



## Voices for Inclusion and Civil Society Empowerment

**Disabled People Organisations stepping up for people with disabilities rights in Liberia**

# INCEPTION REPORT

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## List of acronyms

AIFO	Association Friends of Raoul Follereau
CVP	Communication Visibility Plan
EU	European Union
DPO	Disabled People Organisation
HR	Human Resources
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NCD	National Commission on Disability
NUOD	National Union of Organization of the Disabled
ORS	Oscar Romero School for the Deaf
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
PWD	Person with disabilities
VOICE	Voices of Inclusion and Civil Society Empowerment
WS	Williette Safehouse
UN	United Nations

**List of Annexes**

Annex 1: M&E Plan

Annex 2: Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Annex 3: Project Risk Log

Annex 4: Work Plan

Annex 5: Communication & Visibility Plan

Annex 6: Visibility Materials

Annex 7: Project Launch event documents

## 1. Description of the Action

<b>Project Name</b>	Voice of Inclusion and Civil Society Empowerment (VOICE)-Disable People Organisation Stepping up for people with disabilities rights in Liberia.	
<b>Reference No.</b>	Europe Aid/168161/DD/ACT/Multi	
<b>Contract Number</b>	CSO-LA 2020 / 421-002	
<b>Project Duration</b>	24 months	
<b>Project Start Date</b>	01 February 2021	
<b>Project End Date</b>	31 January 2023	
<b>Status</b>	End of Inception Phase	
<b>Name</b>	<i>The European Commission EU Delegation to Liberia</i>	<b>AIFO</b>
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<b>Date</b>	Approval:	Submission: 22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2021
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<b>Target country(ies)</b>	Bomi, Montserrado and Nimba
<b>Target groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 9 Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs) and the National Union of the Organisations of the Disabled (NUOD) members in Montserrado (3 DPOs and NUOD central office), Bomi (3 DPOs and NUOD county delegation) and Nimba (3 DPOs and NUOD county delegation), made of 1.047 people with disabilities (PWDs) of which 419 are women and 628 are men (within the DPOs)</li> <li>- 90 deaf and HOH young persons in Montserrado, Bomi and Nimba counties participating in livelihood and skills training (age from 15 to 35).</li> </ul>
<b>Final beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All PWDs in Liberia (estimated 752.000 people), in particular all deaf and HOH young persons (estimated 52.640 people)</li> <li>- Deaf and HOH young persons’ family members of project beneficiaries (estimated 250.000 members).</li> <li>-10.000 Community dwellers in target communities.</li> </ul>

## 2. Executive Summary

This inception report provides an overview of the Inception Phase of the European Union (EU) funded project titled *Voices for Inclusion and Civil Society Empowerment (VOICE) - Disabled People Organisations stepping up for people with disabilities rights in Liberia*.

This 2-year project aims at enhancing the capacity of civil society organisations, to promote and empower persons with disabilities and to ensure that people with disabilities can fully enjoy their rights in Liberia. In particular, the project aims at enabling the umbrella federation of people with disabilities, the National Union of Organization of the Disabled (NUOD), the Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and their members to effectively demand the respect and fulfilment of the human rights of all Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), in line with the Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) to which Liberia is a signatory since 2012. The primary beneficiaries of the project are deaf and hard of hearing persons (HOH) who will be supported to ensure that they have equal access to work and employment opportunities. It is implemented in the counties of Montserrado, Bomi and Nimba, in partnership with Williette Safehouse (co-applicant) along with other local partners and associates.

The project will directly target beneficiaries from the disabled community who will benefit from the entire project planned interventions.

The project interventions will focus on the following four strategic areas and key activities include:

- *Capacity-building component.* Training sessions on organisational management skills
- *Advocacy component.* NUOD advocacy follow-up meetings with DPOs to establish local advocacy actions
- *Awareness component.* The Information Education and Communication (IEC) Programme, Community Radio and TV programme with the participation of deaf and HOH persons focussed on PWDs right to work and employment.
- *Livelihood and skills training component.* The Fellowship programme including life-skills, literacy, social entrepreneurship training, and coaching for 90 deaf and HOH persons.

The inception report covers key activities that were carried out during the inception phase from 01 February 2021 to 31 March 2021. It provides a summary of the main inception phase achievements and set up of project management and implementation structures under the inception phase namely:

- The recruitment of AIFO Project Manager and WS Programme Manager
- Meeting with EU delegation
- Field mission to Saclepea, Nimba County
- Field mission to Bomi, that is, meeting with ORS, NUOD Bomi Charter and others
- A Detailed Project implementation Plan is developed that includes key project documents such as the M&E plan and Monitoring protocol, Communication & Visibility Plan, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Risk Log and Detailed Work Plan.
- Signing of the MOU with Williette Safehouse
- Planning and preparation for VOICE Project launch

### **3. Implementation of Project Activities**

#### **3.1 Activities implemented during Inception period**

This segment provides synopsis of project activities conducted during the project inception period, which were primarily focussed on the followings;

-EU meeting: a meeting was held with the EU delegation during the inception phase, the meeting was aim at discussing the VOICE Project launch, soliciting their inputs on the project launch and the induction of the VOICE Project Manager and seeking answers regarding some concerns associated with the VOICE project. The meeting was successful and met its objectives. The meeting was held on March 24,2021 at EU Office, Sekou Touré Avenue 37, Mamba Point, Monrovia, Liberia and it was attended by Melany Oey, AIFO Country Director and Nibo R. Browne AIFO VOICE Project Manager and Lorpu Scott, EU Project Officer.

-The recruitment of relevant project staff such as, VOICE Project Manager and WS Programme Manager and the setup of project management structures. The inception period was also centred on stakeholder engagement, including project partners and associates. For this purpose, we organised two field missions and set up several meetings with project partners and stakeholders to discuss the assigned roles and responsibilities as partners and stakeholders under the VOICE project along with the preparation of MOUs.

-The preparation and subsequent signing of the MOU between AIFO and Williette Safehouse was achieved under the inception phase, while the others are still in process and will be concluded beyond the inception phase. The signed MOU will enhance the partnership and hold each party accountable to monitor specific assigned activity implementation and reporting, donor compliance, and project effective oversight and others.

Additionally, the team focussed on the preparation of a detailed Project Implementation Plan, which includes key project documents such as an M&E plan and Monitoring Protocol Communication & Visibility Plan, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Risk Log and Detailed Work Plan. See the attached annexes as supporting documents to this report.

From the analysis of the inception phase activities, nearly all of the activities mentioned above were achieved with the exception of the gender-mainstreaming plan. However, there is some progress being made for the development of the plan, including the gathering of basic information of the plan and the development of the first draft of the plan that is currently being reviewed by the team. It is anticipated that this process will be concluded in the coming weeks.

The preparation of the project launch is currently on going with significant progress being made including meeting and providing information to partners, associates, donor and the identification of the project launch venue, drafting of project launch invitation, development of project launch banners and drafting of the project launch programme. The event is planned for the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July as per the annexes.

##### *3.1.1 Hiring of VOICE project staff*

During the inception phase of the VOICE Project, positions were advertised for AIFO VOICE Project Manager and WS Programme Manager. Interviews were conducted with selected candidates and finally two persons were selected based on the two different institutions standard and they were subsequently hired and AIFO Project Manager officially started work on March 16, 2021 and WS Programme Manager started work earlier than AIFO VOICE Project Manager.

The recruitment of these two staffs took into consideration these specifics, positions were advertised on different advertisement platforms both internal and external. Thereafter, selected candidates were invited for test and interview, references were checked, and final



selections were made, thus providing an employment contacts to them. The hiring process of AIFO Project Manager took longer time than what was anticipated, because of the long list of candidates and because of the strict selection process, involving both AIFO Liberia and AIFO HQ.

In the same manner, the hiring of the 2 Sign Language Teachers is currently ongoing. The Sign Language Teacher TOR has been developed and vacancy advertised and testing and interview along with hiring of the successful candidates will go beyond the inception phase.

Below is the list of new staffs that were hired for the VOICE Project implementation at the end of April.

- AIFO's VOICE Project Manager
- WS Programme Manager

### *3.1.2 Field missions*

#### **Field mission Saclepea, Nimba**

Between February 25-26, 2021, a brief visit was made to Saclepea, Nimba County. AIFO-Liberia Country Director, Melany Oey and AIFO-Liberia Communication and Program Support Officer, Luther Mendin undertook the mission.

The main objective of the visit was to have a first-hand information of the institutions that are expected to host deaf students for the sign language and vocational training programmes. The mission was also an opportunity to provide update to institutions that are expected to partnership with AIFO under the VOICE project and provide clarity where necessary.

#### **Visit to Danyee Community School**

As far as the deaf school is concerned, the team met with Mrs. Deborah Wehyee, proprietors of the Danyee Community School located in Saclepea, Nimba County. According to Mrs. Wehyee, deaf people are many in the locality and registration for deaf students is free of charge. However, it was not clear what the actual programmes for deaf children looks like. So far, the school has registered a total of 32 deaf persons, mostly young children. The institution is recognised by the MOE and currently has a total of 110 students ranging from ABC to 9<sup>th</sup> Grade.

#### **Challenges**

- Most of the deaf kids identified do not have formal education and they are mostly seen on the farm or doing petty businesses.
- Most of the deaf children will need shelter

#### **Conclusions/ Follow-up Actions**

- MOU to be concluded between Danyee Community School and the VOICE project outlining key roles and responsibilities and anticipated outcomes
- Hiring of Sign Language Interpreters
- Renovation of classrooms
- Inception meetings with students and parents to help support their children and commit to the programme
- Recruitment of students with set criteria (target age: 15-35yrs)

#### **Visit to Women of Purpose Skills Training Center**

The team also met with representatives from the Women of Purpose Vocational Skills Training Center in Saclepea, Nimba County. The Women of Purpose Vocational Training Center was established in Liberia to advance women's participation in society through Skills Building. The group was legally established since 2012 to cater to vulnerable women and has graduated close to 1000 beneficiaries in Saclepea.

Current Vocational Skills Training Programmes: pastry, tailoring, hair dressing, interior decoration, slippers designs, carpentry, Tie & Dye, Bees Making and soap making.

Students learn on a schedule basis (twice weekly) and the length of the programme is every six months. On average, about 30 students participate in separate trainings.

#### Conclusions/ Follow-up Actions

It is foreseen that the centre will be used for the vocational training programme in Nimba County. Representatives of the centre appreciated AIFO for the initiative and committed to supporting the project interventions to ensure tangible results. The below action point was highlighted during the brief meeting:

- MOU to be concluded between Women of Purpose Vocational Skills Training Center and the VOICE project outlining key roles and responsibilities and anticipated outcomes

#### **Field mission Tubmanburg, Bomi**

The main objective of the field mission to Bomi County was to introduce the project team to ORS and update on the inception of the VOICE project also elaborating more on key activities and expected outcomes of the project. More besides, the mission was intended to elaborate more on specific roles and responsibilities of individual partner organisations and to assess the representation of NUOD in the county looking at challenges and current programmes.

The visit was held on 18<sup>th</sup> of March, 2021 involving a team of AIFO and Williette Safehouse (AIFO-WS). In particular, AIFO was represented by Melany Oey, Country Director, Nibo Browne, VOICE project Manager, Sylvester Roberts, Regional Coordinator and Luther Mendin, AIFO Communication and Program Support Officer. Williette Safehouse was also represented by Soko Kamara, Senior Programme Manager and Michael Weah, Programme Coordinator respectively.

Separate visits were made to Oscar Romero School of the Deaf, NUOD Bomi County Leadership and Father Garry, head of the local Catholic Church in Tubmanburg.

The meeting provided an opportunity to the AIFO-WS Team to meet with the Country Director of Mary Meals, Paula Nawrocki for the first time as Mary meals hosts Oscar Romero School of the Deaf that is an associate partner of the VOICE Project. The team also held talks with the principal of Oscar Romero School of the Deaf, Madam Jerrydine Agordo who provided a summary of activities her institution is involved with.

#### **Current Programmes; ORS and Mary Meals**

ORS provides educational support to a total of 91 students (47; male, 44 female). About 68 students are in elementary school while the rest are in senior secondary classes. The school has interpreters providing basic education for deaf and hard of hearing persons. ORS also run an apprenticeship programme which considers hair braiding, crocheting, barbing, carpentry and tailoring. Package is provided to students after the apprenticeship programme. The school runs under the MOE and constitutes a total staff of 46. The school also has a nurse, counsellor and a sporting coach. The girls sleep in a dormitory while boys below 16 sleep in the boys' dormitory. Boys above 16 sleep at their individual homes. The school is tuition free and enrolment is done on a criteria basis. Parents are involved into PTA meetings and sign language training. Parents' motivation is used as a factor for selection of the students. ORS offers 10 regular subjects approved by the MOE. It has a total of 6 sign language interpreters

and books on Sign language are researched for the ongoing sign language training programme.

Mary's Meals started operations in Liberia since 2006 with focus on school feeding in Bomi, Montserrado, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount counties. They currently support a total of 625 schools which takes into account a total of 157,000 children that are being fed on a daily basis. Mary's Meal work in partnership with the government.

Both Mary Meals and Oscar Romero School of the Deaf, expressed their total commitment to the project implementation and willingness to contribute in any form or manner during the implementation of the project. At the same time, AIFO-WS Team was informed during the meeting about the expected departure of Victoria Ladygina, General Manager, and Oscar Romero School of the deaf at the end of March 2021, thus creating a gap. However, there are plans to recruit another person very shortly to fill in the gap. Notwithstanding, during this gap period, Madam Jerrydine Agordo, Principal of the school will be the direct contact person.

#### Challenges:

- Most of the students are brought by guardians, so the support from actual parents is lacking
- Visitation of parents on school campus
- Parents hardly attend sign language courses

#### Radio & TV Exposure

ORS is hoping to go on TV & radio hopefully this year. VOICE project also have a focus on radio and TV for deaf and hard of hearing persons so synergies will be sort on this front. VOICE project hopes to utilise audio-visual materials to better enhance knowledge of sign language during the implementation of the radio and TV programmes.

Currently, ORS students use a local radio station in Bomi and participates every 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday to explain about deafness and challenges being confronted by children with speech and hearing problems.

The meeting provided the team with a perfect opportunity to identify the following:

*Collaboration and Expectations:* it became clear on what activity of the project ORS will collaborate on. In particular, the IEC programme, the Sign Language courses and Vocational training programmes. A detailed MOU is expected to be factored as part of the engagement with ORS on the VOICE project.

*Safeguarding:* ORS will support AIFO in elaborating safe guarding policies/system for the project. In particular, for children attending the sign language training programme in Nimba County. An added advantage is that ORS currently runs a sign language programme with a well thought safe guarding policy in place, the project will utilise and continuously learn from this approach.

#### Meeting with Community leaders

Father Garry is a resident of Bomi County and very influential within the County. He has lived in Liberia for so many years providing both religious and humanitarian support so it was important for the team to meet him to have a first-hand information of the situation in Bomi County. During our brief interaction, he explained about the daunting challenges people with disabilities are faced with ranging from lack of feeding, shelter and economic support. In particular, he stressed more on the need to support the leprosy community in Grand Cape Mount County. At least 40-50 persons affected with leprosy and their families currently live at a leprosy colony in Grand Cape Mount County, Massatin that is bordering to Bomi County. This information was quite relevant for AIFO as an institution that also provide support to persons affected with Leprosy.

One of the main outcomes of the meeting with Father Garry was the commitment he made in supporting the project initiatives in the county be it moral or psychosocial support to project beneficiaries. The project will regularly engage him as and when deemed necessary

The team met with NUOD Bomi Chapter to provide initial ideas on the VOICE project and solicit information on the current realities of PWDs in the county. Representatives of CAB, G-77 and LNAB were in attendance. The team also wanted to understand the structure of NUOD in the county and its operations as part of VOICE Project inception phase activity. It was not clear whether there's a separate DPO for the deaf as it's done in other counties. These were key findings from the meeting with the leadership of NUOD in the county which was composed predominantly of males.

- No government support to NUOD in the county
- Not a single NGO has provided programmes to improve their lives
- Individually, some members are helping themselves through gardening, tailoring, baking etc.
- There's no activity or meeting Centre for PWDs in the county
- The chapter constitutes approximately 1000 members with disabilities
- No office space for NUOD in the county
- Recognition of NUOD is very weak

At the end of the meeting with NUOD Bomi County representatives, they expressed their thanks and appreciation to AIFO-WS team for the visit, and appealed for assistance to enable them to be more productive and autonomous within the society as for too long they have been referred to as baggers, and at times they are disesteemed by other society members.

#### **Engagements of the Chapter**

- Currently, PWDs in Bomi have free air time allocated to them on 2 local radio stations.
- Leadership meets monthly, however internal coordination is weak.

The project team did establish a new relationship with DPOs in the county understanding their challenges and providing an opportunity for the project to help find solutions to most of their problems. The project will help strengthen NUOD's capacity in this part of the country to help provide more support to PWDs in the county. An important aspect will be the stakeholder's engagement plan understanding the roles of different stakeholders in the county to effect change.

In continuation of AIFO-WS engagement meeting with partners under the VOICE Project, a meeting was also held on the 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2021 with NUOD Monrovia Office. The aim of the meeting was to provide over all view of NUOD roles and expected results under the VOICE project as direct beneficiary and implementing partner in collaboration with NCD. During the meeting NUOD also voiced out their interminable participation as AIFO had over the years been their major partner within the INGO sector that always gave them supports through capacity building, logistic and financial donations.

And at the end of the meeting, they promised to give their inputs on the draft MoU once the copy is shared with them. There were six (6) persons at the meeting, including NUOD President, NUOD Vice President for Administration, and NUOD Vice President for Operation, NUOD Finance Officer, NUOD Secretary and AIFO VOICE Project Manager.

### 3.1.3 *Engagement with school and vocational training centre*

On March 25, 2021, AIFO-Liberia Regional Coordinator, Sylvester Roberts undertook a field mission in Saclepea, Nimba County. This was a follow up mission after the visit made by AIFO-Liberia Country Director, Melany Oey in February, 2021. Meanwhile, during the meeting with the training centre, it was agreed that under this project, AIFO will underwrite all financial cost associated for all project students within the duration of the skill training programme at the centre and the centre will work closely with AIFO for the achievement of the project target under the skill training programme.

The main objective of the visit was to also assess both areas for the VOICE project deaf education and vocational skills training programme. In particular, the two classrooms expected to be used for the deaf education programme and the vocational skills training centres. An estimated cost for the setting up of the class rooms which take into account provision of desks and chairs, facelift of classrooms (fixing doors, windows, etc.) of both areas have been concluded and the class rooms setting process well underway.

### 3.1.4 *Set up class rooms*

The setting up of the two class rooms involves the conduct of a need assessment by both Project and Logistic teams to identify what needs to be done at the facility, setting priorities in the context of budget. Thereafter, a market assessment is done by the logistic team for the availability of those needed material and cost. And suppliers are also identified for the supply of materials needed for the setting up of the class rooms.

The two identified and selected class rooms for the sign language training session need renovation to enhance a better learning environment for the students. As such, cost for the renovation was not anticipated during the development of the approved budget. Thus putting a challenge to us to carry on the renovation of these two classrooms before the start of classes. Fortunately, from the cost analysis done, the approved budget allotted for the setting up of the two class rooms under this project, it is sufficient to cover both the setting up of the two class rooms and their renovation and not placing additional cost on the project.

The actual renovation and completion work of the 2 class rooms will be done after the inception phase awaiting the approval from EU for the setting up of the two class rooms budget to be used between the setting up of the class rooms and the renovation of the two classes. The signing of the MOU between AIFO and the school authority will be done after the inception phase. In addition, currently, procurement plan for the setting up of the identified class rooms is ongoing at AIFO.

Meanwhile, the hiring of sign language instructors is nearing completion and part of the process is to begin developing syllables and milestones for the deaf education programme.

## **3.2 Preparation of project working documents**

The VOICE Project has the inception phase that addressed the development of detailed project execution plan that consisted of preparation of key project working documents, such as, VOICE M&E Plan, Stakeholder engagement and Information management plan, Risk Log and Detailed work plan and others.

The preparation of project working documents is vital to plan the start and end date of the deliverables in order to complete the project on time as the project management team use these essential project documents, which are directly related to the project targets and outputs.

The Project Management and Monitoring Committee under the VOICE Project is charged with the responsibility to approve all detail developed project implementation documents under the

inception phase. Under the inception period this was not actually realised as planning is ongoing to organise the first meeting beyond the inception phase which will bring together all MMC members along with key stakeholders that are linked to the project to inform them about the developed project implementation plan with supporting documents and to seek their approval for the project implementation plan along with those documents.

### 3.2.1 *M&E Plan and Monitoring protocol*

The M&E plan along with the Monitoring protocol were developed representing key requirements to support the oversight functions of the VOICE Project management team with the timely collection and analysis of data for internal performance assessments and the substantive reporting on results both to the donor and internally to VOICE project team and AIFO. The M&E plan, which functions as a guide for project staff, determines HOW indicators will be tracked for the measuring of results, and by WHEN and WHOM monitoring activities have to be accomplished throughout the implementation of the project (during baseline, midline, and end line) and disseminated. See the attached ***M&E plan – annex 1***.

The M&E plan visualises the project's impact and overall objective, outcomes, indicators and their corresponding definitions, baseline and targets with their reference years, the means of verification with the appropriate tools to collect the data, the frequency or schedule to collect the data and the responsible person.

Additionally, AIFO and Williette Safehouse after several review sessions developed a monitoring protocol document (*See the attached M&E protocol – annex 1*), which when operationalised, will employ a results-based monitoring in this project. The monitoring protocol is an excel document that lists all the outcome and output indicators applicable for the VOICE project interventions, disaggregate indicators where necessary for easy data collection, collect and enter quantitative and qualitative data relevant to the quarterly results of VOICE activities, consistent with the project's work-plan. The data will be backed up by gathered means of verification, as stipulated in the M&E plan.

The following data collection tools are among several tools already developed while more earmarked to be customised based on the need to collect additional data for the project to feed the Monitoring Protocol:

- Attendance Sheet Template
- Activity report Template
- Communications Tracking tool
- Capacity Assessment tool
- Pre & Post Assessment tool
- DPO members engagement tool
- Meeting minutes' template

Based on an analysis between targets and results, as reported in the Monitoring Protocol, the VOICE project team will evaluate the effectiveness of its interventions on a routine basis and identify lessons learned for steering their implementation towards meeting the targets.

Further, the data of the Monitoring Protocol will be shared with the project's lead partner, for enabling the aggregate monitoring and periodically reporting of the project results to review the extent to which the project is on course in meeting its objectives.

### 3.2.2 *Stakeholder engagement & Information management*

The team has identified and listed all of the stakeholders that are linked to the VOICE Project thus creating an information management plan under the project timetable.

A stakeholder analysis is a process of identifying these people before the project begins such as (Donors, beneficiaries, Partner institutions, Local government; Stakeholders, Local media, Management, local community or organisation); grouping them according to their levels of participation, interest, and influence in the project; and determining how best to involve and communicate with each of these. And the communication strategy is also involving the distribution of project information base on the grouping participation, interest and influence considering specific communication to be shared on a structural basis.

And for details, see the attached ***Stakeholder Engagement Plan – annex 2***, that contains the list of stakeholders along with the information management plan.

### 3.2.3 *Project Risk Register*

At the inception of a new project / programme led by AIFO Liberia in partnership with other organisations, the risk management process for the project will be initiated. See the attached ***Project Risk Log – annex 3***.

The projects' risk management process is managed by the Project Management and Monitoring Committee, with ultimate responsibility pertaining to the AIFO Project Manager. The arrangement of a one-day workshop to participatory develop the Project Risk Register further will be planned after the inception phase. The AIFO Project Manager is responsible for summoning quarterly reviews of the project's Risk register at regular MMC meetings and for reporting about overall risk assessment and extreme and high risks in their quarterly reports to the Country Director and Headquarters.

The results of the Risk Management Process are tabulated within the Risk Register which is the document containing the results of projects and organisational risk analysis and response planning.

The Risk Register documents risk management information systematically and coherently; it is a good way to keep track of identified risks and record the controls put in place to manage them.

The VOICE project Risk Register identified nine potential risks under the VOICE Project ranging from health, security, nature, human resource, governance etc. The Risk Register analysis took into consideration the probability and impacts these potential risks may have on the project. However, on the overall the risk log points to health risk to be the very high risk for Project. For the details on the risk log analysis, see the attached annex 3.

### 3.2.4 *Detailed Project Work Plan*

**The Detailed Project Work Plan is annex 4** to the report, as an attachment. The work plan highlights each project activities detail or step leading to the implementation of each project targeted activities during the entire project duration. And it is being monitored by the Project Manager for the effective and efficient implementation of the project.

## **3.3 Project management and coordination**

The Management and Monitoring Committee is coordinated and chaired by the Project Manager, it is composed of 1 representative from the co-applicant and 1 representative each from the associates and sub-granting institution. The Project is managed by the VOICE Project Manager (AIFO) who is responsible for the overall supervision and implementation of the Action.

The project team is composed of: two Communication Officers who will lead on the management and implementation of the IEC programme, in collaboration with the Project Manager; two finance staff (lead-applicant: Finance Administrator & Logistician and co-applicant: Finance/Accountant Officer) who are responsible for the project financial accountancy; one Fellowship Programme Manager who will lead on the Fellowship programme and vocational training in particular in Montserrado; two project coordinators (lead-applicant: Regional Coordinator; co-applicant: Project coordinator) who will coordinate project activities on county level, and two Community Workers who will provide support for the logistics of project activities.

The AIFO HQs Project Office will support the overall coordination of the Action and will be in charge for reporting and communication with the EU representative.

### 3.3.1 *Setup of the project management structure*

#### **Project Coordination meetings**

The project coordination meetings are being held regularly and rotationally with AIFO and Williette Safehouse with the involvement of key project staffs from both institutions.

These meetings were intended to further strengthen coordination amongst key project staff and organisations. The meetings sought to discuss overall project achievements and inception plans, share learnings, identify key challenges/gaps and suggest recommendations for effective project implementation. The meetings further served as a gateway to providing technical support/inputs about effective and sustainable implementation of the VOICE project, including carrying out situational analysis and reporting.

On the overall, there had been five coordination meetings held in the inception phase. These meetings are guided by agenda and taking of meeting minutes and agenda items are read and unanimously agreed for discussion.

Based on the agenda items agreed, discussions were then held through item-by-item basis with identification of key action points, person responsible and timeline for implementation. The coordination meetings have been such an efficient way for project staff to share information and report on progress, and to confirm that the team is on schedule and that feedback on deliverables and team synergy is enhanced.

Though the Management and Monitoring Committee (MMC) has been established with each institution (AIFO, WS, NUOD, LCD and ORS) being represented but since the establishment of the MMC there has been no meeting being held due to the absence of the MMC TOR. However, we are currently working on the TOR for the MMC that will lead to the meetings of the MMC and this will be done beyond the inception phase.

#### **Working groups**

During the project inception phase, several working groups have been formed namely:

**VOICE Communication Working Group-** this working group is comprised of two communication officers from AIFO and WS respectively. During the project's inception period, both individuals met weekly to elaborate the VOICE project CVP. This team will meet regularly to assess the performance of the VOICE CVP and make recommendations where necessary. A close collaboration will be sort with the EU Communication Officer assigned in Monrovia.

**M&E Working Group-** this working group consists of the VOICE project manager as well as the senior project manager from WS. The team meets regularly to assess the M&E component of the project. During the inception phase, they were instrumental in elaborating the VOICE M&E Plan as annexed to this report. In particular, this working group will be involved in data interpretation and analysis.



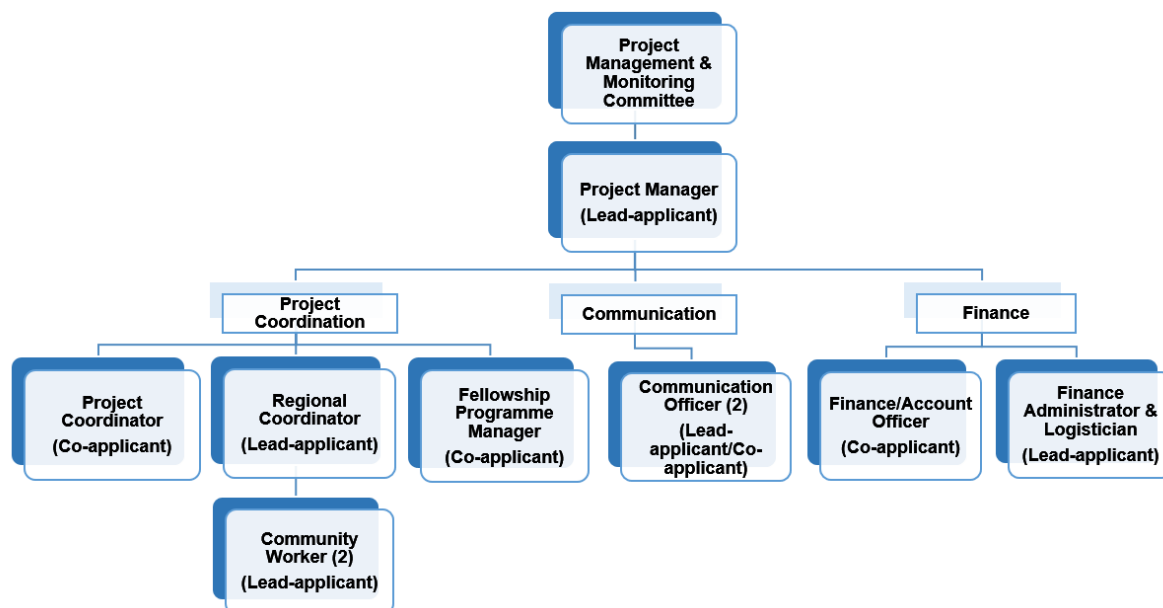
**Finance Working Group**- this working group consists of finance officers from AIFO and WS. The group meets regularly to discuss project budget, cost analysis, financial reporting and provide recommendations where necessary.

**Monitoring and Management Committee**

The monitoring and management Committee was established in the inception phase. AIFO and its partners and associates provided names of staffs representing each institution namely; AIFO, WS, NUOD, LCD and ORS for the purpose of monitoring and managing project activities during the implementation of the project after the inception phase. The objective of the MMC is to ensure that all activities are of good quality and delivered within the agreed timeframe and budget. In order to achieve this, the committee will closely monitor and advice on management decisions affecting project implementation, reputation, accountability and sustainability.

*Membership*

Permanent members of the MMC will be representatives of AIFO (Project Manager), WS, NUOD, LNCD and ORS. The AIFO Project Manager will head the committee while other AIFO senior Staffs and representatives of partners and associate institutions will serve as members of the committee. The Committee will routinely communicate by telephone and e-mail, gathering in person every month at partner’s offices in and outside of Monrovia on a rotational basis. The committee will meet regularly to review project activities progress, challenges, lesson learnt, and identify solutions to mitigate potential problems relating to the project.



3.3.2 *Project Human Resources*

The recruitment process of VOICE Project staffs was conducted during the inception phase. The table below shows the list of inclusive VOICE Project staff that are presently working on the EU project from each organisation.

Table 1: VOICE project staff recruitment list

No	Organisation	Position	Staff Size (number)
1	AIFO	Project Manager	1
		Finance Administrator & Logistician	1
		Regional Coordinator	1
		Communication Officer	1
		Community Workers	2
2	Williette Safehouse	Programme Coordinator	1
		Finance/Accountant Officer	1
		Fellowship Programme Manager	1
		Communication Officer	1

### 3.3.3 Partnership contract agreement

The Grant contract between AIFO and European Union was signed in December 2020. The first draft of the partnership agreement was sent to the co-applicant for review and comments in the month of February 2021. By the end of the inception period, the partnership agreement was signed by the co-applicant and AIFO.

Initial meetings with the Associates were held to discuss the partnerships and what the roles and responsibilities of each partner would entail in support of the VOICE project. And during these engagement meetings, both partners and associates expressed their full participation and commitment in delivering VOICE project activities. At the close of these meetings, AIFO, partners and associates identified a focus person to directly communicate with for the smooth flow of communications with and among AIFO and partners and associates.

## 4. Beneficiaries/affiliated entities and other Cooperation

### 4.1 Relationship between the beneficiaries/affiliated entities of this grant contract

During the inception period under review, Project VOICE conducted consultative meetings with key stakeholders of the project to establish positive relationships and to get their support for the project. In particular, meetings were held with training Skilling centres and academic institution earmarked for the vocational and sign language trainings. We also held meetings with ORS, NUOD, NCD and DPOs in the project counties providing details information about the project and highlighting their roles and responsibilities under the VOICE Project.

### 4.2 Relationship between your organisation and State authorities in the Action countries

During the period under review, the project team conducted preliminary consultative meetings with key stakeholders of the project to establish positive relationships and to get their support for the project. In particular, meetings have been held with the National Union of Organisations of the Disabled and DPOs in Bomi, Nimba and Montserrado counties.

One stakeholder (kick-off) consultation meeting is being planned in Montserrado, Nimba and Bomi counties during the period. The essence is to inform about the project and to be able to gather feedbacks. Different sectors (CSOs, community and national and local governments) are foreseen to participate to the meetings. The events will serve as an opportunity for

discussion on the project's target groups and recommendations aimed at strengthening the engagements of the project.

Through the stakeholder consultation meetings, the project idea will be presented and discussed.

Additional stakeholders' meetings are planned with strategic line ministries and agencies of government including DPOs and local community groupings to ensure ownership and acceptance of the project. Those earmarked are:

1. Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
2. Wubu Foundation for Deaf Children
3. County Development Officers
4. Association of Sign Language Interpreters
5. Independent National Human Rights Commission
6. National Commission on Disabilities
7. Ministry of Youth and Sports
8. Human Rights Division of the Ministry of Justice
9. Alliance on Disability etc.

## 5 Visibility

### 5.1 Communication strategy

The VOICE project team trust that EU-funded interventions must have an excellent visibility and branding. Therefore, an elaborate communication and visibility plan has been developed with a view of ensuring that the project communicate effectively with the broader public. See the attached ***Communication and Visibility Plan (CVP) – annex 5***.

The plan is aligned with the Communication and Visibility requirement of the European Union. AIFO will lead on the VOICE CVP with support from Williette Safehouse the project's communication and visibility will be based on the following elements;

- I. Public Events: Besides the project launch event, VOICE will organise other events during the project period. Events such as the commemoration of international day of persons with disabilities (IDPD-Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>), World Deaf Day (WDD-March 3<sup>rd</sup>) etc. will be used as a means of raising more awareness. Additional public events such as trade fairs, graduation ceremonies for VOICE project beneficiaries will also be utilised. All presentations during such event(s) will bear the logo of the EU and VOICE.
- II. Press Visit: Press visits will be organised once every year by VOICE consortium during which local journalists from both print and electronic media entities will be invited to see VOICE' project work on the field, interview beneficiaries and report findings on their various outlets. Before such visit is organised, the EU Delegation will be informed well in advance and acknowledgment of EU funding will be ensured.
- III. Press releases: With reference to the contractual agreement, a press release will be issued at the start of the project (launch event) and at the end. Whilst press releases will also be produced during major project events and ceremonies.
- IV. Project publications: Materials such as training manuals, flyers, fact sheets, newsletters, success stories, presentations and any other type of publications will bear the logo of the European Union and VOICE with the disclaimer statement "This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union."
- V. Banner and sign boards: Plastic or textile banners will be produced to serve as a backdrop for special events such as training, meetings, campaigns and other community gatherings. Key information about the project will be written on the banner

and sign board using the English language. All signboards will be placed in strategic locations of the project intervention areas.

- VI. Promotional Items: All promotional materials produced under the project will clearly bear the visual identity of the EU with the expression “Funded by the European Union”.
- VII. Website and Social Media: AIFO has a dedicated website and social media pages to engage the target audience with different contents and updates from the project. The page will be used to post contents such as photos, educational info graphics about the project, beneficiaries' stories, short videos, etc. VOICE' members will also use their organisation websites to spread information whilst support of the European Union will be acknowledged. Any and all such information will be previewed and confirmed by the EU before posting.
- VIII. Vehicle, equipment and supplies: All vehicles, motorcycles, equipment (printers, laptops etc.) supplied for the project by the EU funds will be labelled with the EU logo.
- IX. Photographs: In order to show the physical progress of the project's activities, photographs will be snapped during the implementation period of the project. VOICE shall have the copyright of photos snapped and will share that right with the EU. These photos will be used in leaflets, factsheets, newsletters, reports and other documents of the project.
- X. Audio-visual production: Short videos of important project activities will be captured by the communication focal persons of VOICE or other staff of consortium members. These short videos after production will be shared with the EU for validation before posting on social media or YouTube. Every video will acknowledge the EU support with not just the EU flag but also with the expression “This project is funded by the European Union”.

## 5.2 Visibility materials and events

During the inception phase, the VOICE project communication team develop different visibility materials to improve visibility and branding of the project. The below listed items were developed during the reporting period;

- ✓ **VOICE Project Logo-** the VOICE project communication team developed a proposed logo for the VOICE project during the period. This will have to be formally approved by the EU before usage in all external and/or internal publications related to the VOICE project. The logo features symbols of deaf and hard of hearing persons with an amplified voice depicting the inclusion of the voices of deaf and hard of hearing persons in society.
- ✓ **Roller Banners-** different sizes and samples of roller banners have been developed to be used for the activities of the VOICE project. These roller banners once approved will be routinely used for all VOICE project events. This will avoid spending too much for banners.
- ✓ **VOICE Project T-Shirts-** the t-shirt features the project logo, partner's logo and the EU flag with the inscription “Project funded by the European Union”. The VOICE project title is also embedded.

Other visibility materials such as project brochure, factsheets, flyers, signposts etc. will be developed following the project's inception and will be shared with the EU for approval before printing.

### **5.3 Preparations for the project launch**

As far as the VOICE project launch is concerned, initial preparations related to the venue and draft outline of the programme have been concluded. Tentatively, the programme is planned for the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2021 at iCAMPUS in Monrovia. This will have to be accepted by the EU depending on their own schedule. The outline of the project launch is considering a keynote address from either representative of the Gender Ministry or the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The keynote address will be tailored to the focus of the project contextualising key policies issues and reinforcing the message of a broad based human rights approach in dealing with issues related to disabilities in Liberia.

The programme will also entertain special remarks from the ambassador of the EU to reinforce their commitment in working with people with disabilities in Liberia. We also hope to showcase the talents of deaf and hard of hearing children through the dramatization of sign language to help convey the importance of sign language education for deaf and hard of hearing persons in Liberia. There will be special remarks from key stakeholders outlined in the project including key CSOs and government functionaries.

The invitation letter and press release have been drafted and will be annexed to this report for approval from the EU.

## **6. Challenges**

Throughout the inception phase, the team has not encountered any major challenge that could undermined the project implementation. However, some delays should be noted in the selection of personnel, as well as in the consequent realisation of the project launch event and in the submission of the present inception phase report.

Also the issue of the gender mainstream plan completion within the inception phase is one of the challenges faced in the inception phase, including the lack of budget to commence the renovation work on the two identified class rooms for the sign language training session. At field level, one of the problems encountered is that many of the students are brought by guardians, so the support from actual parents is lacking, and parents don't visit school campus to attend sign language courses that will aid the process of communicating with these students at home. The project will tackle the problem, helping to overcome it.

## **7. Conclusion**

The inception phase was completed, with significant achievements in the elaboration of detailed Project Implementation Plan (including M&E review and planning, stakeholder engagement plan, communication plan, risk log, information management plan, detailed work plan and budget for Year -1), and the activities are ongoing per the work plan.