Updates: Exchanging Notes: Eligibility Assessments, 1/3 Threshold and the Grant Making Support Group - *Maureen Aung-Thwin, Martin Hala, Tom Kellogg, Irman Lanti, Binaifer Nowrojee, Jargal Perenlei & Hari Sharma***

Binaifer Nowrojee asked Asia directors to discuss and share their experiences with the newly introduced grant-making processes which are currently not applicable to foundations (Mongolia and Indonesia). During the conversation the following themes emerged:

**1/3 Threshold:** All directors agreed the 1/3 Threshold poses a legitimate problem due to the additional work it creates and the resulting delays in grant processing. Maureen Aung-Thwin and other directors expressed concern over the 1/3 Threshold’s repercussions for their under $25K grantees, who will undoubtedly have difficulty securing third party funding. All directors agreed that a general waiver process for receiving batched approval for smaller organizations in transitional process countries should be devised. Binaifer Nowrojee emphasized that not a single 1/3 Threshold Exception has been denied, and encouraged Asia directors to not allow the 1/3 Threshold to alter their approach to grant-making which must be led by the needs on the ground.

**Eligibility Assessments:** Tom Kellogg highlighted the positive effects of Eligibility Assessments (EAs), noting that EAs force programs to ask questions of grantees that might otherwise be overlooked and offer a formalized process to guide this practice.

**Workload calibration:** Directors raised the issue of staff anxiety in submitting 1/3 Threshold Exception Requests and EAs to the President. Binaifer Nowrojee highlighted that the amount of nervous energy and work that go into these documents for approval (1/3 Arguments, EAs) is highly disproportional and needs to be reduced. She urged Asia directors to invest in training to provide staff with direction and confidence to produce strong documents rather than submit these documents to endless editing and rewriting by multiple members of the team. She also proposed the possibility for staff to write these documents in their local language, for translation, if written English skills were posing a problem. This not only applied to staff, but also to grantees. Binaifer Nowrojee encouraged programs to send out calls for proposals and the organizational self- assessment forms for Eligibility Assessments in the local language if that made the application process easier for grantees.

**Role of Foundations:** Irman Lanti raised the issue of the role of the country foundations in these new processes. Binaifer Nowrojee clarified that all foundations can opt in to these processes, and incorporate them voluntarily, but at this point are not yet required to implement them.

**Human Resource standardizations:** Irman Lanti expressed concerns over complying with centralized human resource standards which have recently been announced from New York, and the difficulty in knowing proper titles, pay scales, etc. Binaifer clarified that this is determined locally, and that for the moment the foundation boards should serve as the governance mechanism on this. Jargal Perenlei shared the Forum’s strategy for setting pay scales and titles by comparing and aligning with the human resource standards of other industry actors, for example the Asia Foundation.

**Action Points:**

* Asia Office to explore opportunities for GMSG trainings to be provided for Foundation and Country Program staff
* Investing in a training to coach grant-making staff in writing eligibility assessments and 1/3 threashold documents.

**Updates: OSF Website and Asia - *Binaifer Nowrojee***

Binaifer Nowrojee updated directors on the fact that the Communications department had asked the Asia Office to think about how we want the website to look. Binaifer would like programs to think about what successes could be profiled and publicized (without putting any grantees at risk) so that the website accurately captures the Asia team’s work. The Foundation directors expressed their desire to keep independent foundation websites, but could think through how the Foundation websites could harmonize with, or be profiled on, the larger OSF website.

**Action Points:**

* In early 2015, the Asia Office will begin to ask programs to think about website entries in order to provide the Communications Department with content.

**Updates: Any Other Business - *Binaifer Nowrojee***

**Performance Appraisals**

Binaifer Nowrojee announced that in her supervisory role she would be responsible for performance appraisals for OSF Asia program directors (Maureen, Martin and Tom) . Foundations’ board chairs are responsible for conducting performance appraisals for Foundation directors (Irman, Jargal, and Hari). Binaifer announced that this year, these performance reviews will incorporate staff members’ feedback through a “360 degree” process.

**Action Points:**

* Binaifer Nowrojee will send a self –appraisal form to Maureen Aung-Thwin, Martin Hala, and Thomas Kellogg in September in order to capture their input before the end of the year.
* Binaifer Nowrojee will ensure that all individuals whom she does not directly oversee will receive a performance appraisal from their respective board chairs.

**The 2015 Budget Process – *Binaifer Nowrojee***

Binaifer Nowrojee will be presenting the 2015 Budget and Strategy to the Global Board on September 3rd, from 9:30 am to 11:30 am New York time. Directors are welcome to join via video or in person if they are in New York. The presentation is limited to only five power point slides and is intended to provide a summary capturing all of the overall changes to the budget. Binaifer Nowrojee encouraged directors to reexamine and consolidate the number of Categories of Work represented in their budgets wherever possible.

Binaifer summarized the draft budget: Asia Regional Programs and Foundations provide a combined $24 million to the region, while the Network Programs contribute an additional $11 million. This brings OSF’s total footprint across Asia to $35 million, and demonstrates that Network Programs account for about 30% of OSF’s budget in Asia, underscoring the importance of their role. Currently, the total head counts in the Asia region are frozen, but existing positions can be “repurposed” and the case argued to the budget committee.

**Action Points:**

* All directors to flag any unused headcounts for Binaifer Nowrojee to absorb into Asia Office

**2015-2017 Asia Strategy Presentation – *Martin Hala***

Martin Hala introduced the draft 2015-17 Asia Strategy, stating that the Directors’ Retreat would be used as an opportunity to make any changes or additions to the draft document being submitted to the Global Board budget subcommittee for approval.

Overall, the Asia Office is expected to re-balance the current imbalance of work and provide support to the individual programs’ and their staff. There are only two major planned programmatic interventions that co-authors Binaifer Nowrojee and Martin Hala felt the Asia Office would be the premier entity to pursue: (1) policy making in migration across Asia and (2) building up of advocacy capacity.

**1. Migration Concept**:

The Migration concept would be jointly pursued by the Asia Office in collaboration with the International Migration Initiative (IMI) and the Think Tank Fund (TTF). The Asia Office could facilitate the IMI to cover new territories, helping to make the IMI approach more balanced geographically without a great amount of new financial investment or manpower. The TTF has expressed interest in the Migration concept and feels that collaboration with the Asia Office on a shared area of interest could help facilitate a strategic and organized expansion of TTF programming into Asia. The TTF and IMI each have headcounts for Asia and these two positions could be jointly hired in conjunction with Asia Office and dedicated to the development of this concept. Binaifer and Martin argued that this approach would not require large investments, and represented a relatively limited, manageable initiative. All directors agreed that this approach made sense and should be pursued as it is outlined in both the discussion note prepared by the IMI and the draft Asia Strategy.

**2. Advocacy:**

All directors next discussed the various ways in which the Asia Office could increase OSF’s advocacy capacity in the region, acknowledging that advocacy would likely be ineffective at the national level, and would require sub-regional actors such as SAARC and ASEAN. After discussion, it was decided that a four or five member advocacy team, with two members devoted to ASEAN and SAARC, and two OSF advocacy staff (Jerry Fowler in D.C. and Neil Campbell in Brussels) would be the most effective. As Asia Office’s advocacy capacity develops, an advocacy approach for East Asia (China, Japan, South Korea) could be developed under Tom Kellogg’s guidance.

**Action Points:**

* Binaifer Nowrojee and Martin Hala to jointly pursue the continued development of these concepts with IMI, TTF, and OSF Advocacy Staff
* Final text of the Asia Pacific Regional Office strategy to be submitted to New York by 11 August 2014

**2015-17 Asia Strategy Discussion – *Tom Kellogg***

Tom Kellogg started the second session of the discussion on the Asia strategy by opening the floor to all directors for their questions, comments and concerns. During the conversation the following themes emerged:

**Asia Office as Learning Environment**: Binaifer Nowrojee raised the issue of the Asia Office’s role in creating a continuous learning environment and stated that she would like the Asia Office to eventually have a professional facilitator on its team in order to build up the skills of the staff. She also raised the issue of English language capacity and emphasized the Asia staff’s need to improve written English because of the fact that it is the official working language for the OSF central network offices. Lastly, Binaifer and other directors agreed that the Asia Office should make investment in the management skills of the program and foundation directors, for example on issues of stress management, dealing with local labor laws, and resolving conflict within staff.

**Asia Office Advisory Board**: All directors were in agreement that an Asia advisory board would be problematic and not a useful undertaking at this stage due to the difficulties in delineating a useful role of a regional advisory board. As needed, Hari Sharma suggested that advisory committees on specific themes or countries could be appointed and called an “expert group”, without any formalized board arrangement.

**Shared Frameworks**: It was agreed that the Asia Office would abstain from proposing a Shared Framework on migration and would proceed with treating new programmatic work as “concepts”.

**Asia Office Name:** After a brief discussion on potential names and acronym combinations for the Asia Office, it was decided to refer to the Asia Office as the “Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO)”. Directors agreed that at the risk of being viewed as expansionist, it could be explained that this name allows us to distinguish ourselves from other offices within OSF (for example, ARO) and also accommodates for future work in the Pacific region if and where feasible.

**Co-Funding:** It was established that all conversations with other funders will be held in consultation with the directors of each country program and foundation. This was decided in response to Tom Kellogg’s expressed concern that certain country funders have politically-motivated agendas behind their development work in attempts to increase soft power in Asia, which could have damaging repercussions for local OSF programs and staff.

**Asia Office Structure:** All Asia directors agreed that the new Asia office should as much as possible avoid creating bureaucratic layers. There was some discussion on the value of sub-regional managers and the conclusion that they would add an additional layer of bureaucracy. The Asia strategy at the moment proposes two regional managers: One for programs and strategy (Martin Hala) and one for learning and evaluation. Binaifer Nowrojee and Martin Hala highlighted that the LM&E-focused regional manager would also take on hidden administrative work of APRO, such as working with human resources on staffing issues, portfolio reviews and board development. This manager would also develop a methodology for tracking our spending and assessing the impact of our grant-making practice – a critical position considering OSF’s increased emphasis on self-evaluation.

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| Wednesday, August 6, 2014  Overall Facilitator: Maureen Aung-Thwin |

**Report back from last meeting: Shared Framework proposals and decision to proceed with one**

Binaifer Nowrojee began the second day of the retreat with a welcome and a brief outline of the day’s agenda. She summarized the issues that were identified as being of relevant concern to all of Asia: and asked directors what conclusions they had come to in their work to incorporate the three identified themes of Youth, Diversity, and Migration.

**Youth – *Maureen Aung-Thwin & Hari Sharma***

Maureen, Hari and their staff ultimately concluded that a Shared Framework did not seem like the most viable option for developing work around youth, and suggested a number of alternatives. Youth issues could be mainstreamed to programming across Asia by flagging youth as a core concept, and encouraging Network Program partners in Asia to incorporate youth into the development of their work in Asia. Asia Directors also discussed the benefits of scholarships to youth, as well as brief educational experiences such as the OSI Rights and Governance two-week educational experience offered at CEU, mentioned by Tom Kellogg. All directors agreed that educational and content delivering activities could be the most impactful tool for youth-related work at this time.

**Action Points:**

* Binaifer Nowrojee to adjust the draft paper on Youth, removing references to the Shared Framework, and circulate to all Asia staff
* Binaifer Nowrojee to meet with Lenny Bernardo in order to discuss the OSI Rights and Governance course at CEU and possibilities for encouraging applications from students in Asia and expanding to schools in Asia.
* Jargal to share the Forum Mongolia’s work on youth violence and the impact of crime and violence on youth living in low-income communities

**Diversity - *Irman Lanti***

Irman Lanti presented a concept that would address the issue of growing religious fundamentalism and the shrinking spaces for minority religious communities. All directors agreed this was a complex issue that OSF traditionally has not adequately addressed because it lacks the proper tools. It was suggested to develop a concept to initiate a platform for communication between the liberal forces in faith majority countries (starting with Islam) and potentially collaborate with another OSF Regional Program such as the Middle East North Africa (MENA). All directors emphasized the Asia Office should be aware of the risk of funding moderates to talk only among like-minded individuals and failure to include the target extreme audiences. This concept needs to be further developed, and the identification of potential individuals who might participate will serve as a starting point.

**Migration: *Martin Hala & Tom Kellogg***

Martin Hala acknowledged that the Migration concept was discussed at length yesterday, and summarized that the proposed arrangement with the IMI and the TTF was found acceptable by all directors. Martin Hala used this brief opportunity to confirm that this would be presented as a concept, and that this would not be pursued as a formal Shared Framework.

**Action Points:**

* Martin Hala and Binaifer Nowrojee to read Goran Buldioski’s comments on the discussion note drafted by IMI, and make any necessary adjustments
* Martin Hala and Binaifer Nowrojee to incorporate migration work into the final version of the Asia Strategy and present it as a concept within the Asia strategy.
* Martin Hala and Binaifer Nowrojee will work to further develop the arrangement with the IMI and TTF.

**Creating a framework for network program interventions in Asia to maximize relevance and impact - *Binaifer Nowrojee***

Although all agree on the value of network program contributions, Asia program directors expressed some concerns and different experiences in working with various network programs and uncertainty on how to always build strong and useful collaborations. Binaifer Nowrojee shard the framework document used by the Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa (OSIEA) as one example to help establish clearly stated parameters for collaboration. All directors agreed that similar parameters should be established for work in the Asia region, and that the Asia office should help guide and ground network program interventions. In addition, the Asia Office should also be a catalyst to attract more network programming and to encourage collaboration in cases where increased network program interaction is desired (Mongolia). In the conversation, access to essential medicine was identified as a key thematic issue faced by foundations and country programs throughout the region. Binaifer Nowrojee identified Vinay Viswanatha as an expert resource within Asia who could help to develop a paper on how work on this issue could be developed across Asia.

**Action Points:**

* Binaifer Nowrojee to approach Vinay Viswanatha to draft a document on access to medicine and how we could facilitate this work across the board
* Martin Hala and Binaifer Nowrojee to draft Asia Office framework to maximize network program interventions in Asia for Asia Directors’ input.

**Creating a continuous learning environment: The upcoming October 2014 Asia Team Retreat - *Binaifer Nowrojee***

Binaifer Nowrojee described the nature of the upcoming October 2014 Asia Team Retreat as an opportunity for all Asia staff to come together for the first time, and for directors to evaluate how beneficial and effective such a gathering is and if it should be continued on an annual or biennial basis into the future. Inclusion of all ranges of staff (programmatic, administrative, office support, human resources, etc) from each program is encouraged, and if a staff member has other priorities or important travel the Asia Staff Retreat will not interfere with this. Binaifer emphasized the need to take the diversity of the group into consideration and to design an agenda generic and interesting enough that will benefit all staff participants regardless of where they sit in the staff organogram.

Binaifer will be bringing in two outside facilitators who are trained in a methodology called Appreciative Inquiry that strives to stretch people beyond their desk work, and create an organizational culture and team environment that is conducive to bringing out the strengths of all staff. The agenda will be drafted in communication with the facilitators and a “Core Team” of staff to ensure that the content addresses the topics and issues identified by each program. One slot in the agenda will be reserved to enable the staff to learn about TIFA Indonesia’s work and may focus on a particular issue in Indonesia as the host country. All directors suggested that the Asia Office strategy also be discussed at some point during the retreat.

Binaifer asked all directors to nominate one person from their staff who would serve on a Core Team of individuals responsible for liaising with the Asia Office on behalf of their program. This Core Team will communicate with facilitators on the collaborative drafting of the agenda, will help to arrange flights and visas for their staff, and arrive a day or two earlier to Jakarta to help organize the logistics of the retreat.

**Action Points:**

* All directors should nominate one individual from their staff to serve on the retreat Core Team end send Binaifer Nowrojee the name of the selected individual
* All directors should encourage staff to reflect on the desired content for the retreat and be cooperative in proactively engaging with their appointed Core Team member

**Evaluation of the directors’ retreat and any other wishes – *Maureen Aung-Thwin, Martin Hala, Tom Kellogg, Irman Lanti, Binaifer Nowrojee, Jargal Perenlei & Hari Sharma***

All Asia directors stated that they found the directors retreat to be valuable and constructive. All agreed that holding the retreat twice a year felt manageable, particularly during the upcoming years when the emerging Asia Office is still under development. Directors were in favor of the venue rotating between different host countries, with a special session incorporated into the agenda dedicated to a particular issue in the host country. Directors vocalized the desire for the Asia Directors Retreat to be an opportunity for exchange and exploration of possibilities for country program cross-pollination. Directors suggested that the agenda could be collaboratively designed in advance in consultation with country directors, who could select the topics and issues to be discussed.

**Vote of thanks and adjournment – *Binaifer Nowrojee***

After no outstanding business remained to be discussed, Binaifer Nowrojee thanked all Asia directors for their time and participation and closed the meeting at 11:30 am.