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## MINUTES OF DIGNITY BOARD MEETING SEPTEMBER 23-24, 2021

COMWELL HOTEL AND TEAMS – 3.30 to 5.30 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS: Louise Holck, Dea Seidenfaden, Karin Hansen, Nomfundo Mogapi (*on teams*), Lotte Leicht, Marie Louise Nørredam, Camilla Rathcke, Tomas Martin, Christian Balslev-Olesen

FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD: Rasmus Grue Christensen (RGC), Dorrit Rée Akselbo (DRA)

GUESTS: Morten Olesen (item 8)

ABSENT: Manfred Nowak, Emil Kiørboe

REFEREE: Mette Grimstrup

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### **1. Approval of agenda of Board meeting September 23-24, 2021**

Agenda was approved.

Chairperson Christian Balslev-Olesen gave a warm welcome to everybody, glad finally to meet.

### **2. Status from the Chairperson**

Status from CBO. Since the last Board meeting, the Executive Committee has mainly been busy preparing the Board Seminar, including presentations, etc. The EC has also been following the IAPB project closely. It is a grand and serious business that DIGNITY has embarked on here, which is also why it has been put on the agenda on this Board seminar with a presentation later in the evening.

### **3. Status from the CEO**

Status from RGC: So far, things are going well. On the overall financial situation, it is worth noting that from 2022 and forward, we will have considerably less flexibility than we have had so far. The Danish Foreign Ministry has not only been very flexible, but also quite generous in administrative terms until now, and with the new DED, this will soon change. So, we will have to be extremely vigilant over our financial management. However, DIGNITY is very well-prepared for this new future, with new and improved budget monitoring systems in place.

Workplace: We have had a Staff Day in high spirits, and are onboarding a lot of new colleagues, also a lot of international colleagues, which can be a bit challenging, mainly due to the strict Danish migration rules.

The Clinic: Spending time on the negotiations with the Capital Region and still working with the organizational changes. Much more about both at the next Board meeting that will focus on the Clinic. We hope to strike a bargain with the Capital Region that promises more patients and markedly increased transparency from DIGNITY's side, and we hope that the Region will accept more flexibility/less bureaucracy from the Region's side.

Internationally, we are moving ahead with DED, our main agreement with the MFA. It is a challenge to initiate a number of new projects when the pandemic still hinders travel etc. Our second important agreement with the MFA, DAPP, focusing on the Middle East, is also on the way with a new tender coming up. In the Eastern Region we plan more projects with new partners. The IAPB is also well on its way, despite a worsened situation on the ground.

In the advocacy area we have had a successful conference on the Danish use of solitary confinement. And are continuing our efforts nationally, being present in the Danish media on subjects related to our mandate – the asylum system, prison conditions etc., and internationally i.a. fighting overcrowding in prisons around the world.

A question was raised as to the practical consequences of the reduced flexibility – what will it mean? RGC explained that from now on, the MFA will only pay their fair share of the administrative costs, which means that they will not subsidize other donors who won't. This means that we will have to be extremely careful only to accept new funding where the administrative costs are covered. This reduced and aligned overhead is a general phenomenon in the whole NGO sector.

DIGNITY is well prepared, though. The reduced cutback in administrative costs is in place for 2022, i.a. due to the reduced housing costs and other savings.

#### **4. Evaluation 2020 and Annual Plan 2022**

This is the last evaluation in the old format. The annual plan is the first under the new DED. The new annual plan sets a new course, i.a. it sets knowledge development and -delivery much more clearly on the agenda.

The Board asked if it was possible to get an overview that gave an impression of whether it has been possible to obtain an increase in transfers to Africa, as requested in the DED.

Such an overview is not possible in the old evaluation, but it will be in the forthcoming evaluations in the new format. Actually, there has been an increase in transfers to Africa in 2020, but they are partly due to Covid-19, where unused travel funds were transferred to partners instead.

The Board found it impressive how much has been done during Covid-19, and interesting how much work could be done locally – an experience worth taking with us further.

The Board will receive the finished Evaluation 2020 when it is submitted to MFA on October 1st.

#### **5. Forecast 2021**

Since the last forecast, there is no new income, besides the IAPB. There has been a slight shift in the clinic where the VISO certification is changing the scheme a bit. We presume to end up with a small plus.

There are two uncertainties in the accounts - one is the clinic, where the latest figures show that the level of service delivery is still at a lower level than at the same time last year. Another is the new holiday scheme, which provides much more holiday to be held this year. The appointments in IAPB may also provide some changes.

We are pushing a hump in front of us of planned new initiatives that have not been possible due to covid-19.

## 6. Localization

Short presentation by MOOL: The partnership strategy is the final strategy that DIGNITY need in order to live up to the recommendations from the Danish MFA. The Code of Conduct and Complaint Mechanism is part of the Partnership Policy. It is a step also to start the quest for more partners.

It is a value document more than an instructive document. The ambition is to address the power and economic issues embedded in partnerships.

Overall, the Board was very appreciative of the document and of the fact that DIGNITY clearly prioritizes partnerships, also by gathering the Board around this subject. It was underlined that DIGNITY should pay very much attention to the work around the Human Capital, preparing the staff members working with partnerships. Attention to white privilege and neocolonialism requires a complete retraining of employees. The inequality shows itself not only with respect to power and money, but also around data access, the handling of Covid 19 etc.

The Board was assured that DIGNITY is aware that cultural change requires the training of staff, and that this is on the way. DIGNITY is on its way in a process, and has been so within the last few years, where the partners' demands and wishes are increasingly weighted in the program design.

A global partnership workshop is also planned for the end of October, which also facilitates partnerships internally, between the partners. Hopefully it will become a permanent platform.

Discussion of how the fine words in the paper can become reality. How do values become practical guidelines in everyday life?

There is a dilemma between DIGNITY as a knowledge- and evidence-based organization and the tough demands on delivery, methods, etc. - and the critique of the classic white man with knowledge. How is it solved in practice? The most difficult thing will be to take a step back - to continue developing project in close cooperation with partners and with partners in the driving seat. Fortunately, the DED provides flexibility to be responsive to the wishes and needs of the partners.

It was pointed out that knowledge-based is also sometimes based on Best Practice - being a knowledge organization does not have to conflict with strengthening local forces. It is also evidence-based that projects succeed when they are based on local commitment, cultural sensitivity, etc.

It may be necessary to distinguish between what we can demand of ourselves in the Code of Conduct, and what we must / will demand of our partners around the world who work under completely different conditions.

It was recommended to adhere to international standards as a way to get around the 'white knowledge' syndrome. The Mandela Rules and the SDGs, for example. UNICEF and Save the Children have also worked with globally constructed standards for many years.

A question was raised as to whether the Danish government's policy in the area of refugees and asylum has become problematic in relation to DIGNITY's legitimacy. The Commissioner for Human Rights of the African Union has e.g. expressed quite strong criticism of the Danish government's policy, calling it both colonialist and racist.

The Board was told that an incipient criticism can be felt, although not very comprehensively, especially in the areas where DIGNITY's efforts can have a migration-preventing effect, efforts in refugee camps, etc.

It was agreed upon that the presentation is well written and good. And that the Board can also approve of the appendices Code of Conduct and Complaint Mechanism in the present edition, knowing that there will be more work to be done with the papers.

Broad agreement that this is an extremely important discussion, which both must and will fill in the future.

*The discussion continued Friday, in a joint session with the DIGNITY management group, with presentations by Duncan Green, Christian Friis Bach and Peter Christiansen on the broader subject of the future of INGOs.*

## 7. Status on the Clinic

Short status by RGC:

As mentioned, the current, aging operating agreement (between "Hovedstadens Sygehusfælleskab" and "RCT") is being renegotiated. The common database initiated by DIGNITY will provide more transparency. Here, too, it will also mean that DIGNITY will to a greater extent have to provide transparency as to what partners get for their money. In the process, it has been very beneficial with the inputs that the working group in DIGNITY's board has been able to provide.

The Board commented that many of the challenges that DIGNITY experiences around the world are also reflected in DIGNITY's rehabilitation clinic, so the clinic can also be seen as an experimental facility for the challenges we face globally. It also gives a huge strength that we can exchange experiences on the concrete work. And learn from each other - in Kosovo they are, for example, much better than DIGNITY at outreach after treatment.

## 8. Evaluation of the meeting (joint evaluation between the Board and the management group)

Good finally to meet each other, also enriching with common discussions. Difficult to get the internationals involved, but important - especially with this particular meeting with partnerships on the program. And hybrid meetings are better than nothing. Both the management group and the Board found it very useful and good to know each other better.

Meeting	Item	Subject	Decision	Responsible	Status
2021 BM 4	5	Approval of Partnership Policy, Code of Conduct and Complaint Mechanism	The Board approved of the documents for further processing.	Management	