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| <b>Date:</b>      | 1 August 2016  |
| <b>Programme:</b> | Strategic Partnerships for Dialogue & Dissent – Fair, Green and Global Alliance, activity nr. 27534          |
| <b>Re:</b>        | Management letter on the baseline studies carried out for the inception phase of the FGG programme 2016-2020 |
| <b>Ref.:</b>      | DSO/MO-360/15  |
| <b>Contact:</b>   | Daniëlle Hirsch, <a href="mailto:dh@bothends.org">dh@bothends.org</a> , +31 20 530 66 00                     |

Dear Mrs. Tjoelker, dear Mr. Van Bommel,

On behalf of the FGG Alliance –ActionAid, Both ENDS, Clean Clothes Campaign, Milieudefensie/Friends of the Earth International, SOMO and the Transnational Institute, I gladly present the final reports of the baseline studies that were carried out as part of the inception phase of the FGG Programme 2016-2020.<sup>1</sup>

The overall baseline study consists of four separate analyses; an internal study on Mutual Capacity Development and three external studies for each of our Theories of Change. These studies were carried out between February and July 2016. The ToC<sup>2</sup>1 and ToC2 studies were led by *Context, international cooperation* while ToC3 was done by *Profundo*.



In this management letter the FGG Steering Committee sets out to guide readers through the final reports. After describing process and methodology, we share our reflections on the findings of the different reports. Finally, we indicate direct and annual follow-up activities that will ensure wise use of the studies to the benefit of the FGG programme.

### **Methodology baseline studies – results of process taken for inception phase**

#### *Mutual Capacity Development*

Mutual Capacity Development is a key concept for the FGG Alliance. Therefore, after in-depth reflections with the consultants on the scope and methodology of the external studies, the FGG Alliance decided to carry out an internal analysis on this matter to assure sufficient attention could be paid to the current state of affairs. The separate study of the capacities of our partners and our own organisations allowed us to take into

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<sup>1</sup> The requirements for this inception phase are described in the contract as follows: *De subsidieontvanger zal uiterlijk op 1 juli 2016 de resultaten van de inceptiefase beschikbaar stellen (baselines). De baselines bestaan uit een uitgewerkte contextanalyse per land met daarin in ieder geval gegevens over de capaciteit van de zuidelijke partners in 2016 en de stand van zaken t.a.v. de thematische doelen op pleiten en beïnvloeden.* As the FGG programme is a global programme, it was agreed that our baselines would not be specified per country. [NB deadline was adjusted to 1st August]

<sup>2</sup> Theory of Change

account that there is considerable overlap between partners working on different ToCs. In addition, conclusions about capacities and needs to strengthen these are similar between different FGG members and partners, independent of the TOCs they would be focusing on.

For this study, we have taken a qualitative approach consisting of 30+ in-depth interviews with existing partners about their current capacity as well as their main needs for mutual capacity development. To honour the mutuality of our approach, each of the six FGG members has also reflected on these questions themselves. A group of FGG staff members responsible for partner relations as well as the Steering Committee have reflected on the outcomes during two dedicated meetings. The resulting report is attached to this letter.

FGG greatly appreciated the possibility of addressing Mutual Capacity Development in the programme's inception phase, since we feel that the process by itself already held a lot of value; through dedicated conversations with partner organisations, FGG staff has gathered new insights. The resulting analysis provides an excellent basis for the further deepening and strengthening our approach to Mutual Capacity Development. The exercise was felt to be useful and there was enthusiasm to make this an annually recurrent monitoring tool.

#### *TOCs 1, 2 and 3*

The three external baseline studies have been carried out with full participation of FGG staff; the teams organised two rounds of discussions – the first based on initial concept notes prepared by FGG staff members<sup>3</sup>, and the second on the draft reports by the consultants. Following these discussions, staff provided additional written inputs and gave ample feedback to the drafts. In addition to the combined inputs from FGG members, the consultants did desk research, held a survey among partner organisations, and realised interviews with FGG partner organisations, academics, Northern and Southern CSOs and representatives of European governmental bodies. These interviews allowed for a triangulation of and provided references for the common understanding of the baseline findings by the FGG Alliance. The process of target setting was done internally as part of the baseline process

#### *Inception phase goals met in the process*

This process served the goals we had for our inception phase; it has allowed for joint strategizing among team members and with partner organisations. Also, it has strengthened the joint understanding amongst FGG members of our Theories of Change, including their underlying assumptions, focus in terms of activities, planned interventions and indicators.

The inception phase came to an end during FGG's Annual Meeting 2016 in Amsterdam on June 16<sup>th</sup>. The meeting gathered over 70 FGG staff members and Steering Committee members. One of the agenda points was a discussion of the outcomes of the baseline, also with the FGG Advisory Group members.

Besides the baseline reports, an important outcome of the inception phase is increased understanding and reconfirmed collaboration among team members. In addition, targets have been set and uploaded in IATI.

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<sup>3</sup> As a starting point for the studies, concept notes have been developed per dossier, in which FGG Alliance staff members elaborate on the current state of affairs, relevant policy processes, spaces for CSO intervention and gender. A similar, somewhat more extensive concept note has been developed for dossier 3.3.3, which has not been integrated in the ToC3 baseline study due to the somewhat distinct nature of this dossier. These concept notes are internal working documents and therefore not included in the final overall reports. They will be further updated when relevant.

## **Findings**

The baseline studies confirm the priorities we have set for our Strategic Partnership. First of all, the urgency and importance of working on the enabling environment for civil society actors and environmental and human rights defenders. Secondly, the dialogue and dissent within the partnership with the Ministry is underlined as an area of attention. Third, it is clear from the studies that work is still needed to better analyse the gender aspects of our work in various policy fields. This topic has been prioritised as the first item on our Learning Agenda that we will focus on in the second half of this year.

The three ToC studies provide a context analysis of the policy fields concerning corporate conduct, trade and investment, and financial regulation and tax policies. They are helpful in providing a broad stakeholder review on our main research questions.

While we share the context and baseline analyses that arise, we do feel that on particular issues the conclusions reflect a difference between the analysis of the FGG Alliance and some of the stakeholders consulted, of the current situation in fields we work in. An example of such a different way of interpreting current trends is the suggestion by stakeholders to take a more cooperative approach in corporate conduct, focusing on voluntary standards, where we explicitly aim for legally binding standards. A second example is the advice, in ToC3, to 'jump on the band wagon' of policy processes where there is currently momentum – while we explicitly choose to set the agendas also in areas where there is so far little space for intervention. Our FGG-1 programme proved that choosing a different approach has also made the alliance effective in several fields in the past. This explains that our programme may not always reflect the suggestions provided in the stakeholder review as reflected in these baseline studies. We propose this could be a topic for our next policy discussion with our counterparts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Having said that, the main conclusion of the FGG Steering Committee is that the studies adequately confirm our programme choices. Particularly in terms of the fields of work, assumptions, strategies chosen and results aimed at, the conclusions of the studies confirm the approach we take. In terms of the formulations of outcome areas and indicators, the reports confirm that these reflect our work and are useful for measuring progress.

## **Using findings for monitoring and evaluation**

The outcomes of our inception phase activities serve our monitoring and evaluation purposes. The FGG Programme is too extensive to allow for the baseline studies to provide a 'benchmark' in the form of detailed point-zero descriptions of all the specific policy processes we work on. Rather, they provide a broader context analysis of the relevant policy fields of corporate conduct, trade and investment and financial regulation and tax policies from a global perspective. Following our experiences with the FGG Programme 2011-2016, we will use these analyses for our mid-term and end evaluations to reflect on changes and to analyse the contribution of the FGG alliance to these changes.

The studies have furthermore functioned as background material for the target setting for 2016-2017 by the teams and with partner organisations. Such target setting will be done annually; reporting and reflection will also take place annually. During the planning process in September, final adjustments to the targets for 2017 will be made by each FGG member organisation. For monitoring purposes, the formulations of outcome areas

and related indicators are now definite; a glossary will be developed to ensure coherent understanding of all the terms used.

In order to monitor our mutual capacity development results, we have developed an approach additional to the monitoring of the specific outcome area B in our programme. As mentioned above, we will carry out an annual qualitative study similar to the baseline studies through interviewing 5-7 partner organisations per FGG member, focusing on the changes that have occurred compared to the baseline of Mutual Capacity Development and will analyse the contribution of the FGG programme to these changes.

#### **Other follow-up**

- A. Gender has been prioritised as the first topic on our Learning Agenda and will therefore be further addressed in the second half of 2016, to ensure proper inclusion of the main learning points in the 2017 Work Plan.
- B. To allow for the dissemination of the main findings of the baseline studies, we are producing accessible 4-page summaries that we will share with you and other interested stakeholders.
- C. The programme committee members are now discussing with programme staff if there is a need for additional or more detailed benchmarks in order to be able to monitor and measure changes achieved in the course of programme implementation per dossier.
- D. The FGG approach to Mutual Capacity Development is still considered a novelty by many. Based on the outcomes of the baseline on Mutual Capacity Development the FGG Alliance is therefore considering to develop a publication on this approach. The FGG Alliance would gladly exchange ideas about mutual capacity development with their counterparts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

To allow for a shared understanding of the baseline studies, we suggest to include a discussion of the studies on the agenda of our next policy discussion within our Strategic Partnership with you. We hope you will enjoy reading the reports, and we look forward to a discussion on the outcomes of our inception phase.

Kind regards,



Danielle Hirsch,  
Director Both ENDS

#### *Annexes:*

- Baseline Study Mutual Capacity Development;
- Baseline Study ToC 1;
- Baseline Study ToC 2;
- Baseline Study ToC 3;
- Revised budget;